

THE HENCHMAN

Written by

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EXT. ISOLATED DESERT MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Out in the bright yellow and brown middle of nowhere (maybe Texas?), a ten foot tall archway covered in electrical wires and circuit boards stands on a desert hillside.

There's a loud electrical hum, and the space in the archway ripples and shifts strangely; we can suddenly hear the sounds of a busy city street, police sirens, gunshots, and then-

A van comes flying through the archway portal, falling onto its side with a crash, and sliding to a stop in the dirt.

A man, 30s, in a **COPPER** face-mask, bursts out of the bullet riddled driver's side door, which falls off into onto the ground with a clatter.

COPPER

I'm so sick of this superhero shit!

The portal arch sparks and then *bursts into flame* behind him.

COPPER (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

He stares at the burning arch, climbing out and standing on the side of the flipped van, looking around, totally disoriented and confused.

There's a groan of pain from in the van, and Copper kneels down, pulling up **BRONZE**, from the door, another masked goon, covered in his own blood after being shot several times.

BRONZE

What- *Where are we?*

COPPER

You're asking the wrong guy.

Copper lays Bronze down on the side of the flipped van as he tries to tend to the man's injuries, but it looks bad.

BRONZE

Those people were *melting*, man-
He fucking melted them alive!

COPPER

Stay cool, we're out of there now-

The back doors of the van *burst open*, and **MR. GALLIUM** comes staggering out into the desert in a haze of smoke.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Ah fuck, there he is.

The bulky black, orange and purple costume is a mix of a HAZ-MAT radiation suit and the bizarre "plague doctors" of the 1600s. It's part armor, part scientific utility, with multiple jury-rigged devices attached at odd angles.

It's currently *smoking and sizzling and minorly on fire* as Mr. Gallium stumbles out of the back of the van.

Mr. Gallium pitches forward and goes crashing to the dirt, the plants around him wilting and curling and turning black.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Jesus.

Professor Johan IMMELMAN emerges from the truck, looking like the world's most grizzled and frightening college professor. He wears some kind of big cool looking sci-fi device like a backpack, and it swings back and forth clumsily.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Hey! What happened! Where are we?

Immelman ignores him as he rushes to Mr. Gallium's side, turning over the super-villain, releasing several valves on the armor. Jets of steam and sparks shoot off various parts, Mr. Gallium twitching but mostly motionless.

Bronze has lost a lot of blood. He's not looking good.

BRONZE

What's h- h- happening-

COPPER

Don't worry, I'll figure it out.

Copper hops down off the van, going to Professor Immelman, who has gone over to see if the burning arch is salvageable.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Hey! Uh, excuse me! What is that thing? How did we get here?

Immelman's demeanor is surprisingly cheery.

IMMELMAN

Teleportation my friend! A collaboration between Mr. Gallium and myself-

COPPER

Can you turn it back on? I mean, how do we get out of here? Where even *is* this, we were in New York-

IMMELMAN

I can't be certain. Mr. Gallium chose this location, so Mr. Gallium must have business here.

COPPER

Yeah well I just saw Mr. Gallium get his shit pushed in with his own super-weapon by The Miracle, and newsflash: Mr. Gallium ain't doin so hot, Mr. Gallium's dead!

Mr. Gallium weakly tries to turn over, and fails pathetically, like a flipped tortoise.

IMMELMAN

Not dead. Not yet.

Copper takes off his Copper mask, and tosses it away. It's here we get a good look at his face; bright, intelligent eyes set deep in rugged, dangerous looking features.

Well, usually dangerous. Not right now. His voice keeps cracking as he tries to reign his panic in, following Immelman around like a yappy little dog begging for treats.

COPPER

What the fuck was that? I was just supposed to drive the van, Bretniev said this was a transpo job, a transpo job! I'm just a driver, and I didn't hear nothing about no fucking 600 trigger happy cops and was *that the national guard?* *What in the fuck!?*

IMMELMAN

Mr. Gallium is misunderstood. Society doesn't allow for genius of his magnitude to go unchallenged. Institutions are rarely a friend to true scientific progress-

COPPER

That psycho set off a bomb! HE MELTED TWO BLOCKS OF NEW YORK!

Immelman just looks at him, unimpressed. Bronze coughs, spitting more blood, and Copper refocuses.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I know you're one of Mr. Gallium's guys, but me and my friend, we're just knockaround guys. He needs help. He's dying, man.

Immelman points about a hundred feet away, where there's a little rickety run down shed.

IMMELMAN

Gallium probably has a whole hidden base out here. There's likely something you can use in there.

Immelman hands Copper something. It's a Colt Navy revolver, an antique that looks like it's from a cowboy movie.

IMMELMAN (CONT'D)

Take this.

COPPER

What am I supposed to do with this, sell it at an auction?

IMMELMAN

You stay here. I'll be back with help in just a moment!

Immelman turns away, and Copper sees that there's a bullet-hole in his teleportation backpack device.

COPPER

Hey, wait, your thing is-

Immelman activates his teleporter and it **BLOWS HIM IN HALF**, spraying Copper with blood and gore!

Copper stands, eyes wide, as little bits of Immelman rain down, splattering around him like fat red rain drops.

COPPER (CONT'D)

AHHHHH.

Copper drops, frantically wiping his eyes and spitting, trying to get pieces of Immelman out of his mouth.

BRONZE

(weakly)

What happened? What was that?

Copper violently shakes his head, snapping himself out of it.

COPPER

Hold on Sergei, I'm coming!

Copper takes off running towards the shed. Sprinting. We follow him, kicking up dust out in the middle of nowhere.

He gets to the shed, and yanks on the door again and again, before he can get it open. And inside...

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

It's some sort of park maintenance shed. Landscaping tools. Dust. Spiders. No secret super-villain shit. Nothing useful at all. Except maybe- Copper grabs some duct tape.

COPPER

BRONZE! HOLD ON SERGEI, I'M COMING

EXT. ISOLATED DESERT MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Copper bursts out of the shed, running at full speed. It's weirdly quiet out here now, just the sound of Copper panting and his footsteps.

He slides up next to Bronze, who's very pale.

BRONZE

Ja- Jake- what are you going to do?

Bronze dies.

Copper checks his heartbeat. His hand comes away covered in blood. He puts his hands on his head, trying to figure out what to do, and drawing a blank.

He looks around. Nothing in every direction, other than the one little shack. The burning archway has caused a long black tendril of smoke that reaches up into the sky.

Absentmindedly, Copper takes out an Alcoholics Anonymous chip from his pocket, and begins rolling it over his knuckles, a nervous tic.

A beat, then a noise from behind him. He turns to see...

Mr. Gallium is standing again, haltingly walking in the other direction, jerky and stiff.

COPPER

(beat)

Hey. Um- Gallium, Mr. Gallium.

Mr. Gallium doesn't respond. Copper hesitates, then walks after him, keeping a good distance.

COPPER (CONT'D)
I'm Jake, I'm one of Bretniev's
guys. You, uh-
(remembers)
You assigned me the name Copper, I
think? I'm Copper.
(no response)
What do we- what do we do now?

Mr. Gallium is still haltingly walking. He stumbles a little, accidentally colliding with a bush and getting tripped up. Copper gets closer.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Why did you take us way out here?
(looks around)
And where is "here," exactly?

Mr. Gallium stops, standing still, swaying a little bit. Copper edges closer, wary, but curious.

Mr. Gallium spins, clawing at his helmet, and then turns and goes crashing down into the bush. Mr. Gallium lays there, motionless, seemingly dead.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Great.

There's a bizarre chirping noise coming from under Mr. Gallium, or maybe, from inside him. Copper carefully comes close, and sees...

...Mr. Gallium has fallen on a roadrunner, which is screeching and flapping, pinned beneath his body. Copper looks around, and then kneels, and carefully, with some effort, lifts Mr. Gallium off the bird.

The roadrunner skitters off into the desert. Copper watches it go, and then is suddenly *GRABBED* by Mr. Gallium.

MR. GALLIUM
(distorted)
Help me.

Copper stares down at the faceless helmet. He tries to free himself, but can't. Tries again, can't.

Mr. Gallium's hand drops, weakly.

Copper stands. Looks around. Burning arch. Miles of desert in all directions. Flipped van. Dead friend.

Copper makes a choice. We hear...

THE SOUND OF A
RATTLING
WHEEL...

And see an extreme wide of Copper, pushing along Mr. Gallium, who he's put in a wheelbarrow from the shed, bouncing and bumping in the blazing heat.

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EXT. HIGH DESERT - LATER

Onwards they go, through dunes and cactuses, through burnt out bushes and stretches of flat nothing, Copper pushing Mr. Gallium along, Mr. Gallium still motionless.

Copper sweats. Tosses away his jacket. Unbuttons his shirt. Squints against the sun. Has it been one mile or twenty?

COPPER

This is...a bad situation. But my philosophy, in life, is that there's options. Sometimes you gotta wait, you gotta play the game, you gotta try every angle, but eventually, you'll find some choices you like. Like me, see, I moved through life like water, I play every situation, I game everything out and I- I- okay, I end up out here.

Copper glances up, and notices a vulture coasting high in the sky above him. Huh. They really do that.

COPPER (CONT'D)

And this ain't great.

(beat)

Okay, so maybe I'm not the best example of my philosophy.

The wheelbarrow rattles along. After a beat, Copper stops to rest, and look around.

COPPER (CONT'D)

(casual)

Hey, Mr. Gallium. Why'd you do it?
Why did you kill all those people?

Mr. Gallium doesn't respond. Maybe unconscious. Maybe dead. A little gauge on the armor has started beeping.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Hey. Hello. Hey.

He snaps. Mr. Gallium's motionless. He claps his hands, and Mr. Gallium stirs.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Fantastic. You know, I was-

Mr. Gallium hears the toot of a car horn, not too far away. He stops dead, his ears perking up, and looks around.

COPPER (CONT'D)
See? What'd I tell you? Options.

EXT. RANGER STATION CABIN

At the end of an isolated dirt road in the middle of nowhere sits a ranger station cabin, with one truck parked out front.

The **PARK RANGER**, mid 40s, is bringing in groceries from the back of the truck, taking trips. As she goes in, we see a brief glimpse of a flatscreen TV, showing footage of some kind of disaster in New York City.

"DEATH TOLL RISES PAST TWO HUNDRED." She turns the sound up the TV, glancing back as she walks out to the truck, when-

There's a click and the ranger stops dead in her tracks...as we realize there's a gun to the back of her head.

It's Copper, ancient revolver cocked.

COPPER
You ever seen your own brain?

The ranger doesn't respond.

COPPER (CONT'D)
You ever seen your brain before?

RANGER
No- no-

COPPER
You are one decision away from
having it come flying out your
forehead. There a gun in the car?

RANGER

No- they don't give us guns-

Copper, looking at his ancient pistol, sighs in relief.

COPPER

Okay back up, slowly-

There's a sudden clattering noise, and both Copper and the Ranger turn to see that Mr. Gallium has fallen out of the wheelbarrow and now leans heavily against the cabin.

MR. GALLIUM

(distorted)

Shoot her.

Upon seeing Mr. Gallium the ranger nearly screams, her eyes bugging huge in recognition and terror.

RANGER

*Please please please Mr. Gallium I
didn't see anything-*

COPPER

*HEY SHUT THE FUCK UP. You think
you'd be the first cop I've killed?*

(to Gallium)

I don't want to waste the bullet.
Car keys, cell phone, now.

The ranger hands them over.

Copper takes the cuffs off the ranger's belt and cuffs her hands, pushing her towards a door to the dug out cellar under the cabin.

He flings it open and shoves the ranger in so violently she falls, landing hard, screaming in pain. He slams the door closed, and bars the latch, just as the beeping alarm on Mr. Gallium's armor begins screeching....

And Mr. Gallium *lights on fire*. Like, completely on fire. And then just stands there burning.

Copper yelps and rushes inside, moments later bursting back out with a fire extinguisher, and blasts Mr. Gallium, which has an instantaneous and bizarre effect:

The Mr. Gallium armor seems to butterfly open, unzipping and ejaculating a woman out of it, the armor falling away like a dead husk.

The woman, **MR. GALLIUM**, is mid 30s, wiry and wild eyed, with a massive tangle of brown hair wrapped into a bun. She wears fitness shorts and a loose tank-top.

COPPER (CONT'D)

It...it's a woman? You're- female.

She collapses into the sand, crawling towards the door of the cabin as Copper finishes putting out the burning armor.

Mr. Gallium doesn't look good. She's pallid, covered in sweat, blood dripping out of her mouth and nose, eyes sunken and bloodshot, shaking badly.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Hey, slow down. Wait a second.

INT. RANGER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

In the cabin, Mr. Gallium sits in the center of the floor, swaying slightly, as Copper wraps a blanket around her. Her smoking helmet sits on the floor next to her.

When she looks up at him, Copper twitches backwards: Her eyes are bizarre, orange where they should be white with long rectangular pupils like a goat's.

COPPER

Your eyes. Are you-

Mr. Gallium lurches forward and vomits. Whatever comes out of her is *corrosive*, and molten hot, and the vomit immediately begins burning a hole in the floor of the cabin.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Jesus, what's happening to you?

Mr. Gallium flops forward, dry heaving, unable to speak. Copper stands, going to the sink and turning on the coffee maker, when he notices the TV.

It's a big picture of the woman sitting on the floor.

Under it is the headline: **MR. GALLIUM'S IDENTITY REVEALED:**
DR. ELANA CRISTENSON. Three pundits are talking animatedly.

Copper unmutes the TV.

PUNDIT

-put any kind of label on it,
 "super-villain," "gimmicked
 criminal," I say we take the sauce
 off, call her for what she is: a
 terrorist, a murderer, we can't let
 these masks and costumes change the
 way we talk about-

Copper changes the channel. CNN. More live coverage from
 some sort of massive disaster. The reporters talk about the
 deaths. The ticker headlines read:

DEATH TOLL STILL RISING AS RESPONDERS SORT THROUGH WRECKAGE.

COPPER

...Two hundred and forty people...

Mr. Gallium doesn't respond. Now on TV the headlines:

ARMOR WHICH GRANTS NEAR INVULNERABILITY AND HEAT CONTROL and
TOXIC HUMAN NUCLEAR BATTERY. Copper tries to pull it
 together, talking more to himself than to her at this point.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I didn't wake up expecting to
 be...here. Right? But I guess
 those people didn't wake up
 expecting to be...dead, so I got
 off easy...

Mr. Gallium says nothing. On television they show more
 pictures of her at younger ages, getting diplomas, archival
 footage of her in a lab-coat being interviewed.

COPPER (CONT'D)

They got your real name, did they
 have that before?

Mr. Gallium doesn't react. The headline is **"FORMER HARVARD
 PROFESSORS DESCRIBE CRISTENSON AS 'UNHINGED,' DELUSIONAL."**

Copper looks back at her. She's just staring at the floor,
 spitting, trying to stay upright, her head lolling loosely.

COPPER (CONT'D)

You've done this shit with the
 radiation bombs, what, four times,
 five? And Miracle's stopped you
 every time, right?

Mr. Gallium says nothing. Copper notices a smell, and then
 looks to see a puddle of urine growing under her.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Shit, are you- you're pissing? Why
are you doing that? Stop doing
that, don't do that-

MR. GALLIUM
I'm sick.

Her speaking startles him; Copper seems to remember who he's talking to. On TV they're showing archival helicopter footage of Mr. Gallium, in her armor, throwing some kind of wave of fire at police officers.

Copper looks from the super-villain on the TV to the dying woman on the floor.

COPPER
Yeah. Sick, right.

There's a clattering noise from beneath the floorboards. Uh oh. Sounds like the ranger is moving around down there.

Copper yells down at her.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Don't do anything stupid down
there!

He quickly squats next to Mr. Gallium, not touching her. He offers her a towel, which she takes, limply. He helps her up into a chair at the kitchen table.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Here, come on, sit up-

MR. GALLIUM
(weakly)
I don't recognize you.

COPPER
I'm not one of your guys, I'm one
of Bretniev's guys. He made us put
on all your- you know, shit,
uniform or whatever this is.

MR. GALLIUM
Where's Dr. Immelman?

COPPER
Dead. Tried to use his- teleporter
thingie- and he just fucking-

Copper pantomimes exploding.

MR. GALLIUM
I warned him that might happen.
(beat)
You're a killer?

COPPER
No.

MR. GALLIUM
You told the ranger-

COPPER
When you want a certain response
from someone, sometimes you say
things that aren't entirely true.

Copper tries to decelerate, going back to the TV, which is
now showing the costumed superhero **THE MIRACLE**.

COPPER (CONT'D)
I never seen the Miracle in person
before, he's so fast just like
WHAM, POW, like being in a car
wreck. That guy is a superhero?
He's terrifying.

Mr. Gallium picks up her helmet, looking at it.

COPPER (CONT'D)
He made it so you got hit with your
own bomb, huh, that's why-

MR. GALLIUM
It's not a bomb.

COPPER
What?

MR. GALLIUM
My devices aren't bombs.

COPPER
No, they- I mean, if they're not
bombs...what are they?

BANG a rifle shot comes up *through the floor*, right next to
Copper's foot, striking the chair Mr. Gallium sits in. She
violently tumbles to the floor.

Copper leaps up onto the kitchen counter like the floor is
hot lava. He waits. There's shuffling from the basement.

COPPER (CONT'D)
"They don't give us guns," huh?

RANGER (O.S.)
(muffled)

*When you want a certain response from someone, sometimes you
say things that aren't entirely true.*

COPPER
Oh *real* funny-

Another rifle shot blasts through RIGHT NEXT TO HIM. Copper goes quiet, shifting. Mr. Gallium starts to stand up, and Copper frantically pantomimes "DON'T MOVE."

Mr. Gallium acknowledges and then ignores him, continuing to shakily try to stand. BLAM! A bullet comes up so close to her it passes through her hair. Copper flinches. Mr. Gallium doesn't.

Copper quickly crawls across the counter to grab a broom leaning against the wall, listening carefully to the sound of the ranger scuffling around below.

Mr. Gallium takes a step and a bullet comes up through the floor and through the table she's leaning on. Again, no reaction from Mr. Gallium.

Copper thinks, and listens: the ranger is reloading. He notices the coffee is at a boil, and gently picks it up.

He then carefully steps from the counter to the table, Mr. Gallium watching him disinterestedly.

He pantomimes "don't move." Not clear if she gives a shit about their current situation.

He takes the broom, and pushes down a floorboard to his right. It creaks- *blam!* There's the rifle shot- Copper *dumps the boiling pot of coffee down through the floor boards-*

There's an agonized SCREAM from beneath them. Copper *rips* the landline phone off the wall, then quickly goes and picks up the laptop on the table and *snaps it over his knee.*

Blam! Another shot through the floor, and more screaming.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Come on!

Copper grabs Mr. Gallium by the arm, dragging her along.

EXT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Copper comes bursting out of the cabin, dragging Mr. Gallium. There's another rifle shot from inside.

Copper takes a moment to catch his breath, and sees Mr. Gallium, holding her helmet under one arm, watching him.

MR. GALLIUM

You're not as stupid as you look.

COPPER

What is that, a joke? Look at this get-up you have me wearing! No one is as stupid as I look.

MR. GALLIUM

Are you my friend or my enemy?

COPPER

Are those the only two choices?

(beat)

Friend, I'm your friend, then.

There's a muffled groan of pain from inside the cabin.

MR. GALLIUM

Go back in and kill her.

COPPER

(thinks)

No, no way. She's fucked up, sure, she's not coming out to get us, so we shouldn't go in there to get her. Reality check: She's got a high powered rifle, I've got an antique, you can barely walk. We go toe to toe with anyone, there's a chance it turns into a mess, something we can't afford.

(beat)

That okay?

(tries it out)

Boss?

Mr. Gallium is unreadable.

COPPER (CONT'D)

You don't have your fancy armor anymore. Everybody makes mistakes. So you made a mistake. If I could turn back time for you I would-

MR. GALLIUM

I didn't make a mistake.

COPPER

Well, if this was your plan, then-

MR. GALLIUM
I made a minor miscalculation.

COPPER
Okay, sure.

MR. GALLIUM
The device was using Selenium, the melting point was too high.

COPPER
Right, but like, who cares about that, right now, right? Let's focus on what's next-

MR. GALLIUM
The Miracle ruined everything, he always ruins everything. I was trying to get Francium, and I succeeded-

COPPER
But you know that you lost, right?

There's a dead beat.

COPPER (CONT'D)
He beat you. What we're doing right now, it isn't some grand revenge plan, this is survival. You're sick, you're real sick. You need an exit strategy. You *lost*.

Mr. Gallium is just staring at him. Copper begins to get the feeling he might be in danger, and subconsciously touches the gun tucked into the back of his pants.

She stumbles back, dizzy, and then steadies herself. She seems lost in thought for a moment, and then, for the first time, speaks in a calm, confident, quiet voice.

At first, she sounds very sane. At first.

MR. GALLIUM
You know Listerine?

COPPER
(beat)
What?

MR. GALLIUM
Listerine, mouth wash? It was an antiseptic.
(MORE)

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

They sold it to clean floors. But that wasn't working, so they changed the marketing.

COPPER

(totally confused)

What are you talking about-

MR. GALLIUM

They invented the concept of mouth wash not from a medical need, but as a marketing gimmick. Invented it and made billions of dollars, and you know what? The first guy they tested it on *died*. A man died. To create Listerine, a product no one needs. I invented Kim-A4. The biggest breakthrough in human history. I created something that can turn people into gods. Not Listerine. This is real. And I've been wronged. You understand that, wronged? At the lab they said I was eccentric, "eccentric" really like I don't know what that means? Eccentric is what they call you when they're scared of you, but they wanna laugh about it. Who's laughing? Oh, no, now they cry. Wow it's such a big tragedy! "You don't have the numbers, Elana!" They tell me "no human testing" but I knew, and I proved it. And then, what, no, I broke the law? The law. I'm punished, why, cause some people died? Oh some people died, so what, get real, there are going to be mistakes, people die every day. Somebody died for fucking Listerine! "Blood on my hands," right? The blood is on the hands of the people who try to stop me, that's why people die! They act so offended, oh everyone's so offended. My device works! It works! I'm living proof! It works! This isn't a game, it's not "win or lose," I'm not operating on some short perfect timeline. You calling me a loser, a LOSER? I'm a visionary! Oh I'm so bad cause people get hurt, like no one's ever been hurt before.

(MORE)

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

Little children die in mines for diamonds for some woman's necklace, people die on rides at amusement parks, but they don't close the mines, they don't shut down the amusement parks! But ohhh, not me! I offer the human race hope, I offer people a real future, real change, but not me, I'm a criminal! Well I refuse to be the exception, the persecuted exception! They think I'm unstable? I'm **undeniable**. And it's not over til I say it's over. There will be more tests, I will perfect the process. It will not end. And those who have defied me will suffer for their ignorance, they will suffer so they remember, so they never forget! I will remind the doubters again and again and on and on and never done until I SAY! *My world, this is MY WORLD and nobody tells me what's right and wrong, I CHOOSE WHAT'S REAL, I DO NOT LOSE, there will be more tests, if they die they die, if they die they die, yes, more tests, I DID NOT "LOSE" BECAUSE IT'S NOT OVER, IT'S NEVER OVER, IT WILL NOT END, IT WILL NOT END, IT WILL NOT END, I WILL NOT BE DESTROYED, I RISE AGAIN, AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN! I will walk across a sea of bodies if I have to, and never stop! There will be more tests! There must be more tests! There will be more tes-*

Mr. Gallium shaking and spitting like a mad dog, stumbles, clutching her chest, and then vomits up more radioactive waste as she falls to her hands and knees.

Copper, eyes wide, realizes he's been holding his breath, and exhales deeply, staring at Mr. Gallium, who's rocking, on her knees, swaying in the wind, as the dirt sizzles and burns from her bile.

"Misunderstood," wasn't that what Immelman had said?

"Misunderstood" about fucking **what**, exactly.

Any notion of Mr. Gallium being some meek waifish scientist is burnt into dust. She's the sort of crazy it's not safe to be in the same city with.

Kneeling there, she looks like something from hell. Real hell, not some religious fantasy. The kind of hell you see people create when they lose touch completely.

She's muttering something, quietly, as she pulls out loose chunks of her own hair...which appears to be falling out.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

*More tests...there will be more
tests...just a few more and they'll
see...They'll know...more tests...*

Copper looks over at the shack, then the truck, then just off into the distance.

He's pondering. Do I run? Can I even run? He looks at the gun at his side. Would that even do anything to her? Or just piss her off? What should-

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

Get the truck.

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - OPEN ROAD - DAY

The park ranger truck rattles down a long straight road, not a car in sight. They blow past a sign reading Entering LOVING COUNTY, TEXAS.

Copper is driving, Mr. Gallium sitting in the back, helmet in her lap, towel over her head, sunglasses on. Copper rolls down the window and chucks out the ranger's cell phone.

Mr. Gallium offers Copper a small bronze key.

MR. GALLIUM

Hold this for me? No pockets.

Copper takes it, confused.

COPPER

What's this for?

MR. GALLIUM

There are people coming. To help me. Soon.

COPPER

Somewhere I should be going?

MR. GALLIUM

West.

COPPER

"West." Okay.

(beat)

So who's coming? Other super-villains or-

MR. GALLIUM

I'm not a super-villain.

Copper hides his reaction.

COPPER

Listen, Mr. Gallium-

MR. GALLIUM

Don't call me that. The news made that up cause I used Gallium in my first device. It was a mistake.

COPPER

Well what should I call you?

Mr. Gallium has no response. Copper shakes his head.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Okay. I'm not going back to jail.

Mr. Gallium is silent.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I'm not, I'm just not. I hope you have a plan. Cause it's not- I'm not going back to jail. I was in State Penn for two years, that's time I can't get back-

MR. GALLIUM

I've never been to jail. Never going.

Copper nods subserviently.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

People like you can fill up the jails. They haven't built a big enough cage for me yet.

There's a beat.

COPPER

You really think you could beat the
Miracle, one on one?

MR. GALLIUM

At full strength? Of course.

Copper stifles a laugh. Mr. Gallium looks at him sharply and oh boy does he fucking straighten right up. Blood begins to pour out of her nose, eyes and ears.

COPPER

Oh Jesus! What the fuck is that?!

MR. GALLIUM

It's my brain.

COPPER

Your fuckin' brain!?

MR. GALLIUM

I received a lethal dose of
radiation. My body is...Shedding
the poisoned cells, regrowing new
ones...trying to heal itself...

COPPER

Heal itself? You need a hospital-

MR. GALLIUM

I'll be fine.

A new trickle of blood comes out of her nose. She wipes it away. She looks like she won't be fine at all, actually.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

I just need some water.

EXT. ISOLATED GAS STATION - DAY

The gas station stands on its own out in the middle of nowhere, with a little garage and a mini-store. An eighteen wheeler is parked out front. There's a little pink girl's bicycle leaned against the front of the store.

Copper pulls up in the park ranger truck, and is about to get out, when he stops to check his reflection in the mirror. He's still got blood and sweat and dirt all over him.

COPPER

Ah, shit, right.

He hurriedly begins wiping his face. He catches Mr. Gallium watching him from the back seat. She looks fucked up; her skin has taken on a slimy, translucent quality.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Wait here? I'll be right back.

MR. GALLIUM
Can you get me gatorade?

COPPER
(beat)
Seriously?

INT. ISOLATED GAS STATION - MINIMART

Copper goes to the with a bottle of water and a gatorade. An old **ATTENDANT** sits looking at a laptop computer, with earbuds in, but takes them out as Copper approaches.

Copper glances up at the cigarettes behind the counter.

COPPER
Oh, and could you get me a...
(nah)
Never mind.

The clerk scans the water bottle and the gatorade, but then stops, holding the gatorade, his eyes looking down at the laptop screen.

Copper clocks this, and without missing a beat, flips the laptop around. It's showing a livestream of the coverage of the incident in New York. Right now it's showing:

Mugshots of Dr. Immelman, Bronze...and Copper. Uh oh.

COPPER (CONT'D)
(flatly)
That's not me.

Mr. Gallium, wearing her helmet, stumbles into the store. Both the attendant and Copper stare at her for a beat.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Okay, it's me.

Copper pulls out the revolver, right to the attendant's head.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Don't move.
(to Mr. Gallium)
What are you doing in here?

Mr. Gallium stumbles and slumps to the ground, grabbing the water off the counter. She lifts up the lower portion of her mask, and just begins *chugging it*.

As she chugs, Copper notices the attendant looking down, and cocks back the hammer of the revolver.

COPPER (CONT'D)

This is a single action revolver.
But I'm so close I don't think I'll miss, and all it takes is one bullet to fuck up your life. You reach for that shotgun under the counter, *bang*.

ATTENDANT

There's no shotgun.

COPPER

Don't fuck with me.

ATTENDANT

I'm unarmed. I'm an old man.

COPPER

Okay. Really think. Okay?

The attendant stares at him. Mr. Gallium finishes her jug of water, tossing it away, and starts to stand, picking up the bottle of gatorade.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Mr. Gallium. Put your hand on my shoulder and lead me out the door.

Mr. Gallium steps forward, and puts her hand on Copper's shoulder. She slowly begins to lead him backwards through the gas station store, until they're nearly to the door.

As they walk, Copper notices framed photos on the wall. The Attendant in the Marine Corps. Marksmanship awards. The Attendant shaking hands with President Clinton in full military dress.

Uh oh. Oh well. Almost to the door. Come on.

A toilet flushes. A man, a **TRUCKER** presumably the owner of the big rig out front, steps out of the bathroom. He's between them and the door.

Copper is distracted for a split second and the Attendant moves slightly. Copper catches the movement out of the corner of his eye and fires **BANG** the shot misses and hits a stand of gum, sending a confetti of debris up into the air.

The Attendant jumps back, arms raised, as the trucker in the bathroom ducks down, Copper hurriedly re-pulling the hammer.

MR. GALLIUM
(distorted)
Just kill him.

COPPER
Don't move again I swear to god
you're dead!

MR. GALLIUM
(distorted)
Shoot him.

The trucker slowly draws out a knife, crawling along cover.

COPPER
Get me to the door.

MR. GALLIUM
(distorted)
You're being a fool.

COPPER
Get me to the door!

Mr. Gallium starts backing him up again, and then the trucker **LUNGES OUT FROM COVER, stabbing Copper in the shoulder.** Copper screams and fires the gun at point blank range into the trucker's ribs.

The trucker stumbles forward, knocking Copper and Mr. Gallium into an aisle of chips and candies which fly everywhere when-

BLAM! The Attendant, having drawn a shotgun out from under the counter, fires- but strikes the Trucker, blowing off the side of his head.

The Trucker's corpse falls entirely onto Copper, and the weight causes the whole aisle to collapse, sending him crashing to the floor, as Mr. Gallium quickly crawls away.

The Attendant, coming around the counter, fires again, again hitting the trucker's body, spraying Copper with blood.

Copper fires with the revolver, pulling himself out from under the trucker, and the Attendant expertly moves to cover.

COPPER (CONT'D)
FUCK! FUCK!

Copper tries to stand, but the arm he uses to push himself up gives out and he falls face first. That knife to the shoulder really fucked him up.

He notices a glimpse of movement, and fires from his "laying flat on his face" position blindly, waving the revolver like a mad man. BANG! Direct hit to a can of Redbull. BANG! Bullseye on a rack of sunglasses.

Copper frantically crawls away. The Attendant, aiming carefully, speaks in a low, stern tone.

ATTENDANT

Listen son, you tried, alright?
You tried. A man's dead now. I
don't know what she's got you into
but it's not worth dying over.

Copper tries to pull himself up, but the shoulder wound hurts too much.

COPPER

Shit! Agh!

ATTENDANT

Just surrender.

Copper realizes the old man is right. He sets down the gun, starting to surrender, when-

LITTLE GIRL

Grandpa? What's happening, I heard-

A **LITTLE GIRL** has entered through the back door.

ATTENDANT

Kelly get out of here now-

The little girl suddenly screams, and the Attendant realizes *Mr. Gallium is behind him-*

The attendant spins *fires the shotgun directly into Mr. Gallium's face at point blank range. The buckshot ricochets off her face and up into the ceiling, shattering a light, causing glass to rain down onto them-*

Mr. Gallium's head jerks back...but she stays standing. The blast has blown off half of her helmet, and she takes it off, dropping it to the floor.

The pieces of buckshot are *flattened against her skin. She reaches up and peels a pellet out of her eye. She shakes her head, and the bullets tinkle to the floor.*

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
That's...that's impossible...

She reaches out and yanks away the shotgun from the stunned attendant. The air around it begins to ripple and the shotgun lights on fire and then **melts in her hands**.

COPPER
(realizing)
It's not the suit. It's you. The
powers are in you.

Mr. Gallium glances back at Copper, who's still struggling to get to his feet, then turns back to the old man.

ATTENDANT
Please. Please don't kill me,
alright, I'm sorry, I'm sorry I-

Mr. Gallium **GRABS HIM BY THE THROAT**, and he's *immediately engulfed in rippling fumes of pure heat*, and he screams-

LITTLE GIRL
No! NO! STOP! NO!

-The bags of chips on the shelf start *bulging and POPPING* and the cans of beans and chili start *EXPLODING* and-

-his screams *immediately go high-pitched and disturbing as he melts alive, bursting into purple fire*-

The little girl's screaming stops as she goes into shock. The man's body falls, dead. The smoke alarm in the gas station starts beeping.

This triggers the gas station's sprinkler system, water pouring down on everyone. Copper pushes himself to his knees. The little girl is still just standing there.

Mr. Gallium takes a step towards the traumatized girl. Copper, realizing what might be about to happen, *leaps into action*, stepping in front of Mr. Gallium.

COPPER
Come on. He could've triggered a
silent alarm or something.

Mr. Gallium looks back at the little girl. Copper literally *grabs* Mr. Gallium by the arm, and Gallium turns on him, eyes wild and frightening.

Copper immediately lets her go.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Let's just go.

Mr. Gallium stares at him, eyes narrowing, then turns back to the little girl-

But stumbles a little, leans heavily on a rack of chewing gum that tips over, and she almost falls to the floor. Copper catches her, leading her away.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Easy, easy. Let's go, come on.

Copper grabs the gatorade off the counter, and then leads Gallium out the door.

As the door shuts, he takes one last long look at the charred corpse of the attendant, and the little girl standing motionless in the falling water.

The door swings shut.

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - TWILIGHT

They drive along the road. It's raining. Water streaks down the windows.

Copper sees a truck approaching. In the back are men holding shotguns and rifles. It blows past. He shakes off a chill.

Mr. Gallium is silently leaning her forehead against the window, sitting in the front seat now. Her skin has gone slimy and translucent, and she's missing more hair now, her eyes clouded over like a corpse.

The mood is tense and dark.

MR. GALLIUM

(quietly)

They wouldn't give me my grant.

COPPER

What?

MR. GALLIUM

At the lab. They wouldn't give me my research grant, they wouldn't fund my experiments.

COPPER

...oh yeah?

MR. GALLIUM

They said Kim-A4 was dangerous,
they wouldn't approve human trials.
But I had to show them. You know?
I had to prove it, my discovery.

She trails off.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

So I tested it on myself. Replaced
the metals in my blood. And it
hurt, and I was sick, but then...I
got better. And it worked. I'm
proof. So it happened for me. It
can happen again. Why wouldn't
they listen.

(beat)

So I figured...I'd just start
setting them off. If I turned a
hundred, two hundred, five hundred
people all at once, gave them the
power I have...there'd be no
denying it any more.

Copper eyes her. For the first time, Mr. Gallium looks
emotionally present, actually near tears. The sudden weight
of her emotion hits him and Copper nearly squirms.

Mr. Gallium is still staring out the window.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

And now all this. All these things
I've done. All the...deaths.
People- so many people, have died
or- I've killed. And they still
won't listen. I proved it. Don't
try to stop me.

(pleading)

Why doesn't anybody believe in me?

Mr. Gallium turns, again allowing herself to look directly at
Copper. She takes a breath, regarding him, and then,
quietly, looks back out the window.

After a beat, she spits a tooth into her hand, covered in
bloody slime. She stares at it. Copper tries not to react.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

They say it made me crazy but I'm
not. I'm not crazy.

(beat)

I'm not insane.

Mr. Gallium wipes a tear, pressing her head against the closed car window again.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
I just need to do more tests.
They'll see.

Copper glances over at her, and she seems to shiver, and turn further away. Copper keeps it strictly business.

COPPER
(beat)
How far west is west?

Mr. Gallium doesn't react.

COPPER (CONT'D)
What I'm saying is, I think we
should stop somewhere. Roads
aren't feeling too safe.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A farmhouse in the middle of nowhere, a dark silhouette out in the middle of nowhere, a steel windmill spinning in the field out front.

The ranger truck is outback, as Copper peeks through the windows. Mr. Gallium chugs her gatorade.

COPPER
Okay, no one's home. Looks like
fifth house is the charm.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Copper picks the lock, and in come Mr. Gallium and Copper. She reaches for the light switch, and he stops her.

COPPER
No lights.

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Gallium comes in, staggering, a little sloppy from exhaustion, followed by Copper, who stays in the doorway.

It's a little boy's room. Toys, posters, including a poster for The Miracle, blueish in the glow from the moon outside the window.

Mr. Gallium picks up a Miracle action figure, staring at it, griping to herself, stalking around in the dark.

MR. GALLIUM

They kill humanity with capitalism.
Everything commodified. Survival,
commodified, "oh who can get the
best doctors?" That's capitalism
poisoning. The planet on fire.
Trash and poverty and ignorance and
death, and they say *I'm* the
problem. I burn a few people.
Their system burns the whole earth.
Look at social media for ten
minutes and then come lecture me
all about the inherent value of
human dignity.

Blood drips from her nose, falling onto the face of the toy.

She tosses the Miracle figure at Copper, who catches it. He stares at the Miracle, covered in her blood.

Mr. Gallium picks up the guitar on the floor and looks at it, then gets woozy and sits onto the bed. She reaches up and pulls out a massive clump of hair.

Mr. Gallium can't stay upright and lays all the way down.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

The metals in my genetic code are
shifting to absorb the radiation.
I'll be better in the morning.

Copper stands in the door way looking at her.

COPPER

Were you going to kill that little
girl?

Mr. Gallium barely reacts.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Why'd you kill the old man? That
shotgun barely hurt you. Why'd you
burn him like that?

No reaction from Mr. Gallium.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I need to know. Were you going to
kill that little girl?

Mr. Gallium sits up in bed. She stares at him, unreadable.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Okay. You sleep. We'll get up
early tomorrow and start...sorting
this out.

Mr. Gallium just stares at him.

In the moonlight, with those eyes, filthy and bedraggled,
there's something truly frightening about her. Ethereal,
like some dead blasphemous thing, a witch from a fairy tale.

Copper backs up, and closes the door.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BATHROOM

Copper takes off his shirt, investigating the wound on his
shoulder. It's not as bad as it looked. He cleans it, then
bandages it up, wincing in pain.

After he finishes, he notices something on the sink, and
picks it up, looking at it.

Listerine.

INT. FARMHOUSE

We watch as Copper quietly goes room by room in the house,
looking for anything he can steal or use.

He gets a shirt. World's Greatest Grandpa. A jacket. A
baseball cap with the Houston Astros "H" on it. Good.

Finally, he finds a rifle case. Checks inside. Mossberg
hunting rifle, nothing too fancy. He immediately begins
loading it.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - LATER

It's midnight now. Copper has pulled down the shades, and
now sits alone in the dark in the kitchen, feet up on the
counter, watching TV on mute.

**RUMORS OF MR. GALLIUM SURFACE IN MONTANA, TEXAS, OREGON.
CITIZENS TAKING TO THE STREET IN ARMED "HUNTING PARTIES."
GOVERNMENT CONDEMNS VIGILANTE ACTIONS.**

The mugshots again: JAKE DONNER. There he is. Top of the
CIA's Most Wanted list. Terrorist.

Copper absentmindedly rolls his AA chip across his knuckles.

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS ROOM

Copper peeks in, holding the rifle. Mr. Gallium is asleep. He walks over to her and puts the rifle to her head.

And waits. She's asleep. He lowers the rifle, exhaling a shaky breath.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Copper comes out the front door, careful to close it quietly, and then power walks up the isolated driveway, going over to the windmill in the field.

He keeps glancing back at the house, and literally breaks into a full run, getting about three hundred yards away before he hunkers over, out of breath.

Copper looks back at the house, in the moonlight, and plays with his AA chip.

COPPER

Okay, I'm done.

Copper does something funny to his AA chip; he pulls a thin, translucent wire out of it, sticking it in his ear, and then twists and presses the coin itself. There's a beep.

He speaks into the chip. There's a slightly different tone to his voice; more confident, more collected.

COPPER (CONT'D)

This is Number Five.

(beat)

This is Number Five, over.

A voice speaks through the mic in his ear: calm, confident, all business. This is **HARLOWE**.

HARLOWE (O.S.)

What is your location?

COPPER

West Texas, somewhere. Loving County, maybe? I don't know. I've been trapped with Gallium, all the subjects I was surveilling are dead, my cover is blown, my face is all over the news. Get me out of here. I need exfil now. Code Uniform Tango Fiver Niner.

HARLOWE
(long beat)
That's not possible.

Copper seems confused.

COPPER
If you can't track my chip, we
stole a park ranger truck, it must
have a tracer in it-

HARLOWE
Are you still with Dr. Cristenson?

COPPER
"Doctor Cristenson?" Fuck that, she
hasn't been "Doctor Cristenson" for
ten years pal, that thing in there
is Mr. Gallium. The powers aren't
in the armor, they're in her! All
her bullshit about turning people
into gods, it's true! I saw this
woman take a shotgun to the face,
she can light people on fire with
her bare hands-

HARLOWE
Are you still with her?

COPPER
Send in a tactical team, send in a
drone strike, fucking nuke her for
all I care! I'm not trained for
this! My investigation is over,
everyone involved is dead, I have
no obligation to continue! I gave
up fucking years, do you understand
that? No family, no real friends
just surrounded by these psychos.
I went to jail. And The Miracle
just flew down and- *into dust!* He
turned it into dust!

HARLOWE
Steve, stay calm.

COPPER
Did you just tell me to stay calm?
To stay calm? Like I'm a 911 call
and my kitty got stuck in a tree?
Where's calm? There's no calm in
five hundred miles!

HARLOWE

This is now a matter of national security-

COPPER

I don't give a fuck about National Security! Fuck America, let it burn! Tell them I went native. Tell them I'm- psychologically unsound.

HARLOWE

If that's true I shouldn't even be communicating with you.

Copper groans in frustration and throws a wild punch in the air, pulling his own hair.

COPPER

What have I done other than follow orders? Now tell me about how the DCPD is such a great employer. Are you even the original guy? Have I even been talking to one contact this whole time or do they swap you out every two weeks, too, am I just completely alone-

Copper cracks on this last word, and hunches over, letting out a sob. He fully begins to cry, sobbing so hard he can barely speak, all the stress and trauma of the last 24 hours coming down hard on him.

COPPER (CONT'D)

This woman's fucking crazy. She's going to kill me. All that work with the Bretnievs and she's just going to fucking burn me alive.

(beat)

I'm so scared. I'm so scared man. You don't know what it feels like to hold it in, this kind of fear, I-

He shakes his head violently.

HARLOWE

Where is Mr. Gallium now-

COPPER

No.

HARLOWE

(beat)

Where is Mr. Gallium now?

Copper is silent, stifling his sobs. The voice on the phone talks calmly, reassuring.

HARLOWE (CONT'D)

I am the same person, Steve. It's been me the whole time. My capacity to help you isn't what you think it is. It's just not my job. Do you understand that?

Copper is silent. His face crinkles and he almost starts crying again but then stops himself.

HARLOWE (CONT'D)

The only light in the tunnel that I can offer you is the Kim-A4 device itself. We have multiple other agencies involving themselves. You're our last shot at keeping ahead of this situation, and stopping anyone else from getting hurt, in some ways it's a blessing that you got assigned to her, you're in a key position to-

Copper realizes something and interrupts:

COPPER

Other agencies? Like who?

(beat)

Is this still a secure line?

(beat, no response)

...I'm still top totem on this call, everyone currently on the line announce yourself.

A beat.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Announce or I'm hanging up.

Another beat, and then:

HARLOWE

Harlowe, deep cover touchpoint, Washington DC Police Department.

Silence. The wind blows. Copper waits, and then just as he relaxes, he hears a cornucopia of voices speak up in his ear.

VOICE

Ted Ambrose, Hazardous Materials Oversight, CIA.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Michael Brodie, Nuclear Threat
Division, Homeland Security.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Janet Versey, Domestic Terror And
Gimmicked Criminals Unit, FBI.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Ishiro Hunt, FEMA out of the DOI.

VOICE (CONT'D)
John Arnold, Captain, United States
National Guard.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Iris Goreman, NSA-

COPPER
All right stop stop, stop, stop!

Copper stands and does a bizarre, frustrated, flailing kind of dance to try to shake off the huge burst of adrenaline.

He stares up at the steel windmill, rattling in the breeze.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Let me guess, each of you has your
own opinion about what to do with
me, right?
(beat)
I bet you all loved the part where
I said "fuck America, let it burn,"
huh, that's gonna look great in a
transcript. That'll look just
great. Wow I'm so fucked.

Copper sighs, staring off into the pale early morning light.
He regains some composure, wipes his face, and inhales
deeply, holds it, let's it out- okay, he's sane again.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Since I have you all on the
line...what are my options, here?

HARLOWE
(beat)
Options?

COPPER
My choices, my possible roads to
take, what help can you offer me,
what are the options-

HARLOWE

You will continue the operation-

COPPER

No, sorry, that's not happening-

HARLOWE

This is non-negotiable, you are now a vital operative-

COPPER

Wait, *no!* NO NO NO NO if you leave me here you're killing me-

HARLOWE

This is a direct order, you are to locate the Kim-A4 device and-

COPPER

This isn't my job, I already have NOTHING and if you leave me here, you're killing me-

HARLOWE

You will continue-

COPPER

If you leave me here you're killing me *if you leave me here you're killing me if you leave me here you're killing me*

HARLOWE

There is no other option. The Kim-A4 device is your way out. Now if you'll listen we can-

COPPER

Fuck you.

Copper hangs up, pulling the wire out of his ear. He stares out at the road. Then back at the farm house.

He hears a noise. It's a road runner. Couldn't possibly be the same one. It stands near the windmill.

And then runs off into the desert.

He watches it go.

INT. NIGHT CLUB

At a crowded, somewhat dingy nightclub in New York, music is blasting, the party's jumping. Bronze and Copper are at the bar, in street clothes.

Bronze is clearly on coke, talking fast.

BRONZE

This is what I'm saying to you,
Jake, the superheroes and
supervillains, all this shit, it's
good, it's positive.

COPPER

I'm not sure I'm willing to run
with a philosophical argument-

BRONZE

Philosophical? What's
philosophical? It's practical.
Every dollar Uncle Sam spends on
tracking one of these psychos in a
costume, that's a dollar they're
NOT spending on tracking me. It's
about how they spend time, you
know? You think they're not more
worried about The Red Whisper, or
Holy Trinity, any of those super-
powered nutjobs? I'm telling you,
embrace it. EMBRACE IT!

COPPER

Yeah yeah.

Bronze takes out a baggie of coke and wiggles it at him.

BRONZE

I'm gonna hit the head, you want
to? Then we go over and talk to
Sergei's guys.

COPPER

I'm good.

BRONZE

Sober guys, man. What a buzzkill.

Bronze heads off. Copper's alone at the bar. An **EXCITED GUY**
notices him.

EXCITED GUY

Steve!

Copper looks totally confused.

EXCITED GUY (CONT'D)
Steve! Steve! Holy shit!

Copper is bewildered. The guy pushes through the crowd and hugs him, and Copper pulls away, looking confused.

EXCITED GUY (CONT'D)
It's me, it's Mark, I just moved to
New York, this is so random.

COPPER
I'm sorry, I don't know you-

EXCITED GUY
Steve. What? What are you doing?

COPPER
I don't know you, man, fuck off.

EXCITED GUY
(hurt)
Steve...

Copper notices Bronze coming back to the bar. Copper suddenly leans in close to the Excited Guy.

COPPER
(quickly)
We were never friends. I think
you're a fucking loser, Mark. I
don't like you. You're fucking
pissing me off. You're a loser.

The Excited Guy looks really hurt. Copper glances back to Bronze, who's quickly approaching.

EXCITED GUY
Hey fuck you Steve.

COPPER
Fuck off.

The Excited Guy turns away, and Copper looks back to where Bronze was approaching, only to get **JUMPSCARED** by Mr. Gallium standing at the bar next to him, stained with vomit and blood, flesh rotting, eyes wide and manic-

MR. GALLIUM
There will be more tests.

He turns and sees Bronze, covered in blood and dying, and then looks at the crowd of dancing people.

The music is fading, and the noise of police sirens, panic and screaming are rising-

The crowd has stopped dancing. Now they all stare at Copper.

Then one by one *their faces start **MELTING***-

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAWN

Copper wakes up coughing violently, under a blanket on a couch in the living room. He covers his mouth with his hand. When he takes it away...there's blood.

That's bad. Copper hears a sound from upstairs: the shower.

WE SEE

Mr. Gallium's bare feet in a bath tub. The water runs down her body, thick with dirt and ash and blood and her strange, shimmering vomit that glimmers like gasoline.

BACK TO COPPER

Not clear if we really just saw that or he imagined it. But his expression changes. Hardens.

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Copper peeks in, to see...something in the bed. Is it...a corpse? Is she dead? The whole bed area is burnt and distorted and covered in bloody slime...

A ***hollowed out eyeless carcass*** of Mr. Gallium lays twisted and deflated in the bed. Jesus christ she is dead she-

MR. GALLIUM

Good morning.

Copper startles. Mr. Gallium stands wrapped in a towel, in the doorway of the bathroom.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Gallium, now wearing a UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS hoodie and sweatpants, is sitting and eating a bowl of oatmeal. Her eyes are almost back to normal, human looking, but the iris and pupils are still distorted.

Clean, her hair up, wearing normal clothes, she is an entirely different flavor of strange and frightening than in her Super-Villain or filthy witch forms.

First she was sci-fi. Then horror. Now she just feels...awkward. Wrong somehow. Simultaneously completely absent behind the eyes and ferociously present.

The fact that she's some kind of human after all just makes her even creepier.

Copper is watching her eat with total indifference. She notices him watching.

MR. GALLIUM
I'm feeling much better.

Copper just stares at her without responding. Mr. Gallium shifts, a little uncomfortable.

Copper raises his AA chip, presenting it to her.

Then POOF! sleight of hand-magics it away. Brings it back. He does a whole little magic show for her, disappearing and reappearing the coin until finally: he reaches over and SURPRISE! pulls it out from behind her ear.

Mr. Gallium is baffled, but hesitantly smiles. The first smile we've seen from her.

COPPER
Ta-dah.

MR. GALLIUM
I-

COPPER
(interrupting)
You know up until this point, in my life, I viewed myself as kind of a poltergeist, you know what that is?

MR. GALLIUM
...A ghost?

COPPER
An essence. A being without form.
Like: there is no me. So when I arrive, I am never truly here. And when I leave, I am never truly gone. I don't actually exist.
(beat)
I've always felt that way.

Mr. Gallium clocks the extremely noticeable change in Copper's demeanor, his communication, his grasp of language. She's wrong-footed by it, and doesn't know how to react.

MR. GALLIUM
What've you been doing down here?

COPPER
Reading about the people you
killed. Their families.

Mr. Gallium doesn't know how to react, and then:

MR. GALLIUM
I can't save everyone, they'll see-

COPPER
No, they won't see. Cause they're
dead. Your hypothetical "saved"
people don't exist. They're a
fantasy of your imagination. All
you've left behind are bodies.

MR. GALLIUM
Oh I've *left bodies*?

COPPER
(smirks)
Here we go.

MR. GALLIUM
You ever heard of Sarin gas? It's
a chemical weapon. It causes every
muscle in your body to cramp
simultaneously, your eyes, your
tongue, everything-

COPPER
So? Can you control when you do
that, your little rants? Did you
have a point?

MR. GALLIUM
They invented it as a weapon.
Sarin Gas. People died while they
were testing it, and then, in 1988,
Saddam Hussein dropped it on
civilians and-

COPPER
So you're not so bad? Is that
where this is headed, again? Cause
you're going to make invincible
fire zombies out of everybody?

MR. GALLIUM
I'm doing what I'm doing to try to
heal the world-

COPPER

Well maybe you should put it in a press release, cause when I was looking around at all those people dying I don't recall any of them asking about your intentions.

Mr. Gallium is quiet, and Copper suddenly *knocks the bowl of oatmeal off the table in front of her*. It clatters across the floor.

She stares at him.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm not feeling too hot.

Mr. Gallium's really off her game and totally bewildered. But then looks angry in a way that's very scary.

Copper just stares back at her. After a beat, he stands up, and starts cleaning up the oatmeal on the floor.

COPPER (CONT'D)

So: west?

MR. GALLIUM

(beat)

West.

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - OPEN ROAD - MORNING

Off they go. Mr. Gallium sits in the front seat, her helmet in her lap, hood up, sunglasses on.

MR. GALLIUM

Shouldn't we try to find a new car?

Copper doesn't react. Mr. Gallium, clearly a little uncomfortable, reaches over and turns on the radio. Static. She has to switch the channel a couple times.

"Butterfly" by Crazy Town is playing. She stops and listens to this. Mr. Gallium says something quietly. Copper ignores her, lost in thought.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

This song came out when I was in High School. It was just always on the radio. People hated it, but I liked it. They played it at this bar for 18 and up kids. I wonder if they still have those.

Copper is silent.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
Did they ever do anything else?

Copper is silent.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
This band, did they ever do
anything else?

Mr. Gallium thinks about this. Something occurs to her.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
(beat)
I feel like there used to be more
one hit wonders, when I was a kid.
We're the same age, right? Do you
remember, um-
(sings)
"I'm not sick, but I'm not well-"

COPPER
The fuck are you talking about.

MR. GALLIUM
...I'm just talking.
(beat)
Is something wrong?

Copper laughs bitterly.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
Did you sleep?

COPPER
(irritated)
Look, I'm not interested in having
some kind of- "normal conversation"-

MR. GALLIUM
You don't know me, you don't-

COPPER
Enough, don't start on one of your
fuckin' monologues- No!

Copper swerves and pulls over on the side of the road,
turning off the car. Mr. Gallium is totally confused.

COPPER (CONT'D)
That chapter is over, my curiosity
about you is finished.
(MORE)

COPPER (CONT'D)

I know you're going to kill me so just do it.

MR. GALLIUM

I'm not going to kill you-

COPPER

Oh not me but you'd kill a little girl?

MR. GALLIUM

I wasn't going to kill that girl!

COPPER

You don't know what you're going to do, okay? You're not- a reliable narrator of your experience. You're not right, in the head. I don't know if it was the chemicals that did it or if you were always that way, but I know you're gonna kill me, so just fucking do it.

Mr. Gallium is silent. Copper *slaps the dashboard* in front of her, startling her. And again. And again.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Fuck you. Hey, look at me. Your fucking thing, the Kim-A4? It doesn't work, it'll never work. You'll never change the world, you'll just be hated, forever. You're a terrorist. That's what people will remember about you, Elana. You're right, they make it cute for TV, "super-villain," but what you are is a mass murderer who kills innocent people. Children. You don't do experiments, *you set off bombs*. You're a monster. I'm disposable to you, you fucking said it yourself. Do it. Kill me. I feel nothing but contempt for you, you have the nerve to call yourself a god? The god of what, failure? You're pathetic, *pissing on the floor, some kind of creature*. Covered in puke, you disgust me-

Mr. Gallium reaches over and puts on her damaged Mr. Gallium helmet. She sits there in her oversized hoodie and sweatpants and super-villain helmet in the passenger seat.

This move is so weird it actually silences Copper's rant.

He stares at her. They sit in silence. Copper shudders, squeezing the steering wheel, regaining composure.

MR. GALLIUM
(distorted)
**Someone is coming to help us.
That's where I'm taking you. I
made contact, someone is coming to-**

Mr. Gallium gags and jerks forward, and vomit suddenly pours out of the bottom of the helmet, hitting the car seat and the floor, *sizzling through her sweater-*

It begins *burning through the car seat-* Copper reaches over and carefully opens the door and shoves her out.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Mr. Gallium stumbles out of the car, staggering and falling to her knees, tugging at her burning sweater. Copper looks at her a beat, considers starting the car...

Then jumps out and goes to Mr. Gallium, helping pull the sizzling sweater off her, leaving her topless, dry heaving.

COPPER
You said you were getting better?

MR. GALLIUM
I am...getting better...Just a
little bit left-

COPPER
You sure about that? I see
evidence to the contrary, doctor.

For the first time, Mr. Gallium, dry-heaving, seems annoyed.

MR. GALLIUM
"evidence to the contrary?" What,
did your IQ jump 20 points
overnight, I liked you better as a
helpful idiot than a smart asshole,
why don't you just leave if you're
so scared of me-

Mr. Gallium vomits again, and collapses, shaking violently, her limbs twitching.

Copper turns and starts to walk away and Mr. Gallium lunges up at him, *grabs Copper by the arm, yanking him down-*

COPPER
Agh! You're hurting me!

MR. GALLIUM
D- don't leave-

COPPER
You said leave, I'm leaving-

MR. GALLIUM
D- don't- I was wrong! Don't-

COPPER
Let me go!

MR. GALLIUM
Please- please-

COPPER
I won't leave you if you let me go!

Mr. Gallium struggles to move, can't, and lets him go.
Copper stands, dusting himself off. He looks north: nobody.
It's clear.

Maybe he could run.

He looks south. Oh, shit. A car is literally two hundred feet away, and closing. Way too close.

COPPER (CONT'D)
(sees the approaching car)
Jesus, shit!

Copper looks down at the topless, vomit stained Mr. Gallium, and then back up at the approaching car, and *DIVES into the dirt* for her Mr. Gallium helmet.

MR. GALLIUM
(weakly)
No, no-

Copper **flings the Mr. Gallium helmet off into the bushes**, just as the car begins to pull over. He frantically begins pulling off his own jacket but then notices-

Mr. Gallium crawling towards where he threw her helmet-

COPPER
No no no, okay, no no no-

Stumbling, still pulling off the jacket, he falls to his knees, putting it on her to cover her breasts as the driver of the car approaches.

MR. GALLIUM

My- mask-

COPPER

Forget it, wear this, okay- *fix*
your fuckin- hair, someone's coming-

Weak and dazed, Mr. Gallium gets that edge of a dangerous look in her eye.

COPPER (CONT'D)

(hissed whisper)

No! You will not hurt this guy. I
swear to christ I'll kill you
myself, I'll stomp your head, I'll
stomp your fuckin head in.

She looks unmoved, eyes wild in her head, as she struggles to stand. She can't. Whatever is happening to her has reached its final stage. She's weak, and dizzy.

The man from the car approaches.

Andrew YOUNG, middle aged, paunchy, friendly faced, a harmless mid-west dad on a road trip, waving and smiling.

YOUNG

Hi there! You okay!

Copper takes this last moment out of Young's direct focus to literally just fucking *shove Mr. Gallium down*, and then jumps to his feet waving back, as she dazedly tries to recover.

COPPER

Hi! Hello!

YOUNG

I hope I'm not interrupting-

COPPER

No, I- well, sort of, yeah, but-

YOUNG

Everything good here?

COPPER

I, uh-

(considers)

I don't know, really.

YOUNG

I'm a nurse, and I saw you pulled over there, and she looks a little-sick, so I...

Young seems to notice the spotty trail of smoldering vomit out to where Mr. Gallium lays.

YOUNG (CONT'D)
What's this stuff on the ground?

COPPER
(quickly)
I don't know. It was here when we got here.

YOUNG
There's smoke coming from your car.

Copper sees- **oh fuck uh oh**, the vomit on the dashboard seems to have melted through the entire center console and smoke is billowing out from the inside of the car. It's fucked.

COPPER
Yeah. Wow, yeah, there- that's what made her sick. Was the smoke. Stupid...car. Overheated or something, I don't know.

YOUNG
Oh geez, tough luck. Tough luck.

Mr. Gallium kind of tries to sit up again.

COPPER
(harsh whisper)
Don't you fuckin move.

YOUNG
What?

COPPER
Nothing, just- she's- just checking on her, is all.

YOUNG
Well, gosh, you're about forty miles from the nearest hospital. I could take a look at her. Maybe I can give you guys a ride to the nearest rest stop or somethin'.

Copper blinks at him, and then shakes his head, then rethinks, nods, and then shrugs, and shakes his head and nods at the same time.

YOUNG (CONT'D)
Was that a yes?

COPPER
 UHHHHHHHHHHH-
 (fuck it)
 I- yeah, uh- that makes sense.
 Since the car is- fucked. Right,
 okay, what you're saying- makes
 more sense than whatever I was
 gonna do, so...Fuck.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - SIDE OF THE ROAD

Mr. Gallium is sitting in the seat of Young's car with the door open, Young kneeling in front of her. Luckily, her eyes are normal now, but she seems really out of it.

Young checks her eyes, nose and throat, and takes her heartbeat with a stethoscope. Checks her blood pressure. She watches him with a blank, dazed expression.

Young's crept out, and looks to Copper, who stands nearby.

YOUNG
 Can I talk to you for a moment?

OVER BY THE
 BURNING CAR

Copper and Young talk. Young looks concerned.

YOUNG (CONT'D)
 She's...Well, I don't think her
 symptoms are from smoke inhalation.

COPPER
 No?

YOUNG
 No. This is a strange question,
 but do either you work with- you
 know, radioactive materials?

COPPER
 Radioactive? No, we don't do that.
 Why are you asking?

YOUNG
 Listen, I'm not an expert...but I'd
 say her symptoms are much closer to
 radiation poisoning.

COPPER
 (shocked, aghast)
 Radiation poisoning?
 (MORE)

COPPER (CONT'D)

That doesn't make any sense, she
was just fine twenty minutes ago.

YOUNG

Well these things can come on fast,
if she ingested something, or-

Copper notices a truck of guys with shotguns and rifles
rolling up the road, a few of them with radiation meters.

Young hasn't noticed, so Copper deftly repositions himself so
Young's eyes follow him and his back is to the passing truck.

COPPER

Ingested something? Like she ate
something radioactive?

YOUNG

I don't know, or inhaled it? Like
I said, I'm not an expert-

COPPER

Wow, but she and I have been in all
the same places, eating the same
stuff, breathing the same air-

The truck blows past, and Young turns to look at it, so
Copper quickly gets his attention back.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Hey, I don't suppose you could
check me out too, huh?

YOUNG

Oh, yes. Yes, of course.

COPPER

After we find somewhere to drop her
off at the hospital.

YOUNG

Drop her off? Isn't she your wife?
Or your girlfriend?

COPPER

Nah, no. More of a friend.

(beat)

I think in some ways the
relationship is pretty toxic.

Young nods, a little weirded out, but Copper has made himself
laugh, and stifles a weird giggle. Young looks at him like:
"are you okay?"

COPPER (CONT'D)
It's been a long- couple days.

Copper opens the trunk of the burnt car, and takes out the rifle, and a duffle bag.

COPPER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I know this must look suspicious.

YOUNG
Oh we're way past suspicious, but here I am, right?

COPPER
I would leave the rifle but it's my dad's. It's expensive.

Copper hands Young the rifle. Copper has a weird, very very slight reaction to this. He smiles, then hides it.

COPPER (CONT'D)
You're a nurse, huh? You get started in the military on that, or-

YOUNG
No, never. Geriatric nurse I'm a babysitter for old, old babies. Sort of fell into it.

Copper has another reaction to this, totally unreadable.

COPPER
We were lucky you came by.

YOUNG
No such thing as luck, I think. That's why you've gotta offer help wherever you can.

COPPER
Right.

YOUNG
Buddy, your nose is bleeding.

Copper checks his nose. There is indeed a trickle of blood. Copper gets a little dizzy, and Young steadies him.

YOUNG (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm gonna get you two some help.

As Young helps him to the car, Copper takes one last long look at the Mr. Gallium Helmet, discarded in a bush out in the middle of the desert.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - OPEN ROAD

They drive along. Mr. Gallium is in the back. Copper sits in the front seat, a bit of kleenex in his nose. Young is driving, happily.

The radio plays an audiobook of "The Count of Monte Cristo."

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

Young is headed into the bathroom at the desolate rest stop, a little concrete building with two bathrooms and some vending machines.

Mr. Gallium is in the back, a little out of it.

COPPER
I'm gonna go in, take a piss.

MR. GALLIUM
Don't leave.

COPPER
I won't.

INT. REST STOP - BATHROOM

Young is drying his hands with paper towel when Copper enters. There's a beat, Copper standing in the doorway.

Copper smiles. Young smiles back.

COPPER
Okay. Get me the fuck out of here.

Young looks at him, confused. Copper shakes his head.

COPPER (CONT'D)
The way you took the rifle.
Military man. Rookie fuck up. I
don't want to be a dick about it,
but... Rookie, rookie fuck up.
(smiles)
In tennis they'd call it an
"unforced error."

YOUNG

I'm sorry? What? The rifle?

COPPER

Undercover 101: If someone asks you a question about your past, it means they noticed something about you. They're not just asking you some random question, right?

(beat)

So I said "oh, you served," and you should've said "Yeah," and then pulled something out of your ass. But instead, "no," and in here,

(taps head)

Alarm bells.

Young stares at him, nervous and confused. Copper sighs.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I know what you are. She doesn't know shit. Fuck, I really thought they weren't going to send someone to help me, I'm just so happy to see you, man. Can I hug you?

Copper doesn't wait for permission, walks forward and embraces Young. Young looks totally lost.

YOUNG

(bewildered)

What?

Copper just stares at him, totally certain.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I don't understand. I know you and her are mixed up in something, maybe something bad, but I'm a christian man, and I saw it as my duty to help those in need-

COPPER

Please. Stop. Just stop.

Young is totally confused, still trying to be kind.

YOUNG

What you're feeling could be a side effect of the radiation poisoning. Paranoia is-

COPPER

Don't bullshit a bullshitter! Just explain what's happening next. Are they sending someone? Where's all the cops, is this whole county locked down, what's the deal?

Copper waits. After a beat, Young looks around, uncomfortable, nervous.

YOUNG

I'm really sorry, Jake, I don't understand what you mean.

Copper stares at him.

COPPER

You're pissing me off.

There's a beat of silence.

YOUNG

Please. I have two kids. I was just taking a little road trip out to visit my mom in El Paso-

COPPER

You're pissing me off.

YOUNG

You seem like a good person, maybe if you just take a breath-

Copper draws the revolver, putting it to Young's heart. Young freezes, eyes wide, terrified.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

What are you doing!?

COPPER

Shut the fuck up! Shut the fuck up and get on the ground, now!

YOUNG

Why are you doing this, I'm only trying to help!

Copper falters.

COPPER

Aw man. Am I going crazy now, too?

He lifts the gun a little, and Young IMMEDIATELY attacks him, knocking it out of his hands.

The two of them struggle; Young is the bigger man, and he quickly gets Copper down on the ground, Copper groaning in pain from the stab wound in his shoulder.

Copper throws him off, and Young raises his hands, as Copper staggers, coughing out blood, dizzy.

YOUNG

Listen, just listen to me, I don't
know what you're-

Copper tackles him into the sinks, and one of them breaks off the wall under his weight. Young shoves him off again, and batters him around, but Copper manages to get onto his back, and get him in a sleeper hold.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

(choking)

You're making a mistake, please-
please- don't- stop- please-

They fall to the ground, and Copper braces himself against the wall, tightening the sleeping hold.

Young passes out. Copper searches him. Gets his car keys, but...

COPPER

Come on, gun, gun, gun...

No gun, no ID, no wire. Shit. Uh oh.

EXT. REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Copper, limping slightly from the struggle, rushes out, straightening himself, even though his shoulder wound has now bled through his shirt.

He gets into the car. Mr. Gallium can tell something's up.

COPPER

Be cool. The guy is a cop.

Mr. Gallium tries to sit up.

COPPER (CONT'D)

No no no, you stay put, stay put-

MR. GALLIUM

We have to get away.

COPPER

Yeah and go where?

MR. GALLIUM
Someone is coming for us.

COPPER
You keep saying that-

MR. GALLIUM
No, they're coming soon, if we
don't hurry we-

COPPER
Someone's really coming, you're not
just saying that.

Mr. Gallium nods.

MR. GALLIUM
They said sometime today but I
don't know when. Gerard Airstrip,
in Westfall, off the 285. We
teleported in to Loving County for
a reason, I grew up out here, I can
show you the way.

Copper stares at her, and then nods and starts the car...Only
for her to get out, and begin walking towards the rest stop.

COPPER
WHOA! Hey, stop!

MR. GALLIUM
He saw us, we have to kill him-

COPPER
No we don't, get back in the car-

MR. GALLIUM
He has to die-

COPPER
*Get in the car, I'm not even sure
that guy's a cop, I'm goin crazy
too now, just get in the car-*

A massive **BANG!** Mr. Gallium is *SHOT IN THE BACK*. She
falls forward, *smacking her head against the hood of the car.*

BANG BANG BANG bullets *whiz by* Copper, hitting the car and
shattering windows as he drops and *scrambles under the Range
Rover*, drawing his revolver. Whatever is shooting at him is
leaving holes the size of baseballs.

Young is approaching from the rest stop, bloody and bruised but all business and holding a massive Magnum Research BFR 45-70 revolver, an experimental handgun that looks like it was designed to one-shot Godzilla.

Copper fires once with the revolver, and Young turns and ducks to cover behind the vending machines.

YOUNG
FEDERAL AGENT! Drop your weapon
and surrender now!

Copper screams in frustration.

COPPER
I knew it! I knew it!
(screams over the car)
FUCK YOU YOU FAT ASSHOLE!

YOUNG
This is an experimental weapon
based on a gun they use to hunt
bears. You ever see the kind of
hole that puts in a human being?

COPPER
Yeah, it's incredible that you were
able to hide it up your ass.

Copper grabs Mr. Gallium by the ankles and drags her *under the car* to his side. She's out cold, unconscious.

Young yells to him, calmer, more friendly.

YOUNG
Lieutenant Steve Garrett. You're a
hero to me, man. Six years under
cover with the Bretnievs?
Legendary shit. I've read your
whole file, you should write a
memoir or something.

He turns her over, pulling down the jacket to see where she was shot and...The huge bullet is flattened into her skin.

But not without consequence; she's invulnerable, but not invincible. The massive bullet is in an extremely painful looking crater of bruising and discoloration.

COPPER
You hurt her.

YOUNG

Yeah, well...Like I said, it's a pretty big gun.

(kinder)

Surrender, we can find the Kim-A4 together, you can still be a hero.

(beat)

I respect you, Steve, don't die for no reason-

COPPER

(laughs)

You "respect me?" I just knowingly assaulted an undercover fed, you think I'm dumb enough to think they give out pardons based on *respect*?

That shuts Young up. Copper takes the opportunity to quietly open the back door of the Range Rover, and slip out the rifle, which he slings over his good shoulder.

YOUNG

I'm a super-criminal specialist with the NSA. I was sent to pick you up, not kill you.

(beat)

Look, what you undercover guys go through, I can't even imagine.

(no response)

Foster care, then juvie, I mean, a guy like you goes undercover they're looking for something or running from something, right?

Silence from Copper. Young edges to the side of the vending machine, trying to get a shot.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

You're burnt, Garrett. DCPD doesn't get you out of this one, no one does. The gas station guys, plus all the dead people in New York... Unless you have a direct line to the Kim-A4, you're fucked.

There's a beat. Copper doesn't respond.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

I'm a decorated former NAVY Seal with a gun designed to kill superheroes. You're a metro cop with an antique revolver and radiation poisoning. This isn't a fight you can win, so-

Suddenly, the vending machine he's hiding behind starts to tip over, falling on to him.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

Ah fuck!

He scampers out of the way, and sees Copper suddenly appear to his right, rifle raised.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

Wait.

Young tries to turn the gun on him-

Copper fires immediately, hitting Young in the arm. Young screams and fires his massive pistol, but the shot goes wild and blows a hole in the wall of the rest stop.

The recoil is too much to fire one-handed and the big gun jumps out of Young's grip, leaving him defenseless.

Copper approaches him with the revolver raised.

COPPER

NAVY Seal, more like a fuckin NAVY walrus. God this must be so embarrassing for you, getting punked out by the same guy twice in ten minutes?

(laughs)

Maybe they should've made you a NORMAL criminal specialist, huh?

Young looks fucking furious, but now Copper, for the first time, is riding adrenaline and actually having a little fun. He reaches into the shattered vending machine and takes out a bag of cracker-jacks.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Here's a pro-tip: I know I'm burnt, dumb ass. What the fuck do they teach you in the NSA? If someone is desperate, YOU DON'T GO NEGATIVE! You went right to negative, look how that turned out.

Young, clutching his bleeding arm, slumps down against the vending machine, staring daggers at Copper.

YOUNG

Do you know how fucked you are? Before you could've made some kind of argument, some kind of defense, but now, you just-

COPPER

Shot a federal agent, I know. Yeah
yeah yeah. Young, be serious.

(beat)

I never had a chance.

MOMENTS LATER...

Copper, driving Young's truck, goes screeching out of the parking lot, off down the road.

After a beat, Young, now stripped to his underwear, his right side soaked in blood from his arm, wanders out of the rest stop, looking after them.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - OPEN ROAD - LATER

Copper drives in silence. Mr. Gallium is in the front seat, coming around, out of it. She winces, touching her back, and then touches her forehead.

MR. GALLIUM

What happened?

COPPER

...nothing good.

EXT. ABANDONED AIR STRIP - FENCE - SHORTLY THEREAFTER

Outside the front of the air strip is a fence with a lock on it. They're parked out front. Copper uses the butt of the rifle to break the lock, then calls back to the car.

COPPER

They know we're out here, doc.
They're probably watching us right now. There's no way anyone can get a plane in or out of this.

MR. GALLIUM

They're not coming by plane.

EXT. ABANDONED AIR STRIP

The airstrip is worn down by time. There's a few mostly abandoned looking buildings here and there, a rusted out car, and not much else...

But as they drive on to the air strip, Copper sees what Mr. Gallium meant. One of the "teleportation arches," like we saw at the beginning, sits in the middle of the runway.

Copper pulls over, getting out, circling the arch. Mr. Gallium stumbles out moments later.

MR. GALLIUM

One of the teleportation arches.
Dr. Immelman helped me design them,
I had them set up in expectation of
a worst case scenario.

COPPER

Okay! Okay, here we go, here we
go, how do we turn it on?

MR. GALLIUM

We can't. They have to turn it on
from their side.

COPPER

Cool cool cool, so how do we tell
them like, hey, hi, come get us?

MR. GALLIUM

We can't. You threw away my
helmet.

Copper nods, and then laughs.

COPPER

Of course! Of course. Why would
anything be easy? HA! SHIT!

MR. GALLIUM

They said they'd try today. We
just have to wait.

COPPER

Wait? Really?

Mr. Gallium nods.

INT. ABANDONED AIR STRIP - MECHANIC SHOP - LATER

It's been mostly cleared out, but the dingy little mechanic
shop still has signs of life. They didn't condemn this
place, just abandoned it.

Copper has found a tool box, and is currently using pliers to
pry the big bullet out of Mr. Gallium's back, like he's
pulling a splinter.

She winces in pain.

COPPER
Almost got it. Christ...

MR. GALLIUM
What?

COPPER
Your skin feels so strange.

MR. GALLIUM
It's because of my physiology.
It's part of the Kim-A4 process.

COPPER
Yeah it's not- bad. Just
different. Can you still feel
things normally?

MR. GALLIUM
Yes. It's different. But yes.

He pries the bullet out. The bruising on her back is nasty,
but, all things considered...

COPPER
Look at that. Anti-tank round.
You took it like a champ, didn't
even break the skin.

MR. GALLIUM
If I was at full power, it couldn't
have hurt me at all.

He POOF! dissappears the flattened bullet, and then reappears
it behind her ear. Mr. Gallium doesn't react, and he shrugs.

Copper gets up, and begins rifling through the drawers and
cabinets, searching around for anything he can use. Mr.
Gallium watches him, thinking.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
Why did you try to make me kill
you?

COPPER
(sighs)
Had to see where that road led.

MR. GALLIUM
That's crazy.

COPPER

Gimme some more insights about my
sanity while we wait on your
imaginary friends.

MR. GALLIUM

You think I'm that easy to
manipulate? That I'm some
emotionally frail homicidal lunatic
that will just lash out and kill
you if you hit the right button?
Has it not occurred to you that all
you were saying is what everyone
else has been saying for ten years?

Copper shrugs, finding an old dusty guitar.

COPPER

You know it's funny, "emotionally
frail homicidal lunatic," you
nailed it.

MR. GALLIUM

So you don't respect me at all.

COPPER

(disbelief)

"Respect" you?

Copper opens a drawer in the back panel of a desk and claps
with glee. Mr. Gallium's confused; Copper holds up a joint.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Thank you Texas.

Mr. Gallium sighs, stretching her back.

MR. GALLIUM

You know I'm not- blind, okay, I
know you've been- I've been relying
on you, and I appreciate it. I
appreciate you, -...

(beat)

I don't know your name.

Mr. Gallium gets an odd look; she's actually embarrassed. A
tiny glimmer of self-awareness, maybe, somewhere in there.

COPPER

I'm Steve. My name is Steve.

(beat)

Now I'm going to get high and take
a nap.

MR. GALLIUM
What if someone comes?

COPPER
Tell them I'm napping.

He lights the joint, and notices Mr. Gallium staring at him.
He takes a hit.

Then, after a beat, he offers her the joint.

CUT TO:

It's thirty minutes later. Copper and Mr. Gallium are sitting on the floor, extremely high, eating a bag of chips Copper got from the broken vending machine.

MR. GALLIUM
I'm- I am super smart. Just cause I've had these- issues, it doesn't mean I'm a fake smart person.

COPPER
...Okay.

MR. GALLIUM
No I'm being serious: ask me any science fact. Seriously. I'll know. Ask me anything.

Copper looks at her for a beat, then sits up and asks:

COPPER
What's the diameter of the Earth?

Mr. Gallium stares at him, and then cracks up laughing.

MR. GALLIUM
I don't know.

Copper watches her laugh convulsively, self-conscious, trying to hide her face, and after a beat, he can't help himself but laugh a little too.

COPPER
Oh my god, you're high as fuck.

MR. GALLIUM
(hiding her face)
I was- humans- okay, the scientific-

COPPER
Don't do this, don't do a weird mad scientist rant now, please-

MR. GALLIUM

No, I was saying- science can save
the world-

(laughing, struggling to
breath, then serious)

It's incredible- humans made
chips...

She tries to complete the thought but struggles.

COPPER

"Humans made chips?"

MR. GALLIUM

Like- potato chips-

COPPER

What are you talking about?

MR. GALLIUM

Humans made chips-

(dying laughing)

Humans made- humans made chips-
okay- no- humans-

COPPER

Did they make chips?

Copper is losing it too now, both of them cackling, near
teary eyed with laughter.

SNAP CUT TO:

Copper is sitting on the floor, tuning the guitar, watching
Mr. Gallium, who's zoned out standing over the desk staring
out the window.

He starts to play, which catches her attention. As she
stands and listens, Copper sings a slow downbeat version of
the second verse of "No One Is To Blame" by Howard Jones.

When the chorus comes, he replaces "and you want her, and you
want her" with the words "and you wonder, and you wonder,"
effectively making the song about Mr. Gallium.

Mr. Gallium is a nuclear physics PhD with a dual masters in
Radiology and Cellular Biology, who has spent most of her
adult life in an obsessive homicidal fugue. But she's a
little moved by the song, and awkwardly applauds at the end.

SNAP CUT TO:

They're both sitting on the floor now, Mr. Gallium's head in
Copper's lap. He's absentmindedly petting her hair.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Imagine you're a kid coming home from school. And you've had such a good day, and then you get home and you find out mommy's not coming home today. Mommy was in the city and a bad man named Mr. Gallium set off a bomb and mommy died.

Mr. Gallium is quiet. Her eye slightly twitches, but then she shakes her head.

MR. GALLIUM

Imagine you're a father. And your son has leukemia. He's terminal, getting weaker every day. There's no hope. And then you get the news: we cured leukemia. Your son is coming home. And you'll never have to worry because we cured all diseases. There's a new machine, and it's going to make everyone into a superhero.

Copper lets this sit. For the sake of it, for the first time, he seems to give what she's saying real consideration.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

You were right. In the car. What you said. I made a bad call, I did the wrong thing. They're never going to listen to me. But I can't turn back or it all disappears, that beautiful future, poof, evaporates. So I have to do it again and again until it works. This is the road I'm on. I can't turn back. Those are the stakes.

Copper processes this, hears the sanity and the insanity mixing together, then sighs, looking up, and thinks aloud:

COPPER

I wish I cared about one thing even just half as much as you care about the Kim-A4.

Mr. Gallium listens with interest, sitting up.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I've spent my whole life getting backed into corners.

(MORE)

COPPER (CONT'D)

Maybe if I had what you have,
whatever you want to call
it...passion or insanity or
whatever it is...

He trails off.

MR. GALLIUM

(beat)

I see it, you know? When I see it,
it just takes over everything and
there's nothing else.

COPPER

Oh yeah, I can't imagine having
what you had and throwing it away.
You were successful, a genius,
you're beautiful...and then just-

MR. GALLIUM

You think I'm beautiful?

Copper is confused for a moment, and notices Mr. Gallium looking at him expectantly. She sits up further, putting her hands on his thighs and leaning in.

Copper processes how intimately she's touching him, but his reaction is unreadable. She lets the silence hang, and then:

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

(beat)

I haven't had sex in ten years.

She stares at him. Smiles slightly. Are they going to...? There's something there, maybe for a moment, but Mr. Gallium reads a social cue for once.

Copper is afraid. She's hurt, but hides it.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

You don't have to be afraid of me.

Mr. Gallium turns, leaning against Copper, her eyes distant. The moment of connection or whatever it was has faded.

We can feel a glimmer of her awareness of how alone she is.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

I'm not going to burn you.

She sits staring off into nothing. Copper gently puts his arm around her.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. Did I make it weird?

There's a beat, and then Copper starts laughing. Elena can't help herself; she starts laughing too.

COPPER
Yeah, that's what made it weird.
Up until now, I thought: I'm so comfortable. But now, I'm like:
this chick is kind of a freak.

Mr. Gallium shakes her head, trying to control her laughter.

CUT TO:

Two hours later. They're both fast asleep, huddled together in the corner of the room.

SNAP CUT TO:

An electrical **CRACK** like a boom of thunder from outside rattles the windows in the mechanics shed. Copper wakes up, shaking off the sleep, and Mr. Gallium sits up beside him.

Her eyes are back to completely normal. She looks...human.

EXT. ABANDONED AIR STRIP - MOMENTS LATER

Copper and Mr. Gallium walk out onto the airstrip, to see that the archway is activated.

FADEL AHMAD, 50s, a distinguished looking Emirati man in traditional kandura and ghitrah, stands waiting on the tarmac. Behind him are five dangerous looking mercenary security guys with assault rifles, as well as three nurses, and a professional looking

VALET, 20s, Fadel Ahmad's assistant. She stands close to the arch, through which we can see a night sky, and a clean, hospitable environment.

FADEL AHMAD
I'm sorry about the wait. What
have you two been doing out here?

Mr. Gallium and Copper falter. Mr. Gallium awkwardly tries to fix her hair so it looks less like she just got high.

COPPER
(beat)
Just hangin' out.

FADEL AHMAD
...Okay. Dr. Cristenson, right
this way.

Mr. Gallium walks towards the arch, immediately being
intercept by the nurses, who offer her bottled water and help
her onto a gurney.

Copper moves to follow, the Valet steps in his way, calling
back over her shoulder.

VALET
Chair! Chair please!

She stops Copper with her arm.

VALET (CONT'D)
Sir, if you could just wait out
here for a moment.

COPPER
I go where Gallium goes-

VALET
Mr. Gallium is our priority, we
will address you shortly. Is there
anything I can get for you?

They roll the gurney through the archway. Gallium is gone.

COPPER
What?

VALET
It's sunny out! Here, take these.

The valet hands Copper her sunglasses.

COPPER
Oh, uh, thank you.

VALET
Anything to drink, eat? We have
nuts, pineapple, I can make you a
mojito from the bar?

COPPER
Uhh...

MOMENTS LATER...

Copper sits in a big comfortable chair, eating nuts and
sliced pineapple and drinking a mojito in his new sunglasses.
He looks chilled the fuck out.

Fadel Ahmad approaches from behind him. Copper, seeing him, sits up and hesitantly smiles.

FADEL AHMAD
So. Who are you?

COPPER
I'm one of Bretniev's guys-

FADEL AHMAD
Bretniev? Sorsi Bretniev?

COPPER
No, no, his son, Aleksei. I'm a driver, you know, pick up work from the family.

FADEL AHMAD
You're a thug.

COPPER
(beat, smiles)
Yeah. I hope that's not a problem.

FADEL AHMAD
No!
(laughs)
Quite the opposite. I was concerned you were one of Elena Cristenson's devotees, those mad men that help her set off bombs.

Copper shakes his head, laughs, but that's a little strange..

COPPER
But...I mean aren't you her friend?

FADEL AHMAD
Her *friend*? No, certainly not. My name is Fadel Ahmad, I work in biotech in Qatar. I met the doctor before she became...whatever she is now. We thought her Kim-A4 technology was very promising, very exciting stuff. But we never had the chance to invest before...

Fadel gestures, indicating "mass murder," disappointed.

COPPER
(quietly)
Just needed a few more tests.

Fadel nods sadly.

COPPER (CONT'D)

So now what? You're risking your ass here, too, this place is crawling with feds, cops, militias-

FADEL AHMAD

Yes, and they say one of your American "super-heroes" is on his way, too.

(disdain)

An ugly cultural phenomenon. Our times are filled with superheroes, perhaps because it seems like we have no *normal* heroes left.

COPPER

...So, why, then? You came so far, just to save her?

Fadel looks legitimately surprised, and laughs.

FADEL AHMAD

We're not saving her. We're collecting her. For parts.

COPPER

...what?

FADEL AHMAD

Dr. Cristenson is a liability. Her mind is dangerous. But her body...priceless. The things we could learn, things we could build.

COPPER

Wait, I'm- you- okay- you mean you- You want to dissect her?

FADEL AHMAD

Yes.

Copper processes.

FADEL AHMAD (CONT'D)

You have some kind of moral objection?

COPPER

She's a human being.

FADEL AHMAD

She's a murderer. She burns people alive. She wouldn't hesitate to do the same to us.

Copper is about to respond, but oh shit, good point Fadel.

FADEL AHMAD (CONT'D)

Don't let my accent fool you, I'm a businessman, not a terrorist. She is worth not millions, but billions. She can affect real change in the world.

(beat)

All she has to do is die.

(sighs)

This is a matter of opportunity. There's nothing sinister about it.

COPPER

You're gonna cut up a woman into little pieces and your line is, "there's nothing sinister."

Fadel laughs, then smiles.

FADEL AHMAD

You say you have no loyalty to her, and yet you seem upset by the thought of her demise. Is it simply a greater moral objection, a benevolent concern for all mankind?

Now it's Copper who laughs. The question hits him just right, and even though he should still be wary, he seems to relax a tiny bit and answers honestly.

COPPER

I don't fuckin' know, man. I don't know how I feel about any of this. It's all way beyond my- you know- pay-grade. I just want a way out, man. Can you do that for me?

FADEL AHMAD

We're not going to hurt you. But we're not here to rescue anybody. My most sincere apologies.

COPPER

Apologies, I've been getting a lot of those, lately.

(sighs)

You're just gonna leave me out here? Doesn't seem fair.

FADEL AHMAD

There's a saying in Qatar, "Life's not fair."

COPPER

(beat)

Yeah, we got that one here, too.

FADEL AHMAD

My friend, in truth? I think they have it everywhere.

(beat)

How about a cigarette?

Copper's eyebrows raise. He's been looking for one the whole movie. But his first answer is still:

COPPER

I quit.

(beat)

Okay, yeah.

Fadel takes out a pack of cigarettes and offers one to Copper, who takes it. Fadel then lights the cigarette, and smiles. Copper smiles back.

FADEL AHMAD

(thinks)

Perhaps if we talk a little more, something could be arranged for you. You're right that leaving you here seems...arbitrary.

Copper laughs.

COPPER

Honestly, I'm just fucking exhausted, man-

Suddenly the various electronic and radiological devices set up by the mercenaries begin beeping and screeching.

COPPER (CONT'D)

What's-

An Arabic Ambulance *half engulfed in purple fire* **EXPLODES THROUGH THE TELEPORTATION ARCH, damaging it badly!**

Both Copper and Fadel startle, eyes wide.

FADEL AHMAD

My god.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Oh no.

Several mercenaries, on fire, come running out of the arch, as the other mercenaries open fire on the ambulance, riddling it with holes as it swerves out on the tarmac.

Copper yanks Fadel out of the way of the ambulance, and then has to pull him down again to avoid being hit by the wildly firing mercenaries.

The Valet, burnt but alive, screams from the archway.

VALET
MR. HAMAD! THE GATE IS COLLAPSING!

Indeed, sparks are jetting off of it, and the teleportation window is flickering.

COPPER
No, no no no no come on-

One of the mercenaries approaches Copper, gun raised.

FADEL AHMAD
No, wait-

The mercenary fires and misses, Copper quick-draws the revolver and shoots him in the head.

FADEL AHMAD (CONT'D)
God damn it!

Another mercenary opens fire, and he's **ENGULFED BY A WAVE OF FIRE**- oh fuck Gallium's out of the ambulance, now wearing a medical robe, and she looks pissed.

COPPER
(to Fadel)
Run.

Fadel is in shock, paralyzed, and Copper fires his gun in the air right near him.

COPPER (CONT'D)
RUN! RUN!

Fadel turns, and starts to run back towards the archway. A mercenary moves to cover him, firing on Mr. Gallium.

*He unloads the assault rifle into her chest from ten feet away- the bullets spark off her and she **BLASTS HIM WITH RADIOACTIVE HEAT, MELTING HIM!***

Copper tries to stop her and she *shoves him off, turns and blasts the gate just as Fadel runs through!*

Overloaded, the gate sparks and explodes, collapsing apart.

A single mercenary has been left behind, and he fumbles reload his gun as Mr. Gallium stalks towards him. Copper steps forward, gun raised, the cop in him coming out.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Drop the gun! DROP THE GUN NOW!

The merc pulls the trigger and **MR. GALLIUM BLOWS HIM APART.**

COPPER (CONT'D)
Fuck!

And again, they're alone, with just a couple of burning corpses to keep them company. The sky is big and blue. The wind blows.

Mr. Gallium is breathing hard, eyes wide. She looks, for the first time, scared.

Copper DGAF. Copper mad. Copper pissed da fuck off.

COPPER (CONT'D)
SERIOUSLY? YOU BLEW UP THE GATE.
SERIOUSLY. DOC, YOU ARE- I SWEAR.

MR. GALLIUM
(quietly)
They were trying to kill me.

COPPER
Are you a child? You thought you could trust them, *why!?* How am I supposed talk to you? Cause sometimes you're like this cool collected genius and then other times you're like this fucking cartoon nutjob, and hey, **YOU JUST BLEW UP OUR ONLY WAY OUT OF HERE.**

MR. GALLIUM
They were trying to *kill me!*

COPPER
Have you interacted with anyone who HASN'T tried to kill you lately? How can you possibly be so naive-

MR. GALLIUM
(screams)
SHUT UP! SHUT THE FUCK UP! SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

Copper is shocked. Mr. Gallium doesn't seem crazy, or maniacal: we are now witnessing someone who's freaking out.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

I'm not naive! Don't condescend to me! You think that I'm what, LESS invested in surviving than you are? FUCK YOU! SHIT! SHIT! I BLEW UP THE GATE! SHIT! AGHHHH!

Mr. Gallium pulls her own hair, shaking with frustration.

COPPER

You know, if you really believed your philosophy, you'd have just let them cut you open. So you could contribute to that utopia you're so intent on-

MR. GALLIUM

OH PLEASE. Now who's naive!? You think those shithheads are what, great pillars of altruism? YOU WANT THE WORST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TO BE IN CHARGE OF WHO HAS SUPER POWERS? You want Russian oligarchs giving what I have to their sons as a birthday present? What'd they offer you?

COPPER

They didn't have a chance to offer me anything because SOME PSYCHO STARTED LIGHTING THEM ON FIRE!

MR. GALLIUM

WELL FUCK ME FOR SAVING MY OWN LIFE, RIGHT?

COPPER

YEAH, MAYBE. FUCK YOU, MAYBE.

MR. GALLIUM

OH I SHOULD DIE? AND TO THINK AFTER ALL THE EFFORT POOR YOU HAD TO SPEND TO KEEP ME ALIVE!

COPPER

Is that sarcasm!? THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT, NOT MINE! AND I HAVE BEEN LIVING AND DYING FOR YOU!

MR. GALLIUM

YOU DON'T GIVE A FUCK ABOUT ME! No one does!

Mr. Gallium **screams**. Copper is so startled he jumps backwards. But she's long gone, and screams AGAIN, and then again, and then turns and **flings a wave of radiation that** blows apart the comfy chair Copper was sitting in.

She's breathing hard, and screams again, eyes wide.

COPPER

...Hey, are you- are you okay-

MR. GALLIUM

I'm having a panic attack.

COPPER

Okay, slow your breathing down...

Copper goes to Mr. Gallium, who's trembling. He puts his hands on her arms gently.

MR. GALLIUM

Don't touch me-

COPPER

I used to have panic attacks.

Mr. Gallium stares at the burning gate.

MR. GALLIUM

Oh no. Oh no, what are we going to do? Oh no. Oh no.

COPPER

In through the nose, out through the mouth. Count with me to ten.

Together they count to ten. Mr. Gallium nods, focusing again. It takes her a second, but she finds her calm self.

MR. GALLIUM

How many bullets do you have left?

COPPER

Five in the rifle, the revolver, uh-

He takes out the ancient revolver and looks in the chamber.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Two.

Mr. Gallium nods, and then:

MR. GALLIUM

The key.

COPPER
The key- the key!

MR. GALLIUM
Do you still have the key?

Copper takes it out. He's still got it. Mr. Gallium seems to silently make a decision. She stands up, walking towards the ambulance.

She waves her hand and all the fires on it go out.

COPPER
What's the key for? You got some kind of base out here? And if so why was that not our first stop?

Mr. Gallium says nothing. She seems totally focused, getting up into the ambulance.

MR. GALLIUM
This time I'm driving.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - OPEN ROAD

Copper sits in the back of the ambulance; the fire blast from inside has blown a massive hole, essentially giving the back of the ambulance a big panoramic window.

Through it, Copper sees a water tower in the middle of nowhere. As they drive by, they see people hanging up a home-made banner:

WELCOME MIRACLE!!!

Uh oh. This feels like some third act type shit.

COPPER
Where are we going, Mr. Gallium?

MR. GALLIUM
One more test.

Copper looks like: uh-oh. But then he notices something even more alarming than Mr. Gallium's homicidal fixation:

A police car.

Then several more, coming off side roads as they pass them. Cop cars and unmarked government vehicles on the side of the road, just sitting and waiting, join in following the ambulance as it drives.

Helicopters are visible in the distance. Now armored personnel carriers are coming out onto the road. Fire trucks. SWAT vans.

They're leading a parade of dozens of law enforcement vehicles down a road in the middle of nowhere.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
Why aren't they trying to pull us over?

COPPER
Isn't it obvious?
(flatly)
They're scared of you.

There's a beat and Copper searches the sky with his eyes.

COPPER (CONT'D)
They're waiting for someone who isn't.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE

The ambulance drives up a dirt driveway towards a ranch house. It's certainly the cleanest and most welcoming environment we've been to so far, in this dirty, desperate movie.

The government vehicles don't come in with them, instead beginning to establish a perimeter. Copper watches them from the back of the ambulance. But then he's distracted.

A golden retriever has appeared, smiling, barking, running alongside the ambulance.

He stares at the dog, and then touches his forehead, dizzy. His head hurts. He rubs his eyes, and again sees his nose is bleeding, as the ambulance rolls to a stop in front of the

RANCH HOUSE

Mr. Gallium gets out, staring up at the house. It's a nice two story, that looks well kept, homey. There's a barn and a garage. Plants in pots on the porch.

Copper stumbles out, taking a moment to collect himself, and then follows Mr. Gallium up onto the porch, dodging the Golden Retriever which is jumping around barking excitedly.

Mr. Gallium extends a hand, confusing Copper.

MR. GALLIUM

The key.

COPPER

What is this place?

MR. GALLIUM

The key.

Copper hands her the key, and she unlocks the front door.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Gallium enters, Copper following her, as they walk through the nicely appointed hallway.

COPPER

Whose house is this? Is this your house, whose house is this-

Mr. Gallium's about to respond, but then she hears something. A TV is on, showing news about Mr. Gallium being cornered at a farm in rural Texas.

MR. GALLIUM

No, oh no! Oh no oh no oh no-

She rushes to the edge of the living room, where they see...

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

Mom. Dad.

(beat, fixes her hair)

I thought you were in Idaho.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN

MRS. CRISTENSON, 60s, a confident, kind woman, sits at the kitchen table across from her daughter, Mr. Gallium.

MR. CRISTENSON, 60s, stands in the doorway, looking at his family at the kitchen table, but keeping back. He seems less forceful than his wife, more unsure.

Copper leans against the wall. His eyes are wide as fuck. He has no idea what to expect or what's going to happen next.

MRS. CRISTENSON

(beat)

It's not true.

Mr. Gallium sits in silence, looking away.

MRS. CRISTENSON (CONT'D)
 You're not Mr. Gallium.
 (beat)
 He's a criminal- he's a terrorist.
 He's a man, for goodness sake.

Mr. Gallium doesn't respond. Over in the corner, Copper notices a framed photograph. Mr. Gallium, age 7, at this very same kitchen table, sitting across from her mother.

Just as they are now.

Mrs. Cristenson leans slightly, trying to force her way into her daughter's field of view.

MRS. CRISTENSON (CONT'D)
 What they're saying, it's a mistake. Or they're...Confused, somehow. You didn't- Elana, you wouldn't hurt anybody, you wouldn't have...killed all those people.
 (beat)
 You're sweet, you're good.

Mr. Gallium stares at the clock on the wall, trying very hard not to look at her mother.

MRS. CRISTENSON (CONT'D)
 You're a good girl. You're not some...they're showing the families crying on TV, you wouldn't do that. You wouldn't do that, I know you. You're just...you're just misunderstood, you-
 (beat)
 You're a scientist, and all those problems, those were just teenage things! You were doing so well-

MR. GALLIUM
 Mom.

MRS. CRISTENSON
 Okay so tell me, tell me now it's not true, you're not- I'm so proud of you, at Harvard, we told everybody how you'd gotten it together, you wouldn't hurt anyone-

MR. GALLIUM
 Mom.
 (beat)
 The problems- the problems kind of came back.

This lands hard. Whatever these problems were...Mr. Gallium is crying. Mrs. Cristenson is crying. Mrs. Cristenson searches her daughter's face.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
I- they wouldn't give me my grant.

MRS. CRISTENSON
(long beat)
That was ten years ago.

MR. GALLIUM
They wouldn't give me my grant and
I had to- prove it-

For the first time, Mr. Gallium seems to hear herself as she recites her super-villain origin, forced to process what she's saying as she sees the reaction on her mother's face.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
I was right, about Kim-A4, it- it
can help people and- nobody would
listen and- they hurt my feelings-

She's fully crying now, forcing the words out.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
And the problems came back, and my
brain was just going and going, and
if they just trusted me and
believed in me no one would have to
get hurt, but they wouldn't listen,
so I had to- do more tests and-

Mrs. Cristenson takes a shuddering, terrified breath.

MRS. CRISTENSON
(realizing)
Oh my god. No, no baby. Elana,
stop. Stop.

MR. GALLIUM
I had to- I- they wouldn't listen-

MRS. CRISTENSON
All those people. You killed all
those people.

MR. GALLIUM
Mom please- I was- you understand I-

MRS. CRISTENSON
I don't understand.

Mr. Gallium finally fully breaks down, sobbing. Her mother just stares at her across the table in horror.

MR. GALLIUM
*Please- Please- you don't
 understand- please don't hate me
 mom, please, you don't understand!
 Please! Please!*

Mr. Gallium is hoarse, now. She hangs her head, sobbing.
 Mr. Cristenson looks to Copper.

MR. CRISTENSON
 What do we do?

LOL OMFG HAHAAHAHAHA SERIOUSLY!? says Copper's face but he just barely manages to hold it in.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - MR. GALLIUM'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM

We're in Mr. Gallium's childhood bedroom with Copper, taking a moment to collect his thoughts. Soccer trophies. Science fair photos.

Copper sits on the edge of the bed. He notices something under the bed, a digital camera covered in dust, still plugged into the wall.

He picks it up, and wipes the dust off. Turns it on, and flips open the screen. Looks in the gallery at the most recent video.

A **ten year old Mr. Gallium** sits on the foot of the bed, right where he's sitting now. She picks up a guitar.

10 YEAR OLD MR. GALLIUM
 Okay so this is- take two, now.
 Take two. TWO!

She holds up two fingers, and then strums the guitar.

10 YEAR OLD MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
 Sorry it's like- it's not perfectly
 in tune. La la la...okay. Okay!

She begins to play. At first she gets some notes wrong but then settles into a cover of "The Way" by Fastball. She's not bad.

As little Gallium's cover plays, we segue into a montage...

A GOVERNMENT
 TRUCK

Young, his arm bandaged and in a sling, is handing out combat shotguns to armed SWAT team members in Haz-Mat suits.

SAUDI ARABIA

Fadel Ahmad is washing ash off himself in a shower. He towels off, and is greeted by several dangerous looking tattooed men. He nods.

THE CRISTENSON
LIVING ROOM

Mr. Gallium is laying on the couch, looking miserable. Her mother comes and sits next to her, putting a hand in her lap. Mr. Gallium clutches her hand.

LITTLE GALLIUM'S
BEDROOM

Copper looks at the different artifacts of Gallium's past, finally settling on one picture he can't look away from.

It's Mr. Gallium, age maybe eight, dressed in a Darth Vader costume on Halloween.

MR. CRISTENSON

She always liked to wear the boy costumes.

Copper looks up. Mr. Cristenson stands in the doorway. Copper quickly turns off the video of little Gallium.

MR. CRISTENSON (CONT'D)

We had never had someone like that in the family. Someone smart, you know. Just good at everything, it seemed like. We thought she was going to win the Nobel prize or something. Everyone did.

Copper doesn't know how to react, so he just nods. Mr. Cristenson approaches him a little bit, speaking more quietly, as though he doesn't want anyone to hear.

MR. CRISTENSON (CONT'D)

When she had her...issues, well we never had anything like that either. So we didn't...maybe we didn't know how to handle it, someone that smart, with those kinds of problems.

(beat)

(MORE)

MR. CRISTENSON (CONT'D)

They prescribed her medication and she'd take it, and then she'd seem better and she'd go off, then there'd be something that came up and she might...go again, so she'd take the medicines again, but then she'd feel better and go off.

(beat)

Got to a point where she was an adult, we couldn't tell her what to do. And we just, you know, we didn't, we didn't...

(frustrated)

We didn't want her to feel like we thought she was crazy.

(horrificed)

We thought that was the right thing to do. So are we...Are we a part of it? I always to be so supportive of her, no matter what. Because maybe my dad wasn't- so supportive of me, but can you be too supportive? Should we have let her fail more, maybe. Just to get used to it. Maybe we should have..

COPPER

Hey. Don't think like that.
Doesn't do you any good.

Mr. Cristenson nods. Copper, instinctively, hugs him, and they stand like that for a while.

MR. CRISTENSON

Thank you.

COPPER

For what?

MR. CRISTENSON

Taking care of her.

Copper has no idea how to process that one.

COPPER

Man, you, uh...you got any cigarettes?

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - EVENING

It's starting to get a little darker out. Copper stands alone at the edge of the yard, adjacent to a big field. He watches the cows in the field.

On the horizon, he can see a constellation of dozens of blinking red lights in the sky. Helicopters, both civilian and military. Probably being kept back at a safe distance.

He smokes and thinks, a cool breeze blowing. He hears a noise, and turns. It's a roadrunner. He stares at it. It can't be the same one.

It just can't, right? But still. Crazy. Something startles it, and the roadrunner *dashes away*.

A slight breeze ruffles Copper's hair. After a beat, he blows a long exhale of smoke. Then turns and sees-

THE MIRACLE IS STANDING RIGHT BEHIND HIM. Between him and the house. Copper barely reacts.

THE MIRACLE

Hello.

Copper looks at him, unreadable.

THE MIRACLE (CONT'D)

You look like you've been through hell.

COPPER

Yeah.

THE MIRACLE

You're a good driver. I thought you'd gotten away from me for a minute there, in New York.

(beat)

You worked for Gallium long, or-

COPPER

No, actually, not at all. As a point of fact, I've never worked for her. I'm an undercover police officer with the Washington DC Police Department. I was deep in the east coast side of the Bretniev connection, smugglers. They assigned me to her for one job.

The Miracle does a double take, trying to figure out if Copper is serious. He looks legitimately shocked.

THE MIRACLE

Whoaaaaaaa. Are you joking?

COPPER

No, not at all. You flew in and in all that chaos everyone I had been surveilling for years *died*. So you ruined my life, basically, is what I'm getting at.

Copper can't help but laugh, but the Miracle looks sad.

THE MIRACLE

I- shit, I'm sorry. I couldn't let Cristenson set off those bombs.

COPPER

Yeah but one still got set off though, didn't it.

THE MIRACLE

It's a tragedy.

COPPER

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

(beat)

I wonder if it was avoidable.

The Miracle eyes Copper, trying to get a read on him.

THE MIRACLE

Why didn't they pull you out?

COPPER

I don't fucking know, man. They don't know how to handle her.

THE MIRACLE

Do you?

COPPER

(laughs)

No. I'm smart enough to know that that's impossible.

The Miracle smiles, confident.

THE MIRACLE

Well. I've had some success in that department-

COPPER

(sharply)

Have you though?

The Miracle's surprised at Copper's tone. Maybe Copper is, too. There's a beat, the two men staring at each other. Copper shrugs.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Cause just, from an outsider's perspective, your way, of you know, punching her in the face? Hasn't worked out great, long term.

The Miracle looks at the ground, and then back at the house.

THE MIRACLE

You wait out here. I'll go in the house and finish this-

COPPER

Nah, you're not going in there.

THE MIRACLE

...Why not?

COPPER

Her parents are in there. She's already all fucked up. You go in there, more people will just get hurt for no reason.

The Miracle regards Copper, thinking about this deeply.

THE MIRACLE

So...what, you think I'll just...let her go? And that's the way to protect people? Because-

COPPER

Maybe let the real authorities handle this? People with badges and training. Without masks. You're not a cop. You're not a cop. You're just some guy who got, what- meteor powers, how did your shit work again? There's too many superheroes these days, I get you all mixed up.

(sighs)

Like just...fuck off.

THE MIRACLE

"Fuck off?"

COPPER

Yes. Fuck off and go home.

The Miracle starts laughing, and Copper laughs too. The laughing slowly stops.

COPPER (CONT'D)
I'm going back inside.

THE MIRACLE
Don't. Don't be an idiot.

COPPER
I stay out here, I'm screwed. I'm sick, I'm real sick, and I'm an international criminal, haven't you heard? How're you gonna help me? You gonna start a GoFundMe for my release from whatever third world CIA prison they send me to? Nah.
(beat, thinks)
Offer me a better option. That's all I want is options. Please.

THE MIRACLE
...I'm sorry. I can't help you.

That's one too many apologies for Copper.

COPPER
(loooooong beat)
In person you look so fuckin stupid. On TV you look like a big hero. Out here, in the flesh, you look like a halloween costume. You look like a fuckin mascot.
(feeling it)
You're a fuckin- god or whatever, I don't care. You're not *my* god, I didn't choose you, no one did, you weren't elected to be The Miracle. I trained for 2 years to be a cop, how long did you "train" to do this, or were you just some dickhead who got lucky?
(occurs to him)
And you know, for all everybody shit talks about her in there, I don't see you out there trying to give *your* powers away.

The Miracle doesn't respond, just bites his lip and looks into the horizon.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I don't need you to tell me what's right and wrong, I can decide for myself. I tried living on your terms, it didn't work out.

(beat)

Now I'm doing things my way.

Copper flicks away the cigarette. The Miracle sighs.

THE MIRACLE

You mean *her* way. That's the thing about people with mental illness, they can draw you in. She's sick, yes. But that doesn't mean she's not a bad person-

Copper laughs in his face and starts to walk past The Miracle, but The Miracle reaches out and puts his hand on Copper's shoulder and-

THE MIRACLE (CONT'D)

They're going to send in a small capture team. You know if they roll in here it'll be a bloodba-

Copper spins and **PUNCHES HIM IN THE FACE- *CRACK.*** He might as well have punched a brick wall, his hand *breaks* and The Miracle doesn't even flinch.

COPPER

AGH! FUCK!

Copper stumbles back, holding his hand.

THE MIRACLE

Jesus, why would you-

COPPER

You *RUINED MY LIFE*. Did you not hear me? YOU RUINED MY LIFE.

The Miracle steps towards him, apologetic, and Copper quick-draws, braces and fires from the hip- Young's **GIANT BEAR KILLING GUN**.

BOOM it hits The Miracle in the stomach at point blank, *the effect is like a sucker punch to the gut from Mike Tyson!*

The Miracle is knocked backwards, instantly collapsing, holding his stomach, wheezing for air, while the recoil sends Copper staggering away.

COPPER (CONT'D)
 This is on you! *This one's on you!*

Copper raises the gun in his good hand, right to the Miracle's face, and *fires*. **The Miracle's head jerks back violently**, and he collapses, face first.

But the recoil is so strong it dislocates Copper's shoulder with a loud CRUNCH-POP, and he falls down too, the gun flying off into the field.

COPPER (CONT'D)
 Agh...ahhh...

Copper now has one hand that's broken on his stabbed shoulder side, and one arm dislocated. He drags himself, face down, for a few feet.

COPPER (CONT'D)
 (muttering)
 Aghhh...STUPID....

The echo of the shot in the field fades. Copper fumblingly sits up. He sees The Miracle, also inch-worming across the ground in pain, dazed.

The Miracle looks up at him, and Copper gets a good view of the damage. The bullet didn't penetrate the skin, but...

It broke the superhero's nose, and maybe his orbital bone; blood pours out of his nostrils, dripping onto the ground.

When he coughs, we can see it also knocked out two of his front teeth; he spits them out onto the dirt.

The Miracle reaches up, and peels the flattened bullet off his face. Weakly, he rolls over, as Copper gets to his feet.

THE MIRACLE
 You just made a big mistake.

COPPER
 Oh I'm SO sure!

Copper spits at The Miracle, who's struggling to get up, and heads to the house. All confidence. Like a gun fighter.

As he approaches, he sees Mr. Cristenson looking at him through the window.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Copper walks in, and immediately the somewhat more introspective tone the movie had been taking IMPLODES as the sheer amount of adrenaline overwhelms Copper, and he slouches against the wall, holding his broken hand.

MR. CRISTENSON

What did he want?

Copper doesn't even respond, just walks straight to the living room, where Mr. Gallium is laying on the couch, despondent. She looks up at him, confused.

COPPER

Can I speak to you for a moment?

Mr. Gallium gets up, and goes to the hallway with Copper.

MR. GALLIUM

What happened?

COPPER

They're coming in here. Soon. And the Miracle's here.

MR. GALLIUM

You're sure?

COPPER

Yeah I just shot him in the face.
I think it really pissed him off.

Mr. Gallium rushes to a window, but the Miracle is gone. Mr. Gallium blinks. Something's gone weird in her eyes.

Copper starts coughing. Really bad now. He's started to look very sick, pale. It's been escalating slowly but now he's consumed by a coughing fit, spitting blood everywhere.

When he recovers, Mr. Gallium is *right next to him*.

MR. GALLIUM

They thought babies couldn't feel pain.

COPPER

...what?

MR. GALLIUM

Doctors thought babies under one year old couldn't feel pain.

(MORE)

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

So all the way up until the 1980s,
they would do surgeries on babies
with no anesthetic-

COPPER

No, listen, not now. Stay focused-

MR. GALLIUM

Science isn't perfect. There are
stumbles and mistakes and-

COPPER

Snap out of it!

MR. GALLIUM

I need the gun.

COPPER

Wh- the gun?

MR. GALLIUM

The antique revolver Dr. Immelman
gave you, I need it now-

Copper looks at her, confused...and then hands over the gun.
She turns and walks right past him.

COPPER

Doc- wait!

She blows past her confused parents, headed to the door to
the basement.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Gallium comes charging down the stairs, focused,
determined. Copper follows, confused.

COPPER

You can't run from this. He's here
now, it's over.

Mr. Gallium goes through the cluttered basement, mostly used
for storage, until she come to a shelf, and pushes it.

MR. GALLIUM

Help me.

Copper hesitates, then helps her push the heavy shelf out of
the way, revealing something under a tarp in a hidden alcove.

COPPER

What is this?

MR. CRISTENSON (O.S.)
What's going on down there?

COPPER
Stay up there Mr. Cristenson.

Mr. Gallium yanks the tarp away, revealing a jagged, unstable looking contraption that looks like a mix of a toaster oven and a car engine.

MR. GALLIUM
Just one more test.

Copper's realizes with horror he realizes:

COPPER
That's a Kim-A4.

MR. GALLIUM
The first one I ever built.
Technically this is the Kim-A1, but
it should still be able to catalyze
with enough heat that it creates a
proton burst.

Copper coughs again, slumping against a shelf of Christmas decorations, eyes wide, head spinning.

Mr. Gallium raises the old revolver, and opens a secret compartment in the grip, drawing a bullet, and throwing the gun back to Copper, who just barely catches it.

She presses a few buttons; several elements of the Kim-A4 device begin humming, glowing, spinning and shaking.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)
It'll be different this time.
You'll see. They'll all see.

COPPER
Is that...no....The bullet. It's
the Francium. That's what you were
in New York to steal.

MR. GALLIUM
(flatly)
I told you I didn't lose.

COPPER
(realizing)
That shit's radioactive, that's-
that's what's been making me sick.
You knew the whole time.

MR. GALLIUM

The gun's made of lead, you only
had minimal exposure-

COPPER

Minimal exposure-

MR. GALLIUM

Not Gallium, not Cesium, not Radon,
Francium! This time it'll work-

COPPER

Don't do this.

MR. GALLIUM

I'm saving us.

COPPER

No you're not. Remember New York?
Remember Seattle and Detroit and
all the other times you've done th-

MR. GALLIUM

That was different.

COPPER

IF YOU SET THAT OFF YOU'LL KILL US
BOTH!

MR. GALLIUM

(screams)

THERE WILL BE MORE TESTS!

She's in full Listerine mode. Talking to her is useless, and
what's worse, something is occurring to Mr. Gallium.

MR. GALLIUM (CONT'D)

Steve! Your name isn't- when I
first met you, *you said your name*
was Jake! Why would you change
your name-

Fuck.

COPPER

Turn off the bomb and we can talk
about it-

MR. GALLIUM

It's not a bomb!

COPPER

What do I say, how do I get through
to you-

MR. GALLIUM
One more test-

COPPER
ELANA YOU'LL KILL YOUR PARENTS.

Mr. Gallium falters and blinks.

COPPER (CONT'D)
You'll kill your own parents.

MR. GALLIUM
They're the subjects. They're the
test subjects-

COPPER
Take a breath, clear your mind-

MR. GALLIUM
It can't be a test with no test
subjects, they'll be gods like me-

COPPER
(suddenly)
I'll stay.

MR. GALLIUM
What?

COPPER
I volunteer, I volunteer as the
test subject for the b- the device.

Mr. Gallium stares at him.

COPPER (CONT'D)
I believe in you. I do, god help
me, I do. I believe you can make
that thing work, so I'll stay. I
choose to be a test subject, I
volunteer my life.

Mr. Gallium stares at him.

COPPER (CONT'D)
But your parents didn't get that
choice. Cause you didn't give it
to them. If there's even a 1%
chance this fails, you burn your
mother and father alive.

Oh wow. Wait, oh my god. That did it. Gallium lowers her
outstretched hand.

As much as she's capable in this state: she's listening.
Copper builds in confidence, moving close to her.

COPPER (CONT'D)

I know it will work. **I know.** But
if there is even a 1% chance. You
know, just for safety.

MR. GALLIUM

(beat)

For safety.

Mr. Gallium sort of...flinches. And then: she turns, and
powers down the machine.

Copper nearly collapses with relief but controls himself.

COPPER

Yes. Yes, oh christ, thank you-

But the machine is still rattling.

MR. GALLIUM

It's already cycling. But I
haven't mixed in the Francium, it's
going to activate no matter what.

(eyes wide)

I'll try to slow it down. You have
to warn them-

COPPER

Yes, right, warn them, yes-

Copper turns and *sprints to the stairs*. She calls after him.

MR. GALLIUM

Tell them...I'm sorry.

Copper processes this, and then chooses his response:

COPPER

It's gonna work. You'll be able to
tell them yourself.

Mr. Gallium appreciates this more than words can express, but
her brow furrows. Somewhere inside her, she knows
something's wrong. She's not what other people say she is.

She's not "MR. GALLIUM."

ELANA Cristenson stands, the wallpaper peeling and burning,
the machine sparking behind her, looking deranged, a mad
scientist in her lab, standing over a ticking dirty bomb.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Copper comes bursting out of the basement, eyes wide and panicked, his false calm demeanor completely gone.

COPPER

MR. CRISTENSON! MRS. CRISTENSON!
You have to get out of the house,
right now, right now-

MR. CRISTENSON

What's happening, what's that noise-

COPPER

*She has one of her bombs set up in
the basement, this whole fucking
place is gonna burn!*

MRS. CRISTENSON

No- no-

COPPER

GO NOW, GO!

Both of them just stand there staring at him, and so Copper turns and picks up the rifle he's left on the table and *fires it into the ceiling*, startling the Cristensons into action.

He herds them towards the door, the dog barking and jumping.

COPPER (CONT'D)

You can't help her. No one can.

MRS. CRISTENSON

She's my daughter.

COPPER

Anyone who gets close to her is
going to die. Please believe me.

Mr. Cristenson takes her hand, and even as she slightly resists, he leads her out the front door...

Where we can see three armored vehicles arriving, kicking up dust, the haz-mat suited special forces piling out.

COPPER (CONT'D)

Go to them! Run!

Copper watches the Cristensons go. He stands in the open door, staring out.

Then he looks back at the door to the basement. Then the open door again. He realizes: he can escape. He can leave.

He walks to the open door-

COPPER (CONT'D)
Ah fuck it.

-and *closes it*, turning to walk back towards the basement-

COPPER (CONT'D)
ELANA! ELANA, WE HAVE TO-

The Miracle CRASHES THROUGH THE CEILING, landing in front of Copper in a cascade of dust and debris.

Copper fires the rifle directly into The Miracle's neck. The bullet just plinks off harmlessly and destroys a lamp.

Copper pulls the bolt, loading a new shell as The Miracle calmly walks towards him. He fires again BANG- *plink* this time the bullet ricochets off and shatters a family photo.

COPPER (CONT'D)
Wait- wait wait wait-

The Miracle grabs Copper's nose and breaks it.

COPPER (CONT'D)
AGHH-

The Miracle just holds Copper there by his bleeding broken nose as he struggles, like an adult fighting with a child.

COPPER (CONT'D)
AGHHHH! FUCK YOU YOU FUCKIN BULLY-

THE MIRACLE
You chose this. You made this happen. Now *where is sh-*

Mr. Gallium ***COMES OUT OF NOWHERE***, grabbing the Miracle and LIGHTING HIM ON PURPLE FIRE.

He staggers back, Elana moving protectively in front of Copper, who falls, leaning on her, as she leads him back towards the basement door-

But the Miracle, covered in smoke but no longer on fire, *grabs her by the hair and shoves her into a wall of family photos and just starts UNLOADING ON HER*, huge, haymaker punches that *crack the plaster*, drive her into the wall, and send the photos tumbling onto the floor WHAM WHAM WHAM-

Every single one of these punches would easily kill a normal human being. Copper leaps onto the Miracle's back, and the Miracle shrugs him off like nothing.

Blood in her eyes, her face bruised and beaten, Elana tries to attack one more time- and the Miracle grabs her wrist and brutally *backhands her*, knocking her out.

THE MIRACLE (CONT'D)

Sorry. The good guy wins.

The Miracle *flings Elana across the room and through the kitchen window*, sending her unconscious body crashing out into the front yard.

He looks around. Copper's gone. For the first time in this entire movie, we're out of Copper's perspective.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Young, arm still in a sling, now in a haz-mat suit, directs his men to surround the unconscious, beaten Elana Cristenson, guns raised, as her crying parents are shepherded away.

He hops down off the Armored Vehicle, but then, just as he approaches, there's a *crackle of electricity*-

And fifteen heavily armed **MERCENARIES** wearing teleportation packs **zap in** right at the center of the government group, guns raised, Fadel Ahmad at their center.

They have the government agents dead to rights. There's panicked shouting from both groups. Mexican stand-off. If one person shoots, this is an instant massacre.

Young takes cover.

FADEL AHMAD

NOBODY MOVE!

YOUNG

The fuck- Who the fuck are you?

FADEL AHMAD

There is no need for violence!

YOUNG

Identify yourselves, now!

FADEL AHMAD

Hand over Dr. Cristenson!

INT. RANCH HOUSE - THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The Miracle slowly moves down the steps, carefully moving through the basement. He hears something outside:

Gunfire. A lot of it. He stays focused. Moves through the dingy shelves. Until he sees...

Copper, totally fucked up, spitting blood, having fallen onto the rattling Kim-A4. He is weakly loading the revolver with the Francium bullet, struggling with his broken hand.

THE MIRACLE

...What are you going to do?

COPPER

Just...One more test.

After a beat, he puts the gun to his own head. The Kim-A4 device is rattling, shaking, clearly getting ready to go off.

COPPER (CONT'D)

How much do you know about
Listerine?

Copper turns and *fires the gun into the Kim-A4*.

THE MIRACLE

NO-

The room **FILLS WITH PURPLE FIRE**.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE

The day is weirdly quiet. Elana Cristenson pushes herself up, dazed, to see *dozens of dead people all around her*, riddled with bullets.

Fadel Ahmad is hiding with his only remaining mercenary, behind cover. Young is with two of his special forces, behind an Armored Personnel Carrier, reloading.

Elana, realizes she's caught between them, gets to her feet and **charges her hands**, *swirls of radiation all around them-*

When front door of the house *is smashed into splintered wood* as the Miracle is *thrown through it*. The defeated superhero crash-lands in the driveway, coughing, badly beaten and burnt, smoke rising off of him.

YOUNG

...shit.

Elana looks up and sees...

Copper steps out of the front door, radioactive heat rippling around him, his eyes mutated like hers.

ELANA

I knew it.

Young and Fadel Ahmad realize what's happened.

COPPER

Kinda tingles.

Copper takes a beat, flipping a little disk of flaming energy over his fingers like he used to with his AA chip.

YOUNG

Stand down. Surrender, and turn her in, you'll be a national hero.

FADEL AHMAD

Kill them! Give her to us, you'll be rich beyond your wildest dreams.

ELANA

Protect me. You've seen what it can do. We can change the world.

Finally. Some fucking options. He takes a breath.

SLAM TO BLACK.

CUE: "ISLANDS IN
THE STREAM"