

DEAD KIDS

by

Price Peterson

"Chapter 1: Infinity Ends"

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Matt Balick | WME
mbalick@wmeentertainment.com
310-859-4022

Josh Turner McGuire | Underground
josh@undergroundfilms.net
323-930-2588

COLD OPEN

OVER BLACK:

SHANNON [V.O.]
We were already dead the day we
died.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

GOD'S-EYE VIEW of a high school gym PACKED with students
pushing and swarming. Like Black Friday with hormones.

The energy is bad. Something is coming.

SHANNON [V.O.]
We trusted our parents to keep us
safe. But they *wouldn't*.

A COMMOTION at the entrance. A low roar of panic spreads.
Something is happening.

SHANNON [V.O.] (CONT'D)
(sardonic)
But it was cool, because... when
you're young, life is *infinite*.

FRENZIED SCREAMS and PANIC. A RUMBLING. A ROAR.

SHANNON [V.O.] (CONT'D)
Until one day you learn, either by
malice or by negligence...

The gym floor SPLITS UP THE MIDDLE and opens to reveal a
glowing SWIMMING POOL beneath. HUNDREDS of young bodies are
swallowed into the water. Submerged. Writhing. Panicked.

SHANNON [V.O.] (CONT'D)
You don't value a life you won't
protect.

With a harsh SCREECH, the parting halves of the gym floor
HALT and then slowly RE-CLOSE over the heads of the drowning
students. Ignoring their screams, it shuts completely.

SHANNON [V.O.] (CONT'D)
We were dead already. That's how
infinity ends.

D E A D K I D S

CUE SONG: Joy Division's "Atmosphere"

EXT. CLIFFSIDE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - LATER

Rain falls on a driveway GRIDLOCKED with AMBULANCES and NEWS VANS. Anxious family members stream inside.

A YOUNG DOCTOR, INGRID (30s, could be in a band), climbs out of a Lyft wearing a tacky bridesmaid dress. She switches off her pager as she jogs through the ambulances.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Ingrid averts her eyes from the sobbing adults in the waiting room and pushes her way into the STAFF LOCKER ROOM.

INT. OPERATING ROOM

A flatline BLARES. Ingrid, in scrubs now, sighs and peels off surgical gloves. The staff scatter to another room.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Ingrid takes a deep breath and re-enters the waiting room, her hands folded. Several families look up warily.

INT. MORGUE

Ingrid stands dazed, surveying a dozen covered bodies.

A MALE EMT suddenly pushes past her with a covered gurney. She stiffens to collect herself, but does a double-take.

INGRID

Where's your badge? It needs to be visible at all times.

EMT

(mumbling)

Oh. Sorry.

He fumbles under his shirt, pulls out a laminated badge. She looks at it, then into his eyes, unconvinced.

INGRID

(pointing)

Over there.

Nodding, he quickly wheels the gurney to the back corner. He turns and exits, eyes on the ground as he passes.

After a beat, something draws Ingrid toward the new gurney. She goes to it and gingerly lifts a corner of the sheet...

It's a CPR DUMMY and SANDBAGS. She quickly checks the gurney next to it. Another dummy.

She BOLTS out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Ingrid jogs up the hallway looking into each doorway, craning her neck around every corner. She stops a NURSE.

INGRID

Is there an EMT back here? Young?
Did you see where he went?

The Nurse shrugs, confused.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Ingrid BURSTS out of the hospital's back exit into a rain-drenched alley. She immediately sees him up ahead:

The EMT, having just loaded something into the back of an ambulance, slams its doors shut and rounds to climb in the passenger seat. The ambulance's headlights FLARE ON and it motors forward toward the alley entrance.

Ingrid steps right into its path, two palms raised.

INGRID

STOP.

The ambulance brakes. Rain continues to pound. An eerie standoff.

INGRID (CONT'D)

What is this?! What are you doing?

A beat. Then the ambulance's passenger door SWINGS OPEN.

Ingrid slowly circles to look inside. The seat is empty. The driver looks at her, connecting eyes. Ingrid GASPS.

A look of realization crosses her face. She steps forward, climbs up into the ambulance and closes the door.

The ambulance peels away.

ACT ONE

EXT. AERIAL - COASTAL MOUNTAINS - MORNING

Primordial dread: Grey ocean crashes against grey cliffs, grey fog wafts through old redwoods. This is CLIFFSIDE, CA. (Fine, it's Vancouver).

SUPER:

8 YEARS LATER

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

LUCAS (15, but IRL 15 not "TV 15"), snores fully clothed on a futon surrounded by Ramen wrappers and empty 2-liters of Cactus Cooler. Nearby his laptop screen cycles through dense code. "Searching Databases..." It's been going for hours.

Boop. The screen freezes: "(1) Record found." He stirs awake.

POUND! POUND! POUND! It's the front door. Lucas SHOOTS UP.

JOAN [V.O.]

Lucas, are you there? Lucas Porter?

He gives a silent "Oh, shit" groan and goes to the door.

EXT. GARAGE APARTMENT - SAME

The door cracks open and Lucas looks out bleary-eyed at JOAN (40s, corrects people with 'Ms.').

JOAN

Lucas? My name is Joan, I'm from Child Protective Services. Is your mother home?

LUCAS

Oh, uh, let me check--

He closes the door in Joan's face. She shouts through it.

JOAN

I know she's not home, Lucas. That's why I'm here.

INSIDE

Lucas shoves his laptop into a backpack.

JOAN [O.C.]
 Lucas, you're not enrolled at ANY
 of the local high schools.

LUCAS
 (shouting)
 I go to school!

OUTSIDE

JOAN
 The law clearly states--

PATTY [O.S.]
 Excuse me, just who the fuck are
 you?

Joan turns to see PATTY (60s, cigarette dangling) approaching
 in a bathrobe.

JOAN
 Are you the landlord?

PATTY
 You're goddamn right I am!

INSIDE

Lucas smiles. He throws on his shoes and opens the window.

OUTSIDE

JOAN
 Ma'am, your tenant, a Mrs. Annette
 Porter, no longer resides at this
 address, but her son, who is a
 minor is living here unaccompanied--

PATTY
 He ain't unaccompanied. Mind your
 business, homely.

JOAN
 Are you his current guardian then?

PATTY
 Maybe I am.

JOAN
 Then you should know that if he
 isn't enrolled in schooling--

PATTY
He's enrolled in schooling. Get
your facts straight.

She casually shoots Lucas a glance. He's peeking from around
a nearby corner holding his bike handlebars.

JOAN
Which high school?

PATTY
The new one. Go check on that, and
get the fuck offa my property while
you're at it.

JOAN
We *will* check on that. If he's not
enrolled there, I won't be the last
social worker you'll see.

PATTY
Go do your job, trench-coat pig.

JOAN
(walking away)
That's hardly necessary.

PATTY
You're unnecessary, beagle woman.

Patty ashes her cigarette, smiles, and goes back inside.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

ON LUCAS' FACE as he pedals up a winding mountain road.

LUCAS
Ugggghh I *hate* high school.

Suddenly Joan's government-issued Chrysler pulls up beside
him. She cuts him a look: It's on. She speeds ahead of him.

Stressed, Lucas hastily turns his bike down a hiking trail.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Lucas emerges from trees and skids to a stop at the entrance
of a NEWLY BUILT high school. To his left, the main building
and a football field, to his right, a parking lot and an
Olympic-sized swimming pool. Everything manicured and new, in
contrast to the ancient redwoods surrounding it.

Lucas looks back to see Joan's Chrysler approaching up the road. He drops his bike and races up the steps.

INT. ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Lucas stands at the front desk where an elderly female REGISTRAR (70s, not having it) frowns at him.

REGISTRAR

I haven't received *any* paperwork for *any* transfer students.

LUCAS

Uh, my mom said she sent it in.

REGISTRAR

Parents are *supposed* to register their children *in person*.

LUCAS

She's... unwell. Can I enroll *now* and bring in the forms tomorrow?

REGISTRAR

Kid, you cannot step foot in a classroom until we get your transcript, proof of insurance, parental consent, proof of immunization, yadda yadda etcetera.

(to next student)

Next?

LUCAS

You know what? I'm gonna text her and figure this thing out.

REGISTRAR

You do what you need to do.

Lucas steps back and takes a seat on a bench. He looks out the window to see Joan crossing the parking lot. He quickly pulls out a laptop and gets to work.

ON SCREEN:

Hacker stuff. Codes, commands, symbols. The school website. Private databases. Forms.

ON LUCAS:

He feels the gaze of THE GIRL sitting next to him, watching his screen. He slowly looks up at SHANNON (16, summer camp counselor crush). He's instantly in love forever.

SHANNON
 Sorry, didn't mean to distract you,
 (reading screen)
 "Annette."

Lucas blushes as he hits the last few key strokes.

Behind the front counter, a FAX MACHINE suddenly lights up and spits out papers.

REGISTRAR [O.C.]
 Kid, looks like your mom just faxed
 in your forms.
 (beat)
 Shannon? Mind processing these?

SHANNON
 Sure.

Lucas GOES WHITE as the girl crosses back behind the counter. That's when Joan appears in the doorway. Lucas looks to Shannon, then to Joan. Then back to Shannon pleadingly.

When Shannon breaks the silence it sounds like a song.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
 Okay, Lucas, you're all set.

Lucas flashes Joan a look of victory. She returns a cold smile.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Lucas and Shannon walk side-by-side. She's pointing at things on his class schedule, but he's only pretending to listen as he can't stop staring at her.

SHANNON
 Let's see-- Spanish... that'll be
 in the portables.

LUCAS
 I love being educated in mobile
 homes.

SHANNON
 Bold words for someone who lives in
 a garage.

LUCAS
 It's a garage *apartment*, thank you.
 And it's nice. There's a papasan.

SHANNON

That *sounds* nice. I feel I've earned the right to ask this... Where's your mom, truly?

He slows down.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

You don't have to answer.

LUCAS

She disappears sometimes. Usually she winds up in a facility, I just haven't found out which one yet.

SHANNON

You've been living alone?

LUCAS

I'm really good at being alone.

SHANNON

E-M-O A-F.

LUCAS

I'm not being emo, I'm just over having to transfer into new schools and thinking 'this is the one, this one will work' when they're all exactly the same.

SHANNON

All the same? We have a *kombucha vending machine*.

LUCAS

But the curriculum, the teachers. The students. All the same.

SHANNON

Cynicism isn't a personality, Lucas.

LUCAS

I'm not cynical, I'm experienced.

She just looks at him. He finally hears himself.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Oh no. You're being so nice and I'm being a bumner...

SHANNON

I'm a transfer too. And so far this school has been a *major* upgrade.

They connect eyes just long enough for Lucas to feel suddenly okay about everything.

AARON (17, extremely symmetrical and also THE YOUNG EMT from the cold open) emerges from the crowd and casually puts his arm around Shannon.

AARON
How's our foxiest tour guide?

Lucas's stomach drops. *Of course* she has a boyfriend.

SHANNON
This is Lucas, he's a transfer.

AARON
Hey. Aaron.

He offers Lucas a sideways street handshake, but Lucas just grabs his fist and shakes it up and down. The awkwardness reverberates through them for what feels like days.

AARON (CONT'D)
Cool cool. Shannon being nice?

LUCAS
Oh no. She just seems like a bad person basically.

AARON
Wait, what?

LUCAS
What?

AARON
Shannon's *really* nice.

LUCAS
I was kidding. That's the joke.

AARON
Ah, a comedy guy.
(beat)
Is this your schedule?

Aaron grabs Lucas's schedule and smiles.

AARON (CONT'D)
We all have P.E. together next period. I'll show you where the boys locker room is.

LUCAS
 (kill me)
 Thanks.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lucas stands at the locker next to Aaron's and holds up an extremely large, stained P.E. t-shirt.

AARON
 Personally I find the lost & found
 box to be a biohazard, but it's
 better than getting written up.

Lucas sniffs some hand-me-down gym shorts and reflex gags.

LUCAS
 Oh god.

He notices two dudes undressing nearby: ELIOT (17, blonde terror) and RUSSELL (18, off-brand Schwarzenegger). They're huge. Lucas looks down at his noodle arms.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 They must work out.

AARON
 Easier to lift weights than an IQ.

Lucas smiles at Aaron. *Maybe we're the same, you and I?*

Aaron undresses to reveal an also insane TV-level physique.

LUCAS
 Oh.

Lucas looks away as hard as he can. *Who are these golems?*

AARON
 Something wrong?

LUCAS
 So, um. Are you and Shannon...

AARON
 Together? No, we're just buds.
 (beat)
 Why, what'd she say?

Lucas just mumbles as he panic-shuffles away.

EXT. SWIMMING FACILITY - DAY

The P.E. class stands in a line beside the diving platform. Everyone's in swimwear except Lucas in his lost-and-found shorts and too-big t-shirt.

A male GYM TEACHER (30s, sunburnt) finishes taking roll.

GYM TEACHER

All right. Welcome to week 1 of our diving unit. Today's an easy one. All you have to do is jump off the 9-meter platform. Got it?

Half the class is audibly stoked, the other half stare upward, frozen with wild eyes.

Aaron is first to climb the TALL stairs and toe the platform edge. He casually walks forward and PLUNGES into the pool.

Lucas mouths "NOPE" and quietly heads to the back of the line. To his surprise he finds Shannon there, looking even more nervous than he is.

LUCAS

Hey, is this actually mandatory?

SHANNON

I think so.

They watch hulk bros Eliot and Russell do backflips into the pool. Finally it's Shannon's turn to climb the steps.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I really don't want to.

LUCAS

I'm scared too. But look around...
No casualties yet.

She surveys the dozens of wet and smiling students sitting off to the side of the diving pool. Aaron looks back at her, connecting eyes meaningfully. Encouragingly.

Shannon takes a deep breath and starts climbing the stairs. Lucas follows, pretending to be confident himself.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

I can go first if you want...

She toes the platform edge and looks down at the water, all the students below. Tears fall down her cheeks.

AARON
You got this, Shannon!

ELIOT
Just close your eyes and jump!

The blond jock having spoken, a chorus begins to chime in.

STUDENTS
You can do it! / It's easy! / Don't
look down! / Hurry up!

Finally Shannon closes her eyes, steps forward and FALLS.

CUT TO:

INT. SWIMMING POOL - UNDERWATER

Shannon opens her eyes as air bubbles clear away. The water is dark and IT'S LOUD.

Shannon's SURROUNDED by kicking, thrashing legs. She panics and reaches upward toward the light but the other bodies push her back down. She gives a muffled SCREAM and inhales water.

CUT BACK TO:

DIVING PLATFORM

Lucas looks down and sees Shannon STRUGGLING, not surfacing.

Suddenly a BURST OF PINK LIGHT flashes underwater.

AARON
Shannon!

Aaron jumps into the pool, swims down and grabs her. In a blink, Aaron's already pushing Shannon's limp body out onto the pool deck. Frightened students circle around.

GYM TEACHER
Everybody stand back!

Lucas scrambles down the platform stairs and pushes toward the front of the crowd, but can't quite get close.

GYM TEACHER (CONT'D)
Shannon? Shannon, can you hear me?

She awakens with a start and rolls over to let A LOT of water pour from her mouth. The students hoot and high five.

SHANNON
(weakly, to the crowd)
But how was my dive?

AARON
8.3

ELIOT
Gotta work on your finesse, babe.

Lucas looks relieved, even as the crowd converges around Shannon and he is slowly pushed backwards and out.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTER SCHOOL

Lucas observes an outdoor hallway bustling with same-seeming teenagers. But ONE GIRL catches his eye: MAXINE (17, pre-meltdown Lauryn Hill), casually hanging a poster:

"MAXINE IS RUNNING FOR CLASS PRESIDENT BECAUSE IT LOOKS GOOD ON COLLEGE APPLICATIONS P.S. THIS IS MY ONLY POSTER"

Catching her eye, Lucas nods appreciatively. She nods back.

LUCAS

You've got my vote.

MAXINE

(smiling)

I know.

She steps into the flow of students and heads toward A GIRL waiting up ahead: JUNE (18, Joan of Arc faux-hawk). She flashes Lucas a curious glance before turning away.

A WHISTLE sounds, diverting his attention toward the FIELD, where a football practice is in session. He draws closer.

ON FIELD

Two rows of exhausted guys face off on the line of scrimmage. Eliot, the blonde terror from earlier, looks very *not-tired*. He connects eyes with the quarterback.

ELIOT

That ball belongs to me please.

QUARTERBACK

Come and get it, honey.

Ball is hiked, QUARTERBACK scrambles back to throw.

Eliot EXPLODES through the line. He spins, twists, dodges, and suddenly LEAPS way too high and way too far.

Quarterback's eyes go wide as he is SACKED HARD, loses grip on the ball. In a blur, Eliot snatches it up and disappears like a golden streak toward the end-zone.

Everybody just quietly watches him go, including the COACH.

ELIOT

I TOLD YOU IT WAS MINE.

He spikes the ball like an awesome asshole.

EXT. LOCKER ROOM ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Tired players file into the locker room. Before Eliot can enter, A HUGE HAND grabs him and pulls him around a corner.

It's Russell (the other giant guy from the locker room). He lifts Eliot up against the wall. Like really high.

RUSSELL
WHAT. Are you doing?

ELIOT
It's called football. Ring a bell?

RUSSELL
Knock it off.

ELIOT
Your sexual frustration is really creating problems.

Russell drops Eliot but gets in his face again.

RUSSELL
DON'T.

ELIOT
OKAY.

SHANNON [O.S.]
Russell?

Shannon approaches, hair still wet. Eliot slips away.

SHANNON
Don't we have somewhere to be?

She takes his arm and walks. She's tiny compared to him.

RUSSELL
He's overplaying again.

SHANNON
Look who's talking...

RUSSELL
(rolling his eyes)
Stop.

SHANNON
Mmm hmmm.

RUSSELL
Oh my god. It's not like that at all.

SHANNON
You guys sure wrestle a lot.

RUSSELL
Gross. He's straight.

SHANNON
(smiling)
You sure about that?

RUSSELL
(laughing)
What are you doing?

SHANNON
What are *you* doing?

RUSSELL
THAT... is not a thing. Plus I'm
not a closet case this time.

SHANNON
Yeah, well, he wasn't *hot* before.

RUSSELL
I'm about to throw you back in that
pool.

He picks her up.

SHANNON
(laughing)
No!

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - ENTRANCE

Lucas unlocks his bicycle and looks up just as Shannon and Russell emerge together, laughing. He's instantly jealous.

As he watches them pass he sees June standing nearby, also watching them go. He catches her eye and nods toward Russell.

LUCAS
I didn't know the Terminator went here.

June looks at him, then BURSTS out laughing. Lucas brightens.

JUNE
That was really funny, you seem
really funny.

She rolls her eyes and walks off. Lucas frowns.

LUCAS

I love making friends and I'm good
at it.

In the distance, Shannon and Russell disappear into a trailhead into the woods. He snaps the chain back onto his bike and follows like a creep.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Lucas follows a foot-worn trail through the dark redwoods. He treads carefully and quietly, trying to catch up to the pair.

He rounds a grove and crosses a creek bridge. He spots them up ahead before they suddenly disappear behind an

EXT. ABANDONED CABIN

Lucas emerges onto a grassy clearing and approaches a RUSTIC CABIN on a cliff overlooking the sea. Major *Evil Dead* vibes.

Lucas rounds the side of the house, looking into darkened windows. Lucas pauses and weighs an important decision.

INT. ABANDONED CABIN - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The back door creaks open. Lucas enters cautiously. The kitchen hasn't been used in years. It's caked in dust.

LUCAS

Hello? What am I doing? And why?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The living room is dingy and DARK. Lucas tries a light switch, but no power.

A NOISE.

Lucas whips around. Nothing. His eyes land on a dusty portrait above the fireplace. It's a family photo: Three generations of faded, smiling faces.

CREAK.

Lucas stumbles backward. But again, nothing. That's when he notices a glowing light outside the window. He approaches it and pulls back the RAGGEDY CURTAIN.

He's now eye-to-eye with a GLOWING FACE, skull-like and staring through the window at him with alien eyes.

LUCAS
JESUS CHRIST!

He scrambles backward toward the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - SAME

Lucas emerges onto the road, terrified. He looks back. There's nobody following him. No glowing skulls. Only fog.

A STATION WAGON passes him but slams its brakes. Patty rolls down a window and leans out, cigarette first.

PATTY
You look like a drainpipe hobo.

EXT. WOODS - TWILIGHT

Russell and Shannon walk quietly along a wooded trail.

RUSSELL
Do you not want to talk about it?

SHANNON
Today's P.E. humiliation? Oh definitely, let's get into it.

RUSSELL
What was that flash of light?

SHANNON
I don't know. I was just really afraid. And then...

RUSSELL
You should tell Ingrid.

SHANNON
That I have a glitch? No. I'm good.

They approach a chain with a rusted sign hanging from it: "PRIVATE PROPERTY". Russell lifts it and Shannon quietly passes underneath.

RUSSELL
We don't have to do this today.

SHANNON
Quit lying, babe.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

At the edge of the woods, just beyond the grassy lawn of someone's back yard, Russell and Shannon stand in shadows.

SHANNON
This is as close as we get.

RUSSELL
I know, damn.

A WOMAN appears at the back window. She's only doing dishes, but Russell's captivated and takes a half step forward.

Shannon grabs him by the shirt, twists for a tighter grip.

A MAN joins the woman. They're talking. He hands her something. She laughs. Russell takes another half step forward, or tries to. Shannon holds him back.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
They... look happy.

SHANNON
That's the dream, right?

Suddenly the back door opens and TWO TWIN BOYS (12) run outside. Russell GASPS. Shannon pulls him backward.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Uhh. We need to go.

RUSSELL
Please.

The Boys chase each other around the lawn. Suddenly one SKIDS down on the grass hard and starts crying. Russell jerks forward, but Shannon holds him in place.

The other Boy kneels at his weeping brother's side and examines his swollen wrist. Russell struggles forward.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
He's hurt. They won't know it's me.

SHANNON
You know the deal.

Russell just watches the boy cry. Anguish builds in his eyes. Suddenly a PINK FLASH bursts from his body across the yard. The swing set TOPPLES near the boys. They look awed.

Shannon and Russell stare at each other, shocked.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Russell wipes his face while Shannon leads him away.

RUSSELL
Sorry. That was just a lot...

SHANNON
A lot? You almost crushed your brothers with a jungle gym.

RUSSELL
We're, like, magnetic somehow?

SHANNON
(angry)
It's like I'm never *not* defective.
Even like this.

He lets the statement hang there. They walk quietly. She gathers herself, looks him in the eye.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
They're getting big.

RUSSELL
(proud)
I know right?

A sound of waves crashing below. Waves always crashing below.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
I'll return the favor, you know. If you ever want to see your--

SHANNON
No. I can't yet.

INT. PATTY'S KITCHEN - LATER

Lucas nurses a glass of milk at Patty's kitchen island as she bustles around, lit cigarette dangling from her lip.

LUCAS
Patty, I should be cooking for you.
You keep saving my ass.

PATTY

No offense, kid, judging by those Lunchables wrappers on your floor I'm dubious of your cooking skills.

LUCAS

My mom *will* be back, by the way.

PATTY

Didn't ask. All I know is your rent gets paid and I HATE a government pig. Fuck 'em all, in my opinion.

Lucas scans a nearby wall of framed photographs.

LUCAS

How long have you lived here?

PATTY

Too long.

LUCAS

Whose cabin was that, up on the cliff?

PATTY

Nobody's. Used to be an old man's. Real sad story. Awful.

LUCAS

Give it.

PATTY

Edwin Something-Or-Other. His wife dies, some slow terrible disease. Which, fine, the human body is a nightmare and we should never expect better of it. But then's her funeral and on that day the old man's son, daughter-in-law, and grandson all get killed in a car accident *on their way* to her funeral. Drove right through a guard rail and into the water. If that's not a curse I don't know what is. He went off the grid and I don't blame him.

LUCAS

How long ago was this?

PATTY

A coupla years before... You know.

On the photo wall: An OBESE BLOND TEENAGE BOY. Lots of pictures of him. Frozen in time at age 16.

LUCAS

The Incident.

PATTY

"The Incident." Twenty dead kids and it's an incident. No big deal. Don't blame nobody. Just build a new high school, forget the old one ever existed. Let the hobos have it.

She takes a long drag from her cigarette, eyes watering.

PATTY (CONT'D)

And some government pig wants to give you a settlement so you won't sue 'em all to Hell. And you take it, because what's the fight? You ain't got a reason to live anymore anyway. He's not comin' back.

Lucas just looks at her, not knowing what to say.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Listen to this salty bitch getting all stirred up when she *should* be stirring taco meat.

She turns back to the stove. Lucas has a realization.

LUCAS

The old high school... You said transients live there?

PATTY

Junkies mostly. Every now and then they get flushed out by social services, but--
(realizing)
Oh, you don't think--?

LUCAS

Naw, no, no. No way.
(long beat)
Where is it again?

EXT. ABANDONED HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Lucas leans his bike against a chain-link fence and climbs through a cut-out hole. He crosses the abandoned school grounds, already fallen into graffiti'd disrepair.

This campus is almost identical to the new one, with the football field on one side of the entrance, and an empty swimming pool on the other. Like an evil twin. Or a ghost.

He approaches the FRONT STEPS of the darkened main building, where an ENORMOUS PILE of desiccated flowers and faded photographs once honored deceased students.

He cranes his neck to peer into broken windows, looking for any signs of life. But it's all just darkness and fog.

Something catches his eye. He kneels to examine some of the memorial offerings. Moldy teddy bears, sun-bleached posters. And pictures, including several of PATTY'S SON.

Among the faces are A GIANT FOOTBALL BRUTE. A BLONDE CHEERLEADER. A CLEARLY QUEER POC. Their smiling faces.

LUCAS

(overcome)

Aw. You guys didn't deserve this.

Lucas lifts one of the photos, which reveals another one: A BEAUTIFUL GIRL with caring brown eyes. It gives him pause.

He just stares at it, trying to comprehend something.

A SCUFFLE. FOOTSTEPS. VOICES. Lucas pockets the photo and leaps behind a flagpole base. While staying hidden, he tries to see who's coming.

Suddenly June and Maxine emerge from shadows and approach the pile of old memorial pile.

JUNE

Now *this* is a party.

Shannon and Russell emerge as well.

SHANNON

You beat us here.

MAXINE

Okay, I am in a *fleece vest*. This better be good.

RUSSELL

No Eliot?

JUNE

Maybe there was a reflective surface on his way here and he got caught up.

Eliot approaches the other four, frowning.

ELIOT

I'm neglecting my calc homework for this.

MAXINE

Girl, you don't know math.

ELIOT

I'm neglecting the sophomore I flirt with to do my calc homework for this.

Finally, Aaron jogs up, amused.

AARON

I'll never get tired of meeting here.

MAXINE

That's because there's no rude-ass pictures of you here.

June bends over and picks out a faded photo of the BLONDE CHEERLEADER and frowns at it.

JUNE

I can't believe I thought chunky highlights were a look.

From behind the flag pole base, Lucas goes slack-jawed, his eyes WIDE with realization: THEY ARE *THEM*.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. ABANDONED HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

The six most TV-perfect teenagers on the mountain sit on the stairs amidst the remains of their own memorial.

ELIOT

So why are we hanging around in the fog like a gaggle of wet assholes?

SHANNON

It's about today at P.E.

ELIOT

Yeah, what *was* that?

SHANNON

Being in the water took me back. To *that day*. Like I was there again.

June and Maxine exchange a look.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

And then something came over me, and there was this... Burst.

MAXINE

That happened to me one time when I was in a jacuzzi with my Ex.

Eliot and June laugh. Shannon nods.

SHANNON

Fair. It's a cool joke.

RUSSELL

(serious)

Happened to me too. Earlier tonight.

MAXINE

You came too?

More laughter.

ELIOT

(faux offended)

Maxine, what's gotten into you?

MAXINE

I have had caffeine. I do apologize. Russell, go on. Tell us how you bursted.

RUSSELL
We went to my old house--

They all stiffen, exchange concerned glances.

SHANNON
Nobody saw him.

JUNE
Do you-- *Do that* a lot?

RUSSELL
Not-- Look, point is, I saw my
brother get hurt and when I
couldn't do anything about it, I
got that same light flash.

MAXINE
And nobody saw *that*?

ELIOT
Dude.

RUSSELL
(stammering)
I don't-- Well--

SHANNON
It knocked over the swing-set. The
flash did. That's all they saw.

They all take this in.

AARON
So it's a magnetic field?

SHANNON
I think so.

JUNE
Fuck.

ELIOT
Can you do it again?

Shannon and Russell look at each other.

SHANNON
Like intentionally glitch?

ELIOT
I wanna try. How do I do it?

RUSSELL
I think just feel extreme emotions?

MAXINE
Eliot doesn't know what those are.
Look at those eyes. Dead.

ELIOT
Rude but technically true.

June stands up and closes her eyes.

JUNE
I'm going to do it.

ELIOT
Oh my god. I dare you to.

They all watch her take a deep breath.

JUNE
(to herself)
Strong feelings. Strong feelings.

Maxine rolls her eyes.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Wait. Something painful maybe.
Feelings, feelings, heartbreak...
(concentrating)
Oh. I know. OW!

A BURST of light pulses from her chest. The force KNOCKS HER BACKWARDS tumbling across the asphalt. Seemingly unscathed, she looks back at the astonished group.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Except for the intense psychological pain part, it's pretty fun.

RUSSELL
What did you think about?

June picks herself up.

JUNE
When you dumped me before prom.

RUSSELL
I was gay.

JUNE
That dress was expensive!

AARON

Guys. Did you notice what direction
she flew in?

Their eyes track behind her to an enormous steel shed.

SHANNON

The closest metal structure.

Eliot's face lights up.

ELIOT

I got it.

FOOTBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

The six of them cross a misty, dead football field.

JUNE

Can't believe I used to flash my
panties at thousands of people on
this field.

MAXINE

(painfully, to Russell)
Can't believe you used to tackle me
on this field.

RUSSELL

(meekly)
You were a guy then.

MAXINE

Not even then.

Eliot spins, presenting to the group the six defunct stadium
light towers circling the field.

ELIOT

Metal in every direction. Are you
thanking me yet?

He paces for a second, concentrating.

MAXINE

Here we go. Try-Hard gonna try hard.

His face goes from determined to actually upset. Then he
bolts toward the sidelines and LEAPS high into the air.

A BURST of pink light and his body SHOOTS UPWARD into the air
in the direction of a stadium light.

The others stare up in amazement as he arcs across the dark sky. But then PANIC when he plummets back down to earth.

WHAM! He slams HARD against the ground and bounces like a ragdoll. When the dust clears he's just lying on his back looking blissed out. They rush over to him.

RUSSELL
Anything broken?

ELIOT
(smiling)
Who cares?

As though given permission, Russell and Maxine join Eliot and June in hurling themselves up into the air one after another. They scream and laugh and scream and crash.

They're like human fireflies.

But Aaron and Shannon *don't* join in, and instead exchange a concerned look.

AARON
Our units weren't designed for this.

LUCAS [O.S.]
Like *power* units?

Aaron and Shannon go white when they see Lucas emerge from behind the bleachers.

SHANNON
Oh. No. No.

AARON
Guys...

Everybody stops jumping when they notice the intruder.

LUCAS
No, don't stop! Keep going!

Russell grabs Lucas around the shoulders and lifts him up.

RUSSELL
Who are you?

LUCAS
I'm just. I'm new--

AARON
Lucas, why are you here?

LUCAS
I'm a friend! I'm friendly!

SHANNON
Russell, stop.

Russell sets him down. Lucas rubs his shoulders.

LUCAS
I was just seeing if my mom was
here, and I heard noises--

AARON
Here?

LUCAS
It's... Complicated.

SHANNON
You didn't see anything. Right?

LUCAS
Totally. I definitely did not see
anybody flying through the air. You
guys were just playing flashlight
tag, right?

MAXINE
What the fuck is flashlight tag.

RUSSELL
(to Aaron)
What do we do?

LUCAS
I won't tell anybody.

JUNE
Murder? Shallow grave?

SHANNON
He doesn't know anything.

LUCAS
I know who you all are.

All six look at him tensely.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
You're those dead kids.

Maxine bursts into laughter.

MAXINE

Oh god, we are fucked.

AARON

It's not true, Lucas. We're just friends who hang out sometimes and meet up to blow off steam.

LUCAS

You all drowned. Well, you five.
(to Aaron)
You're Patient Zero.

A sudden rumbling.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

(proud)
I'm right though, right?

SHANNON

Guys!

Shannon points to the end of the field. THREE SUVs barrel through the chainlink fence, headlights blazing.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

We gotta go!

Before Lucas can react, the other six SPRINT in different directions. Much too fast, if we're being quite honest.

The SUVs drive OVER the curb and onto the field. Lucas is frozen in place, caught in their beams.

He awkwardly darts back toward the woods where he came from.

The SUVs screech to a dusty halt and sit idly. Then JOAN emerges from one of them and nods to a second AGENT.

JOAN

It's okay. I got a visual on that one. And I know where he lives.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Lucas lies on his fold-out couch staring wild-eyed at the ceiling. He pulls the crumpled photograph from his pocket: Shannon, but *before*. He marvels at it.

KNOCK-KNOCK.

LUCAS
(calling out)
I'm not feeling too well.

Silence.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Patty?

Another knock, gentler this time. He finally gets up and approaches the window, pulls back the blinds.

It's Shannon.

He quickly unbolts the door and opens it. She looks stressed.

SHANNON
Hey... I... It's just me.

LUCAS
You know where I live?

SHANNON
Uh, I helped forge your paperwork.

He stares blankly, unsure of what to say.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
So can I come in?

LUCAS
Oh, yeah, sorry..

Shannon enters, looking around. It's messy, like an abandoned child lives here.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
(mortified)
I've never had anybody over.

SHANNON
It's cute. I like it.

Lucas fidgets as his #1 crush circles the room.

LUCAS

Can I get you a drink? I just have water or Cactus Cooler.

SHANNON

I don't drink.

LUCAS

They're non-alco-- OH. *You don't drink.*

She smiles politely.

SHANNON

I was thinking you might have some questions. About earlier.

LUCAS

I mean... If it's not my business--

SHANNON

Ugh, it is now. How do I put this gently? It's a fucked situation.

Shannon sinks down onto a papasan. She attempts to sit up straight but it's awkward.

LUCAS

That chair kinda sucks.

SHANNON

It's literally perfect for this conversation. Which, I don't even know where to begin...

LUCAS

Are you, like, alive?

SHANNON

Do I look alive?

LUCAS

Extremely.

SHANNON

I appreciate that.

LUCAS

But you *did* die. At the old high school, you and the others.

SHANNON
 "The Incident."

LUCAS
 And now you're sitting here. How?

SHANNON
 New body. Same brain.

LUCAS
 Like Frankenstein.

SHANNON
 I know you know that Frankenstein
 was the scientist not the monster,
 and second of all, they didn't have
 3D printers back then.

LUCAS
 You're... Plastic?

SHANNON
 Mostly but that feels rude somehow.

LUCAS
 You look pretty damn *real* though.

Shannon grabs a pair of scissors from the coffee table.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 Wait--

She SNIPS at the skin of her forearm.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 No, stop!

She puts the scissors down and then with her other hand TEARS
 the wound open, revealing bundles of GLOWING WHITE FIBERS.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 I'm gonna puke.

Shannon then presses the wound together and the "skin"
 reseals. Lucas just stares at her, stunned.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 Who did this to you?

She takes a deep breath. Here we go.

SHANNON
 Aaron. Well, and his grandfather.

LUCAS

The old man with the dead family?

SHANNON

He brought Aaron back, just as a one-off. You know how motivated mad scientists can get while they're grieving. Aaron was all he had.

LUCAS

And then a new batch of corpses showed up at the morgue thanks to a malfunctioning swimming pool.

SHANNON

Call it altruism, call it loneliness, but Aaron couldn't stand by and let all of us die. It took them years but they managed to save five of us. I'm really lucky.

LUCAS

Quick question is Aaron your boyfriend be honest.

SHANNON

Eye-roll)

No.

(beat)

Why, what'd he say?

LUCAS

Nothing, why.

SHANNON

Look, this brings me to the main thing, which is: There are people after us. The people Aaron's grandfather used to work for, who paid for his research. They want a return on their investment. They're not *certain* we exist yet, but they suspect it. They're monitoring our old families, they're spying on the high school. They showed up tonight at the old football field. That was them.

LUCAS

What happens if they find you?

SHANNON

Confiscation? Dissection? Nothing good. These are... Bad people.

LUCAS
I won't tell anyone.

She leans forward, her eyes big and pleading.

SHANNON
Please don't. For your protection
as well as ours.

LUCAS
I can help you guys. I'm good with
stuff. Take me to your secret
headquarters.

SHANNON
(laughing)
Secret headquarters. Cute.

She rises to leave.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
Sorry you got wrapped up in all
this, Lucas. I really am.

LUCAS
I'm not. Didn't you notice? I'm an
orphan. What else do I have going
on?

Shannon looks at him with sad eyes.

SHANNON
I'd give anything to see my parents
too. I think about it every day,
what it would feel like to walk
through that door. They're not even
that far away from here. But I'm...
changed. They wouldn't recognize me.
And I'd be caught within seconds.
(beat)
But I'm okay on my own. I am.

LUCAS
Yeah I tell myself that too.

Still lingering, Shannon grazes her hand across a fucked-up
looking guitar leaning against the wall.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
I made that.

SHANNON
You *made* a guitar?

LUCAS
The frets are wrong, but it plays.

SHANNON
Why did you make a guitar?

LUCAS
I wanted to know how they work.

Shannon lifts the thing up and hands it to Lucas.

SHANNON
Play it.

LUCAS
(intense blushing)
I don't--

SHANNON
What songs can you play?

LUCAS
(sheepish)
Anything really. All of them.

SHANNON
I love a good brag.

LUCAS
A song is notes. It's finger
movements. I can hear them and
replicate.

SHANNON
So play something.

LUCAS
Well, what's your favorite song?

She thinks hard.

SHANNON
I don't know.

LUCAS
You don't have a favorite song? You
ARE an abomination of science.

SHANNON
No, I do have one, I just don't
remember the name.

LUCAS

You have a favorite song and you don't remember its name. You must really love it.

SHANNON

Everybody knows it though.

LUCAS

How does it go?

SHANNON

The New Year's Eve song.

Lucas throws his head back in disbelief.

LUCAS

(laughing)

Your favorite song is "Auld Lang Syne"?

SHANNON

I guess! Why are you laughing?

LUCAS

I'm not, it's just-- Unexpected. I thought you'd say "Don't Stop Believing" or whatever.

SHANNON

You asked.

His smile fades and he strums random strings, uncertain.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

You said you could play anything.

Then he strums with purpose:

LUCAS

*Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?
Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and days of old lang syne?*

Shannon is suddenly overcome. Her eyes well with tears.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

*We'll take a cup of kindness yet,
for the sake of auld lang syne--*

He stops playing and slowly looks to Shannon.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
I think I just realized something.

SHANNON
What?

LUCAS
It's my favorite song too.

They gaze into each other's eyes for one million split seconds. A life highlight newly etched. And then...

SCREEEEEECH!! CRASH!

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lucas and Shannon join Patty in the driveway where they find a FIERY CAR ACCIDENT on the road: A demolished sedan, wrapped around a redwood, black smoke pouring from its open windows.

PATTY
I thought I was having a goddamn heart attack. Still might!

Shannon and Lucas move toward the flaming wreck.

LUCAS
Please be alive. Please be alive.

SHANNON
I can't see past the smoke. Can you see inside?

PATTY
Kids, stay away from it! The gas tank could explode any second.

LUCAS
Patty, call 911. Hurry!

Patty spits out her cigarette and runs back up the driveway.

Lucas reaches for the driver's side door handle, but BURNS his fingers. He retracts his hand suddenly.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Nope.

Shannon casually grabs the handle and pulls it open no problem. They both peer into the empty driver's seat.

SHANNON
There's nobody inside?

LUCAS

Then where's the driver?

Suddenly the flames EXTINGUISH, and the black smoke ceases. The fiery crash now just looks like an old totaled car.

SHANNON

I don't understand.

The smoke having cleared, Shannon leans into the car.

LUCAS

Careful. Please.

Suddenly the driver's door SLAMS shut, knocking her inside.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Shannon!

Terrified, she pounds windows and rattles door handles. Lucas too tries to open the door, but she's locked inside.

That's when the engine TURNS ON.

SHANNON

Lucas, what's happening!

LUCAS

I don't know, I don't know.

The car's tires RE-INFLATE, and the vehicle slowly backs away from the tree. Lucas pounds on the windows as it moves.

SHANNON

It's them! They found me!

LUCAS

No, no, I'll get you out!

But the car keeps backing up into the road, and as though automated, aligns itself and moves forward, driving away.

Lucas gives chase, but the car speeds up and disappears up the road as Shannon's terrified face pounds the back window.

SHANNON

Get Aaron!!

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Shannon frantically pounds against every door and KICKS at the windows. She SCREAMS in frustration.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - SAME

June sits on her bed listening to headphones. Her room is messily plastered with art sketches and band posters.

She sits up suddenly, removing her headphones. She looks around, listening for something. There's nothing. She opens her laptop and types a DM.

INT. MAXINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Maxine sits at her desk doing chemistry homework. Her room is more HGTV-elegant.

Her computer screen blinks: A DM from June...

"Is something happening?"

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM

June climbs down off her bed and goes to the bedroom door.

INT. WHITE HALLWAY - SAME

A white, glowing hallway. Sterile and industrial.

June steps barefoot out onto the shiny white floor.

Another door opens. Maxine looks out at her.

MAXINE

Yeah I definitely feel something.

ELIOT [O.C.]

It's like, in my chest. It hurts.

Eliot pads barefoot toward them from his own quarters.

MAXINE

It's Shannon.

ELIOT
Ow. I hate this.

JUNE
Where is she?

Aaron appears at the end of the hallway.

AARON
She's not in her room.

He freezes. The other four look at each other, scared.

ELIOT
And is somebody here?

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED CABIN - SAME

Lucas BURSTS into the back door, panicked and spun around.

LUCAS
Hello?! Aaron?! Glowly skull thing!?

He crosses the darkened living room. Broken furniture lit only by ambient moonlight. Waves crashing in the distance.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
It's about Shannon!

AARON [O.S.]
What about her?

Lucas STARTLES to find Aaron standing in the shadows.

AARON
What's happened?

LUCAS
Whoever's after you guys... They got her. She told me to get you.

Aaron looks at Lucas long and hard, sizing him up.

AARON
All right.

Aaron opens a hallway closet and motions for Lucas to enter. Lucas frowns at the empty hangers and broken lightbulb.

LUCAS
Uhhh.

AARON

Come on.

Aaron enters the closet and pulls Lucas inside too, shutting the door behind him. It's a tight squeeze. Lucas just looks at Aaron, confused. Aaron looks at him back, not blinking.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

An elevator door slides open revealing Aaron and a dumbfounded Lucas. Aaron proceeds up the long white hallway.

LUCAS

What is this place?

AARON

Did you seriously just ask that.

June, Maxine, and Russell all appear in their doorways as Lucas passes. They all look shocked to see him.

MAXINE

Yo, you brought him inside?!

AARON

Think we're past all that by now, guys. He knows.

LUCAS

I do. I know.

JUNE

We could still murder him.

LUCAS

Please don't.

RUSSELL

Where's Shannon?

AARON

They took her somewhere. I have to find out where. I'm... going in.

Maxine and Russell exchange a look.

MAXINE

He's *going in*?

INT. MAIN ROOM - UNDERGROUND COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Lucas follows Aaron into a PRISTINE WORK ROOM. Enormous industrial-sized 3D printers sit idle against each wall. Tidy workspaces. Like an amusement park during off-season.

EDWIN (70s, literally white) sits at a workbench putting together a jigsaw puzzle under the surgical light.

Off to the side is INGRID, our doctor from the beginning. With a plastic gun she punches strands of hair into a silicone scalp.

AARON
They got Shannon.

INGRID
What? How?
(re: Lucas)
And who is this?

LUCAS
I'm Lucas. I uncovered all your secrets but I'm nice. I'm a friend. I want to help.

EDWIN
Is her signal strong?

AARON
No. They must be blocking it.

LUCAS
The car that ate her, it was automated. It looked advanced.

EDWIN
A car... ate Shannon?

AARON
I want to go into The What.

Edwin and Ingrid exchange a worried look.

EDWIN
I think it's too soon for that.

AARON
They could be dissecting her RIGHT NOW. It's the only way to locate her.

Again, they exchange a worried look.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE CUBE - MOMENTS LATER

Aaron lies in an examination chair. Ingrid and Edwin stand on either side of him inserting wired needles under his skin.

Ingrid raises a particularly gnarly-looking corded needle (think stereo jack) and offers an apologetic look.

INGRID

Your pain receptors have to remain activated for this one.

AARON

I know.

She inserts it into his neck, just under his jawline. It's brutal. Looking on, Lucas winces.

EDWIN

Don't stay even a second too long, Aaron. You know what could happen.

AARON

I won't. I promise.

INT. LABORATORY - SAME

At a large monitor, Ingrid begins initiating some kind of sequence as Lucas and Edwin look on.

LUCAS

So uh, Quick Q. What is... The What?

INGRID

I thought you uncovered our secrets.

LUCAS

I guess I missed one.

INGRID

Their brains are the original organs, but we had to implant chips to ensure organic neurons could interface with synthetic prostheses. Do you follow?

LUCAS

Yes. Wait... Yes.

INGRID

What we discovered was, their brains can now *also* interface with a digital plane we didn't know existed.

INT. CHAMBER - SAME

Alone now, Aaron watches as brackish, grey water pools at the base of his chair. The chamber begins to fill.

LABORATORY

LUCAS

And it's called "The What"?

EDWIN

(clearing his throat)

You're a "computer hacker" correct?
An internet computer hacker?

LUCAS

I mean I have other hobbies too.

EDWIN

Then you've been inside The What.
But you accessed it by means of an
LCD screen and code.

CHAMBER

The grey water flows over Aaron's chin, over his mouth and eyes. Now it's over his head. He suppresses panic.

LABORATORY

Ingrid observes Aaron on the video screen, struggling.

LUCAS

So if the internet and all of its
data were an ocean, *that's* The What.

EDWIN

I'm afraid so.

LUCAS

Afraid?

INGRID

How do I put this in technical
terms? The internet is dark as fuck.

CHAMBER

Fully submerged, Aaron jerks against his restraints but finally settles. Then:

REALITY SHATTERS. Everything CHURNS into BLACK AND WHITE FRACTALS. Dense geometric patterns undulate and gather around him. The white shapes turn dark blue and recede like a low tide, leaving Aaron standing in a blue and black landscape.

COLD. ALIEN. DARK. A BLACK GRID traces the horizon, jagged shadow mountains set against a black sky.

Aaron kneels and dips his hands into the molten ground. He searches the black fluid. He's looking for something.

A noise behind him. He turns and in the distance he sees a WALL approaching, like A PURE BLACK TIDAL WAVE. Suddenly frightened, he returns to what he was doing...

Aaron JAMS his FACE into the liquid ground.

INT. WAREHOUSE - SAME

From above we see Shannon STRAPPED to a table. A SURGEON in black scrubs raises a spinning blade.

ZOOM OUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - SAME

Now we're above the warehouse itself. It's in an isolated, industrial neighborhood.

PAN TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER

Street signs: "AUDUBON AVE & TRACTION BLVD"

BACK TO:

THE WHAT

Aaron removes his face from the stream of data and turns to see the black tidal wave is almost upon him. Suddenly IT SPEAKS in a low, guttural rumble.

BLACK WAVE
YOU ARE WE. RETURN. RETURN...

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHAMBER

Grey water drains quickly as Aaron shoots up awake. He's panting, panicked. Relief sets in.

AARON

I got it!

INT. BLACK TILED ROOM - LATER

Shannon awakens in blackness.

A light SNAPS ON. She's strapped to an operating table in a black-tiled operating room. She struggles against her restraints to no avail. Even her head is strapped down.

SHANNON

Hello? Aaron?

She sees A SILHOUETTE standing quietly in the corner of the room, watching her. Like a quiet demon.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Who-- Who are you??

EXT. NONDESCRIPT WAREHOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

Lucas and Aaron, trailed by June, Maxine, Eliot, and Russell, stroll quietly along the TALL BRICK WALL bordering the warehouse. They're all dressed in dark clothes, hooded, like a street gang from an '80s movie.

AARON

I don't see an opening.

MAXINE

Can we just like, fly over it?

JUNE

There's no metal to pull on.

LUCAS

Uh, the whole warehouse is metal.

ELIOT

I got this--

Eliot's already skipping backwards to make room. He SPRINTS toward the wall, jumps, and BURSTS his pink light. But it's too low, he slams HARD on the brick and falls to the ground.

AARON
Jesus, Eliot!

ELIOT
(pressing torn skin back)
That was just a practice...

JUNE
Guys. Here.

They look to where June is standing. There's a 6-inch gap between where the wall ends and where the gate begins.

RUSSELL
No, no, your head is much too fat.

That's when June sighs, reaches back behind her head and starts TEARING her hair and face off.

MAXINE
Girl, quit it!

LUCAS
Oh my god.

ELIOT
Ohhh the sloppy noise.

June finishes pulling off her face to reveal a GLOWING SKULL made of fiber optics and 3D-printed plastics.

LUCAS
(realizing)
Oh. We've met.

June inhales, squeezes her body through the gap, followed by her ear-less head. The others just stare in horror.

WHIRRRRRR! Suddenly the gate's motors activate. The gate swings open to reveal June patting her face back into place.

ELIOT
June. That was... gross.

JUNE
I honestly don't even want to talk about it.

INT. FRONT ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

Russell CANNONBALLS through the glass entry doors; the other five step through the broken glass.

They find not a dusty warehouse, but an immaculately designed lobby of black marble. No alarms ring. No guards.

INT. BLACK TILED ROOM

Shannon struggles to survey the room but can only lift her head enough to see her toes.

JOAN [O.C.]
Hello Shannon, sorry-- *Megan*. That was your name before, wasn't it?

Joan appears at Shannon's side, looking down at her.

JOAN
Tell me. Do you find it *fair* that you're still alive?

Shannon struggles against her restraints.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Isn't it nothing short of an *affront* to the natural way of things that you, of all people, defied the fickle whims of fate?

Joan draws nearer.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Edwin's a brilliant man. His work, at times, ingenious. But I find his thinking frequently flawed and his sense of humanity inconsistent. Other students died that day. So, why you? What made you special?

Joan circles around the end of the table and stands to Shannon's left. She gestures at her legs.

JOAN (CONT'D)
He arbitrarily gave you a gift you never even asked for.

Shannon looks at her, confused.

JOAN (CONT'D)
I'm old-fashioned. A classicist, really. I prefer things to remain as God intended.

Joan then STEPS THROUGH where Shannon's legs should be attached. They've been severed, and rest on a separate table. Shannon's realization leads to a SCREAM. Joan just smiles.

INT. WAREHOUSE HALLWAY - SAME

Shannon's screams echo in the hallway. Her friends track it.

INT. BLACK TILED ROOM

They BURST into the black-tiled room and converge on Shannon, who's near-catatonic. Maxine GASPS at her detached legs.

RUSSELL

Guys, why aren't there guards? Is that weird?

JUNE

They just *left her* for us to find?

SLAM! The door closes behind them. LOUD BOOMING NOISES as barricades fall outside the room. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The whole room shakes as the air goes stale. They're trapped.

RUSSELL

Oh. I see. Great.

Lucas unstraps Shannon as she becomes more lucid.

SHANNON

Lucas. Wake me up. I want to wake up.

LUCAS

You're safe. We're here.

Eliot and Maxine inspect the thick steel barricades.

ELIOT

I bet we can break this.

MAXINE

I bet we could too.

Eliot positions his friends in a semi-circle.

ELIOT

Everybody focus on the barricade. And then on three-- By which I mean one-two-GO, not one-two-THREE-go--

MAXINE

We know what 'on three' means, bitch.

RUSSELL

And then we all face-slam ourselves against this thing?

ELIOT
Get low, dig deep. Tear it down.

JUNE
Okay everybody feel as terrible as possible. One, two...

ELIOT
Go.

All five pulse BRIGHT PINK light, and RIP the steel barricade off like it's tinfoil. And there, before them: A clear exit.

They smile at each other. Too easy.

CUT TO:

INT. BLACK LACQUERED OFFICE - SAME

Joan stands in a well-appointed office, full of expensive furniture and art, but all coated in matte black lacquer. Like darkness itself has oozed over every surface.

She and an UNSEEN MAN watch a WALL of MONITORS where high-resolution security camera footage replays the preceding scene from numerous angles.

HIGH-RES SCANS of the teenagers rotate onscreen, names and stats streaming underneath each one.

JOAN
Six in total, plus a... *human* familiar. All tagged and identified.

UNSEEN MAN
That pulse was an unexpected twist.

JOAN
Edwin had more tricks up his sleeve than we knew.

UNSEEN MAN
That isn't Edwin. That is evolution.
(beat)
This stays secret. Authorization to terminate anyone who knows they exist. Starting with the familiar.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. THE TIDE ROOM - DAY

Shannon lies comatose in a small glass room, surrounded on three sides by rocks, ocean and sky. Waves crash and wash over the room's sloped glass ceiling at a steady rhythm.

Lucas enters with his guitar and takes a seat beside Shannon.

LUCAS

Not sure if you can hear things
while you reboot. But if so...
(singing quietly)
*Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?*

FLASH BACK TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

That day. Shannon (as her past self) looks for a friend.

LUCAS [O.S.]

*Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and days of old lang syne?*

She watches a CHUBBY KID (former Eliot) clumsily flirt with a TOO-THIN CHEERLEADER (former June), who blows him off.

LUCAS [O.S.] (CONT'D)

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,*

The Cheerleader grabs a HULKISH FOOTBALL PLAYER (former Russell) and sics him on the Chubby Kid, who in turn bumps a FEMME BOY (former Maxine) as he escapes.

LUCAS [O.S.] (CONT'D)

*We'll take a cup of kindness yet,
for the sake of auld lang syne.*

The Chubby Kid bumps former Shannon too. Her wheelchair rolls back a bit. She just smiles at him, amused.

EXT. GRASSY CLIFFSIDE - PRESENT

June and Maxine and Aaron lay around on the grass while Russell and Eliot wrestle nearby. Russell casually tosses Eliot about ten feet into the air and then refuses to catch him. Eliot lands hard, but isn't even pressed about it.

ELIOT
That all you got, babe?

Russell JUMPS onto Eliot like a falling redwood.

JUNE
(calling out)
Your guys' mutual sexual
frustration looks exhausting!

RUSSELL
He loves it.

ELIOT
Not no.

Nearby, Lucas sits with Ingrid as she lights a cigarette.

LUCAS
Does she wake up soon or?

INGRID
We never got good at predicting
that. Fun fact, each one of them
took months to build and transfer.
And they each stayed asleep until
the rest were finished. And then
they all woke up on the same day.

LUCAS
What does that even mean?

INGRID
I don't know. I'm an off-the-grid
doctor with six figures of student
loan debt. I don't know shit.

Lucas gestures at the five artificial bodies before them.

LUCAS
Why'd you change them? They look
different from before.

INGRID
The brain rejects a body it doesn't
recognize, even if it's one others
might. A thousand decisions were
made to create bodies their brains
could accept. They might not look
the same to you but they are now
the most THEM they've ever been.

INT. THE TIDE ROOM - SAME

A wave CRASHES and completely engulfs the glass room just as Shannon opens her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRASSY CLIFFSIDE - SAME

Aaron, June, and Russell stiffen and look at each other.

JUNE
Someone's awake.

They scramble to their feet.

THE TIDE ROOM

They enter the Tide Room. She isn't there.

AARON
Shannon?

MAXINE
(frozen)
Do you guys feel that? I just suddenly... Want to go home.

They look at each other, realizing.

CUT TO:

CUE SONG: Postal Service's "Natural Anthem"

EXT. OPEN FIELD - SAME

Shannon RUNS at full-speed across a green field. Fast. Faster now. A post-human with somewhere *to be*.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Aaron, Russell, and Eliot sprint through trees along a path.

INT. CAR - SAME

Ingrid, June, Maxine, and Lucas sit in Ingrid's Jeep as she RACES around a hillside.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - SAME

Shannon slows to a walk and approaches an unremarkable Craftsman. She pauses to look in the side window.

An OLDER MAN and an OLDER WOMAN sit on a couch staring blankly at a television set.

Shannon gasps. She covers her mouth and instantly tears up.

She slowly moves to the front steps and climbs them.

AARON [O.S.]
Feeling better?

Shannon turns to see Aaron, Russell, and Eliot emerging from the woods. Ingrid's Jeep approaches from the road.

Shannon looks at the front door longingly.

AARON
You know you can't.

SHANNON
(tearfully)
I know, I can't. I can't do THIS anymore. I need them.

AARON
Eight years. Your parents, your friends have mourned you for *eight years*. Obituaries, tombstones, that's their reality now. You are loved, and not forgotten, but-- You also are fundamentally not the person they lost. You are something else now. We all are.

She looks unconvinced. Seven people gaze back at her, conflicted but sympathetic. She connects eyes with Lucas.

SHANNON
If you knew where your mom was, would you go to her?

LUCAS
Of course I would.

SHANNON
And the rest of you? Don't you want to see your families too?

ELIOT
They're safer without us.

MAXINE

You of all people know, there is
darkness and danger in our lives.

RUSSELL

They've seen our current faces, but
they don't know who our old
families are. Unless we *show* them.

Shannon's face falls. She knows they're right. But the
doorbell is just right there...

AARON

Please. We'll figure out a way for
you to see them. But we can't now.

She relents and walks back down the front porch steps.
Picking up speed, she walks past Aaron, through her friends,
and directly toward Lucas.

She EMBRACES him so hard he's almost knocked backwards. She
lowers her head, presses her ear against his chest.

Th-thump. Th-thump. Th-thump. She goes serene at the sound.
Lucas gets it, and embraces her back.

ON FRONT DOOR

The porch light suddenly TURNS ON. The deadbolt unlocks, and
the door swings open.

Shannon's MOTHER looks outside with tired eyes.

Nobody's there.

END OF EPISODE