

THE MORPHEUS PROJECT

"In Somnis Veritas"

Pilot

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**INT. COURTROOM - DAY**

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The tip of a pencil strikes a wooden tabletop over and over.

Overlapping voices are heard distantly, as if underwater. *Something* is happening. Bui we're fixated on:

Tap. Tap. Tap. The pencil is wielded by a male hand. Dark skin. Chewed nails. Coiled power in every strike.

Outside this sphere of concentration, SILENCE FALLS.

JUDGE (O.S.)

In consideration of the defense's motion, the prosecution's lack of objection and the endorsement of the victim's wife, I have decided-

TAP. TAP. TAP.

Suddenly, another hand stills the pencil. We look up into the face of a court-assigned, pro bono DEFENSE ATTORNEY.

Behind him, we can see the JUDGE (50s, stern), and two rows of confused JURORS, whispering amongst themselves.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Do I have your attention, Mr. Jones?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Our apologies, Your Honor.

The Judge stares at the DEFENDANT: ELIJAH JONES, 19, black. A street kid in an ill-fitting suit, face closed off. Hard.

JUDGE

I have decided to accept the defendant's plea, end these proceedings, and allow him entrance into the Morpheus Project-

Startled MURMURS from the gallery. A WOMAN'S stark white face stands out from the crowd. This is LAURA BARRERA, 30. Her face is a beacon of loss and shock.

Next to her is SIMON PARSONS, 50s, white, kind-faced and concerned in a perfectly tailored Armani suit.

LAURA

(whispers)

Did I do the right thing?

Her whisper cuts through the gallery, and as Parsons takes her hand comfortingly, Elijah TURNS AROUND.

They lock eyes, hers unforgiving; his flat, like a shark's.

**EXT. PSYCHIATRIC CENTER - DAY**

A grey, run-down state facility outside the city limits. Baltimore lies in the distance. So close yet so far.

**INT. PSYCHIATRIC CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY**

Elijah, now in the flimsy green uniform of a patient, walks between two ARMED GUARDS. Bad attitude firmly in place.

**INT. THE CHAMBER**

The doors slide open and Elijah steps in ahead of his guards. When the doors slide closed, they stay on the other side.

Elijah is alone.

The room is dark, and he squints, looking for people.

ELIJAH

Yo, what's—

The lights BLAZE ON, blinding. As his vision clears he sees:

A POD, roughly the size and shape of a casket. Tubes and wires weaving a complex web on all sides.

And not a single other human being in the room.

Unlike the rest of the decaying facility, everything in here is brand new and state of the art.

Elijah edges closer to the pod and looks inside. It's full of a sickly green gel, filling a body-shaped indentation.

A SPEAKER crackles to life.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

Take off your clothes.

Fury rises quickly to Elijah's surface.

ELIJAH

*Shit* no. No fucking way.

Pause.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)  
Your refusal to comply has been noted. Two refusals will constitute a strike.

ELIJAH  
Three strikes I'm out?

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)  
Only one strike is required for ejection from the program.

ELIJAH  
Shit.

Reluctantly, he peels off the uniform. His naked body tells a story of wear and tear. A healed bullet wound. A long knife scar. Cigarette burns. Ink over all of it.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)  
Step into the pod and lie down.

Elijah hesitates, shivering.

INTERCOM VOICE (V.O.)  
You have thirty seconds to comply.

Elijah pulls himself up the side of the pod and puts his feet into the gel. From his reaction, it's freezing cold.

ELIJAH  
Fuck me. *Fuck me.*

He slides in the rest of the way, keeping his head above the gel so he can breathe.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)  
Submerge your head.

Elijah's eyes are wild with fear.

VOICE (O.S.)  
You have thirty seconds—

He takes a deep breath and SUBMERGES. The pod comes to life.

Wires slide into the gel and attach with tiny NEEDLES to Elijah's face and neck. Tubes and more wires wind around his arms and legs, across his chest. Attaching. Holding him down.

Elijah opens his mouth to protest, and a tube tunnels down his throat. He chokes, flails, then finally SUCKS DOWN AIR.

For a moment, all is still.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

Begin.

In the gel, Elijah breathes slowly, in and out. SEDATION takes hold. His eyes close, leading us into...

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

This sequence is entirely POV, with the ethereal quality of MEMORY.

Complete darkness. The tinkling sound of BREAKING GLASS. Then the slow blurry blinking of EYES OPENING.

We focus on a woman's FACE, peaceful in sleep. It's dark but we recognize her from court: LAURA BARRERA.

Again, the sound of BREAKING GLASS, then HEAVY FOOTSTEPS.

We rise, taking in the bedroom of a successful young couple.

We open the door and step out into—

**INT. LANDING - NIGHT**

The landing at the top of the stairs. We face a large window. But the frame is EMPTY, the glass on the floor.

The wind blows in through the sturdy OAK TREE outside, past—

The dark figure of an INTRUDER in the shadows. We can't see his face. But we can see the moonlight reflect off his GUN.

INTRUDER

STOP. DON'T MOVE, FUCKER.

His voice is low, harsh. A MIRROR on the wall just catches the reflection of our arms being raised.

We speak, in a surprisingly calm male voice.

MALE VOICE

Please. There's no need to hurt me, or anyone else.

INTRUDER

You gonna call the police.

MALE VOICE

But I won't have a description. I can't see you. This doesn't have to go any further than right here.

It's true. We can't make out the intruder's face, and we're not trying to. We're still as ice. The gun wavers.

INTRUDER

I should kill you. I gotta kill you now.

MALE VOICE

You don't have to kill me. You don't have to kill anybody. Ever. You can walk out of here and it'll be like this never happened. There's a better way—

A bang. Too far away to be the gun in front of us. Maybe a car BACKFIRING—

BANG. GUNSHOT. One second later. The intruder's gun smokes.

We spin, catch sight of our face in the mirror. TIME STOPS.

This isn't Elijah's memory. It's JUSTIN BARRERA's, 30. He's Hispanic. Clean cut. Handsome.

With a gaping BULLET HOLE in his temple.

Justin falls to the floor and we stare through his eyes up at the bookcase against the wall as spots fill our vision.

The intruder leans over him, lips moving, but as Justin's world fades, the words are lost.

Suddenly, the bedroom light flicks on, and we see the INTRUDER'S FACE:

Justin's killer is ELIJAH. He's seeing himself, monstrous, through the eyes of his victim.

**INT. CHAMBER**

Elijah's eyes snap open and he SCREAMS against the tube in his throat, but no sound emerges.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

Again.

The pod WHIRRS, preparing for round two.

SMASH TO:

TITLE: THE MORPHEUS PROJECT.

**INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY**

FIVE YEARS LATER.

A claustrophobic two-stall restroom with peeling wallpaper and rotting tile.

Elijah adjusts the same ill-fitting suit he wore to his trial five years ago. He fills it out more at 24 than at 19.

And slowly he realizes the reflection in the mirror isn't his:

It's JUSTIN'S.

Elijah's hands freeze on the buttons. He turns on the tap, splashes water on his face, and looks again:

It's his own face in the mirror. Older. Haunted. Elijah's fingers shake as he smooths his lapels.

**INT. PAROLE BOARD MEETING ROOM - DAY**

Elijah stands nervously in front of the PAROLE BOARD: a seated semi-circle containing a cross section of humanity. Male, female. Young, old. Black, white.

PAROLE BOARD MEMBER #1

Elijah Jones. You've participated in the Morpheus Project program for the requisite five years. Today we decide if you'll be released.

Elijah swallows hard. Focuses.

PAROLE BOARD MEMBER #2

How would you say this program has changed you?

ELIJAH

Before I got here... You musta seen my file. You know everything I did. But now...

His audience leans in.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

I could never hurt another human being again.

There is surprise at his response. Elijah shifts uncomfortably.

PAROLE BOARD MEMBER #3  
That's a bold statement, son.

ELIJAH  
(defensive)  
I ain't- I *don't* have another way  
to say it. I lived Justin Barrera's  
death over three thousand times.

A communal sucking in of breath.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
But I didn't just relive his death.  
They showed me his life. His  
memories. It's like I got another  
voice in my head.

The board looks alarmed.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
Not an actual voice. Just a sense  
of another way to speak, to act.  
To... be. He was a good man.

PAROLE BOARD MEMBER #1  
(pointedly)  
And you killed him.

Elijah has no response to that.

PAROLE BOARD MEMBER #1 (CONT'D)  
You understand, Mr. Jones, that if  
you commit *any* crime after your  
release- whenever that is- you'll  
receive the maximum sentence for  
Mr. Barrera's murder? Life in  
prison, or even death by lethal  
injection?

Elijah stares at his feet. It seems like this guy's already  
decided against him.

ELIJAH  
I understand.

One member leans forward and we recognize him: SIMON PARSONS,  
who sat next to Laura Barrera at Elijah's trial.

SIMON PARSONS  
Mr. Jones, my name is Simon  
Parsons. I'm the CEO of Meadowlark  
Industries. We created the Morpheus  
Project. I only have one question  
for you.

Elijah tenses up, expecting the worst.

SIMON PARSONS (CONT'D)  
 (kindly)  
 Do you have a plan for your life  
 after your release today?

**EXT. CEMETERY - DAY**

LAURA BARRERA, now 35, sits cross-legged on the grass of a peaceful cemetery. Our first chance to really study her: she has a luminous quality that hasn't faded, despite the armor she's forged for herself over the last five years.

She carefully traces the engraved letters of a HEADSTONE:

*HERE LIES JUSTIN BARRERA  
 DEVOTED HUSBAND AND PUBLIC SERVANT  
 1981-2011  
 IN SOMNIS VERITAS*

JULIA (O.S.)  
 (concerned)  
 Laura? Can you hear me?

JULIA REED, 50s, approaches her. She's striking in a power suit, an intimidating, no-holds-barred kind of woman.

Laura surges to her feet, caught out of her reverie.

LAURA  
 Sorry. Yes. Hi, Julia.

Julia puts a hand on Laura's shoulder. Physical affection isn't her strong suit, but she cares enough to try. They stare down at Justin's grave together.

JULIA  
 I can come back if you need more  
 time.

LAURA  
 No, it's okay. It's not like he's  
 going anywhere.

She looks away from Julia's surprised face.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
 Life goes on.  
 (gallows humor)  
 Ob-la-di, ob-la-da.

Julia laughs despite herself, then grows wistful.

JULIA

I go to work every day and still think I might run into him. I miss his ideas, his optimism. He actually believed he could make the world a better place, one criminal at a time.

She clears her throat, trying to dislodge the emotion.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Remembering that makes me a better District Attorney.

LAURA

(uncomfortable)

Well. I'm glad his memory inspires you.

(deep breath)

You must've heard by now. Just tell me.

Julia hesitates, then gives it to her straight.

JULIA

Simon Parsons just called me. Elijah Jones has been released.

Laura gives one short, almost involuntary nod.

LAURA

Now we'll see if Justin was right.

Julia starts to say something, then changes her mind.

JULIA

Come on. You shouldn't be alone.

Julia leads Laura away. Laura glances back at Justin's grave, just once.

She misses a WOMAN, black, slender, WATCHING her intently from behind a gravestone a couple hundred feet away.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ELLWOOD PARK, BALTIMORE - NIGHT**

One of the roughest neighborhoods in Baltimore. Abandoned buildings. Abandoned cars. Abandoned people.

**INT. JEFFERSON STREET TENEMENT - STAIRWELL - NIGHT**

CORA JONES, a tiny, wizened black woman pushing 80, carries two bags of groceries up the last in a series of stairs. She's way too old for this shit.

**INT. JEFFERSON STREET TENEMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Panting, Cora makes it down the hallway and opens the door to her rundown apartment. She looks around suspiciously, making sure no one's lurking behind her.

Then she enters, closing the door quickly. We hear three separate latches lock behind her.

After a moment, Elijah emerges from around the corner.

He walks down the hall. Stares down Jesus on his cross, nailed to her door. Raises his hand to knock.

But he doesn't. He just leaves.

**INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Elijah raps on this door without hesitation. He's drunk, a half-empty bottle of cheap whiskey still in his hand.

The door opens, revealing CARMEN, 22, a feisty Dominican girl with sharp dark eyes and a promisingly plush figure.

CARMEN  
(unimpressed)  
It's you.

**INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Elijah stumbles in behind Carmen.

ELIJAH  
You still in the same place. I  
wasn't sure who was gonna answer  
the door.

CARMEN  
Yeah, I'm still here. You see your  
grandma yet? She's right where you  
left her too.

Elijah just shrugs.

ELIJAH  
You still my girl?

Carmen laughs in his face.

CARMEN  
You been gone five years. FIVE  
YEARS, asshole. Things have  
changed.

He looks her in the eyes.

ELIJAH  
I've changed.

CARMEN  
(snorts)  
Never heard that one before.

He puts his hands on her, waits to see if she'll stop him.  
She doesn't.

ELIJAH  
I'm gonna show you.

He kisses her, hungry. She kisses him back.

**INT. CARMEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

FLASHES:

-Elijah goes down on Carmen, slow and deliberate. Her moans  
rise in pitch and volume...

-Carmen rides Elijah, his hands on her hips...

-He holds her wrists over her head, driving into her, holding  
back til he can't anymore and he comes so hard it hurts.

After, Elijah and Carmen lie next to each other, panting. He  
reaches for her, to hold her.

CARMEN  
Nah, you know I don't like that.

Elijah, hiding his disappointment, lets her go.

CARMEN (CONT'D)  
(giggles)  
Pretty good after five years of  
celibacy.

ELIJAH  
 Good enough to stay the night?

CARMEN  
 You got nowhere else to go, huh?

ELIJAH  
 True.  
 (earnestly)  
 But Carmen—

The door CREAKS OPEN. Elijah JUMPS UP wildly.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
 (harsh)  
 Who's there?!

Two tiny wide eyes look through the crack in the door from about two feet off the ground. This is JOSUA, 2.

JOSUA  
 (frightened)  
 Mami?

ELIJAH  
 (shocked)  
 You have a kid?!

Carmen pulls on a robe, goes to the door and picks up Josua.

CARMEN  
 It's okay, sweetie. This is Elijah.

This seems of little comfort to Josua, in light of the naked stranger in front of him.

ELIJAH  
 Shit.

**INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT — NIGHT**

Elijah, still dressing, comes out of Carmen's bedroom, Carmen and Josua trailing behind him.

CARMEN  
 Just like that, you out?

ELIJAH  
 I'm a *felon*, Carmen. I got a P.O., a record, and a metric shit ton of baggage. I can't be around a kid!

CARMEN  
You said you changed.

ELIJAH  
You're not listening-

CARMEN  
Oh, I'm listening, *pendejo*.

Her tone stops Elijah short.

CARMEN (CONT'D)  
Why'd you come here? Because you  
miss me?  
(beat)  
Because you love me?

No answer. Josua stares at Elijah solemnly.

CARMEN (CONT'D)  
This is me now. I'm a package deal.  
I missed you-

ELIJAH  
Really.

He looks at Josua, too young, too light-skinned to be his.

CARMEN  
-but I don't let guys like you  
treat me like shit anymore. Not in  
front of my son. Get the fuck out.

He goes. He looks back to see Carmen smile into Josua's face,  
and Josua wipe away her tears without comprehension.

Off the SLAM of the door behind Elijah-

CUT TO:

**INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - NIGHT (JUSTIN'S MEMORY)**

Another door SLAMS opens. A drunk couple stumbles in, kissing  
and groping. The boy is Justin (19). He flicks on the light.

GIRL  
Noooo...

He flicks it back off.

JUSTIN  
As you wish.

She giggles. Then stubs her toe.

GIRL

Ow!

JUSTIN

OK, hang on...

A pause, then the strike of a match. Justin lights a candle.

GIRL

Perfect.

They resume kissing. The girl pulls Justin's shirt off and goes for his pants.

JUSTIN

Hey. Hang on.

He stops her gently. In the half-light we recognize—

LAURA. 18 years young.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I don't want to mess this up by going too fast.

LAURA

I'm not going anywhere, Justin. I promise.

*(mischievous)*

Unless I'm just using you for your notes from Crawford's class.

*(off his face)*

Kidding. I'm using you for your body, not your mind.

She kisses him lightly, playfully. Justin walks her backwards to the bed. They fall together.

JUSTIN

OK. Let's do this.

LAURA

*(incredulous)*

"Let's do this?"

*(realizes)*

You've never done it before, have you?

A long pause as Justin considers lying.

JUSTIN

No. You?

LAURA

Once.

(beat)

Twice.

(beat)

Like, twice and a half.

JUSTIN

How does that—

LAURA

(sexy)

I'll show you.

And they lose themselves in each other. It's tender. It's so intimate we want to look away, give them their privacy.

Laura, in the candlelight, as he makes love to her for the first time, is the most beautiful thing Justin's ever seen.

After, he pulls her close, just like Elijah tried with Carmen. Laura molds herself to him, wanting to be held.

It's a perfect moment. But it fades into—

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The last night of Justin's life. Looking at Laura's face, ten years older, in the dark.

**INT. LANDING - NIGHT**

Bang. BANG. Justin spins, falls, dies. Elijah looming over him, a monster. The BOOKCASE in the background.

**EXT. LAWN - SUNRISE**

Elijah JERKS AWAKE. He's been dreaming Justin's memories while sleeping on a well-manicured lawn, his bottle of booze empty next to him.

He looks up at the house in front of him, and we realize he's in someone's back yard. The large oak tree behind the house is strangely familiar.

He hesitates, knowing what he's about to do is wrong. But he climbs the tree, looks inside the house through the large glass window, onto a very familiar landing...

It's JUSTIN'S HOUSE. The inside is different— the BOOKCASE that was spattered with Justin's blood as he died is GONE, replaced with what looks like a collection of first graders' art projects on a table. Elijah frowns.

He climbs a little higher in the tree and forms a GUN with his thumb and forefinger and points it through the window, taking aim at where Justin once stood.

At that moment, LAURA, clad only in panties and a camisole, EXITS the bedroom, yawning.

Elijah FREEZES, still pointing his finger gun, now straight at Laura. If she goes down the stairs, there's no way she'll miss him through the glass window in the morning light.

But instead she crosses the landing and closes the bathroom door behind her.

Elijah shimmies down the tree so fast he scrapes his palms into bloody pulp.

**EXT. CHARLES VILLAGE, BALTIMORE - SUNRISE**

Elijah runs down the street as fast as he can, too fast, his breathing jagged and harsh and terrified.

**EXT. CHARLES VILLAGE, BALTIMORE - DAY**

Several hours later. We get a better look at Charles Village in broad daylight; the Park Slope of Baltimore. Young moms, nice cars, bright colors.

**EXT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - DAY**

Laura emerges from a blue Prius.

NYASHA (O.S.)  
Mrs. Barrera?

NYASHA MARTIN, 28, black, is waiting outside the house. Her skinny frame is tucked uncomfortably into a cheap suit.

Laura doesn't recognize her but we do: the woman watching Laura at the cemetery.

LAURA  
Yes?

NYASHA  
I'm Nyasha Martin. I'm a reporter.

Laura tenses.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

I just have a couple questions,  
about the Morpheus Project.

LAURA

It's not a good time. Or a good  
subject for me.

NYASHA

Please.

Her face is purely earnest. Laura sighs.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Laura pours them each a cup a cup of coffee in her warm,  
sunlit kitchen. Nyasha writes in a battered NOTEBOOK.

NYASHA

What inspired Justin to come up  
with the Morpheus Project?

LAURA

He really, truly believed in the  
idea of rehabilitation. And he was  
a big reader, scientific journals,  
Psychology Today. I don't know what  
put it all together for him,  
exactly. He had one of those brains  
that just made these incredible  
leaps.

(she laughs)

Didn't always go well. One time he  
tried to make gefilte fish tacos.  
Disgusting.

Laura's warming up. She hasn't talked, really talked, about  
Justin in awhile. Nyasha smiles, but steers them back.

NYASHA

So Justin came up with the idea,  
and took it to Simon Parsons. Why?

LAURA

Simon's company owns and operates  
every prison on the Eastern  
Seaboard. He agreed to fund the  
program on a trial basis. Without  
Simon, no Morpheus Project. You  
should try his office—

NYASHA

Do you know how Justin picked them?  
The subjects?

Nyasha grips her pen tightly.

LAURA

Very carefully, using pretty  
specific criteria. Like age,  
intelligence, what prisoners stood  
to lose...

NYASHA

Like children?

LAURA

(curiously)

Sure, I think children could've  
played a part. Justin loved kids. I  
think he would've been—

She swallows, painfully. They've veered into dangerous  
territory.

LAURA (CONT'D)

He and Simon brought on a team of  
psychiatrists to determine which of  
the victims' memories to use, what  
order, how many times—

Nyasha knows this, and it's not why she's here.

NYASHA

Have you been tracking the results  
of the Project?

Laura fights to keep her voice steady.

LAURA

I know Elijah Jones was released.

NYASHA

He was the last. The other nine—

LAURA

(cuts her off)

I don't know what happened to them.  
I've been trying to get on with my  
life, focus on—

NYASHA

Four of them are dead.

LAURA  
 (shocked)  
 What?

NYASHA  
 Three wound up back in prison  
 within days of their release. And  
 two more have just- disappeared.

Laura stares at her.

LAURA  
 How the hell do you know all this?

NYASHA  
 (quietly)  
 Because I'm one of them.

For a moment, Laura doesn't move. Then she jumps out of her chair, stumbling towards the door. Nyasha BLOCKS HER.

NYASHA (CONT'D)  
 (desperate)  
 Mrs. Barrera, I'm not here to hurt  
 you! I came here because something  
 is wrong. Terribly wrong.

Laura tries to lunge around her, but Nyasha sees it coming.

NYASHA (CONT'D)  
*Listen to me.* Someone wants  
 Justin's program to fail, wants it  
 so bad they'll kill to make it  
 happen.

She pulls out a picture of a HISPANIC MAN, smiling and holding a BOY, 5.

NYASHA (CONT'D)  
 This is Emilio. Emilio Sandoz. And  
 his son, who doesn't have a father  
 anymore. I want to know *why*.

LAURA  
 And you came to *me* with this? Are  
 you insane? I'm not Justin!

NYASHA  
 Your husband saved me when I  
 thought my life was over. I  
 hoped... maybe now we could help  
 each other.

LAURA

You didn't know Justin. *You didn't know him.* None of you. You're just another—

*(she can't even finish)*

If I call the police, I know what'll happen to you. I know the rules. I call them, you're done.

For a moment, it looks like Nyasha might try to stop her.

NYASHA

No need. I'm gone.

And she leaves.

Laura takes several deep breaths, trying to recover. The house is quiet, still.

Laura notices Nyasha left her NOTEBOOK on the table. She dumps it in the TRASH with such force she knocks the whole thing over, spilling garbage across the floor.

Laura shoves her hand in her mouth to keep from screaming.

**EXT. RITZY APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY**

Elijah stands outside a beautiful apartment building, checking an address on a piece of paper with surprise.

His clothes are wet and dirty after a night on Laura's lawn. But he squares his shoulders and enters.

**INT. RITZY HALLWAY - DAY**

Elijah KNOCKS on 9B. The door opens to reveal CARL LOCKE, 45. He has the look of a powerful man gone slightly to seed and the raspy voice of a lifelong smoker.

LOCKE

Elijah Jones?

ELIJAH

Yeah. You Officer Locke?

LOCKE

You're late.

He takes in Elijah's grass-stained clothes and unpleasant smell. Lets him in.

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

Elijah sits uncomfortably across the table from Locke, who has Elijah's parole file in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other.

LOCKE

Let's be clear. You come here once a week, until the office is clear of that asbestos shit. You're never late again.

He takes a drag on his cigarette.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

You make me look bad and I'll come down on you like a fuckin' anvil. You make me look good, and we'll get along just fine.

Elijah listens while staring at a box of donuts on the counter. Locke follows his glance, narrows his eyes.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Your grandma feeding you?

ELIJAH

What?

Locke points out a line in the file.

LOCKE

You gave her address as your place of residence. If I call on your granny, is she gonna know who the fuck I'm talkin' about?

ELIJAH

(thinking fast)

Man... she over 80. Sometimes she has trouble keeping track of things, you know what I mean?

Locke looks at him cannily.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

I'm taking care of her.

LOCKE

You find a job yet? You know you gotta disclose your status.

ELIJAH

Yeah, I know. Like Jean Valjean.

Locke blinks at him.

LOCKE  
The fuck's a Valjean?

ELIJAH  
He's in a book. *Les Miserables*.  
Victor Hugo.

LOCKE  
(in disbelief)  
You read it?

A long pause.

ELIJAH  
Naw. I guess I never did.

LOCKE  
Right, so you're just a pretentious  
son of a bitch.

Locke gets up.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
Have a job next time I see you.

Elijah rises quickly.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
Hey, Jones...

Locke tosses him a donut. Elijah's so surprised he almost drops it.

ELIJAH  
Thanks.

LOCKE  
You know you can't go within 100  
yards of anyone related to your  
victim, right? Project rules.

Elijah forces himself to sound casual.

ELIJAH  
Yeah, I know.

Locke studies him.

LOCKE  
I don't know exactly what you been  
through, kid.  
(MORE)

LOCKE (CONT'D)

No doubt in my mind you deserved it  
but— I hear stories. People getting  
their heads fucked with. That's  
just...

He struggles to find the right words. Gives up, shrugs, and  
lights up a new cigarette instead.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

(reluctant)

I'm here if you need to talk.

Elijah doesn't know what to say, settles for—

ELIJAH

I'm good.

LOCKE

Then get on outta here.

Elijah books it.

**EXT. DRUID HILL PARK - DAY (JUSTIN'S MEMORY)**

Justin (23) lies next to Laura on a blanket, their bare feet  
entwined. He's reading *Les Miserables*. She wears a yellow  
sundress and is staring at him, itching for attention

JUSTIN

(without looking up)

You're distracting me, LaLa.

LAURA

How many times are you going to  
read that?

JUSTIN

It's important. Everyone in law  
school should have to read it.

LAURA

Wait, it's not actually required?  
The hell are you reading it for?

JUSTIN

Because I'd steal a loaf of bread  
if you were hungry.

LAURA

You're so bizarre.

He flips over and pulls her to him, horsing around but not  
really.

JUSTIN

What if more people could change  
like Jean Valjean did?  
(deep in thought)  
What would it take, to change the  
nature of someone who harms  
everyone around them?

LAURA

They'd have to feel it. *Really* feel  
it.

JUSTIN

Feel what, exactly?

LAURA

The pain they cause.

A light in Justin's eyes. The beginnings of inspiration.

JUSTIN

You're pretty brilliant, you know  
that?

LAURA

(rolls her eyes)  
Obviously.

Justin kisses Laura on the nose... then starts TICKLING her  
fiercely.

Laura shrieks with laughter but those shrieks dissolve into—

**INT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY**

—the cries of a baby outside a cubicle housing the most tired-  
looking WOMAN ever to grace an unemployment office.

UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE WOMAN

There are currently no positions  
available matching your profile.  
Check back in two weeks.

Elijah blinks at her, coming out of Justin's memories.

ELIJAH

But I need a job to keep my parole.

She just looks at him blankly. So what?

**EXT. BIG JOE'S PLACE - NIGHT**

A long-standing bar establishment. It's a weeknight, but some regulars still haunt the place with enthusiasm.

Elijah sidles up to the bar. BIG JOE, black, 30s, well over six feet and aggressively obese, barely looks up.

BIG JOE  
What'll ya have.

ELIJAH  
Gin and-

FLASH TO:

**INT. UPSCALE BAR - NIGHT (JUSTIN'S MEMORY)**

Justin at the bar with friends and coworkers, celebrating.

JUSTIN  
Another tin and gonic!

He's three sheets to the wind. His friends cheer.

FLASH BACK TO:

**INT. BIG JOE'S PLACE - CONTINUOUS**

Elijah snaps out of it.

ELIJAH  
No. Natty Boh.

Big Joe smirks. But it fades the instant he looks up.

It's like he's seeing a ghost.

BIG JOE  
What the fuck are you doing here?

ELIJAH  
Buying a drink. Legally. Five years is a long time.  
(deep breath, goes for it)  
Look, you need any help back there?  
I can clean or carry or whatever-

BIG JOE  
(menacing)  
Get out.

ELIJAH  
The fuck? I ain't done nothin'!

BIG JOE  
You killed a guy. An important guy.  
Hotshot government lawyer.

Elijah leans in.

ELIJAH  
Look, I never told *anyone* you  
crewed me out for that job, not  
even my shitty pro-bonehead-

Big Joe SLAMS his giant hands down on the counter. The bar  
falls silent.

BIG JOE  
You ever say any of those words in  
that order again, I'll pull your  
tongue out through your teeth.  
There ain't no work for you here.  
Not tonight, not never. We clear?

ELIJAH  
(bitterly)  
Yeah, we clear.

BIG JOE  
Don't come back here again, kid.

Elijah studies Big Joe. It's hard to miss the fat man's FEAR.

**EXT. BIG JOE'S PLACE - NIGHT**

Elijah emerges, head down. He walks straight into:

NORM  
Hey fucktard, watch where you're-  
'Lijah?

NORM EARLS, 25, black, a beanpole with a shit-eating grin,  
beams at Elijah.

NORM (CONT'D)  
My brother!

He embraces Elijah hard, they slap each other's backs.

ELIJAH  
Norm, my man. Sup with you? I heard  
you shipped off to the army-

Norm pantomimes firing a machine gun, then laughs.

NORM

(laughs)

Yeah, didn't work out long term.  
But you, I ain't seen you since we  
knocked over that shitty bodega...

He laughs. Elijah doesn't.

NORM (CONT'D)

You were on fire that night bro.  
Asshole didn't have a single  
fuckin' tooth in his fuckin' mouth  
when you finished with him.

FLASH: A PULVERIZED FACE, teeth shattered in the man's mouth.  
He's choking on them, blood everywhere, then a BOOT STOMP-

Elijah SHUDDERS. Norm keeps talking.

NORM (CONT'D)

I had to drag you outta there! You  
were like Rambo or somethin'.

Through the bar window, Elijah can see Big Joe glaring at  
him. Norm takes note.

NORM (CONT'D)

Yo, you hittin' up Big Joe for  
work? Naw man, that well's dry. Let  
me hook you up.

ELIJAH

For real?

A loud, rowdy group exits the bar. Norm lowers his voice.

NORM

Hell yeah, least I can do. Call me  
tomorrow. I'll set you up right.

He scribbles down his number. Elijah hesitates.

ELIJAH

You know I'm out on parole right?  
So is this, you know... legal?

Norm has the gall to look offended.

NORM

'Course it is, asswipe. I know you  
part of that guinea pig farm  
experiment. That shit's serious.

(MORE)

NORM (CONT'D)  
 We go way back so I got your back,  
 ya know what I mean?

ELIJAH  
 (touched)  
 Thanks, man. Really. Thanks.

NORM  
 (laughing)  
 Fuck you, man.  
 (*lisp*ing, *effeminate*  
*voice*)  
 "Is it... legal?"

Elijah laughs too, the first time we've ever seen it.

ELIJAH  
 Fuck you.

Norm strolls into Big Joe's, still chuckling. Elijah starts down the street, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

**EXT. BALTIMORE COURTHOUSE - DAY**

A huge grey stone monument to the legal system, steps filled with lawyers and jurors and citizens of all kinds.

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

Laura sits in Julia's office, which is large but functional—a government office.

Julia eats her lunch behind her desk, talking fast.

JULIA  
 And you're sure it was really her?

LAURA  
 Jesus, Julia, I'm positive! I looked her up. She was released from the Morpheus Project six months ago.

Laura looks at a printed-out article from the web. There's Nyasha Martin, looking harsh and unhealthy in her MUGSHOT.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
 But I have no idea what she did.

Julia looks at the same mugshot on her computer, but with a more complete file attached.

JULIA

She stabbed a hedge fund manager to death for his Rolex. Sold it for heroin.

Laura sucks in her breath.

LAURA

How the hell did she find me? This is *exactly* why I'm not listed.

JULIA

(utterly serious)

I don't know. But I'll find out.

Laura hesitates, then plunges ahead—

LAURA

Why didn't you tell me about the others?

JULIA

What do you mean?

LAURA

Back in jail, missing... Dead. Like Emilio Sandoz.

JULIA

That's privileged information, Laura.

LAURA

Yeah, but it's me, *Julia*. I'm not exactly a casual bystander.

JULIA

I didn't want to disappoint you. I know how much this program meant to Justin. How much it means to you.

Not the answer Laura was looking for. Julia stands up, tosses what's left of her sandwich in the trash.

JULIA (CONT'D)

But I promise, Nyasha Martin will never bother you again. I'll take care of it.

The conversation is clearly over.

**INT. PSYCHIATRIC CENTER - CAFETERIA - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Five years ago.

Elijah, 19, sits at an empty table in a cafeteria. People whisper, but he's too busy staring at his tray to notice.

SLAM. He jumps as a younger Nyasha Martin drops her tray in front of him. She's pale, and not just skinny but gaunt. A recovering junkie.

NYASHA

You another freak?

Elijah says nothing.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

Yeah, you another freak. They got us mixed in with gen pop in here.

She sits across from him.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

He's a real bitch, Morpheus.

Elijah glares at her, says nothing.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

God of dreams? Named this whole misbegotten operation after him.

*(she snorts)*

More like the most realistic fucking nightmare in the world. More like tripping balls and you can't stop.

Elijah eyes the track marks on Nyasha's arms and she pulls down her sleeves defensively.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

You think you got it bad? Try doing Morpheus while they rehab you. Dreams, reality, they all the same. Hell.

Elijah still hasn't touched his food. Nyasha starts eating off his tray.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

But I'm a murderer. You a murderer.

ELIJAH

Bitch, shut up.

She looks up at him, hurt. The anger comes to him fast and hot. His own drug of choice.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Who said you could talk to me? You think because we're both stuck in here, we're the same?

NYASHA

Nah, we ain't the same. Look at you, only caring about yourself. Me, I got a little girl at home waiting for me. And she'll see me in five years, clean, instead of... No needle ever gonna touch me again, not lethal injection, not anything else. We deserve hell, you and me. So *enjoy*.

She stands up, done with him.

NYASHA (CONT'D)

When I get out, I ain't leaving my baby's side for anything. You wanna take this on alone? Be my fucking guest.

CUT TO:

**EXT. DRUID HILL PARK - DAY**

Present day Elijah sits on a bench overlooking the lake. All around him is idyllic activity; bicyclists, kids with balloons, young couples in love.

He looks to his right and sees LAURA sitting next to him in her yellow sundress. She smiles, all light and loveliness.

He smiles back, tentatively. She opens her mouth to speak-

NORM (O.S.)

Hey.

Laura's gone. She was never there. Elijah glances up at Norm.

ELIJAH

Whoa. Was I supposed to dress up?

Norm is nearly unrecognizable in a perfectly tailored suit, complete with pocket square and tie.

NORM

People's perceptions matter,  
Elijah. I look like a respectable  
businessman. What do you look like?

Even his speech is upgraded, his street accent gone. Elijah  
squints up at him.

ELIJAH

I don't get this.

Norm casually pushes aside his jacket, revealing a .357  
MAGNUM.

NORM

And you won't.

**EXT. DRUID HILL PARK - PATH - DAY**

Norm walks very closely behind Elijah, clearly leading him  
with the gun.

ELIJAH

You ain't gotta do this, man.

NORM

I'm getting paid a lot of money to  
do this. Isn't that what you're  
here for? Money?

Elijah looks around, hyper alert. He sees every kid, every  
jogger, every vendor behind a cart. But no one sees him.

ELIJAH

I thought we were friends.

NORM

We were friends. I got better  
friends. Friends that don't want  
you walking, let alone talking. If  
you hadn't gone back to Big Joe's,  
maybe you'd have lived longer.  
Maybe not.

Elijah sees their destination: a tunnel crossing under  
another path. Perfectly dark underneath.

It's now or never.

ELIJAH

(Justin's words)

This doesn't have to go any further  
than right here.

NORM  
 (laughs)  
 Yeah it does.

Elijah gives a sharp ELBOW to Norm's ribs, pushing the air out of his lungs.

Elijah RUNS for it, but Norm is way faster than he expected.

The Magnum is out, silencer already in place, and Norm gets a SHOT off quickly. He hits Elijah in the shoulder.

Elijah screams in pain, but keeps running.

There's too many people for Norm to try again so he wipes the gun, tosses it into a trash bin, and walks away quickly.

He pulls out his phone, dials.

NORM (CONT'D)  
 (on phone)  
 It's me. No. He ran. I clipped him  
 in the shoulder. What now?

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING**

Laura sits at the table with her dinner and a book. But she keeps glancing up, her mind clearly elsewhere.

POV: TRASHCAN

Laura's face appears as the top swings up. She starts to scrape off her plate, then STOPS. She reaches in and grabs-

**INT. OFFICE - SUNSET**

Laura sits at her desk, flipping through NYASHA'S NOTEBOOK. A framed picture of Justin watches over her, smiling benevolently.

LAURA  
 Emilio... Emilio...

She finds his name in an ARTICLE taped between the pages.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
 (reads)  
 Emilio Sandoz... 2013... Extortion.  
 Kidnapping. And... second degree  
 murder. There it is.

She puts the notebook aside and googles Emilio. She finds pictures of Emilio's original VICTIM, a wealthy widow.

And there's his son, chubby-cheeked and sad-eyed, recognizable from Nyasha's photograph.

She clicks and a VIDEO pops up of a BILL O'REILLY WANNABE:

O'REILLY WANNABE

What is this program? The *Morpheus Project*? Listen up! Instead of the death penalty, killers do a couple years of make-believe, pretend they're sorry and get back on the streets to commit armed robbery!

*(shakes his head)*

This guy held up a dry cleaners next to a precinct full of cops. Give this genius a Darwin Award!

The video STOPS there. Laura frowns at it, thinking...

The phone RINGS. Laura SCREAMS, then covers her mouth, embarrassed. She picks up.

LAURA

Hello?

**EXT. BALTIMORE STREET - SUNSET**

DETECTIVE LARRY WILSON, 50s, stands on the street in a rumpled suit, old-school cell phone to his ear. The sun going down behind him illuminates a bad neighborhood on a bad day.

WILSON

Ms. Barrera, this is Detective Larry Wilson of the Baltimore P.D.

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Intercut as needed.

LAURA

*(nervous)*

Can I help you with something, Detective?

WILSON

Well, ma'am, I'm honestly not sure.

LAURA

Wait. Detective Wilson?

WILSON

Yes ma'am. We've met before. The night your husband died.

A long beat.

LAURA

Yes, I... remember.

WILSON

Mrs. Barrera, do you know a Nyasha Martin?

Laura reacts, startled.

LAURA

She came to see me a couple days ago.

(angry)

Whatever she's saying, I *don't* know her and I won't vouch for her.

REVEAL: Behind Wilson, a body in a body bag being loaded onto a stretcher from the sidewalk.

WILSON

Ms. Martin isn't saying anything, ma'am. She's dead.

Laura's world comes to a standstill.

LAURA

*What?*

WILSON

She overdosed.

(a beat)

I found your name and number in her cell phone. The *only* name and number. I was wondering why.

Laura is stunned.

LAURA

She was in Justin's program. The Morpheus Project. She showed up, pretending to be a journalist. I threatened to call the cops and she left.

(beat)

Will there be an autopsy?

WILSON

For an addict who overdosed?

Laura panics. She's not even sure why.

LAURA

No, no, of course. I'm sorry I  
couldn't be more helpful.

Wilson pauses. His cop instincts are good— he knows there's  
more here.

WILSON

Alright, Mrs. Barrera. This isn't a  
suspicious death— your name won't  
go in my report. But you can talk  
to me if you need to. Anytime.

Laura lets the offer hang in the air. Finally—

WILSON (CONT'D)

Good night, Mrs. Barrera.

Laura hangs up slowly, reeling. The sun has set, and she's  
sitting in darkness. The house feels emptier than ever.

**EXT. CHARLES VILLAGE - DAY (JUSTIN'S MEMORY)**

The daylight burns too bright, giving this memory an  
incandescent heat.

Justin, 30, approaches the front door whistling. A man on top  
of the world.

He gets to the door, realizes he forgot his keys. But not to  
worry! He backs up, flips over a stone in the front yard, and  
retrieves a SPARE KEY.

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - DAY**

The house is as Justin remembers it; boxes of files littered  
around the bright and airy living room. But none of that has  
his attention.

JUSTIN

Laura?

No response. He looks around.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(teasing)

LaLa...?

He bounds up the stairs.

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - LANDING**

Justin stands still on the landing. The sunlight streams in through the tree outside, so fierce Justin has to blink it out of his eyes.

Suddenly, he winces, rolling his shoulder like it pains him.

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - BATHROOM**

Justin checks himself in the bathroom mirror. He rolls his shoulder again. It definitely hurts, but he shrugs it off.

His face in the mirror doesn't seem right either. His eyes are bright, feverish. His skin covered in a sheen of sweat.

JUSTIN  
(hoarsely)  
Laura?

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - BEDROOM**

Justin enters the bedroom, looks down at Laura, who has fallen asleep in the middle of the bed, despite the harsh daylight shining in around her.

Justin smiles at the sight of her, puts his hand on her hip. She murmurs in her sleep, but doesn't wake.

He lies down next to her, face inches from hers. She opens her eyes-

And SCREAMS.

SMASH TO:

**INT. THE BARRERAS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

REALITY. Laura is in bed face to face with ELIJAH, his face covered in sweat, his shirt soaked through with BLOOD at the shoulder.

He's been HALLUCINATING he's Justin.

Laura's scream brings Elijah back to himself. He sits up, BOLTS out of the room.

Laura tears open the nightstand drawer and pulls out a TAZER.

**INT. THE BARRERRAS' HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS**

Laura runs down the stairs, tripping down the last step and holding in a cry of pain.

She grabs a landline PHONE off the wall, dials 9-1-1.

LAURA

Hello? Hello? There's an intruder  
in my home. 3161 Greenwood. I know  
him, he- he killed my-

Laura sees the front door is AJAR. But from Elijah's entrance, or exit? She drops the phone to her chest, hugging the wall as she looks around the corner.

9-1-1 RESPONDER

(muffled)

Ma'am? Ma'am, can you get to a safe  
location-

The living room is EMPTY.

She jumps at a NOISE from down the hall and drops the phone. It CLATTERS to the ground, the responder's still emerging tinnily, prescribing caution.

But Laura inches down the hall, towards a CLOSED DOOR.

**INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM**

Laura FLINGS the door open, tazer out in front of her. The bathroom is EMPTY... but the medicine cabinet is open, and boxes of bandages lie empty in the sink, along with an empty bottle of aspirin.

And the window is WIDE OPEN.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Laura sits at the table, listening to the TWO OFFICERS, BENTLEY (male, 50s, seen it all) and GRAHAM (female, 20s, rookie) confer in the hallway.

BENTLEY

(low voice)

...no signs of forced entry. Check  
upstairs.

Laura stares down into her coffee, deeply discombobulated.

Bentley joins her as Graham disappears upstairs.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

Mrs. Barrera, can you tell me how the intruder got in?

LAURA

I don't know. He was just- there. In the bedroom.

A skeptical pause.

BENTLEY

I just want to be clear. Your statement is that a man entered your house, somehow getting around the locked door without breaking in, and came up to your bedroom. You identified him, in the dark, as Elijah Jones.

LAURA

And I screamed.

BENTLEY

(nods)

You screamed. You chased after him with a tazer, but were unable to find him in the house.

LAURA

I didn't "chase" him anywhere. He ran into the bathroom and locked the door. He took things, bandages and pills-

GRAHAM

Right. We found other pills in your bathroom, too, Mrs. Barrera.

A long pause.

LAURA

(fiercely)

Those were prescribed after my husband's death.

He nods, feigning sympathy. Laura hates him.

BENTLEY

I understand, ma'am. It must be very hard, living alone in the house where your husband died. So it would make sense if you still needed your anti-depressants. And your Ambien.

(MORE)

BENTLEY (CONT'D)  
(off her glare)  
Do you ever take them together?

Graham runs down the stairs out of breath.

GRAHAM  
There's blood on the bed sheets. A  
lot of it.

Laura barely has time to enjoy the satisfaction of Bentley's surprise when the FRONT DOOR BANGS OPENS. JULIA strides in.

JULIA  
Laura?

LAURA  
In here.

Julia finds her and gives her a rather aggressive hug.

JULIA  
Are you alright?

BENTLEY  
(protests)  
Ma'am, you can't just burst in—

JULIA  
I am the *District Attorney* for the  
City of Baltimore. Don't you dare  
tell me what I can't do.

He backs off.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
(to Laura)  
Was it him?

Laura nods. Julia clenches her fists. Turns to the cops.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Your services are no longer  
required here. You won't need to  
file a report.

Laura and the officers are stunned.

LAURA  
Julia, what are you—

Julia stops her.

JULIA

Laura, I need you to take this seriously. You're a target for people like Jones, like Nyasha Martin.

Laura starts to interrupt, but Julia won't let her.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I promised Nyasha wouldn't bother you again, and I kept my word.

LAURA

What?

JULIA

She's back inside. The police caught her with drugs and charged with intent to sell. You won't be hearing from her for a very long time.

There's a long silence. Laura stares at her, unmoving. Trying to comprehend the huge lie Julia just fed her.

GRAHAM

We'll put out an APB on Jones.

JULIA

No, you won't. Believe me, this is way outside your jurisdiction. Clear the premises.

*(when they don't move)*

NOW.

Reluctantly, the cops exit. Graham leaves her card surreptitiously on Laura's counter.

Julia and Laura are alone.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Next time, you call me, not them. I will get you through this.

*(a beat)*

Do you want me to stay with you?

Laura gives Julia a brave little smile.

LAURA

No, I'm OK. Thanks, Julia.

Julia pats her shoulder and leaves. Laura drops the phony smile immediately and watches out the window as Julia, talking fast and angry on her cell, gets in her car and drives off.

**INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Laura enters the bathroom cautiously. She picks up the empty bandage boxes and aspirin bottle and gingerly tosses them into the trash.

She stares a long time at the line of prescription drugs; powerful little orange bottles, all in her name.

She shivers; the window is still open, blowing in cold air. Laura peeks outside nervously, sees nothing. She CLOSES it.

It's only then she can see the MESSAGE left in BLOOD, on the inside of the window:

*bullet in the bookcase*

Laura stumbles backwards, horrified.

**INT. JEFFERSON STREET TENEMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Elijah KNOCKS on the door. Long moments pass as he waits, barely holding himself up against the door frame.

Finally, the door opens— as far as the CHAIN will allow. A wizened brown eye peeks out: CORA JONES.

She takes him in: blood-stained shirt, eyes red with exhaustion, face pale.

ELIJAH

Gramma, I'm sorry. I shoulda said  
it a million times. I'm so—

She CLOSES the door. Elijah half falls, despair on his face.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Please, Gramma. I need help.

The chain slides, and the door opens. Cora, in a robe, ushers him inside, looking around carefully before closing the door.

**INT. CORA JONES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Cora examines Elijah's haphazard bandaging on the couch and shakes her head. She hobbles to the bathroom and returns with supplies. Though her hands shake, her skill is evident.

CORA

You lucky it's a through-and-through or we'd have no choice but to get you to the hospital.

She purses her lips.

CORA (CONT'D)

You should probably go anyway. I ain't the nurse I used to be.

ELIJAH

I can't. They'd report me. I'd go back to prison... for good.

CORA

(snaps)

And whose fault is that?

Elijah sighs.

ELIJAH

I shoulda come here first. I was all messed up. I didn't think.

CORA

Where'd you go?

ELIJAH

(hesitates)

I shouldn't tell you that.

CORA

Well, where you been?

She swabs the wound with antiseptic and he hisses in pain.

ELIJAH

The park.

CORA

Someone shot you in the park? Who? No, don't tell me. Just... don't.

She finishes up.

CORA (CONT'D)

Your P.O. called.

Elijah holds his breath.

CORA (CONT'D)

I told him you were stayin', so you might as well stay a minute.

ELIJAH

Thanks, Gramma.

CORA

And some girl called for you.

ELIJAH

(too quickly)  
Laura?

CORA

Who's Laura?

ELIJAH

She's... nobody. Was it Carmen?

CORA

Boy, I ain't your secretary. The machine got it. Take a listen.

She hesitates, then pats his knee gingerly.

CORA (CONT'D)

You gotta take better care, Elijah.

ELIJAH

I know. I will. I'm-

CORA

Sorry, I know. We're all sorry in this life. My son left you and he was sorry. Your momma left you and she was sorry. I couldn't set you right and I'm sorry too.

And she hobbles off to bed. Elijah sinks into the couch, taking in Cora's apartment. Things worn and familiar. His tiny handprint in clay. Her wedding picture from the 1960s. An old vase with crumbling pink plastic flowers.

This is his life. He's been so busy remembering Justin's he's almost forgotten his own.

He pulls himself up in an act of supreme willpower and goes to the ancient answering machine on the kitchen counter.

He presses PLAY.

NYASHA (V.O.)  
 (on message)  
 This is a message for Elijah Jones.  
 Elijah, it's Nyasha.

Elijah is gobsmacked to hear her voice.

NYASHA (V.O.)  
 (on tape)  
 I went to see Laura Barrera. I  
 shoulda known better. But she's in  
 this too, whether she likes it or  
 not. Still I tried, for Justin's  
 sake. And yours.  
 (softer)  
 She told me you got out. Why didn't  
 you call me?

Elijah folds his head into his hands. This is a very  
 different relationship than where it stood five years ago.

NYASHA  
 Doesn't matter now. Emilio's dead.  
 So are Regina, Rod and Wu. The  
 others are back inside or missing.

Elijah looks up. He wasn't expecting this.

NYASHA (CONT'D)  
 (bitter)  
 No one cares what happens to us, so  
 you have to. Do whatever it takes.  
 Watch your back.  
 (breathless)  
 And if you can, please *please* look  
 out for Nica-

Her voice clicks off. End of the tape, or end of the call?  
 Elijah stares at the machine, remembering:

**INT. PSYCHIATRIC CENTER - VISITATION ROOM HALLWAY**

FLASHBACK: Elijah walks by the Visitation Room.

GUARD  
 Keep walking, Jones. No one here  
 for you.  
 (snorts)  
 As usual.

Elijah barely contains his desire to punch the guard in the  
 face.

Suddenly, movement inside the room catches his eye: a little girl (NICA, 4) runs into her mother's arms. As they spin together, giggling, Elijah recognizes NYASHA.

He stares, their joy a complete mystery to him. When Nyasha looks up, though, Elijah is gone.

**INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

Two MOVERS drag a brand new MATTRESS into the room while Laura watches. After it's settled on the frame—

LAURA  
They said you could take the old  
one for recycling...

MOVER #1  
Sure thing, ma'am.

He grabs one end of the old mattress. When his partner grabs the other side, he reveals a large BLOOD STAIN. They DROP it, startled. Laura holds out a wad of bills.

LAURA  
(firmly)  
Please.

**INT. LANDING**

Laura watches as the movers take the mattress down the stairs and out the open door. When it closes, she sighs in relief.

Her PHONE buzzes— 5 new texts from Julia. She hits 'ignore.'

Suddenly, she swings around, staring at the TABLE of arts and crafts projects right where—

LAURA  
(murmurs)  
Bullet in the...

—the BOOKCASE used to be. She scrambles for her phone, dials.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Hi Ann, it's Laura. Remember that  
bookcase I donated last year? Can  
you tell me where that ended up?

CUT TO:

**EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (JUSTIN'S MEMORY)**

This is the oldest memory of Justin's we've seen. It's hazy, like a film from the 1970s.

A little dark-haired boy (YOUNG JUSTIN, 6) is getting the shit kicked out of him by two bigger boys.

Justin/Elijah's POV: the bullies' faces are blocked out by the bright sun behind them. Suddenly, they FLEE.

The next face is Justin's father DAVID, his face kind and yet stern. At 35, he's older than Justin will ever be.

DAVID  
C'mon, *mijo*.

David helps little Justin to his feet and kneels next to him.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
What happened?

JUSTIN  
They were making fun of Lisa.

DAVID  
Lisa from next door?

Justin nods, the injustice too much for words.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
And what did you do?

JUSTIN  
(proudly)  
I jumped on 'em!

David shakes his head slowly. Justin is outraged.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)  
If I'da been bigger, I woulda won!

DAVID  
Exactly. Bigger shouldn't mean winner. We don't solve problems that way.

Justin starts to cry, full force now. David stands up.

Justin's POV: David is impossibly tall, like a folk hero or ancient statue.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I'll teach you a better way to  
fight.

**INT. LANDING - NIGHT**

Back on that fateful night. Elijah holding Justin at gunpoint in the dark.

This time, we see it from ELIJAH'S PERSPECTIVE.

JUSTIN  
There's a better way-

Bang, the car backfires. Then BANG. Elijah's gun SMOKE and Justin's head whips around as he falls.

The smoke rises like fog, obscuring everything.

Elijah approaches Justin's body. The mist clears, revealing:

LAURA. Dead on the floor. Bullet hole in her forehead.

**INT. CORA JONES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Elijah SNAPS awake from his nightmare. He sucks down deep breaths, recovering.

**INT. CORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Elijah peeks in on his grandma, who looks even older, and very fragile, in her sleep.

Determined, he shoulders on his coat and leaves the apartment.

**EXT. SOJOURNER TRUTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT**

A large brick building. The sign out front currently has its large black letters arranged to read: SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

From a distance, we see the Prius pull up. Laura emerges.

From this perspective, it feels like someone is WATCHING her.

**INT. SOJOURNER TRUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL - NIGHT**

A darkened hallway lined with lockers.

A KEY in the lock. The double doors swing open, revealing Laura. She takes in the creepy effect of the empty school.

She steels herself, then strides through the darkness, passing a framed PHOTO of herself: Teacher of the Year.

**INT. - CLASSROOM - NIGHT**

A very, very dark classroom full of shadows. Laura enters carefully, quietly. Immediately finds herself face to face with a TALL DARK FIGURE.

She lets out a SCREAM before realizing-

It's just a CARDBOARD CUT OUT of Olaf, the snowman from Frozen. She laughs nervously, trying to shake it off.

She tries the lights, to no avail. No power during the summer. Or no one to fix the circuit.

LAURA

Damn it.

She uses her phone's flashlight to illuminate her way, squeezing between the tiny desks.

It looms at her from the back of the room: the BOOKCASE Justin died next to. She sucks in her breath at the sight.

She examines it from the bottom up, pulling out books as she goes. At eye level, there's a SIGN: Reading is for Winners! She pulls it off, runs her fingers over the wood-

And finds an UNEVEN SPOT. She freezes. Then looks closer, with her phone.

Sees the subtle glint of a BULLET wedged deep in the wood.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

Suddenly she hears a NOISE behind her. She whirls, shining her light across the empty classroom.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(scared)

Is someone there?

No response. She holds her breath. All is still-

Something- SOMEONE- moves outside the door.

Jolted, she turns her phone flashlight off, and STUMBLES over a knee-high desk, cries out before she can help herself.

She scurries on her hands and feet across the floor to behind the teacher's DESK.

A long silence. Then she hears FOOTSTEPS in the classroom. Deep breathing. Small desks pushed out of the way.

Under the desk, Laura struggles to control her own breathing, staying as quiet as possible. Then...

The footsteps back away, grow fainter. Laura waits a long moment, then looks around. She's alone.

**INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY – NIGHT**

Laura peeks around the corner, just in time to see a FIGURE disappear around a corner.

She hesitates, scared. Then—

LAURA  
(mutters)  
Fuck it.

She reaches into her coat and pulls out her TAZER.

**INT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE – NIGHT**

We follow the figure, obscured by shadow, as he nears the front double doors.

Suddenly, Laura swings out from another connecting hallway, holding her Tazer on him like a gun.

LAURA  
(yells)  
Who are you?! Why are you following me?!

In her other hand she wields her phone flashlight. It shines on:

JEREMY, compact but wiry, in a security officer's uniform. He flinches away from the sudden bright light.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Oh my God, I'm sorry, sir.

She lowers the tazer and her phone light.

JEREMY

It's OK.

His voice is so gravelly there might be something wrong with his throat. Either way, the effect is unsettling.

LAURA

I was just looking... for something. I teach here. Really.

An awkward pause.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'll go.

He gestures "after you," and she complies, embarrassed. But as she passes him, something catches her eye:

On his neck, not quite tucked under his uniform collar, is a swastika tattoo. She stops short.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What the—

She doesn't even have time to face him before the CLICK of a GUN being cocked echoes through the hallway. She turns, his blank face suddenly menacing.

Laura goes for her tazer, but it's too late. The gun is at her chest, Jeremy's finger on the trigger—

Suddenly, in a blur of speed, Jeremy is tackled to the ground by ELIJAH. The gun SKITTERS across the tiled floor.

Laura screams, ducks behind the school receptionist's desk.

Jeremy pushes Elijah off, but not before Elijah gets in a good KICK to his ribs. Jeremy recovers quickly and pushes Elijah backwards with such force that Elijah crashes into a glass TROPHY CASE. He SCREAMS in pain as the glass cuts his arms and face.

Jeremy goes for the gun, but Elijah launches himself on top of him, PUNCHES him in the face so hard we hear Jeremy's cheekbone crack.

JEREMY

*FUCK!!*

Elijah won't be stopped. It's the side of him we've seen glimpses of, before the Morpheus Project, before Justin's memories. The utter RAGE in his face, the JOY in the violence as he beats the shit out of Jeremy, who can only hold up his arms, trying futilely to protect himself. Blood spraying.

And then Elijah gets the GUN. He leaps to his feet, panting, victorious. Points it down at Jeremy's face.

But it's not Jeremy he sees lying broken on the floor amidst the blood and glass. It's JUSTIN.

Elijah's face drains of all his anger and he starts shaking. Hard. Hard enough that the gun drops from his grasp.

He and Jeremy watch as the gun falls in slow motion, onto the floor. For a moment they both stare at it.

Then Jeremy, faster than anticipated, grabs the gun, leaps to his feet and PISTOL WHIPS Elijah across the face with it.

Elijah goes down, hard. He's shaking, helpless, trying to crawl away. Now it's Jeremy's turn to kick Elijah in the ribs, knocking him to the floor.

The next kick goes to Elijah's face. He chokes on a broken tooth, blood pouring from his mouth and nose.

Jeremy's gravelly LAUGH fills the hallway. Elijah looks at him blankly through the pain as Jeremy gets down low next to him. He smiles as he puts the gun to Elijah's head.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

The infamous Elijah Jones. You got no fucking idea who I am, do you?

Elijah barely shakes his head "no."

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Too bad.

TZZZZT. The unmistakable sound of a TAZER. Electricity dances over Jeremy's chest and arms and he MISSES his shot.

We hear the sizzle as the tazer warms up again and Jeremy makes a RUN for it. He disappears into the dark hallway, limping.

Elijah, curled up in a ball, takes a moment to realize he's not dead after all. He uncurls, looking straight up at LAURA.

She scoops up Jeremy's gun and points it at Elijah as he slowly, painfully pulls himself to his feet.

LAURA

Tell me why I don't kill you myself. Right here. Right now.

Elijah's barely standing, but Laura is vivid in her anger.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
 Tell me why I let you keep  
 breathing when you killed my  
 husband!

ELIJAH  
 (mumbles)  
 I didn't.

Laura stares at him in disbelief. Elijah wipes the blood from his mouth and tries again.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
 (stronger)  
 I didn't kill Justin Barrera.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

We're back in Justin's memories, the night he died. But it's different this time. Brighter. Every tiny detail in focus. And we're no longer limited to his POV.

We can see everything clearly now.

ELIJAH (V.O.)  
 I saw it happen over and over  
 again. Thousands of time. Justin's  
 death.

The sound of BREAKING GLASS. Justin's eyes open to see Laura's face. His hand strokes her cheek.

BREAKING GLASS again. Then HEAVY FOOTSTEPS. Justin rises...

**INT. LANDING - NIGHT**

The window is broken.

Elijah lurks, armed in the shadows of the landing.

The sturdy OAK TREE stands outside, but with the new brilliance to this memory we notice:

A SHADOWY FIGURE in the branches, mostly hidden by leaves. And the subtle glint of HIS GUN.

ELIJAH  
 STOP. DON'T MOVE, FUCKER.

Justin raises his arms. He speaks, but we don't hear him over-

ELIJAH (V.O.)  
 Every time, I saw things more  
 clearly. And every time I hated  
 myself more. Until—

Elijah's gun, pointed at Justin, wavers. IT'S NO LONGER  
 POINTED AT JUSTIN'S FACE. It's now slightly askew. Aimed at  
 the bookshelf.

ELIJAH  
 I should kill you. I gotta kill you  
 now.

JUSTIN  
 You don't have to kill me. You  
 don't have to kill anybody. Ever.  
 You can walk out of here and it'll  
 be like this never happened.  
 There's a better way—

That first BANG. The one too distant to be Elijah's gun. The  
 sound that could be a car backfiring. But in slow motion, we  
 see a BULLET come through the empty window frame, from the  
 tree...

The bang makes Elijah JUMP, and BANG— he fires. The gun  
 smokes.

We're back in Justin's POV as he spins, catching sight of  
 himself in the mirror, falling, staring up at the bookcase.

For the first time, we hear Elijah's voice as he leans over  
 Justin, as Justin dies.

ELIJAH  
 I'm sorry, I'm so sor—

The light flickers on, illuminating Elijah's face, and the  
 BOOKCASE ABOVE HIM.

The last thing Justin sees before everything goes dark isn't  
 Elijah's face—

It's the BULLET lodged firmly in the underside of a wooden  
 shelf. The bullet Laura found in the classroom.

**INT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE — NIGHT**

Laura is crying. Elijah can't look away from her.

LAURA  
 Two shots? Two bullets?

He nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
How do you know yours wasn't the  
one that killed him?

ELIJAH  
(hoarse)  
I know.

Laura shakes her head, not convinced.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
A guy called Big Joe hired me to  
rob your place. Said nobody would  
be there and to grab the jewelry in  
the bedroom. Now he won't come near  
me. Like he's scared of my  
existence.  
(*in a rush*)  
Someone was out there watching me.  
Making sure Justin died and I was  
to blame.

LAURA  
But... why you?

ELIJAH  
Why *not* me? Black kid from Elwood  
Park... record a mile long...

His eyes drop.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
I never killed nobody before. I've  
come close... but I wasn't gonna do  
it, he was right— Justin was right,  
I didn't have to— but the shot made  
me jump—

FLASH: Justin's face with a BULLET HOLE in his forehead.  
Elijah shudders.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
I see him everywhere. I see him  
and... I see you. I can't stop. For  
the rest of my life, I'll wish I  
was never there that night. But I  
think... even if I weren't— Justin  
would still be gone.

He looks at Laura, begging her to understand.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)  
You have to believe me.

Laura stares at Elijah from behind the gun.

LAURA  
I don't have to believe you.

We see how much she wants to kill him. To end this.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
But I do.

And slowly, slowly, the gun comes down.

**INT. RITZY HALLWAY - DAY**

Elijah, his face a mess of bruises, knocks on the door.

Locke, Elijah's P.O., opens the door. He takes in Elijah's injuries.

LOCKE  
Jesus, Jones.  
(pause)  
At least you're on time.

**INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Locke and Elijah back across the table from each other. Locke taking in Elijah's story.

LOCKE  
So you're telling me not one but  
two assholes tried to murder you  
this week, and that's why your face  
looks like rotten hamburger.

Elijah nods solemnly.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
Because you're at the center of  
some goddamn conspiracy designed to  
destroy the program that got you  
out of the prison system in five  
years.

Another nod.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
A program created by the man you  
murdered.

Elijah hesitates, looks down for what we now know is a lie.

ELIJAH  
Yeah.

LOCKE  
And where, exactly, does Laura  
Barrera fit into all this?

Elijah looks up sharply into Locke's flinty gaze.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
Because you know I can't help you,  
not one damn bit, if I find out  
you've gone anywhere near her.

ELIJAH  
I haven't gone near her. I won't.

A long, long pause as Locke stares Elijah down.

LOCKE  
So that's that.

ELIJAH  
You don't believe me.

LOCKE  
Naw, it's worse than that. I do.

The relief shines through on Elijah's face.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
I got a couple calls to make to  
verify your story.  
(off Elijah's fear)  
Trust me. I'll be discreet. But  
what you got ain't enough to  
convince anybody else yet.

Elijah stands to leave, and, surprisingly, Locke puts his  
hand on his shoulder.

LOCKE (CONT'D)  
I need you to promise me you'll sit  
tight, Jones. No more of, you know—  
(he gestures at Elijah's  
injuries)  
This.

Elijah nods tightly and pulls away.

**INT. BARRERAS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Laura pacing her living room, on the phone.

LAURA

No, I know. I know. You were right about everything. I'm so sorry.

**INT. CORPORATE RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT**

Julia stands strong in a richly decorated office space, ignoring a RECEPTIONIST typing away behind a desk.

JULIA

I can't protect you if you keep things from me, Laura. We also call it obstruction of justice.

The receptionist quietly glares as Julia's voice gets higher and higher.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You have to stop asking questions. You have to trust me to handle everything.

We see Julia glance at the name on the office door- SIMON PARSONS. She lowers her voice.

**INT. BARRERAS' HOUSE - NIGHT**

On Laura's conflicted face-

JULIA (O.S.)

(on phone)  
*Let it go.*

LAURA

(on phone)  
I promise, Julia. We'll talk soon.

She hangs up. For a long moment, she stares down at the phone in her hand. Then she pivots, looking behind her to-

ELIJAH. Pacing like a tiger in a cage. He stares at a picture of Justin and Laura on their wedding day, laughing. Happy.

But under that, something catches his eye. He gently moves the picture aside to find Justin's copy of *Les Miserables*.

Laura watches as he opens the book to one of its well worn pages, mouthing words. Laura stares, blinking away tears.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
She bought it.

Elijah turns to her, quickly closing the book. Caught. He keeps his distance from her.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
You talked to your P.O.?

He nods.

ELIJAH  
Now what?

LAURA  
Now we find the truth.

#### **INT. MORGUE - NIGHT**

A cold blue room filled with cadavers. A MORGUE ATTENDANT wheels in Nyasha Martin's cold, dead body on a gurney.

He looks around nervously before laying the paperwork on top of her, then slides her body inside the crematorium. He flips the switch and walks away.

LAURA (V.O.)  
What happened to Nyasha Martin.

DETECTIVE WILSON watches from the viewing room, unnoticed.

#### **INT. CREMATORIUM**

We watch as the fire consumes a PHOTOGRAPH held tightly in Nyasha's hand: her daughter, NICA.

#### **INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Jeremy, blank-faced and mechanical, dresses his wounds from his fight with Elijah. With his shirt off we can see the multitude of angry White Pride tattoos across his chest.

LAURA (V.O.)  
Why you were framed for Justin's murder...

**INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Carmen is feeding Josua dinner when the DOORBELL RINGS.

She picks Josua up and looks through the peephole, but can't see clearly. It looks like Elijah, but taller, skinnier-

It's NORM. He smiles charmingly, hoping to be let in.

LAURA (V.O.)  
 ...and who *really* killed my  
 husband.

**INT. BARRERAS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Laura's eyes and voice are steady, looking at Elijah.

ELIJAH  
 Maybe our first step is to keep on  
 breathing. People want me dead. You  
 too, if they figure you out.

LAURA  
 I know. But I owe it to Justin, not  
 just to find out what happened to  
 him but-  
 (she pulls out Nyasha's  
 notebook)  
 -to the people he was trying to  
 help. I thought I could just move  
 past all this but I can't walk away  
 now. I won't.

ELIJAH  
 Then I won't either.

And they're left with nothing else to say.

The most unlikely allies in the world.

CUT TO:

**INT. ROOM**

A dingy, windowless room, hardly bigger than a cell. Locke sits, waiting, at a table.

We hear the click of heels across the concrete floor. A WOMAN (30s) enters, one we've never seen before.

WOMAN

I read your report on Elijah Jones.  
Excellent work. The money is  
already in your account.

Locke preens at the praise, but the woman turns to leave.

LOCKE

Excuse me... ma'am? You said I  
should keep an eye out for anything  
strange. This is strange.

He pulls out a yellowed cut-out newspaper article.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

This here is from when I got my  
commendation. See?

The woman looks over the article contemptuously.

WOMAN

So?

LOCKE

The picture. It ain't *of* me.

In the picture, another man, skinnier, sallower than the  
Locke we know accepts a politician's handshake.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

So who the fuck is this guy?

WOMAN

That's Carl Locke.

LOCKE

Very funny. I'm Carl Locke.

The woman BUZZES a button on the wall.

WOMAN

Carl Locke is dead.

LOCKE

The fuck are you talking about? I'm  
Carl Locke! I've been a P.O. for  
twenty years! I'm from Dallas— my  
dad's still there, you can ask him!

WOMAN

(amused)

When was the last time you talked  
to your father?

Locke starts to answer, realizes he DOESN'T REMEMBER. TWO GUARDS enter behind him.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

And how's that "asbestos" in your office coming along?

(to guards)

Looks like our friend here needs another round in the pod.

As the guards grab him, Locke starts to grasp at the horrifying truth.

LOCKE

What pod? What the fuck is happening?!

The woman watches calmly as the guards drag Locke away.

#### **INT. WAREHOUSE**

A huge, dark warehouse. The guards pull Locke, who's resisting, towards a POD— like the equipment from Elijah's time in the Morpheus Project, but more sophisticated.

We hear the familiar WHIRR of the pod starting up and pan up and away from Locke's misfortune...

REVEALING: The warehouse is full of dozens of pods, whirring and glowing as they operate.