DARKNESS

The SOUND of rainfall tickling pavement, before we...

FADE UP: ON;

EXT. AUSCHWITZ - - MORNING - - PRESENT DAY

LONG SHOT: A somber ceremony, hundreds gather amidst a grey and gutted wasteland. Dignitaries. Presidents. Survivors.

Insert Legend: **Krakow, Poland.**

CLOSER(series of shots): Faces, withered and full of decay. Old men weep openly, unapologetically. Others smile proudly, defiantly. The burdens of memory.

Insert Legend: **60th Anniversary of Auschwitz Liberation.**

A dark FIGURE, subsumed in shadow, sharks through the crowd, moving away from the ceremony. Away from the masses.

CLOSE ON DRESS SHOES

Setting a steady, if muddy, course as we PAN UP to see the man we know as MAGNETO. A multitude of contradictions.

Old. And vibrant.

Elegant. And angry.

Brilliant. And base.

CAMERA TRACKS ALONGSIDE MAGNETO (HAND-HELD)

His trademark hat, coat and swagger on display, he remains unaffected by, virtually oblivious to, the rainfall...

And he stops in front of a 14 foot-tall GATE. Rickety and full of rust, it's less than formidable.

But to Magneto, it's ghastly.

He stares at it, lids fluttering like the wings of a hummingbird, assaulted by memory.

SFX: The wrenching sound of metal being bent.

MATCH CUT TO:

THAT VERY SAME GATE

Only now it's MANGLED open as if the hand of God itself reached down and clawed it apart.

Burn in Legend: ***1944.***

WIDER to see rain pouring as Nazi soldiers circle a barely conscious boy. This is YOUNG MAGNETO.

ERIK LEHNSHERR by name. He's 14. Filled with promise and possibility. Make no mistake about it, he's our hero.

He writhes in the mud, the recipient of a rifle blow to the head as guards close cautiously in around him...

WIDER STILL to reveal the scope of the scene...

EXT. AUSCHWITZ - - <u>VAUNTED VIEW</u> - - DAY

New prisoners - Jews and gypsies - are shepherded behind that torn gate, an older man and woman looking askance. ERIK'S MOTHER and FATHER. Helpless to it all.

But we're focused on Erik as a GUARD grabs one of his flaccid limbs. Implores his peers to assist in the effort before...

...They drag the boy face down through the mud, under an archway inscribed with the German words: *"ALBREIT MACHT FREI."*

VOICE (V.O.)
(thick German accent)
"Work shall make you free..."

CUT TO:

INT. INFIRMARY - - BLOCK 28 - - <u>PANNING SHOT</u>

Along a shelf full of specimen jars rife with, dear Lord, *are those eyeballs(?)*. Detailed anatomical charts close by.

STILL PANNING...

Across a board, PHOTOS of emaciated prisoners - mostly children - undergoing a battery of obscure and obscene tests.

VOICE (V.O.)
This is also said of the truth...

And we realize, this is no "infirmary"; <u>this is a laboratory.</u>

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And so I ask you again to tell us
the truth...to tell us what you did
to the gate...

STILL PANNING AROUND THE ROOM, over the framed PHOTO of Adolf Hitler and the riot of swastika-ridden FLAGS until we - -

STOP ON A CLUSTER OF DOCTORS

Donning lab coats, their backs to us, they part to reveal... ERIK. Seated atop a surgical table, his shirt off as if undergoing a thorough physical examination.

He looks catatonic as the voice we've been hearing steps into frame...

DR. KLEINMEIN(30's). Fragile features betrayed by reptilian eyes, he cuts an imperious and effete figure...

DR. KLEINMEIN
Your parents are dead, they cannot help you.

He reaches out to touch Erik's face - Erik recoiling before the doctor grabs a firm hold of his jaw. *Squeezing.*

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
We will find out what you are, boy, this I promise you.

He pulls Erik closer - close enough to kiss - as tears streak down the boy's cheeks. SOBBING in spite of himself.

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
Shhhhhhh.

And only now do we see the hermetic gloves on his hands, and the sharp and serrated PINCHERS in his grip, before...

THE CAMERA DRIFTS BACK...

And the doctors close ranks around Erik, mercifully obscuring our view of things as THE CAMERA MOVES further away until we find ourselves in the - -

INT. HALLWAY - - OUTSIDE LABORATORY - - CONTINUOUS

The lab door closes in our face. Leaving us abandoned in the sterile and SILENT corridor.

Until;

Erik's gut-wrenching SCREAM shatters the silence; a sound you'll take to the grave. Nearly inhuman. *TIME FADE TO:*

THE DOOR. As it creaks open, ERIK emerging.

Tough to tell how much time has passed but his hair's longer, his body's thinner. A virtual scarecrow with skin.

TRACK WITH ERIK - - CLOSER

As he ambles down the hall, every inch a mile, barely able to discern what lurks in the other rooms along the periphery.

We, however, can't look away.

For there, visible through passing door apertures, we see CHILDREN. Prisoners. TEST SUBJECTS.

A glimpse into hell.

A slump-shouldered lad, about Erik's age, has one BLUE ORB. An older boy, further down,(STILL TRACKING)has NO ARMS.

Lastly, we see TWIN BROTHERS with artificially blonde hair and blue eyes. They stare at Erik as he passes.

FADE TO:

EXT. DINING HALL - - AUSCHWITZ - - NIGHT

HEAR the DIN of silverware on plates, before we - - CUT TO:

INT. DINING HALL - - AUSCHWITZ - - NIGHT

SS GUARDS patrol the cavernous hall, eyes on PRISONERS as they sip cold soup.

We settle on one of the many long tables where we find ERIK, staring at his reflection off the green gruel(POV): The face that looks back is even more anemic. Nearly skeletal.

He doesn't touch the SPOON to the left of his bowl. Glancing up to meet inadvertent eyes with a GYPSY GIRL about his age.

Shorn of hair, she's defiantly beautiful. Unveiling a radiant smile that cuts to Erik's core.

And for a second, everything's good in the world, before a COMMOTION(os)distracts Erik. Makes him turn to see - -

AN SS GUARD (KIRKEN)

With a SCAR along his cheek, slam his rifle into a young prisoner's head. Over and over again.

Erik recoils at the sight. Winces at the SOUND.

But when he looks down, his SPOON's not where it was a moment before. It's slid a foot across the table.

And Erik looks around, making certain no one's noticed as he listens to the hushed conversation beside him...

PRISONER #1
(in Hebrew; subtitled)
The allies are coming, the Red Army's less than a week away...

PRISONER #2
Only means they'll kill us faster.

SFX: The WAIL of air-raid sirens.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIRKENAU - - AUSCHWITZ - - NIGHT

Nazi soldiers shepherd prisoners from barracks en masse as chaos infects the camp. The liberation underway.

Erik stands with several prisoners by the crematorium, watching with the wounded eyes of a widow or a war veteran.

His gaze goes to an OLD MAN who's propped up against a barren brick wall beside others. The prelude to an execution.

A sinewy SS officer of obvious import orders an UNDERLING to dispose of the helpless prisoners. His name is HANS DECKER.

Under Decker's command, the soldier points his pistol at the old man's head as

ERIK

Clenches his fists, closes his eyes - but hears only *CLICK*(os)

BACK ON THE SOLDIER (ERIK POV)

His gun JAMMED, he tries his rifle. It, too, JAMS.

BACK ON ERIK

as Decker brandishes his Sig Saur. It, too, JAMS.

Flustered, the soldier unsheathes a DAGGER before he SCREAMS in pain...dropping the dagger...clutching madly at his skull.

And we see the helmet TIGHTEN around his head...leaving him no choice but to yank it off, toss it to the dirt...

The helmet's visibly bent.

In the distance, over the snow-freckled hills, RUSSIAN SOLDIERS march closer...

Erik takes refuge behind the crematorium wall, slumping down against it. Head bowed, body aquiver.

Staring at his hands as if they belonged to someone else; wondering what's inside him when

A SHADOW

Falls over him. Erik's tear-stained eyes peaking up to see

THE GYPSY GIRL (MAGDA)

Standing over him as if an angel.

ERIK POV: She looks down at us, extending her hand...

And the air raid sirens WAIL as we take that hand, and...

FADE TO BLACK:

The air raid sirens STOP.

Insert Legend: **10 Years Later.**

SLOW FADE UP:

EXT. UKRAINE - - SPRAWLING SHOT - - EARLY MORNING

Insert Legend: **Volyn, Ukraine.**

The sun lazily ascends over this calmly village...

But as light stretches across it, we see the residue of war lingers in its battered infrastructure.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE - - UKRAINE - - MORNING

WIDE SHOT: The only thriving industry in town, a CONSTRUCTION CREW labors to repair damages incurred a decade before.

CLOSER: We find ourselves on the precipitous edge of a mountain, a skeletal house on a hill.

And we HEAR nothing but the continuous THUNK of hammer on wood as we TRACK SLOWLY ALONG a narrow plank...

THICK BOOTS

Come into view, dangling off the edge before we CIRCLE to see the man to whom that footwear belongs...

ERIK LEHNSHERR (25)

And it takes us a moment to recognize him, everything altered or enhanced. Everything but those eternally tragic eyes.

Well-muscled with a mane of raven hair, he's grown up nicely. Most surprisingly, he seems...*happy*.

Across the site, we take note of Erik's CO-WORKERS: A clique of brutish thugs who cast suspicious glances his way.

And we know why when we see how much farther along Erik's portion of the house is than theirs. That STAR OF DAVID around his neck doesn't help matters, either.

Erik tucks the chain back into his sweat stained t-shirt, proceeding to hammer away, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - - VOLYN - - DUSK

A bustling fishing village, Erik walks through, work belt slung over his shoulder...

He angles towards a MERCHANT selling hand-made teddy bears. Perusing the selection before gesturing to a giraffe.

The merchant strains to reach it. Showing Erik the price tag. Safe to say, judging by his expression, it's too much.

ERIK
(points to another)
How 'bout that one?

MERCHANT
Same.

Erik stops. Sighs. Considers. Then:

ERIK
Anything I can afford?

JUMP CUT TO:

A STUFFED ANIMAL

At least, we *think* that's what it is. A scraggily-looking beast borne of fur and fabric...

EXT. HOUSE - - - - OUTSIDE VILLAGE - - NIGHT (WIDER)

Teddy bear under arm, Erik scales a hill, his humble abode coming into view...

He places his work belt down, wiping his boots on the front mat before entering...

INT. KITCHEN - - HOUSE - - <u>UNKNOWN POV</u>

We sneak up on a WOMAN, her back to us, cooking. Reaching out, about to grab her when - -

WOMAN (O.S.)
Don't even think about it.

REVERSE to see ERIK - who stops. And grins. Right before peppering the woman's neck with kisses.

The woman turns around to reveal...MAGDA. Bronzed skin, serpentine shape, the years have been kind to her.

Arms around her husband, she's about to move in for a deep kiss before noticing the bounty in Erik's hand.

MAGDA
You know, we can't afford these things, Erik...

ERIK
If I can't do this for my baby girl, what good am I?

She smiles, moving in for that kiss, as we PRE-LAP:

LITTLE GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)
It's so ugly.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - - HOUSE - - START ON THE TEDDY BEAR

Before we WIDEN to reveal the young lass beside it. ANYA. Erik's 6 year-old daughter. Innocence personified.

ANYA
...I love him.
(kisses Erik)
Thank you, daddy...

But there's a little less luster in her smile.

ERIK
What is it, sweetie?

She doesn't answer. Plays with her new bear.

MAGDA
The children at school again...

And Erik's heartbroken. And all too empathetic...

ERIK
Anya? Listen to me, sweetheart:
(takes her face in his hands)
People make fun of the things they envy. What makes you different is what makes you better. Do you understand?

She nods. Even smiles.

And the Lehnsherr clan proceeds to eat dinner, nothing heard but the CLANG of silverware until...

ANYA
Momma? How come we never have soup?

Erik trades telling eyes with Magda, clutching her hand under the table to blunt the force of memory...

MAGDA
Salad's good for you, Anya.
(stands; takes her plate)
I'll get you some more stew...

When she enters the kitchen(os), Anya excitedly whispers:

ANYA
Do the magic trick, poppa'.
Pleaaase...

Erik deliberates, making certain Magda's out of view before he fixes focus on that salad bowl.

Seconds later, it levitates. And spins.

And Anya's eyes balloon with wonder before...Magda returns, the bowl back to its original spot, Magda none the wiser.

And Erik grins at Anya, a finger to his lips: *Shhh*. Father and daughter share a giggle; their little secret.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - - LATER THAT NIGHT

Erik tosses and turns in bed, another restive night in a lifetime of them. Thrashing at sheets before - -

- - He wakes. But not with a start. With a calm familiarity. He turns to see MAGDA, awake all along.

She runs a finger down his arm, over THE NUMBER tattooed there. No need to ask the content of his nightmare.

MAGDA
...Are you okay?

ERIK
Uh-huh.

MAGDA
(a soft smile)
Liar.

They share a laugh signifying anything but humor. Then:

ERIK
There's something in me, Magda.
Something I've had since Auschwitz.
Something I've never told you about...

And he's trying to speak of his unexplored powers but Magda misinterprets, truncating his confession with - -

MAGDA
I know. I have it, too. We all do.
But we can't let anger define us.
We're building something good here.

He considers correcting her. Doesn't. Only smiles. And holds her tight. Never wanting to let go.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - - THE NEXT MORNING

Erik enters, ready for work, Anya doing a crossword puzzle as she spoons cereal. Magda sketches on a pad close by.

MAGDA
(never looks up from sketch pad)
Want me to make you lunch?

ERIK
We break early. I'll grab something in town. What're you drawing?

MAGDA
(flips sketch pad cover down)
Nothing.
(to Anya)
Get ready for school, honey.

Anya puts her cereal bowl in the sink before scampering into the next room. Leaving husband and wife behind. Then:

ERIK
It's good to see you drawing again.
Can I see it?

She looks up at him, eyes tender but resistant. A matter of trust, she peels the sketch cover back to reveal...

HER DRAWING: *Done in charcoal, it's a chilling rendition of Birkenau. Something haunted and unnerving about it.*

MAGDA (O.S.)
It's all I can draw. All I see.

And Erik softly, lovingly, caresses her cheek.

ERIK
Not forever.

And he smiles down at her, the moment disrupted when ANYA runs back into the room, Erik hoisting her into his arms, instantly returning to daddy-mode when he announces:

ERIK (CONT'D)
Today, we're all walking to school together.

They look at him oddly; clearly this is a rare occurrence.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - - MORNING

Anya's flanked by her parents, holding hands...

ANYA
Why're we going this way, daddy? It's longer...

He stops. Squints. Points:

ERIK
That's why.

Magda and Anya halt, following his finger to see...

MAGDA
You came to show us...*dirt?*

ERIK
Not dirt. *Land.* <u>Our</u> land.

It takes a moment for Magda to realize...

MAGDA
It's...it's *ours?*

And Magda and Anya wrap their arms around Erik - who casts a wayward glance at the property.

ERIK
It's not much now...but it will be. I'm good with construction, you know...

CUT TO:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - - DAY

SLOWLY PUSH IN on Erik's sun-burnt body, hammering on the side of the nearly finished home, building a wall.

Out of sight from his peers, we watch as nails sink into wood on their own accord, Erik "expediting" his workload.

But as we PUSH CLOSER, his bare back coming into view, we're most riveted by the SCARS stretched across his spine.

Little doubt as to their place of origin.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - - VILLAGE - - LATER

Work done for the day, Erik walks apart from his co-workers, a perpetual outsider.

On the periphery, he takes note of a festive PUB.

CUT TO:

INT. PUB - - SOUND UP

ERIK POV: We're met by every eye in the joint; a sea of suspicious sneers as we angle towards...

THE BAR

Where a rowdy band of fishermen congregate as ERIK sidles up to the bartender:

ERIK
I'd like to get something to eat, please.

The bartender waves him off, shooing him towards the dining section of the pub.

And Erik glances down the bar to see several townsmen staring at him. He nods affably back.

They don't reciprocate.

And he's about to look for a table when he catches inadvertent sight of a LOUD MAN at the end of the bar. Clearly inebriated, there's something familiar about him.

CLOSE ON ERIK

An epiphany in his eyes as he spots the prominent SCAR on the man's right cheek, realizing...

IT'S KIRKEN

The guard last seen abusing a prisoner in Auschwitz.

BACK ON ERIK

Heart thundering like a church bell, we move closer to KIRKEN(ERIK POV), EVERYTHING GOING MUTE...

...Nearly oblivious to the MEN who bump and bark at us(os)as we pass, SOUND RESUMING when we reach - -

THE OTHER END OF THE BAR

Only air and opportunity separating us from Kirken.

ERIK

Moves closer, trying to elicit a glance. Still not wanting to believe it's him, not wanting to believe this man's free.

But a glimpse of those icepick eyes, of that coarse skin, and there's no doubt who this is.

Feeling eyes upon him, Kirken looks at Erik, nodding before he drains another mug of ale.

But Erik can't look away, eyes unblinking. Not so much searing as...stunned. So, once again, Kirken turns back.

KIRKEN
(in Russian; subtitled)
Can I help you, my friend?

Erik can't speak. Can't breathe. Can barely move.

Kirken smirks. Shrugs. Motions the bartender for "another".

KIRKEN (CONT'D)
(in heavily accented English)
You speak English?

Erik nods, his chest swelling with each labored breath...

And Kirken looks at ERIK'S HAND on the counter; it shakes.

He says something in Russian(we don't translate)to the bar flies, eliciting LAUGHTER at Erik's expense.

Then finally, a voice culled from deep in Erik's belly...

ERIK
You're German.

Look closely and you'll see a wrinkle flex across Kirken's forehead. Replaced by a reflexive - -

KIRKEN
I'm Russian. A citizen. Born and raised. Do not bother me, boy.

But Erik <u>stays</u>, trembling with fear. *Or is that rage?*

And then, emboldened, Erik peels his right sleeve up. Revealing the NUMBER tattooed there.

And Kirken looks at it. And looks at Erik. And <u>smiles.</u>

KIRKEN (CONT'D)
(subtitled; in German)
Always nice to see old friends...

Erik reaches out. Grabs Kirken's shoulder. And in an instant, Kirken whirls. And SPITS. In Erik's face.

Erik recoils, humiliated, patrons laughing around the bar.

KIRKEN (CONT'D)
(low but hostile; in English)
Not too late to finish what we started, boy.
(raises glass in toast)
We'll get to you soon enough.

Erik towels his face off, hand and voice atremble...

ERIK
You have to pay for what you've done.

Kirken peels back the fold of his coat, exposing the PISTOL tucked beneath his belt.

KIRKEN
Maybe, I'll get to you *now* - -

Without warning, he whacks the mug across Erik's face, shattering it as Erik stumbles back.

No one blinks. No one helps. Many CHUCKLE.

KIRKEN

Guffaws loudest of all, hauling Erik to his feet. Lifting the lighter lad, fistfuls of his shirt in his grip as he leans closer. And growls:

KIRKEN (CONT'D)
You think we went away? We're EVERYWHERE.

He plugs the pistol underneath Erik's chin. Hammer cocked and ready for recoil.

<u>No one seems the least bit disturbed by any of this.</u>

But over Kirken's shoulder, we notice something else: A STEAK KNIFE. At a nearby table. MOVING.

Rising on its own ostensible accord...coming closer...

KIRKEN (CONT'D)
The Fourth Reic - -

His words expire, a tiny trickle of blood gurgling from his mouth before THE CAMERA CIRCLES to show that steak knife.

In Kirken's back.

He unhands Erik, wobbling left to right, the gun CLATTERING to the floor seconds before Kirken drops. DEAD.

And people stand. And stare. Collectively horrified.

The only one more horrified is Erik.

Murmurs ripple through, patrons exiting en masse, as we - -

PUSH IN ON ERIK

His eyes exploding, before we - -

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. PUB - - VILLAGE SQUARE - - DUSK

BAM! Erik stumbles out. Seeking shelter under a cluster of trees, he violently, uncontrollably, VOMITS.

Palms to knees, bent over, he tries to catch his runaway breath. MURMURING to himself like a madman.

One thing clear: This man's no killer.

He vigorously tries to rub the blood from his hands, wiping them on his pants.

But hard as he tries...the blood won't come off.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - - NIGHT

A residential part of town, women and children confer in hushed tones as their men march towards some unknown mecca.

A storm brewing.

EXT. VILLAGE - - OUTSIDE PUB - - NIGHT

Erik regains his breath, watching the sun sink into the sky. A gorgeous sight rendered grotesque.

And only now, apart from it all, does Erik see(POV)the commotion in the village.

The prelude to a lynch mob.

Appropriately inspired, he moves towards it.

ERIK POV: Women and children scatter upon sight of us. Treated to whispers as we pass(*"warlock"...the devil himself"..."some kind of sorcery."*).

A sea of eyes peek from behind blinds, nothing heard but the sound of doors being locked. A chorus of CLACKS.

ERIK

Looks ahead, dark plumes of smoke ascendant.

It quickens Erik's pulse.

And his pace.

Emboldened by thought and possibility, he walks.

He jogs.

HE RUNS (HAND-HELD)

Heart pounding, he moves towards the conflagration. Scaling a modest incline, given full view of

HIS HOME

In flames. A MOB of men amassed around it, thrusting torches and fists in the air. Articulating the night with fire and venom. Trying to drive "the demons" out.

But in a world of fight or flight, Erik's all fight as he runs TOWARDS the burning building, the SCREAMS of his family heard from inside...

THE MOB

Thwart his path, several FISHERMEN pouncing on him, wrestling him to the dirt...

And still, inside the house, we hear the SCREAMS of Anya and Magda through the CRACKLING flames.

Anya's TEDDY BEAR sits abandoned on the front mat...

Inspired, Erik rises awkwardly to his feet, gaze on a busted POLE collapsed in the dirt.

CLOSE ON ERIK'S EYES

Alternately intense. And ENRAGED.

CLOSE ON THE BROKEN POLE

As it begins to rattle and shake. As if possessed.

THE RINGLEADER

A fire-hydrant with feet, raises his bat to pummel Erik just as we notice something odd. And not so odd.

That metal pole. AIRBORNE. Approaching like a missile. Heading right for the ringleader's head. *THUNK!*

And the thug relinquishes his grip on the bat, felled to the dirt floor. Unconscious. Or worse.

And upon sight of this sorcery, the mob moves collectively back. Terrified.

And Erik sprints towards the FIRE, about to enter when - -

THE ENTIRE EDIFICE COLLAPSES

The columns crumbling with a show of sparks before Erik can get to his beloved wife and daughter...

A burst of flames shoot out, sending Erik back, stumbling to the dirt as he emits a pained HOWL...

His wife and daughter scream no more.

And now, his face caked with soot and sweat, a virtual mask, Erik resembles the demon they believe him to be...

And he staggers across the soil, halting to behold the tattered remnants of his home...of his life...

CLOSE ON ERIK

the reflection of Anya's TEDDY BEAR visible in his iris.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

ERIK. FIVE MINUTES LATER.

And he's summoned the strength to move towards THE VILLAGE. Flames still flickering behind him...

Stopping. Beside that plot of land.

What was.

What will never be.

STAY HERE

As he ambles down the road, towards the town square.

Off this haunting image, we slowly...

FADE TO BLACK:

A rhapsodic song of prayer...

ERIK (O.S.)
Y'hay sh'lo-mo ra-bo min sh'ma-yo,
v'ha-yeem o-lay-nu v'al kol yis-ro-
ayl...

Insert Legend: **11 Months Later.**

CUT IN:

CLOSE ON ERIK

Head bowed, he chants the Kaddish(the prayer of mourning).

INT. SYNAGOGUE - - WIDER

A RABBI settles in beside him. They sit in silence, Erik finally finding his voice...

ERIK
I've mourned, rabbi. I've abided by the dictates of the Kaddish.
(looks up)
But still I feel no relief.

RABBI
The Kaddish is a symbol of faith, Erik. It's for your edification, not your relief.

Erik swallows an unspoken, likely subversive, response. And there's another bout of silence, before the rabbi asks:

RABBI (CONT'D)
What will you do now?

Off Erik, pondering that very question, we - -

CUT TO:

DARKNESS. For a second. Before double doors fling open, Erik exiting the synagogue, bounding down steps.

Only now do we see we're in...

EXT. PARIS, FRANCE - - MORNING

No title card necessary, the Eiffel Tower looms large over the comparatively small chapel, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL OF FOREIGN POLICY - - PARIS - - MORNING

A sprawling campus, would-be scholars move to and 'fro. Among them, we FIND ERIK, blending perfectly in with his boyish good looks and conservative attire.

He even carries a backpack, a thick textbook under arm. And we can't help but wonder: *Has he become a student?*

His hair newly shorn, his eyes aged by more than time, he's the oldest young man you've ever seen.

Disoriented, Erik stops a nebbish lad, asking:

ERIK
Professor Wesenthein's class?

STUDENT
That's where I'm headed. I'll show you. We're late!

As they trundle up the formidable steps, we CRANE BACK to behold the enormity of it all, and PRE-LAP:

VOICE (V.O.)
(Israeli accent)
Surely in matters of war, there are no rules, yes?

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - - SCHOOL - - <u>START ON NOAH WESENTHEIN</u>

A dapper dynamo with a sizable gut and auburn eyes that have seen more than they care to admit or remember.

A famed Nazi hunter and esteemed professor, we WIDEN to see he addresses a packed room of students...

NOAH WESENTHEIN
"Inter Arma Silent Legas".
(translates)
"In time of war, law is silent."
Who agrees?

He steps from behind the podium, limping slightly as several hands shoot up from his ever attentive audience.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
WRONG.
(titters of laughter)
The Geneva Convention tells us in no uncertain terms that even war has its rules - its morality, if you will. Without these rules we're no better than our enemies...

Find ERIK in the back of the room, flipping through a book with the Professor's PHOTO on the inside jacket.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The men, the *monsters*, I track, they aren't criminals in a small context.

BACK ON THE PROFESSOR

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
They are international pariahs.
(stops; gathers himself)
The first step towards burying the past lies in adjudicating the present...in bringing these criminals before judges and juries, and letting the law have its way with them.

ON ERIK

NOAH WESENTHEIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
If we're to believe in anything, let it be justice.

Erik watches, enamored, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALL - - SCHOOL - - START ON FRAMED PHOTOS

Adorning the white walls. Shots of Wiener Neudorf. Of Dachau. Of Auschwitz. Frozen memories.

WIDER to see ERIK, his back to us, beholding the pictures. We need not discern his face to know the thoughts evoked.

A BLONDE sidles up, flirtatiously appraising Erik before...

BLONDE
Haven't seen you in class before...

Erik tics a glance to her. Then back to those photos. And an awkward beat reigns before she takes another shot...

BLONDE (CONT'D)
(re: Photos/genocide)
So horrible...

Erik's distracted as the Professor hobbles past, belatedly responding to the vixen with a simple:

ERIK
You have no idea...

With that, he pursues the Professor. Leaving the blonde even more befuddled than usual.

EXT. QUAD - - CAMPUS - - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Erik hustles to catch up to the hurried professor - who feigns deaf to his repeated calls, never slowing until - -

- - An errant garbage-can topples over(*the wind?*). Thwarting the professor's path. Enabling Erik to fall in beside him.

ERIK
Afternoon, professor.

The Professor rights the garbage-can, annoyed.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
There was a day I could have outrun you...
(turns to see Erik)
If this is about my grading system - -

ERIK
No, sir, I'm not a student. I'm an admirer.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
Flattery has little effect on me, young man.
(pats his tummy)
Pastries are another matter...

ERIK
I wanted to talk to you about Nazis...
(before the professor can cut this short)
...And finding them.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
You want to learn...*how?*

ERIK
How. And where.

And Erik stands there, undeterred. STUBBORN. And the professor's amused by his moxie so...

NOAH WESENTHEIN
And just what qualifies you to hunt Nazis?

Erik falls silent, the professor locking eyes with him. Seeing something that most would miss.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
Pain is not a qualification...
(Erik looks away)
Were you in the camps, my boy? I'm writing a book now, you see. Perhaps, you can help me.

Erik stares back, unwilling to answer. Moving on:

ERIK
They're out there, sir, walking freely about. Not just surviving, <u>thriving</u>. There are Nazis in South America.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
Yes. Yes...
(leans closer)
And I hear there are Frenchmen in France...
(then; rat-a-tat-tat)
It's estimated that roughly 200,000 Germans were responsible for acts of atrocity during the War. Less than two thousand were convicted at Nuremberg - another 30,000 by France, Great Britain, Poland and the Soviet Union. That means less than 20 percent of those responsible have been convicted or captured. I'd say they're out there, indeed.

The professor lights a cigarette, enabling us to see his clubbed hand; a number emblazoned on his right forearm.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
Leave the hunting to the hunters, my boy.

With this, he recedes, Erik calling after him...

ERIK
Auschwitz, I was in Auschwitz, professor...

Off the professor, instantly affable, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - HIGH RISE - - <u>START ON 15TH FLOOR VIEW</u>

DOWNTOWN PARIS AT DUSK. The aqueous sky. The infinite horizon. Simply breathtaking.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (O.S.)
...Mengele's program was inspired by Charles Davenport's theory of eugenics when he taught at Harvard University...

PULL-BACK MORE to see the office confines: An aisle of opposing filing cabinets. Reams of research.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...Based on the belief that men and women could be bred - and executed - in a Darwinian struggle for physical and mental dominance.

STOP to find ERIK at a table across from the PROFESSOR - who eats voraciously as Erik stares at PHOTOS of war criminals.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
(scoffing)
All in an effort to create "the master race".

The professor eyes Erik as he sips from a coffee cup...

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
They were close to achieving these goals before the liberation.

Erik falls silent, the professor gently inquiring...

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
You were but a boy...do you remember?

A BEAT.

ERIK
I remember. Too much...and not enough.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
There's a man in Israel who helps survivors. He's quite good, they say.

He pushes away from the table. Rummaging through a cluttered drawer until he emerges with...

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
His card.

He slides the CARD across the table. Erik - other matters to tend to - doesn't even look at it. Hastily tucks it away.

And in an effort to change the subject, he points to the PHOTOS of Nazi war criminals spread on the table.

ERIK
These men, they're all free...?

NOAH WESENTHEIN
Living under assumed names. Many in South America. Some here in Paris. Some, they even say, in Israel and America. Hidden in plain sight.

Erik comes across a photo he recognizes. DECKER. He slides it aside. Then:

ERIK
Kleinmein. Dr. Kleinmein.

The professor knows the name. Feels <u>more</u> sympathy for Erik.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
A ghost. No one's sure where he is.

ERIK'S HANDS turn to fists beneath the table...

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
You sure you wouldn't like some food?

ERIK
No. No, thank you...

NOAH WESENTHEIN
We all respond differently to trauma.
Me, I eat.
(then; pointed)
What is it *you do, Erik...?*

ERIK
I...I need to feel like I'm doing something. Something to help.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
Why do this? *Justice?*

ERIK
In part.

NOAH WESENTHEIN
For you?

ERIK
For all of us.

And the professor looks at Erik, appraising. Finally:

NOAH WESENTHEIN
I can't help you, I'm sorry. Hunting Nazis isn't to be taken lightly. You'll get yourself killed - -

Erik nods - just as the professor's plate of pasta plunges into his lap. Shit.

- - The professor lurches up. Cursing in Hebrew before he mutters an "excuse me" and scampers into the next room(os).

Erik watches him go, glancing at the wall of filing cabinets behind him, before we - -

JUMP CUT TO:

THE SINK FAUCET. Slapping off. A MINUTE LATER.

WIDER: The professor's cleaned up. Calls into the next room:

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
Forgive me. My passion for food sometimes gets the best of me.

FOLLOW WESENTHEIN

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
Now you can tell me about...

Into the OFFICE to see...Erik's gone. So are the PHOTOS.

NOAH WESENTHEIN (CONT'D)
...Auschwitz.

And we see the filing cabinets behind the professor before he does: Each and every drawer left open.

Too many drawers, too much information, to inspect by human hands considering the time constraints.

The professor turns, stunned with what he sees, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE - - STREETS - - THREE DAYS LATER - - MORNING

A tropical climate, the streets are full and festive...

Insert Legend: **Buenos Aires, Argentina.**

And a word about the weather? It's there. *Everywhere.*

But ERIK has other concerns. Dark specs and thin-coat donned, he occupies an outdoor table.

Sipping iced coffee. Sweating profusely.

But despite the newspaper in his hand, his gaze drifts across the street. To A BANK(POV).

And then back to that paper. Or what's beneath it: A SURVEILLANCE PHOTO pulled from Wesenthein's files.

ON THE PHOTO: A stern German man named "Otto Reiner".

Attached, find a dossier with WORDS like *"financial mastermind"..."financier of medical tests"*(CLOSE CUTS)...

For our purposes, we'll call this man THE BANKER.

ERIK

Slides the photo aside. Enabling us to see ANOTHER PHOTO. This one more recent. Clearly shot by an amateur(Erik).

POV: The banker. In a business suit. Smiling.

And Erik compares the two photos, little doubt that this is the same man. Thinner hair. Thicker waist. Same grin.

And only now do we notice THE HANDSOME MAN seated a few tables down. Buzz cut, he studies Erik - who's oblivious to him.

After a moment, with a deep breath, Erik stands. Digs deep in his pockets. Comes up short.

He leaves a few shillings on the table, marching across the street as we STAY BEHIND to see - -

A WAITER

Count the insufficient change. About to holler after Erik before the handsome man waves him off.

Anonymously paying Erik's bill, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - - BANK - - <u>START ON THE MARBLE FLOOR</u>

Dress shoes CLIP-CLAPPING across it before we PAN UP, falling in step with...ERIK.

He stops by a kiosk where he's able to see...

THE MAIN FLOOR(POV)

A banal enough place, tellers tend to clients while bank executives occupy desks on the margins.

There, on the carpet, we see THE BANKER, a plaque on his desk telling us that he's the bank *"PRESIDENT"*.

ERIK POV: The banker grins affably, offering A LITTLE GIRL a lollipop as he chats up her attractive mother.

ERIK

Stalks closer, on the carpet now, eyes on - -

THE BANKER'S DESK(POV)

Uncluttered, our gaze goes to A COFFEE MUG.

VOICE (O.S.)
May I help you?

Erik nearly jumps. Startled to see...

THE BANKER

Inches away. That smile even more effusive up close.

THE BANKER
You seem a bit lost...

Erik's at a loss for words. Stammering.

THE BANKER (CONT'D)
Are you new to our city?

ERIK
Yes. No.

THE BANKER
(a laugh)
Well, whichever it is, if there's anything you need, my name's John...

He extends a hand that Erik tentatively shakes. Watching as the banker moves toward the back vaults...

Erik focuses back on that desk. And the COFFEE MUG atop it.

A SECURITY GUARD circles close by.

Erik sweeps the scene, waiting for the guard to turn away, making sure customers are sufficiently occupied before...

That coffee cup. Rises. And FLOATS through the air. An intoxicating moment for Erik, the mug goes right into his hand. But then Erik sees - -

THE LITTLE GIRL

Staring at him. Having witnessed the whole thing.

The sight of her conjures memories of his beloved Anya.

Erik puts a finger to his lips. *Shhhh*. And he winks with a smile that never reaches his eyes.

The little girl nods back, accepting the tacit terms of their contract. Their little secret.

But as Erik exits, we notice that someone else has seen the whole thing: <u>The handsome man from the cafe.</u>

He watches Erik exit, astonished, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - - ARGENTINA - - LATER THAT NIGHT

PAN OVER THE WALLS where Erik has made up A CHART, a pyramid of sorts...Decker and Kleinmein at the top.

STOP ON ERIK

At a desk, he compares the FINGERPRINTS taken off the coffee mug with those in Otto Reiner's file.

A match.

CUT TO:

A THICK FILE

As its plopped on an already cluttered desk...

INT. OFFICE - - POLICE STATION - - THE NEXT MORNING

An OLDER INSPECTOR examines the file with great intensity as ERIK looks on, his foot tapping to a tune only he can hear.

A YOUNG INSPECTOR enters, closing the door behind him.

OLDER INSPECTOR
(re: File; to Erik)
You've done this on your own? The fingerprints, everything?

ERIK
Yessir.

OLDER INSPECTOR
Impressive.

He slides the file to his colleague.

OLDER INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
What's your interest here?

ERIK
My "interest"? My interest is that of someone who doesn't want mass murderers walking free. I don't want a reward, if that's what you're asking.

YOUNG INSPECTOR
(points to photo of banker)
This man, he's a part of the community. A respected part - -

OLDER INSPECTOR
- - Which is exactly why we'll deal with this matter swiftly.

ERIK
(pointed glance to the young inspector)
I thought it best to alert you before telling Interpol - -

OLDER INSPECTOR
No need for that. This is our concern now. Mr...?

ERIK
(a beat)
Burns. Daniel Burns.

OLDER INSPECTOR
We tend to our own backyard here, Mr. Burns. This won't be tolerated, I assure you.

And Erik nods, already on his way out before - -

YOUNG INSPECTOR
Mr. Burns, where should we contact you?

Erik stops. Hand on the door knob.

ERIK
What for?

OLDER INSPECTOR
To keep you updated, of course.

ERIK
Why? - You've already assured me it'll be dealt with.

And Erik exits, the inspectors trading eyes, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - - DAY

Erik trundles down steps, passing uniformed police officers who loiter beside a pair of prostitutes.

Across the street, leaning against a Jeep, Erik sees the handsome man from the cafe.

MAN
(American accent)
Afternoon...

Erik nods tentatively back, a bit unnerved as he bounds down the block, glancing back before turning the corner into an - -

ALLEYWAY - - CONTINUOUS

And Erik slows, exiting the other side to see

A CIRCLE OF KIDS (POV)

Five older boys surround a younger, chubby kid.

Hazing. Harassing. Humiliating.

BACK ON ERIK

And the sight of this stirs something deep in him. Makes him march closer, teeth clenched.

ERIK
Leave him alone.

And one look at Erik and his intense expression and the bullies scatter, Erik and the overfed boy left behind.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Do you know why they do that?

BOY
...Because they hate me.

ERIK
Because they <u>fear</u> you.

The boy stares back, perplexed.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Go home.

And the lad backpedals before clumsily running away.

And Erik watches him go, the ghost of a grin, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - MOTEL - - LATER THAT NIGHT

Erik sits at the desk, pouring through files...

...Gaze falling on a clipped NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: *"Doctor Helps Holocaust Survivors Overcome the Past."*

We see several more articles about this "Israeli Doctor", THE CARD Wesenthein gave Erik clipped to the top of the page.

He stuffs the articles back into a file before he goes to the bed and the Bible atop it.

Left face down, Erik opens it to THE BOOK OF JOB, reading earnestly before - -

BAM-BAM.

A knock on the door. Startles Erik. Has him on his feet, hustling to the door where he looks through - -

THE PEEPHOLE(POV): The American man.

A deliberative beat before Erik steps back, unlacing the chain and unbolting the lock with nary a squint.

The door creaks open without so much as a touch.

And there stands THE AMERICAN whose been following Erik.

AMERICAN MAN
Thought it was time I introduced myself. Owen Graves. Maybe you'll let me buy you a drink.

ERIK
It's late.

GRAVES
I'm guessing a man like you doesn't sleep much. I really think we should talk, Erik...

CUE LOUD FLAMENCO MUSIC, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LA VIRUTQ DANCE CLUB - - <u>TRACKING SHOT</u>

Weaving through the writhing couples on the dance floor...

STOP ON A BACK BOOTH

Where we find Erik and Graves, huddled under dim lights.

ERIK
Who are you?

GRAVES
I'm with the federal government.
I'm here to help.
(off Erik)
That was a joke. I'm with the Central Intelligence Agency.

In support of this, he tosses several surveillance PHOTOS on the table, showing Erik as he arrives in Argentina. And then, more tellingly, Erik in the bank.

AGENT GRAVES
Professor Wesenthein told us about you, said you might be here. But we had no idea how...
(chooses words carefully)
...*Special* you were.
(drains cocktail)
My experience, the best foreign agents aren't motivated by greed...

ERIK
...What are they motivated by?

AGENT GRAVES
Revenge.

ERIK
You want me to work for you...

AGENT GRAVES
Work *with* us. You can go places, do things, we can't. You're less...accountable.

ERIK
You mean more *expendable*.

Graves places a WAD OF CASH on the table, motioning the WAITRESS over before leaning closer to Erik:

AGENT GRAVES
Look, I understand your trust issues here. If I went through what you did...
(voice trails off)
But be practical: You need money. You need friends.

With this, he peels several crisp bills out. Simultaneously paying the bill and flirting with the waitress.

ERIK
Thank you, Mr. Graves. But I'm doing fine on my own.

And he stands, Graves content to let him go before - -

AGENT GRAVES
Erik? Other way. You can't go out that way.
(with a wink)
Helps to know where you're going on foreign land...

He waves "bye", Erik exiting the advised path, knifing through patrons on the dance floor before - -

He spots a face in the crowd. THE BANKER. Sandwiched between two gorgeous WOMEN. Not a care in the world.

And Erik stops in his tracks, his inertia in striking contrast to the kinetic frenzy around him.

And he stares at the banker - who's too busy having the time of his life to realize the interest he's evoked.

Erik looks back to the booth but...Graves is GONE.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. CLUB - - STREET - - NIGHT

BAM! A back door slaps open, the banker and a lovely lass spilling out. Fully inebriated.

And after a brief and graceless wrestling match, the lass wisely breaks free and stumbles off on her own.

Leaving the banker behind. Shouting drunkenly after her.

And after a moment, he forces perfect posture before ambling down the vacant alley...

Heeding nothing but the faint sound of...rolling THUNDER(?).

Ears attuned, the banker squints down. Spots the source of the sound. A small BALL BEARING. Rolling towards him.

The size of a large marble, it halts at his feet.

And the banker peers down at it, giggling like a school girl. Squatting for a closer look...

ANGLE ON BALL BEARING

Its shiny surface enabling us to see the banker's bemused expression. He sees something else, too:

ERIK (BANKER POV)

Or so he thinks. But when he turns around...there's no one there. Sobering up, the banker reaches for the marble before - -

- - It rolls AWAY from him. As if teasing. Or beckoning.

On a flat surface, the marble's behavior is downright unscientific. Subversive, even.

And the banker's certain he's seeing things. Questioning his sanity but...he follows that steel ball...

...Around a corner. Where he runs right into - -

ERIK

Standing in his path, arms akimbo, something concealed behind his back.

But the banker makes no immediate connection between the marble and Erik, exasperated when he blurts out - -

THE BANKER
Christ, you scared me. I've just seen the most insane - -

But his words expire on sight of that ball bearing. Now hovering in the air beside Erik's head.

JUMP CUT TO:

THE BANKER (HAND-HELD)

Hustling down the STREET before we WIDEN to see his wrists are bound by a bent steel bar. A makeshift shackle.

ERIK, his chaperone, leads the way, as we parachute in:

ERIK
...You have an arrangement with the police, is that it? Is that how it works?

THE BANKER
I'm a Argentine citizen. I'm - -

ERIK
Otto Reiner. War criminal. Murderer. But we'll let the proper authorities figure that out...

Erik shepherds his captive past local denizens...

THE BANKER
Help me...HELP ME...

Erik conceals the shackles on the banker's wrists when he tells the locals:

ERIK
He's had a bit much to drink...my apologies...

And the people move on with predictable apathy...

No one else in sight, the banker focuses on Erik, desperate:

THE BANKER
Wait. WAIT. I have money. A lot of money. I'll give you whatever you want...anything...

ERIK
"Anything"? Can you build a time machine...?
(off the banker; *"Huh?"*)
Then you're no help to me...

THE BANKER
I'm just the money man, yes? You understand that, yes?

ERIK
Clean hands, dirty hearts, is that the idea?

Up ahead, we see the townhouse-like edifice of THE EMBASSY, American flags fluttering off its front.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Kleinmein. Doctor Kleinmein. Tell me where he is.

THE BANKER
I don't know. They don't tell me these things.

ERIK
Who does?

THE BANKER
The Fourth Reich.

ERIK
Tell me where they are...

THE BANKER
I don't know, *they* contact *me*.

Erik's brows furrow as the shackles TIGHTEN on the banker's wrists, his veins flaring, his face going flush.

THE BANKER (CONT'D)
I DON'T KNOW! I told you, I'm just - -

ERIK
I know, I know, "the money man"...Well, "money man", let's go see what you're worth...

He flings the banker through the embassy doors, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - - AMERICAN EMBASSY - - CONTINUOUS

Erik hauls his bounty to the front desk, behind which we see a young receptionist.

On the periphery stand TWO MARINES. Upon sight of Erik, one quietly unclips the holster housing his .45 1911.

ERIK
This man's name is Otto Reiner.
(MORE)

ERIK (CONT'D)
He's a Nazi fugitive and known war criminal.

The receptionist looks up, chewing her gum with aerobic fervor. Then, without missing a beat - -

RECEPTIONIST
Do you have an appointment?

Erik smirks, about to bark back when - -

THE BANKER
My name's John Henders. I'm an Argentine citizen and this man has abducted me - -

In no time, Erik and the banker are SHOUTING at each other, drawing the attention of everyone in the office.

None more pertinent than the MARINES - who now brandish those sidearms. One on Erik. One on the banker.

AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL

Steps into the fray. Angling for Erik.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL
Sir, may I see your passport...

ERIK
This man is - -

THE BANKER
- - He kidnapped me off the street. My papers are in my back pocket. THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!

He gestures to his bound hands, unable to wrestle his identification out without assistance.

A fact that places even more suspicion on Erik, the Marines' guns favoring him as the embassy official inspects those handcuffs, wondering:

EMBASSY OFFICIAL
How did you do this...?

Marine #1 tries to remove the cuffs. To no avail. There's no lock. No key. No explanation.

ERIK
Listen to me. My name is Erik Lehnsherr. This man is - -

EMBASSY OFFICIAL
(off passport)
John Henders.
(looks up at Erik)
And you, you have yet to show us anything. Remove the cuffs, sir.

Erik sizes up the situation, resolution in his eyes.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
Remove the cuffs. Sir.

The Marines flex their firearms to enforce the point.

And Erik shrugs. And sighs. And concedes.

And we watch as those shackles peel slowly off on their own. To the utter amazement of everyone.

The ultimate distraction, the rest happens fast:

The steel bar - now wrenched straight - is used to smack the pistol from Marine #1's grip before...

...Erik kicks the gun from Marine #2's hand, leaving him to contend with a recent arrival we'll cleverly call Marine #3...the steel bar now in Erik's hand as if a tire iron...

MARINE #3
DROP IT.

Erik complies, letting the bar CLANG to the carpet. Right before sucking the GUN from Marine #3's grip.

The Marine stares at his empty appendage, eyes agog.

Not sure what else to do, he RUNS.

And remember that embassy official? He's not so calm anymore, cowering in a corner, petrified...

Erik looks to the staircase - where reinforcements flood into view carrying M-1 machine guns and bad intentions...

And Erik looks at the banker - who has the good sense to duck under a desk. Anticipating what's to come...

ERIK

Angles for the nearest exit before a TROOP OF SOLDIERS block his retreat. Rifles at the ready.

ERIK. Dead to rights. Until;

He spots a velvet-rope used to delineate a walkway. Employing that rope to lasso the rifles into one ineffective pile, barrels pulled together.

BULLETS BLAST

Down at the floor, some ricocheting back at the soldiers. Knees and ankles shot to shit. Soldiers clump to the carpet.

Bedlam. Fucking bedlam.

Erik surveys the scene, seeing the outright TERROR he inspires in the faces around him.

...But there's just too many of them, an army amassing.

He spots an M-1 on the floor. A second later, it's in his hands, FIRING a fusillade into the air.

The soldiers take cover...providing Erik with ample time to unlatch a locked door and flee into the - -

EXT. ALLEYWAY - - AMERICAN EMBASSY - - NIGHT

Sirens howl, boots ECHOING closer as a platoon of Marines spill onto the street...

Only 50 or so yards away, Erik's trapped. No choice but to surrender(or risk killing these men)until - -

A JEEP

Screeches into view, AGENT GRAVES behind the wheel.

No dialogue necessary, Erik vaults into the passenger seat as the vehicle ricochets down the street, and we - -

FADE TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - - EARLY MORNING

Urban blight abounds. Empty and abandoned.

ERIK (V.O.)
You're an American, why not just use your influence back there...?

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - - <u>START ON IMAGES</u>

A roster of Nazi photos projected on a wall at the behest of Agent Graves(WIDER) - who sits beside Erik...

AGENT GRAVES
This isn't exactly a program that we advertise...

ERIK
Since when is hunting Nazis not worthy of "advertisement"?

AGENT GRAVES
It's complex...

ERIK
Most simple things are.

Graves smiles. Blinks. Moves on:

AGENT GRAVES
Then lemme explain it as simply as I can: Everyone's against us here. The government. The police. Even some of the people. That simple enough?

Erik nods. Graves moves on:

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Meet Dr. Charles Grubowsy...

CLICK. On the wall, the projected image of a brutish man in Nazi garb. Snapping off a *Heil Hitler.*

AGENT GRAVES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Headed up medical experiments at Dachau. Oversaw - *personally* oversaw - the slaughter of over two hundred thousand Jews.

ERIK
You want me to kill him...

AGENT GRAVES
(wink-wink)
That would be a violation of the Geneva Convention. We want you to stop him. Whatever that entails.

ERIK
I'm looking for specific Nazis.

AGENT GRAVES
You help us, we'll help you. The bag to your right should facilitate things...

ERIK. Opens said pouch. Finds several items inside...

AGENT GRAVES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Cash. Passports. Other assorted goodies.

ERIK
I'm to do your bidding?

AGENT GRAVES
Our bidding. This is what we in the intelligence community like to call a symbiotic union...
(then; off Erik)
The ways of General Juan Peron are alive and well in Argentina even if he isn't.

ERIK
Meaning...?

AGENT GRAVES
Meaning, the United States government isn't exactly welcome here.

But Erik's less than convinced until his gaze goes back to the wall projection: A photo of DECKER now displayed.

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
This is Raymond Alter. Also known as Hans Decker.

And now Erik's riveted.

AGENT GRAVES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I believe he was in Auschwitz...

Graves sneaks a glance to Erik. Sees that he's got him.

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Our sources tell us that he's here. He also happens to be an associate of...
(clicks back to first photo)
...Grubowsky's. It's a jigsaw, Erik. We just need you to help us with a few pieces.

Erik stands and begins to tuck the cash and passports in various pockets on his person. A decision rendered.

ERIK
I need information regarding a Dr. Kleinmein.

AGENT GRAVES
I'll see what we have.

Erik nods. Almost exits before - -

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Erik.
(he stops, turns)
This Kleinmein guy, it's a personal thing?

Erik lingers in the doorway. About to go before...

ERIK
It's all personal...

Graves watches him go, before we - -

CUT TO:

A MASKED MAN - - UNKNOWN POV

Steps into view, a scope magnifying his right eye like a cyclops. His soothing voice telling us to...

MASKED MAN
(sing-song)
Open wide...

REVERSE to see a LITTLE BOY on a table, the doctor squinting into his open orifice...

And the doctor clicks the scope off. Peels down his mask revealing...a smile. It's only now that we recognize - -

GRUBOWSKY (50'S)

A sunken man with a sickly gait, he pinches the boy's cheek...

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
Barely a peep. I wish all my patients were as brave as you, little man.

Off his crooked smile, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA - - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - - <u>START ON KIDS</u>

Each and every one exasperated, staring at some unseen entity.

REVERSE ON - - ERIK

Entering this children's clinic, drawing attention and awe as he approaches the desk and the assistant behind it.

He DINGS the bell to get her attention, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - - MOMENTS LATER

The little boy sits atop the table, shrugging back into his jacket as Grubowsky jots notes on a clipboard...

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
If you don't tell your mother, there's candy in the jar for you - -

The door slaps open, ERIK entering shortly thereafter. Standing in the threshold, eyeing the kid with apprehension.

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY (CONT'D)
What is this? I'm with a patient - -

Before he can complete the sentence, the table with the lad atop it wheels briskly out the door...

...A moment later the door slams shut.

2.3 seconds later, Erik's alone with the doctor.

INT. HALLWAY - - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - - CONTINUOUS

The table stops in the middle of the hall, the kid ecstatic.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - - CONTINUOUS

And there's a stunned beat before...

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
...How did you do that?

Erik steps closer...the doctor steps back...

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY (CONT'D)
I'm calling the police.

He reaches for the phone...just before it slides out of reach.

ERIK
There are higher authorities than your police.

Erik glances at the MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS laid out on the table, blinking the memories they resurrect away...

And Grubowsy backpedals until he's against the wall, hand clawing at something(os)behind him...

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
What are you?

ERIK
You're the monster here...

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
I'm a doctor. I treat children.

ERIK
Yes, I'm told you have wartime experience treating children. Do they still come to you at night, doctor? Or do you sleep soundly?

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
You have no right to be here...

But Erik keeps coming...

ERIK
Hans Decker, where is he?

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
I...I...don't know what you're talking about...

But Erik's eyes are unblinking, Grubowsky blurting out:

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY (CONT'D)
They'll kill me.

ERIK
There are worse things than death... Where is he?

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
I can't tell you...

ERIK
WHERE IS HE?

Grubowsky stares blankly back - until his stethoscope curls around his neck as if a python. Tighter and tighter.

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY
You mean to kill me? You don't have the constitution...I've been around killers all my life.

The stethoscope becomes a noose, pulling up. Choking Grubowsky until finally - -

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY (CONT'D)
Okay...okay...<u>please.</u>

The noose goes slack, the doctor settling to his feet, catching his breath, a look of calm resolve coming over him.

And only now do we see what he's been reaching for in the drawer behind him: <u>A PISTOL.</u>

And Erik's caught off-guard, exposed. But:

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY (CONT'D)
(in German; subtitled)
I sleep like a baby.

He promptly tucks the pistol under his chin before shouting:

DOCTOR GRUBOWSKY (CONT'D)
HEIL HITLER!

ERIK'S EYES blister open, before we - -

HARD CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - OUTSIDE OFFICE - - <u>CLOSE ON THE LITTLE BOY</u>

<u>BANG!</u> The boy jumps on reflex.

BACK INSIDE THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE - - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON ERIK

Not sure how to react. Still unaccustomed to the sight of blood, he averts his eyes. Grimaces.

Gradually, skittishly, he moves to the drawer Grubowsky pulled the gun from, sorting through it to find

A STACK OF LETTERS.

The same return address on most: *NARAGOS, BUENOS AIRES.*

Close by, Erik finds orders for surgical supplies to be forwarded to the same address.

He grabs the letters, stepping carefully around Grubowsky's body, still averting his eyes...

INT. RECEPTION AREA - - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - - MOMENTS LATER

Erik walks through, the assistant and the kids cowering down, turning away from him in terror.

Erik tries not to feel like a monster.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - - BUENOS AIRES - - THE NEXT DAY

A desolate part of the city, we MOVE with Erik - now donning the trademark HAT that he'll be partial to in later years - as he bounds past a vine-ridden wall. Turning into a hidden - -

COURTYARD

Teeming with dead leaves and dirty sunlight.

AGENT GRAVES inhabits a table. Doing a CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

Never looking up as Erik settles in across from him.

AGENT GRAVES
(never looking up)
Something to drink, Erik?
(he looks up)
Erik?

But Erik can't take his eyes off that crossword puzzle...

ERIK
My daughter, she used to do those...

Graves is caught off-guard. Unsure what to say other than...

AGENT GRAVES
...I'm sorry.

ERIK
(a sad smile)
It's a good memory...

Then, to protect himself from the softness of sentimentality:

ERIK (CONT'D)
Grubowsky killed himself.

Graves isn't surprised.

AGENT GRAVES
That bother you?

ERIK
That he's dead?

AGENT GRAVES
That you didn't get to kill him...

ERIK
I'm not a killer.

AGENT GRAVES
Not until you kill someone.

Erik thinks back to that bar in the Ukraine. Still haunted.

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Six letter word for "go bad" or "spoil"...

ERIK
What?
(Graves points to crossword)
..."Curdle".

Graves tries that out. Grins, impressed. Then:

ERIK (CONT'D)
When he shot himself, I wasn't sure what to feel. Hate eventually turns to indifference. I prefer hate.

AGENT GRAVES
Well, we got plenty more people for you to hate, pal.

With this, he removes a FILE from his attaché-case...

ERIK
Something else first: Kleinmein.

AGENT GRAVES
Hmm? Oh. We're still looking. Interpol's got nothing on him, we've got less. A German autopsy claims he died of pneumonia in Belarus two years ago.

Erik's visibly skeptical of this report.

ERIK
There's more going on here than you realize, agent. They're planning something...something big.

AGENT GRAVES
You were under the impression they were organizing a soccer league?

Erik stares back, unamused. Graves returns to the crossword:

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Seven letter word for "conformity to truth"...?

Erik stands. Nearly out of the courtyard before he answers:

ERIK
"Justice".

Graves tries that out. Giggles. *Should'a known that one.*

When he looks back up...ERIK'S GONE.

And the file's still there.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALERMO VIEJO - - BUENOS AIRES - - DUSK

A shopper's paradise, merchants hawk everything imaginable. But we're focused on the LINE OF CARS parked along the curb.

ERIK

Bypasses a succession of Mercedes and VW's before halting beside a shiny new '56 Chrysler.

He blinks, the locks popping instantly up, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. CHRYSLER - - MOVING - - NIGHT

Pitch-black out, Erik keeps his head bowed in a map as he traverses through the bucolic countryside...

CAR HEADLIGHTS wash over him from up ahead, coming closer...

INT. TRUCK - - MOVING

A FARMER putters past the Chrysler, looking over to see(POV) Erik. Head buried in a map. In the passenger seat.

The farmer's eyes go wide, nearly driving off the road as he studies the rear-view mirror, and we - -

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - - NARAGOS - - NIGHT

Sprawling countryside, the Chrysler rumbles past abandoned homes, stopping by a cluster of brush and bark.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRYSLER - - STATIONARY

ERIK'S EYES - - REAR-VIEW MIRROR POV

A moment of reflection. Or, perhaps, pause.

But only a moment.

Because then, like a shot...he exits(os).

CUT TO:

EXT. ESTATE - - NIGHT

A calmly place, there's nothing particularly interesting about it aside from the unruly, long neglected, weeds.

Nothing furtive grows here.

We HEAR the faint CRUNCH of grass before ERIK crouches into frame. 20 yards from the house.

And he's about to stand to get a better look when - -

The front door. Cracks open. A SKINNY MAN emerging in civilian attire. Surveying the scene, he sparks a cigarette.

And we think him a farmer until we discern the pistol and dagger tucked inside respective shoulder holsters.

He exhales a ring of smoke before returning inside...

Erik takes a deep breath. Moves closer.

CUT TO:

INT. ESTATE - - ENTRY HALL - - MOMENTS LATER

EMPTY. No furniture. No pictures. No personables.

Slinking through, ERIK notices MAGAZINES atop a glass table. *"Sa Man."* And *"Die Hitler Jugend."*

The Nazi motif furthered as ERIK enters "the family room" to find a flag taped to the wall.

An enormous SWASTIKA.

And Erik stares at it before pulling THE STAR OF DAVID from inside his shirt. Distracted by voices...

GERMAN VOICES.

It takes him a moment to realize they're coming from outside. No time to figure out where exactly because - -

THE SKINNY MAN

Enters the room. As surprised to see Erik as Erik is to see him. THEN: A mad scramble...a scrum of limbs...

Close quarter combat, it's messy and graceless and after a few clumsy blows, Erik finds himself on the floor...

...The Nazi straddling him, shouting for help in between PUNCHES to Erik's face...

A hand on Erik's throat, he begins to choke him, removing a KNIFE from his belt...

Powers constrained, Erik writhes beneath the Nazi's grip, things looking dire until - -

The Nazi smiles. <u>Exposing a mouth full of braces.</u>

And now, when we look back at Erik...he's the one smiling.

<u>SFX</u>: A blood-curdling SCREAM.

JUMP CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - - MOMENTS LATER

Erik on his feet now. On the move. We needn't see what he did to the skinny Nazi; we can *feel* it.

EXT. ESTATE - -EAST SIDE - - NIGHT

The Nazi's aborted scream has garnered the attention of THREE of his comrades - who scamper into the house, moving past - -

ERIK

Who ducks behind a stack of tires, staring at the grounds:

Only the full moon provides any source of light. That and the car BEAMS bouncing off the STABLE.

...From which we see TWO SOLDIERS transporting boxes towards TWO JEEPS idling on the grass.

ERIK

Slinks closer, taking refuge behind a rust-ridden TRACTOR. Pondering options before his eyes fall on the alpha male directing the action...

DECKER

Time doing little to quell his penchant for tyranny...

ERIK POV: ANOTHER SOLDIER hauls a BOX of GRENADES towards one of the jeeps, carefully placing it in the back.

One thing clear: These men are assembling an arsenal.

Then, as if mesmerized, Erik steps into the open, moving brazenly towards Decker.

The THREE SOLDIERS notice from behind. Shouting *HALT!*

And Decker turns to face Erik. Mere feet away.

And there they stand amidst the confusion, rifle barrels fixed on Erik's back (he seems less than concerned).

ERIK
You don't remember me...

Decker calmly removes his sidearm. Checks the ammo.

DECKER
...Don't trust I'll need to.

Full of calm, void of contrition, he lifts said firearm as some thirty yards away...

A HAND GRENADE

Tumbles errantly from the back of the Jeep like a tomato.

ERIK
Tell me what I am...tell me what you did to me...

That hand grenade. Rolls closer to the soldiers.

DECKER
I'd rather show you what I'm *going* to do to you.

Erik closes his eyes. Keeps them there. As if accepting his fate. Or expediting that of others. And we hear a - -

PLINK(OS)

The faint but indelible sound produced when a pin's removed from a grenade. Invariably followed by a -

BOOOOOOOOOM!

Sending shrapnel towards the soldiers behind Erik, knocking them to the dirt, wounded and debilitated...

DECKER

Shields himself from the explosion, the Jeep launched into the air before thundering back like a deflated tennis ball.

Gradually activating each and every grenade in that box.

A succession of EXPLOSIONS illuminate the night, sending everything into disarray. It's as if the compound's under attack, Nazis firing at unseen enemies...

ERIK

Uses the pandemonium to his advantage, punching out the Nazi who's approaching from behind. Delivering a debilitating kick to another's knee.

He dislodges their firearms with a flick of his head.

But Erik loses sight of Decker, scouring the grounds for his adversary when he feels

A NAZI

Blitzing him from behind, nary a second to react, whirling to see THE GLINT OF A SWORD - -

Erik extends a hand, unsheathing a DAGGER from a fallen soldier's belt...vacuuming it into his grip before - -

- - PLUNGING - -

- - THAT DAGGER - -

- - INTO THE NAZI'S BELLY - -

And there's nothing mystical about this murder, blood bubbling from the soldier's mouth as he blinks at Erik before collapsing to the dirt, DEAD.

Erik looks at the body. Looks at his bloody hands. The first murder he's intended to commit, it gives him no joy.

And he stares down for what feels like an eternity until...

DECKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I remember you now.

DECKER

Behind Erik. Fifteen feet away. Eyes full of fire, fist full of steel. And Erik tries to turn, but - -

BLAM! He's blown back.

DECKER UNLOADS

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Trying to finish the job as Erik rolls away, the gunshots kicking up dirt. Inches away.

ANOTHER EXPLOSION

Rocks the compound, jeep debris reigning down.

ERIK

Claws his way towards a water well as the stable doors slap open, HORSES scurrying out, only adding to the chaos...

The thoroughbreds dash in circles, caught in the frenzy.

HEAR the rumble of the remaining Jeep engine before we see Nazis driving off...

And we HEAR the THWACK-THWACK-THWACK of helicopter blades, Erik looking up to see a CHOPPER given flight...

And hard as Erik tries, wounded, he's unable to manipulate metal, his powers diminished.

And he's left to watch, clutching his gunshot shoulder as the CHOPPER soars into the sky...

INT. CHOPPER - - IN FLIGHT

Decker looks down through the canopy at the wounded Erik.

Erik stares back.

EXT. ESTATE - - BACKSIDE - - NIGHT

Erik staggers to his feet, watching the helicopter recede before surveying the scene; the detritus of his deed.

A field of flames.

And Erik catches his breath as one of those errant HORSES trots towards him...

Erik reigns it in. Pats its mane. Calming the beast.

An odd contrast to the violence we've just witnessed, there's a paradoxical tenderness to this man.

ERIK
Shhh. It's okay...they're all gone...

But he stops when he looks at the horse's face.

And sees one of its EYES is a synthetic shade of BLUE.

CUT TO:

INT. STABLE - - ESTATE - - MOMENTS LATER

DARKNESS punctured as doors wheeze open, the BG blaze forming a silhouette around Erik who...

...Enters to see the stalls - now only housing hay. But as he wades deeper in, he spots a pathway leading to...

AN UNDERGROUND BUNKER

ERIK POV: We trundle down steps, the inscrutable and subterranean confines coming into view, revealing...

A LABORATORY

Even more advanced than the one in Auschwitz.

Erik inspects the jars arrayed along the shelves. Vials of extracted blood not far away. Next to obscure medical charts.

He rifles through several BOXES, discovering a trove of PASSPORTS. Among them, Decker's.

ERIK'S HANDS

Flip through MORE PASSPORTS, a blur of faces before we halt on a strikingly familiar one: KLEINMEIN.

New name(ALBERT FINEMAN). Same eyes(depraved).

And the very sight of him sends shockwaves through Erik's spine, his hand trembling with the realization that Kleinemein's alive and still conducting his experiments.

Erik slips the passports into his pocket, delving deeper to find something even more disconcerting...

A map of Israel. Travel brochures. Plans.

SIRENS(OS)

Howl in the distance. Coming closer.

A hand on his gunshot shoulder, Erik hobbles out, as we - -

CRANE UP TO:

EXT. ESTATE - - NIGHT - - WIDE SHOT

Decimated, a virtual inferno, police cars approach.

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - - DAY - - MORNING

The Lincoln Monument stands tall and proud over the Potomac...

Insert Legend: **Washington, D.C.**

DD HOLDEN (V.O.)
Congressman Kelly, these accusations are spurious and without merit...

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM - - CONGRESS - - WASHINGTON, D.C.

C.I.A. DEPUTY DIRECTOR HOLDEN, a grey wolf who knows where the bodies are buried(because he buried them), testifies before a panel of congressmen.

Among them, as pugnacious as ever, we see the man we'll come to know as SENATOR KELLY(26, a first term congressman).

Insert Legend: **Congressional Subcommittee on War Crimes.**

DD HOLDEN
...I have no knowledge of any U.S. operative in South America.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY
(grandstanding)
You have no knowledge of any affiliate who's been killing alleged Nazis without benefit of jury or tribunal?

DD HOLDEN
I do not. And I am, to be candid, offended by the accusation.

The Southern lilt comes out in Kelly's voice when he says...

CONGRESSMAN KELLY
Well, take all the offense you like, sir, I'm trying to find out who's responsible for the mess down there.

DD HOLDEN
Let me assure you, Congressman Kelly, it in no way involves the C.I.A. or the United States government.

SFX: The hostile CLAP of heels on hardwood.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - CONGRESS - - POST HEARING

A phalanx of AIDES do their best to keep pace with Holden...

DD HOLDEN
Find Agent Graves, find him NOW, and find out if I just perjured myself on the goddamn floor of the goddamn Congress.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - - DAY

TRACK OVER the floor to find a sleeping bag, food wrappers, files and research data before we...

STOP TRACK ON ERIK

A shard of mirror held up to his bare torso. Eyes closed, teeth grit, he growls primordially.

It takes us a moment to realize that he's squeezing Decker's bullet from his right shoulder. Finally:

TING.

The sound a shell makes when it hits the floor.

And Erik picks it up. Studies it. Tucking it into his pants pocket as if a souvenir.

And he goes to the filthy window, beholding the reflection that stares back, troubled, as we - -

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - - HOTEL - - CLOSE ON MIRROR

Agent Graves' shaving cream strewn face as he rakes a razor down his cheek. Drawing blood with the abrupt - -

KNOCK-KNOCK(os)

AGENT GRAVES
Goddamnit...
(then)
Coming!

MOVE WITH GRAVES as he enters the main room, startled to see ERIK's already inside. On the couch.

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
(droll)
'Preciate the courtesy knock...

Graves pulls his bathrobe tight. Pours himself coffee. Erik watches him for a moment, before...

ERIK
I found a laboratory last night...a medical laboratory...like Auschwitz...

Throughout all this, Graves hasn't stopped moving. Stirring coffee. Packing clothes. Less than concerned.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Are you listening to me?

Graves stops. Stands upright. Sighs.

AGENT GRAVES
I'm listening, Erik. You should'a told me you were going. But now, I guess, none of it matters...

ERIK
...What?

AGENT GRAVES
They're pulling me out. Pulling *us* out. You're done.

Erik inventories emotions. Sadness. Betrayal. <u>Rage</u>. Only now making sense of the LUGGAGE by the door.

ERIK
You're just...*leaving?*

AGENT GRAVES
Your little indiscretion last night didn't help...

ERIK
I thought we'd leave discretion to the discreet...
(then)
<u>You can't do this</u>. We're making progress.

AGENT GRAVES
Not anymore we're not.

Erik flares, one of Graves' suitcases slamming shut, nearly taking Graves' fingers with it.

And Erik looks startled, his emotions out of control. Catching his breath, he stares at Graves before...

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
I am sorry.

Erik paces. Finally sits, the weight of it all too much. And he waits a moment before...

ERIK
I...I killed a man last night...

AGENT GRAVES
You killed a Nazi. Don't waste your conscience.

ERIK
(barely audible)
I'm not a killer...

Graves continues to pack his bags...

AGENT GRAVES
And by the way, whatever you do from this point on is independent of the United States government, you understand?

ERIK
There are things more important than political survival, Graves. Otherwise what are we surviving *for*?

Graves CLACKS his suitcase closed.

AGENT GRAVES
I just do what they tell me.

ERIK
At Nuremberg they asked an Auschwitz guard how he could justify the things he'd done. Guess what *he* said?

Graves stares blankly back.

And after a moment, disconsolate, Erik begins to walk out...

AGENT GRAVES
Erik. Where will you go?

Erik thinks for a moment, then:

ERIK

Home...

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. AIRPORT - - MORNING - - WIDE SHOT

A mass exodus of TRAVELERS expelled onto the curb, greeted by friends and family.

One man stands out. One man stands ALONE.

ERIK

Walks through the faceless horde. A tinge of sadness when he notices a wife and daughter hugging a man about his age.

For a moment, they look like Anya and Magda...

When he blinks...they're strangers again.

Erik recomposes himself, passing under a large sign...

"WELCOME TO ISRAEL"

Discomforted by crowds, we see the cracks in his armor as he beelines for the cab queue...

But all these people, all these Jews, conjure more memories...

For a flickering moment, they all look like emaciated prisoners in a death camp...but only for a moment.

Erik stops, his breath catching, the world spinning around him(ERIK POV)as people stare suspiciously at him, and...

...SOUND RISES, the cacophony of conversation transforming into a LOUD DRONE, before we - -

AUDIO CONTRAST CUT TO:

INT. CAB - - STATIONARY - - <u>SILENCE</u>

- - The door slams shut, insulating Erik in the backseat. Sunglasses unable to mask the mayhem in his heart.

And he's oblivious to the CABDRIVER. Oblivious to everything but the avalanche of humanity outside(POV), a military presence that will later become synonymous with this country.

CABDRIVER (O.S.)
They say it's temporary...

Reminded he's not alone, Erik turns to the yarmulke-wearing man behind the partition...

CABDRIVER (CONT'D)
...But the Fedayeen they are stubborn. Of course, so are we. It's the only reason we have this...

He motions to the world around them...

CABDRIVER (CONT'D)
And we'll do anything to protect our own.

The cabdriver slaps the meter ON, as we - -

WHIP CUT TO:

EXT. HAIFA - - DAY - - <u>ERIK POV FROM INSIDE THE CAB</u>

A bustling district, the road's rife with cars and bicycles; a nation-state imbued with the promise of a new tomorrow...

...But we also see the aforementioned MILITARY presence weeks before the Suez War of 1956.

REVERSE ON ERIK

As he peels his sunglasses off. Closes his eyes. Feels the sun's rays on his face. Yearning to heal, as we PRE-LAP:

CABDRIVER (V.O.)
You sure this is the right place?

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CAB - - DAY

Erik disgorges from the cab, rising into frame before ducking back down to pay the fare...

ERIK
This is it.

Seconds later, the cab drives off, enabling us to see where we are for the first time: A CONVALESCENT HOME.

And curiously enough, Erik looks more frightened than ever. The CAMERA STAYS BEHIND as Erik moves closer, and we - -

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION - - CONVALESCENT HOME - - MOMENTS LATER

Erik approaches the ADMINISTRATOR behind the counter.

ERIK
I'm here to see a patient.

ADMINISTRATOR
Only family's allowed at this hour.

ERIK
Rachel Lehnsherr. I'm her grandson.

The administrator studies Erik. Then:

ADMINISTRATOR
She hasn't had many visitors.
(points down hall)
Room 18.

ERIK
Thank you.

Before Erik can proceed down the corridor - -

ADMINISTRATOR
Sir? She's not well...

Off Erik, bracing himself, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - REST HOME - - START ON ELDERLY WOMAN

Laying in bed, near catatonic. WIDER to reveal ERIK beside her, eyes moist, studying her with an anguished expression.

And we sense that he's been here a while. And that not one word's been spoken. Finally:

ERIK
Nana? I'm sorry I haven't come sooner. You're the only family I have left.

He dabs at his eyes. Tries to steady himself.

ERIK (CONT'D)
I've done things. Bad things. I don't know what that place, what those men, did to me...I have so much hate in my heart...

His words are truncated on sight of his grandmother stirring beneath the sheets, rendering Erik instantly hopeful:

ERIK (CONT'D)
Nana...

She blinks up at him, lids narrow, eyes squinty. BEWILDERED. It's clear that she doesn't recognize him.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Erik...it's Erik, nana...

But we see the emptiness in her eyes, genuinely unable to recollect...to Erik's utter dismay.

Off the wrenching look on his face, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - CONVALESCENT HOME - - WIDE SHOT

Erik sits on a bench, pensive.

CLOSER - - ON ERIK

A shadow falls over him, a PRETTY NURSE settling in beside him. Perhaps, in a different time, he'd notice such things.

NURSE
Mr. Lehnsherr? I'm Sarah. I've been taking care of your grandmother.

Erik sits up straight. Looks over at her.

NURSE (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. Her faculties have gone quickly. She used to talk about you all the time when I first got here. She was so proud of you.

ERIK
(a humble laugh)
She hasn't seen me for a while...

The nurse senses his pain. Unsure what to say. Then:

ERIK (CONT'D)
She can't remember. I can't forget.

And Erik stands. And strides down the hall.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - - DAY

A flock of pigeons BURST into the air like bats out of hell before we PAN UP to see the source of their sudden flight...

DECKER

Donning a hat, hands tucked inside his coat, beelines for a park bench on the periphery.

Alive and well, he bears not so much as a scratch. Moving towards A FIGURE with his back to us. Feeding the pigeons.

Decker settles in beside the figure, a familiar voice heard...

VOICE (V.O.)
When did you arrive...?

DECKER
Just this morning...

And now the man turns to reveal...KLEINMEIN. With shocking white hair and shark eyes, he resembles the love child of Karl Lagerfeld and Leona Helmsley.

DR. KLEINMEIN
You shouldn't have come here.

Paranoid, Kleinmein's acutely aware of his surroundings...

DECKER
I had no choice.

DR. KLEINMEIN
I need you overseeing our operation in South America.

DECKER
(a beat)
There is no more operation.

Kleinmein faces him, eyes boring a hole into Decker.

DECKER (CONT'D)
It was...destroyed.

DR. KLEINMEIN
Mossad?

DECKER
No. One man. The boy. Lehnsherr. Erik Lehnsherr. Now a man.

This affects Kleinmein, lids narrow, jaw tight.

DR. KLEINMEIN
He did this by himself...?
(Decker nods)
...He's grown up, has he?

DECKER
His powers, they've grown, too.

DR. KLEINMEIN
Well, so have ours...

Kleinmein tosses more scraps to the pigeons...

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
He still might be of use. Find him. And deal with him.
(MORE)

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
(stands; buttons his coat)
And don't contact me like this again. We've too much to lose.

He exits, leaving Decker to contend with the pigeons.

SFX: CHEERING.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - - HAIFA - - DAY

Erik moves across the manicured grass, eyes on a SOCCER GAME between kids, one MAN in the fray.

Baseball cap on his head, sweat pouring, the man playfully eludes his younger charges with an easy athleticism.

Erik leans against a tree, in the shade, watching this man with keen interest, before we - -

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - - LATER - - UNKNOWN POV

Post-game, the man - a towel draped over his shoulder - sends the kids and their parents on their way, moving to...

...A nearby ice-bucket from which he removes a soda bottle. Popping it open when - -

ERIK (O.S.)
Excuse me, doctor?

ERIK stands behind the man, charmingly tentative; he holds a sheaf of papers in hand.

MAN
Yes...?

The man turns around, removing his hat to reveal a chrome dome beneath. Meet CHARLES XAVIER(30).

ERIK
Dr. Charles Xavier? I'm Erik Lehnsherr.

And they shake hands, equally intrigued; an odd and unexplained connection here before...

CHARLES
What brings you here, Erik?

ERIK
Beside the soccer? Well, you do, sir.

Erik offers the BUSINESS CARD Wesenthein gave him...

ERIK (CONT'D)
You come recommended...

Charles studies him through narrow lids, then:

CHARLES
Walk with me, Erik...

They stroll down a pathway, a large building - an INSTITUTE - visible ahead. On the horizon.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
You've lost people, yes? Family?
(Erik nods)
Auschwitz.

That word stops Erik in his tracks. Has him wondering how Charles could possibly have known, his tattoo concealed.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Every camp has a distinct smell, a feel, if you will. Auschwitz worst of all. You deal with enough people, you learn to distinguish...

Erik says nothing. Looks over at the patients who move about the grounds. They look happy.

ERIK
Were you there...?

CHARLES
Not like you were. I was part of the allied invasion, an American. Just a boy, barely eighteen.

ERIK
You...fought?

CHARLES
I *photographed*.
(a beat)
I haven't picked up a camera since.

ERIK
That camera, sometimes it feels like it's in my head. And I can't turn it off.
(the bottom-line)
I'm told you help men like me, survivors...

CHARLES
If it's still with you, you haven't survived it yet...

And they continue to walk, ERIK taking note of the Israeli soldiers amassed around the periphery...

CHARLES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We're on the border, so the threat of attack from Egypt is constant. We've been lucky so far but some days you can see the tanks...

ERIK
(a grunt)
War...

CHARLES
War, I understand. Politics, politics confounds me.

He's distracted by a large mastiff DOG as it angles towards a little girl on the grass...

Growling, the canine seems certain to bite the defenseless girl before it stops. And whimpers. And flees.

Erik watches the episode, sensing something strange in the way Charles discerned it. *Hmm.*

After a moment, they resume...

CHARLES (CONT'D)
(gestures to the institute)
Can I give you a tour?

Erik deliberates, unsure what to do until he meets eyes with Charles. Something trustworthy about this guy.

Erik nods "YES".

As they move towards the institute...

ERIK
How long have you been here, Charles?

CHARLES
Nearly twenty years.

ERIK
(an incongruous laugh)
At your age, how's that possible...?

CHARLES
Not here, per se, a sister institution in the States when I was a boy.

ERIK
I don't understand...

CHARLES
I started out as a patient...

Charles strides ahead(os)as Erik reacts, and we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALL - - INSTITUTE - - MOMENTS LATER

Charles shepherds Erik down the immaculate corridor...

CHARLES
I heard voices. Since I can remember. Random. Relentless. I lost my hair when I was ten. Needless to say, I wasn't the most popular kid in school. By the time I was twelve every doctor diagnosed me as schizophrenic.

ERIK
But you've...overcome it, yes?

CHARLES
I've learned to live with it, the voices. To control them.
(pointed)
There's nothing the mind can't overcome, Erik...

ERIK
I think that depends on the mind...

CHARLES
This place was built to help people deal with their minds, with their memories. How to unearth them, and, ultimately, how to befriend them.

They stop outside a door, looking through the portal glass(POV)to see a class full of kids.

CHARLES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The children of Nazi guards and the children of their prisoners, educated together...so that the son won't repeat the mistakes of the father...

ERIK

Stares at the class, unsure how to react.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Some of our attendants...
(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)
(motions to men and women in the halls)
...Are German. Some are even former members of the Nazi Party. Trying to right the wrongs of history.

Erik stares at these men and women as they pass...

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Most of all, what we do here is about forgiveness...

ERIK
First we forgive. Then we forget.

CHARLES
People can change, Erik...

ERIK
We only have so many cheeks to turn...

CHARLES
We don't turn a cheek here. We offer a hand.

But Erik can't take his eyes off the attendants as they move past...any one of whom could be a former Nazi. Then:

ERIK
You've given me your tour, Charles. Let me give you *mine.*

Off Charles, intrigued by the offer, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - - <u>START ON TELEVISION SET</u>

We need not speak Hebrew to understand the images of civil unrest: *Bull Conner. Rosa Parks. The Ku Klux Klan.*

ERIK (O.S.)
Life's brutal to those born different...

REVERSE to see Erik and Charles watching the TELEVISION behind the counter. Scrunched in tight at this crowded venue.

ERIK (CONT'D)
I've spent all my life on the outside, and all my life being punished for it. As a man. As a Jew.

ON TELEVISION: *Police batter blacks in Alabama.*

CHARLES
Cynicism's easy. And cheap.

ERIK
Do you know the definition of history? "Cynicism borne of experience."

CHARLES
(point-blank)
Why're you here, Erik?

ERIK
I've told you, I - -

CHARLES
The other reason. The *real* reason.

Erik pauses. Steals a glance at the TV again before...

ERIK
There are Nazis here...practicing Nazis. I'm sure of it.

CHARLES
And you mean to...?

Erik doesn't say. The answer's in his eyes.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Then it seems you're a man in conflict. A part of you wants to heal the wounds of the past. And another wants to tear them open.

Erik stays silent.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
There are many ways to resolve conflict, Erik. What is it they say? - "Ballots over bullets."

ERIK
Do you know who said that?

CHARLES
Abraham Lincoln.

ERIK
That's right. Do you know when he said it? - Before he got shot.
(then)
When I was there, prisoners were marched out to certain death.

We realize he's speaking of Auschwitz...

ERIK (CONT'D)
Their graves already dug, their backs turned; they knew they were to be shot, gassed, stabbed. They knew they were going to die. And they did nothing. They closed their eyes and they waited. Without qualm or quarter.
(teeth grit)
Never. Again.

Before Charles can respond A COMMOTION distracts both men, eyes drawn across the bar(POV)where THREE THUGS encircle a mildly deformed man seated alone at a table.

ERIK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It seems, human nature unfolds all around us...

Curiously, the sight seems to rile Charles up more than Erik.

CHARLES
(re: deformed man)
It's an anomaly, you know. A mild glitch in the DNA that makes him look different. Inside, he's the same...

ERIK
But to them, he's a monster...

These words resonate with both men before they gaze over to see the ruffians pushing and prodding the defenseless man.

In perfect harmony, without a word, Erik and Charles vault off their stools, moving towards the impending conflict.

Once there, Charles takes the lead, his hand on a thug's shoulder. Trying for a peaceful resolution:

CHARLES
Gentlemen, I'm sure there's a more civil way to resolve this...

The thug turns. Sees Charles. Less than threatened.

THUG
Get outta' here before it becomes *your* problem...

When Charles cedes no ground, the thug shoves him back, nearly knocking Charles over before Erik steadies him. Amused:

ERIK
(spot-on imitation)
"There are many way to resolve conflict."

With this call to arms, Erik and Charles take on the three ruffians at once. Using nothing but fists and grit.

And you know what? They make a great team, moving with poise and precision, fighting without use of their powers.

Felling men twice their size, they're enjoying the hell out of this, easily beating down their adversaries...

The smallest of the thugs grapples by the bar, lifting a chair - about to smash it over Erik's head before - -

CRACK! Charles knocks him clean out with a jab to the head.

Erik nods his appreciation, the thugs all writhing on the floor as the newfound friends clasp hands...

COPS

Enter through the front, responding to the commotion, Erik and Charles sizing the situation up before opting to

RUN

Laughing like two kids pulling a prank, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - - CLOSE ON A SYRINGE

As it's injected into the throbbing vein of a forearm.

WIDER to see Kleinmein retracting the needle from a MAN with golden blonde hair and spooky blue eyes. And we're not quite sure where we've seen him before until we WIDEN - -

- - To see TWO of him. His identical TWIN beside him. These are the boys we glimpsed in Auschwitz. All grown up, they're enormous. Rippling muscles. Empty eyes.

Kleinmein cleans up as the twins roll down their sleeves, standing at instant attention.

DR. KLEINMEIN
(in German; subtitled)
Thirty years later, the Fuehrer's dream will be realized. And you, my sons, will be at the forefront of it. Helping create a new, superior race.
(elated)
We are so close...

His "sons" stare back. Beautiful automatons.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRLINES - - IN FLIGHT

TRACK DOWN the aisle with the stewardess as she checks on her passengers, and we

STOP ON AISLE "8"

Where DECKER occupies the window seat, a shiver of a man beside him (RICHTER).

PILOT (V.O.)
(filtered)
Folks, we should arrive in Jerusalem right on time. Just sit back and enjoy the flight...

The engine ROARS to life, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTE - - HALLWAY - - MORNING

Patients shuffle towards their morning sessions, a lofty spirit here that belies the presumed sadness.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - INSTITUTE - - CONTINUOUS

Charles sits. Erik paces.

ERIK
You can help me, yes? - Help me deal with the things I've seen? The things in my head...

CHARLES
I can help you deal with your memories, with what's inside you.
(a pointed beat)
What's inside you, Erik?

Erik stops pacing. Barely has to ponder before - -

ERIK
Hate. I have done everything right. I've played by the rules - the rules of law, of religion, of <u>life</u>. I've waited, I've watched, I've <u>prayed</u>. And none of its mattered. Still, the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.

CHARLES
God tested Job because he knew he could withstand any hardship.

ERIK
I've been tested enough, Charles.

CHARLES
Do you know what the word "Israel" means? Taken literally it means, "wrestling with God". What you're doing now - questioning - is what you should be doing.

ERIK
All my questions have already been answered...

CHARLES
So then where do I come in?

And now Erik sits down, elbows to knees, leaning closer to this man he's come to trust.

ERIK
I need to know who I am. I need to know what they did to me.

Before Charles can respond - -

- - BOOM! A deafening noise rattles the room, Charles and Erik instantly on their feet.

EXT. INSTITUTE - - DAY

And now we see the cause of the commotion: An Egyptian TANK has breached the border, rolling closer...

Israeli troops scatter, unprepared for the Fedayeen insurrection. An odd sight amidst this serene setting.

Erik and Charles watch, unsure what to do. One thing certain:

CHARLES
(sotto)
It's gonna hit the building...

Over the ROAR of the approaching tanks - -

ERIK
We need to clear everyone out!

CHARLES
There's no time...

Indeed, less than 65 yards away, the tank is joined by another tank - both rolling closer...

And now patients peer from the many windows facing the field, stunned eyes taking it all in...

Charles is unduly calm...

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Go back inside, Erik...

But Erik stays. Doesn't budge. Beside his friend.

And Charles glances over at him. Sees that this is not a man to abandon a fight. And he simply nods.

...Even though they face two tanks.

Israeli soldiers shout for our boys to evacuate...but Erik and Charles stand tall, neither knowing what the other's capable of...

And the tanks roll closer still, their turrets swiveling to take in the scene. A mere 45 yards away now.

CLOSE ON ERIK's lids, narrowing in concentration...

CLOSE ON ERIK's HANDS as they turn to fists...

THE FIRST TANK slows, its wheel chain grinding to an abrupt halt, the metal scrunching up into a debilitating ball.

The tank dies like a wounded insect.

Israeli soldiers surround it, guns fixed...

And Charles looks at Erik, and simply knows.

But there's scant time for recognition, Charles turning back to face the

SECOND TANK

Which also comes to a grinding halt. Seconds later, its top clangs open, soldiers pouring out. And running away.

Even the Israeli soldiers are perplexed by this sudden shift in circumstances...

...But Charles and Erik know what's caused it, slowly turning to face each other, their link finally revealed.

And here they stand, amidst the insanity around them, Erik realizing that he's not alone, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. TARMAC - - AIRPORT - - ISRAEL - - LONG SHOT

A commercial El Al jet sits on the runway, decamping passengers like cattle...

Two men stand out amidst the TRAVELERS, trundling down the mobile ladder in assembly-line fashion...

CAMERA ZOOMS IN

On sight of Richter and Decker - a blue backpack slung over his shoulder. Moving in lock-step.

Hard as they try, by virtue of their carriage, the determined expressions on their faces, these two do not blend in.

VOICE (V.O.)
Business or pleasure?

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A PASSPORT

As its slid across a counter, Decker's photographic likeness staring up at us under the alias *"WALTER STERNBURG".*

PAN UP TO SEE DECKER

Glancing at Richter before he answers the customs officer:

DECKER
A bit of both.

The customs officer STAMPS the passport, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - - HAIFA - - MORNING

Patients/residents do calisthenics on the fresh cut grass.

CHARLES (V.O.)
We're not alone, Erik...

INT. OFFICE - - INSTITUTE - - START ON CHARLES

CHARLES
...There are more like us.

WIDER to see Erik across from Charles...

ERIK
I thought they did this to me, in the camps...

CHARLES
These things, they're born in us. Genetic. Predetermined. A mutation brought out in moments of adversity. For you, Auschwitz...

ERIK
And for you...?

CHARLES
(low)
Something else.

But we see the pain this memory evokes in Charles...

ERIK
These "voices" you hear? -
they're...thoughts? Other people's
thoughts?
(Charles nods tersely)
You can read minds?

CHARLES
(quiet)
I can. But I don't.

ERIK
(with increasing
concern)
You can effect them? Make them do
things?

CHARLES
There's a responsibility we both
have, Erik...a necessary restraint.

But Erik's not so concerned with that...

ERIK
(awed)
My God, Charles, the possibilities...

CHARLES
To those who are given much, much is
required...

ERIK
What's "required" is that you use
what you're given. Don't apologize
for it, Charles, *embrace it.*

And Erik paces, a darkness falling over him before...

ERIK (CONT'D)
You've seen others like us?

CHARLES
Never in person, no. Not until now.
(points)
But look at this...

He goes to a MAP, intermittent areas articulated in red. An aesthetic antecedent to Cerebro.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
These are unexplained cases the world over, many of them deemed circus sideshows - all cases I've been tracking; isolated but increasing. Many in the United States...

ERIK
But how can you ever hope to find them...?

Charles moves to a crude helmet-like device. A precursor to what we'll come to know as CEREBRO.

CHARLES
One day, we'll be able to locate them all. By simply identifying a mutation. An anomaly.

ERIK
And when you find these..."anomalies"?

CHARLES
We can comfort the afflicted...

ERIK
(a growl)
...And afflict the comfortable.

Charles stops. Sees the divide between them. Then:

CHARLES
There is a place for us in this world, Erik.

ERIK
Yes, I've seen that "place", Charles...

With this, he tosses the LOGBOOK taken from the Naragos laboratory on the table between them.

ERIK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And I've seen what they do to people like us.

Charles flips through the logbook, wincing at the gruesome DRAWINGS and PHOTOS inside(POV).

ERIK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The tests, they haven't stopped. The Nazis are using these "anomalies" to create the master race...

Charles looks up, horrified.

ERIK (CONT'D)
The victims of today could be the murderers of tomorrow...

Off Charles, realizing the scope of what's occurring, we - -

CUT TO:

A BACKPACK

As it's UNZIPPED to reveal...EXPLOSIVES. A dense bundle of dynamite and other assorted items.

INT. JEEP - - MOVING(WIDER)

A HENCHMAN drives, Richter riding shotgun as Decker inspects the arsenal, a detailed map of Haifa included.

Richter's gaze goes outside the glass(POV), a school of Hasidm exiting a local synagogue.

Eyeing them the way Sylvester looks at Tweety Bird.

RICHTER
I wish we had more time...

Decker follows his gaze, a smile taking shape...

DECKER
I wish we had more explosives.

With this, Decker ZIPS the backpack closed, and we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - - INSTITUTE - - DUSK

Charles and Erik watch the waning sun...

CHARLES
There were others, like you, in the camps?

ERIK
We were kept apart. I was only allowed in the general population after their tests on me were deemed a failure...

CHARLES
But you knew there was something inside you?

ERIK
Always.

Charles stops. Turns. A decision rendered.

CHARLES
I wanna see what you saw, Erik.

It takes a moment for Erik to realize what Charles is asking. Understandably apprehensive. Then:

ERIK
The things I saw, Charles...

A beat, Erik hesitating before meeting eyes with Charles, a decision rendered:

ERIK (CONT'D)
...The things you'll see.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - INSTITUTE - - NIGHT

Erik consumes a deep breath before closing his eyes.

And Charles stands over him, a doctor to a patient, gathering himself before he places a hand on Erik's shoulder, and we - -

Slowly PUSH into Erik's face, and - -

SLAM CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

(NOTE: A frenetic blur of stylized images ricochet past. All from Erik Lehnsherr's POV. In no particular order.)

- *You sit on your grandfather's lap, laughing.*

- *You're dragged from your home by Gestapo agents.*

- *You preside behind a podium. Your Bar-Mitzvah.*

- *Your eyes are clamped open with wire by Nazi doctors.*

- *You walk home from school. Holding your mommy's hand.*

- *You're held down by SS Officers as KLEINMEIN extracts a tooth from the back of your mouth.*

And then, a burst of bad. Everything accelerated:

- *You thrash violently as KLEINMEIN plunges a syringe into your arm, injecting some inscrutable liquid.*

- *An unnerving DRILL buzzes as you howl in pain.*

- *Kleinmein cackles in your face, clapping hermetic gloves on as we PUSH INTO the wall behind him: Arrayed with photos of other test subjects. CHILDREN.*

- NARAGOS. Erik stands amidst the burning farmhouse, the dead Nazi at his feet. He looks...mythic.

- UKRAINE. Erik ambles through the town after the death of his wife and daughter. But only now do we see what he did: Tearing down poles and lights, doing untold damage to the village. In the throes of a furious temper tantrum...

- - HEAR the sounds of the town folk SCREAMING, deafened by - -

- - ERIK'S PRIMAL BRAY, as we - -

RESUME SCENE:

CHARLES' EYES

Burst open from what they've seen; what his friend had to endure. Aghast and out of breath.

Erik, alas, is more familiar with these images. He sits, head bowed. And there's a long silence, before:

ERIK
Do you see what they've done? What they mean to do?

And Charles, exhausted from the journey into Erik's mind, barely musters the strength to nod.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Only now they're more ambitious. And more dangerous.

Charles gathers himself, perhaps avoiding the inevitable question yet to come...

CHARLES
You need to rest, my friend.

ERIK
I can't stand by and do nothing, Charles. The peace I came here to find...I now know I can never have.

Charles bores a gaze into Erik that makes him reflexively, even protectively, touch his head.

CHARLES
What're you saying...?

ERIK
I have to finish this.

CHARLES
I can help you overcome your demons, Erik, but you have to - -

ERIK
My demons are out there, Charles.

Impassioned, he moves closer. Pleading:

ERIK (CONT'D)
With your powers, together, we can stop them, we can - -

CHARLES
I won't traffic in hate. You don't want justice, you want revenge.

ERIK
In this case, they're not so different.

CHARLES
To me they are.

A BEAT.

ERIK
Tomorrow morning, I'll be gone.

And we see how this hurts Charles. But he nods. And exits.

INT. HALLWAY - - INSTITUTE - - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

Lights dim, Charles recedes down the corridor until - -

ERIK
Charles.

He turns. Waits for Erik to catch up to him. In the corner, out of earshot, we see a JANITOR washing the floors...

ERIK (CONT'D)
Thank you. For trying to help me. But I fear I'm beyond...salvation.

CHARLES
You're wrong, Erik. There's goodness in you. I know it.

And Erik wants to dig deeper. Wants to say more. But only...

ERIK
I haven't had a friend for a very long time...

CHARLES
Me neither, Erik. Me neither.

With this, Erik watches Charles diminish down the hall. But we STAY behind.

Long enough to see the janitor as he turns to catch a glimpse of Erik. IT'S RICHTER.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - - NIGHT

All's quiet, a single light left on...

INT. ROOM - - CLOSE ON ERIK

Sitting on the edge of his bed, Bible in his hand. A deliberative beat before he tosses the Bible aside.

It no longer gives him relief.

CUT WIDE TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - - NIGHT

And the lone light clicks OFF, as we - -

FADE TO BLACK:

HEAR the tranquil sound of water on rock, before we - -

FADE UP; ON

EXT. THE OCEAN - - HAIFA - - THE NEXT MORNING

And we find ERIK up early, standing on the edge of a cliff, beholding the ocean and its tumultuous waves...

Steeling himself for the road ahead...

A JEEP

Comes into view, climbing the mountain's crest...

ERIK

Stares at the world beyond, oblivious to his guests.

THE JEEP

Comes to a halt, a safe distance away.

ERIK

Beholds the sunrise, still seemingly unaware of the Jeep behind him even as we HEAR the CLACK of doors...

DECKER AND A HENCHMAN

Emerge. Each brandishing handguns.

ERIK

Keeps his back to them.

DECKER AND THE HENCHMAN

Trade befuddled expressions, startled by...

ERIK (O.S.)
Kleinmein sent you?

DECKER
He sent us with a message. And a choice.

ON ERIK

DECKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The choice between life and death...

Erik turns to face them, and without pause:

ERIK
I chose death.

And Decker doesn't seem particularly disappointed, offering an imperceptible shrug before raising his handgun...

But we're drawn to the BARREL of that gun. Because it begins to bend. Curving to face the henchman to his right - -

BAM! Shooting Decker's oblivious colleague in the head.

BAM! The gun explodes with the next shot, blowing Decker's hand off. Sending him to his knees, howling in pain.

And Erik steps calmly closer, sweeping the gun aside with a flick of a finger before DECKER rises under protest...

For, you see, the metal in Decker's belt leads him up. And drags him into that Jeep.

Seconds later, the car straps slap across Decker - who's nearly in shock from the pain of his torn appendage.

The straps tighten as Erik begins his interrogation...

ERIK (CONT'D)
Where's Kleinmein?

DECKER
It...doesn't...matter.
There's...nothing you...can do now.

The straps grow tighter...

ERIK
Where. Is. He.

Decker spits blood. Reels. Glares at Erik.

DECKER
(a bloody smile)
You'll never get to him...they won't let you.

Decker begins to cough. *Or is that laughter?*

And Erik pulls something from his pocket. THE BULLET Decker shot him with. Mangled but intact.

ERIK
I think this is yours...

He tucks the bullet into Decker's shirt pocket. Discovers something else there: A PLANE TICKET.

CLOSE ON ERIK

Rattled by whatever he sees inside the ticket(os)...

He staggers away from the Jeep. Leaving Decker behind.

DECKER

Checks the Jeep's rear-view mirror(POV). Relieved to see Erik walking away...

Not so relieved when he sees the car slap into "Drive". Right before it begins to roll towards the cliff's edge...

Decker's good hand claws helplessly at the gear shift to no avail before...

...Reaching into his jacket to remove A WALKIE-TALKIE:

DECKER
Do it...do it now...

Erik halts in his tracks, hearing this last bit before his gaze shoots tellingly ahead to the institute...

DECKER

Nothing left to do but SCREAM as the Jeep plunges off the edge. Slamming into the mountain's jagged side, crumbling apart before settling into a watery grave.

But Erik has little time to celebrate, sprinting(HAND-HELD)towards the institute with reckless abandon.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTE - - HALLWAY - - MORNING

Charles greets colleagues and patients, a cup of coffee in hand. When he stops. On alert.

His gaze shoots down the hall. To RICHTER. Who tucks a walkie-talkie away, before meeting eyes with Charles.

Spooked, Richter sprints down the hall...

And Charles doesn't hesitate before summarily shouting:

CHARLES
OUT! EVERYONE OUT!

And there's a bloated beat before everyone realizes he's serious, responding with appropriate panic.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - - <u>RUNNING WITH ERIK (TRACKING)</u>

Nearly at the building...when he sees Richter exit.

A walkie-talkie in one hand, a TRIGGER DEVICE in the other.

And time turns interminable, Richter smiling before (CLOSE SHOT) pushing down on the trigger.

- - CHARLES AND DOZENS OF PATIENTS - -

Emerge moments before the back of the institute EXPLODES. A relatively minor eruption that feels nearly anti-climactic.

And while Charles shepherds his flock out, Erik's furious expression finds

RICHTER

Rising to his feet, ready to run before we go to

ERIK POV:

Our gaze goes to several WHEELCHAIRS assembled on the peripheral grass - one of which slams into Richter...

...Depositing him in it before rolling back inside the institute seconds before - -

ANOTHER EXPLOSION OCCURS

This one decimating the institute and everything in it.

And Erik's left, once again, to watch a place of healing burn to the ground.

Erik and Charles trade eyes, watching the institute immolate, clawing at grass as it crumbles apart, and we...

SLOW FADE TO:

THE INSTITUTE. TWO HOURS LATER.

Nothing left but rubble and ruins, Charles and Erik walk through the remains...

Firemen tend to the residual flames as paramedics tend to teary-eyed patients...

We sense that not a word's been spoken until...

ERIK
...I've brought this to your doorstep.

CHARLES
They did this, no one else, Erik.

Charles stops. Picks up the PICTURE FRAME at his feet.

ERIK
Everything good they burn to the ground...

Charles brushes soot off the front of the frame to reveal a PICTURE of himself outside the institute at its inception.

ERIK (CONT'D)
It's time we burnt them to the ground.

Charles doesn't look up, gaze locked on that picture.

CHARLES
This is a time to mourn...

ERIK
We mourn in different ways, Charles. And I'll mourn for you and anyone else who doesn't have the courage to fight. But first, I'll fight.

With this, he tosses something at Charles' feet before turning and walking off...

And Charles watches him go, before leaning down and picking up THE PLANE TICKET Erik took off Decker, opening it to see...

POV: Decker's return trip was to...***WASHINGTON, D.C.***

Charles looks back up but...Erik's already gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C - - ESTABLISHING SHOT - - NIGHT

An elevated angle of the storied city.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - - DRIVEWAY - - NIGHT

A chauffeured car pulls in, Twin #1 springing from the passenger seat to open the back door for...

DR. KLEINMEIN

He looks up to see AGENT GRAVES and DD HOLDEN on the stoop of his townhouse. Waiting for him.

AGENT GRAVES
(to Kleinmein)
Dr. Fineman...

Yes, folks, Graves has known about Kleinmein all along.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - - TOWNHOUSE - - MOMENTS LATER

A cavernous space, GRAVES and HOLDEN sit across from Kleinmein. The twins, as always, close by.

We parachute in...

DR. KLEINMEIN
- - He's coming for me, I know it.

Graves and Holden trade eyes before...

DD HOLDEN
You know this how?

DR. KLEINMEIN
I know. You have your avenues of information, I have mine.

DD HOLDEN
How close are you to completing your research, doctor?

DR. KLEINMEIN
We're well past the research stage. We've already identified the DNA and a procedure that will allow you to create the perfect soldier.

Holden and Graves trade terse but telling eyes. Things just went to DefCon Five.

AGENT GRAVES
Then what we'd like to propose, Doctor, is - -

DR. KLEINMEIN
(anticipating)
I won't hide. I won't be intimidated by this madman.

Graves clears his throat. Pipes in:

AGENT GRAVES
Doctor, Erik Lehnsherr has the will and the means to make things...difficult.

Kleinmein tics an imperceptible glance to the twins.

DR. KLEINMEIN
I welcome him. Our cause is greater than his.
(pointed)
Surely the US government won't let one man stand in the way of history...

Holden looks to Graves. Nods.

AGENT GRAVES
Stay the course, doctor. We'll take care of Lehnsherr.

Kleinmein nods, sated, he and the twins shepherded out by a security escort as we STAY behind with Holden and his staff.

DD HOLDEN
This son of a bitch could jeopardize the most important American invention since the atomic bomb. I want a presence at every airfield and every port of entry.

AGENT GRAVES
Sir, with all due respect, I don't think we should underestimate Lehnsherr.

DD HOLDEN
Meaning?

AGENT GRAVES
We can put as many agents in airports or train stations as you want...but it won't matter.

DD HOLDEN
Why not?

AGENT GRAVES
'Cus Lehnsherr's gonna come looking for us.

And even Holden knows...that's not a good thing.

CUT TO:

INT. ARRIVALS - - AIRPORT - - WASHINGTON, D.C.

Armed Marines and local police on patrol...

FAVOR AN ARMY PRIVATE

M-1 machine gun slung over his shoulder as he compares the passing multitudes with the PHOTO in his hand...

CLOSE ON PHOTO:

A surveillance shot of Erik taken by Graves in Argentina.

THE PRIVATE

Looks among the masses, no one close to Erik's image. Flustered, he turns to a fellow soldier and sighs:

PRIVATE
He ain't here. This is a waste of freakin' time.

With this, we FOLLOW him as he stalks off, exiting into the - -

EXT. AIRPORT - - CURBSIDE - - NIGHT

- - Where he moves towards the Army van parked on the street. About to enter when the vehicle lurches suddenly away. Leaving the perplexed private behind. *What the hell?*

EXT. ARMY VAN - - MOVING

And we tag alongside the vehicle for a moment before PUSHING into its back doors to see...

INT. BACK - - ARMY VAN - - MOVING

Several soldiers sit in a semicircle, closer than they'd like to be. A thick chain wrapped around them.

They shout for help...but no one can hear through the reinforced walls. Nothing produced but an echo.

PUSH FURTHER AHEAD INTO THE - -

INT. FRONT SEAT - - VAN - - MOVING

Find ERIK behind the wheel. A man on a mission.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - CONTINUOUS

Kleinmein bounds in, the twins flanking him as he shouts instructions to the dozen or so men who comprise his staff.

DR. KLEINMEIN
(in German; subtitled)
Our calendar just moved up. Be ready to leave as soon as possible.

With this, he moves towards a

THICK WALL-SAFE

Entering the appropriate combo before unearthing a dog-eared JOURNAL, an Italian passport, and that BLUE VIAL.

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
(in German; subtitled)
With the formula all to ourselves...

He places the thick journal on a nearby desk, flipping through pages until he stops on one name..."*ERIK LEHNSHERR*".

He studies the data inside(os), searching for any helpful clues before we go

WIDER: to reveal the glass cubicles which comprise the walls of this subterranean dwelling. Here, we see a dozen or so TEST SUBJECTS locked behind unbreakable glass.

Many of them exhibit similar "anomalies" or characteristics to mutants we'll later come to know.

Among them that Victor Creed-like creature, a hirsute beast, and a young girl who looks a great deal like Mystique.

Kleinmein observes them like a proud poppa as a SCIENTIST sidles up beside him.

SCIENTIST
(in German; subtitled)
What do we do with them?

The scientist gestures to the bevy of test subjects.

DR. KLEINMEIN
(in German; subtitled)
They've served their purpose. We do what we've always done...

MATCH CUT TO:

A LION

In a decidedly larger cage. We're at the - -

EXT. ZOO - - WASHINGTON, D.C. - - MORNING

Several lions prowl in circles as we REVERSE TO see Agent Graves with his wife and two sons.

And the agent's on edge, head on a swivel. Not able to enjoy this Sunday routine. To the consternation of his wife.

GRAVES' WIFE
Can you, at least, *pretend* to be having a good time?

AGENT GRAVES
Sorry.

And he smiles before visibly defusing. Even ruffling his son's bushy head of hair and pointing to one of the lions.

That's all before a man(os)steps into frame beside him.

We need not see who it is; we need only see the way Agent Graves reacts to him. All he can do not to jump.

ERIK

Offers an unexpected smile. Affected by the sight of Graves' children. Of family.

And after Graves recomposes himself, he turns to his wife and kids. As calm as possible:

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Honey, you guys go ahead...
(before his wife can protest; firmly)
Honey. I'll see you in a few minutes.

None too happy - but familiar with the life of an agent - she sighs. And glares. And, with her sons, moves on.

Leaving Graves and Erik behind. After a beat:

ERIK
You might be a little longer than a few minutes. But lying's never been a problem for you.

Off Graves, wondering what the fuck to do, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. AQUARIUM - - ZOO - - MOMENTS LATER

Erik and Graves inhabit a bench, observing a hammerhead shark as it swims behind the glass. In the BG, zoo patrons move easily about, inspecting the sea creatures...

ERIK
The hammerhead's a very rare creature, you know. One of the few animals that eats its own species. Like you, agent.

AGENT GRAVES
Whatever you're planning here, this is not the way to go, I assure you. How 'bout you come in and we - -

ERIK
We've talked too much already. No more *negotiating*. You were helping Kleinmein from the start. Harboring him. That makes you, makes your government, complicit in his crimes.

Graves looks less than contrite...

AGENT GRAVES
First off: Yeah, I lied to you. I'm a spy, Lehnsherr - that's what I do for a living. And second: Nothing's black and white. There's a cost-benefit analysis to everything. Dr. Fineman - -

ERIK
- - Kleinmein, his name's Kleinmein.

Erik's anger silences Graves. A beat, then:

AGENT GRAVES
You have no idea what's at stake here...

ERIK
I know exactly what's at stake. This isn't about the future, it's about the past...

AGENT GRAVES
You're wrong. Because the future Kleinmein can give us will negate the past. He's doing something that can save more lives than we lost during the last two wars combined. If we had this technology in 1936, World War II never would'a happened.

ERIK
You think Kleinmein's doing it out of the goodness of his heart? The only thing you've advanced is the Nazi cause.

AGENT GRAVES
Kleinmein's already helped us invaluably, assisting in LSD testing on military subjects, and - -

ERIK
(teeth grit)
There's nothing he can do to right the wrongs of the past.

AGENT GRAVES
This is the mathematics of life, Erik: Sometimes bad people do good things. And sometimes noble governments compromise values for a greater good. You think we're the only country doing it? Grow up. Half of Europe's scientific advances are forged on the backs of war criminals.

ERIK
So there are good Nazis and bad Nazis now, is that it? - -

But Erik stops, words expiring with the realization that the confines are suddenly VACANT. Devoid of patrons.

And he stands, instantly on alert. It feels like an ambush. His suspicions confirmed with...

AGENT GRAVES
I'm sorry, Erik. We just can't let you get in the way of this...

AGENTS AND COPS

Appear from the shadows, stepping from behind pillars and doorways, guns brandished. One carries a TRANQUILIZER.

ERIK
You think I'm the enemy...

Graves stands. Removes FLEX CUFFS(or the 1956 equivalent of them)from his pocket.

AGENT GRAVES
The enemy's anyone who stands in the way of progress. Now put your hands behind your back.

The agents approach, at least twenty in all. Outnumbered, Erik looks back to Graves, offering his wrists, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. ZOO - - "THE PITS" - - MOMENTS LATER (DAY)

A concave part of the zoo surrounded by cages, we see Erik IN CUFFS, a bubble of agents with him, Graves beside him.

ERIK
He who does not speak out against evil, commands it to be done...

AGENT GRAVES
Poetic.

But now, all around them, we see the cages unlocking and opening, lions, bears, tigers scampering out soon after...

And they walk a bit more before the agents at the front come to a sudden halt. Murmurs of profanity.

And Graves is about to reprimand the agents before taking note of the LION a mere 15 feet away...

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Clever.
(to agents)
Shoot anything that gets in our way, people.

ERIK
You have no respect for the laws of nature...

Gradually, a pack of TIGERS encircle the agents, everything coming to a complete halt. No one sure what to do until...

AGENT GRAVES
Push forward.

The procession inches closer to the exit, the tigers backing up as Erik searches for anything of use...

ERIK POV: Our gaze goes to a cop's holstered GUN.

ERIK'S EYES go tight, his lids narrowing before - -

BAM! The gun goes off, nearly shooting the cop's foot. But more importantly...

Startling the animals. Spurring the tigers to react, and to - -

ATTACK

Lunging at the agents on the outer circle, Graves seizing the moment to drag Erik through the madness, BLASTING a cheetah as they emerge from the scrum of battle...

A YOUNG AGENT

Falls in with them, covering Graves from behind as they angle for the exit...

Behind them, agents fire errantly at the animals, keeping them at bay, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - - WASHINGTON, D.C. ZOO - - MOMENTS LATER

The young agent vaults into a Towncar, Graves coaxing Erik into the back...

AGENT GRAVES
Get in the goddamn car...

He slams the door shut, looking down to see Erik staring back at him through the glass.

Behind Graves, two COPS emerge from the zoo untarnished.

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
You two. Follow us.

The cops duck into their car, triggering the engine, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - UNDISCLOSED LOCATION - - CONTINUOUS

Kleinmein's staff packs up as we PAN ACROSS the confines to see the TWINS strapped to gurneys, Kleinmein administering more of that bluish liquid into their bloodstreams...

In the BG, we see each glass-encased CAGE as it begins to fill with water. Drowning the mutants trapped inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - - MOVING

The young agent in front, Graves sits in the back with the cuffed Erik, a tranquilizer gun in hand...

AGENT GRAVES
You're not the only one with magical powers, Lehnsherr. We're gonna make you disappear. And you know what? - No one's gonna even notice.

Erik looks at the TRANQUILIZER GUN, a smile on his face.

ERIK
You should'a used that thing already...

Graves is about to answer until he notices the streets of Georgetown blurring by outside...

AGENT GRAVES
Slow down, Agent.

ON THE DASH: Speeds increasing. *35 mph...45... 50...*

AGENT GRAVES (CONT'D)
Slow down, agent.

CLOSE ON THE ACCELERATOR, shoved down on its own accord...

YOUNG AGENT
I can't...it's not me...the car, it's doing it...

The agent tries to step on the brake but the accelerator's nearly on the floor now...

Graves sticks that tranquilizer gun into Erik's rib cage.

AGENT GRAVES
Make it stop. *Slowly.*

But the car, it keeps going...faster and faster...

ERIK
Told you you should'a used that gun already...

AGENT GRAVES
You hear me, Lehnsherr? - STOP THIS CAR.

ERIK
(simple)
Okay.

With a shrug, the car slows before veering off course, slamming into a fire hydrant on the corner before coming to an abrupt stop on a busy street.

A geyser of water erupts into the air, obscuring our vision.

INT. POLICE CAR - - MOVING

See the accident through the windshield, the Towncar smashed.

INT. TOWNCAR - - STATIONARY

A collective groan from the occupants before Graves recomposes himself, focusing on the unscathed Erik...

AGENT GRAVES
OUT.

He shoves Erik from the back, the young agent emerging, a gash on his head...

EXT. STREET - - GEORGETOWN - - DAY

The cops hustle over as the hydrant water douses one and all, Graves jabbing the tranquilizer gun into Erik's back...

Graves takes stock of the scene, pointing to one of the two cops and instructing him:

AGENT GRAVES
You, you're driving.

No time to spare, the cop hustles into the front seat as Erik and Graves duck into the back...

INT. POLICE CAR - - STATIONARY

The back of the cop's hatted head visible, Erik asks Graves:

ERIK
Shouldn't you sedate me...?

Graves says nothing. Puts the tranquilizer gun down. Seconds later, the car turns back in the opposite direction...

ERIK (CONT'D)
Where are we going...?

Nearly catatonic, Graves turns to face Erik. He speaks in a dull monotone:

AGENT GRAVES
We're going to help stop Kleinmein.

And Erik's perplexed by this until we see an epiphany take hold of him.

Slowly, Erik turns to meet EYES with the driver through the REAR-VIEW MIRROR(POV).

DRIVER (O.S.)
Nice to see you, Erik.

That voice. Obliterating all doubt when the driver takes his hat off to reveal...A BALD HEAD.

CHARLES.

A moment later, Erik's cuffs SNAP off as Graves continues to stare aimlessly out the window...

ERIK
(elated)
Charles...

CHARLES
I couldn't let you go it alone, my friend.

Erik nods. Truly appreciating Charles. Then:

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Where are we going?

ERIK
I think that's a question for Agent Graves here...

Charles looks at Graves through the rear-view, already under Charles' spell, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - UNDISCLOSED LOCATION - - CONTINUOUS

The water level's precipitously higher in the cages, the subjects screaming mutely, pounding feebly on the glass.

Kleinmein and his crew move to and 'fro, indifferent to the suffering around them.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE - - VIRGINIA - - DUSK

A fleet of Jeeps line up outside barracks...

INT. MUNITIONS ROOM - - <u>START ON STOCK OF M-1 MACHINE GUNS</u>

A SERGEANT steps into frame, handing the weapons to an endless assembly of soldiers, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - - POTOMAC - - DUSK

PAN DOWN a row of police cars, STOPPING ON the one on the end, seconds before - -

AGENT GRAVES'

Groggy head rises into frame from the backseat. He grapples for the door handle(os)before...

...Spilling out, dressed in the cop's uniform, flex cuffs on his wrists. Wondering how the hell he got here.

He looks to the sky for answers...just as it begins to rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALEXANDRIA, VA. - - <u>TRACKING SHOT</u>

Soaring over the vast and vacant farmland, uncut grass swaying with the wind as we drift closer...

Below, on the one-lane road, we find a STATIONWAGON wheeling through, RAIN assaulting it, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. STATIONWAGON - - MOVING

Charles behind the wheel, Erik riding shotgun...

CHARLES
We have to assume they're expecting us...

ERIK
The element of surprise pales beside the element of audacity...
(then)
You know I had a plan back there...

CHARLES
Yes, I believe it involved hitting a fire hydrant then waiting for me to rescue you...

Even Erik has to grin at that before nodding a silent but soulful *thank you*...

Charles nods tersely as the wagon wheels to the side of the road, an old FARMHOUSE visible ahead on a hill.

And Erik looks into the rear-view(POV), nothing but empty highway to the untrained eye, but...

ERIK (O.S.)
We'll have company soon.

CHARLES
I'll deal with them.

And Erik's all too anxious to exit before - -

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Erik. I came back to save lives, not to take them.

Erik nods. And exits.

And Charles watches him go, concern crinkling the corners of his eyes, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMLAND - - ALEXANDRIA - - NIGHT

RAIN

Pounds the plantation-like grounds as Erik climbs a slippery incline, oblivious to the conditions...

CLOSER ON ERIK

A steely determination to him, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - - ROAD - - OVERHEAD SHOT - - NIGHT

THREE ARMY TRUCKS caravan down an empty road...

INT. BACK - - TRUCK - - MOVING

A chalk of soldiers ready for battle, their commander watches as they sort through ammunition.

COMMANDER
...He's now accompanied by a friend. You shoot to kill, does everyone understand?

SOLDIERS
SIR, YES, SIR!

COMMANDER
Now just to make the bureaucrats happy...

He passes out paperwork. *Legal* paperwork.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Non-disclosure forms, boys. Means we're not supposed to talk about what we're about to see.

A hush falls over the soldiers before...

SOLDIER
Sir? What're we about to see?

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - - OUTSIDE FARMHOUSE - - NIGHT

Charles leans against the hood of the stationwagon, oblivious to the rain. Girding for battle.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - - <u>CLOSE ON THICK DOORS</u>

From inside, embalmed in darkness, the double doors creak open, a shard of moonlight articulating...

ERIK.

In the doorway. Inhaling a deep breath before stepping inside the cavernous confines. Consistent with any other farmhouse: Stalls. Sawdust. Barrels.

ERIK POV: Only, look closer. The stalls are empty, not an animal in sight.

And those barrels can't help but conjure memories of Zyklon B, the favored chemical used for Auschwitz exterminations.

ERIK

Walks through, no sign of the promised laboratory. No sign of humanity save the faint din of voices(os).

Growing louder. Coming closer.

He halts above a pile of sawdust, his foot feeling around the surface. Stomping until a dull THUD calls back.

His boot brushes sawdust aside to reveal STEEL DOORS on the floor. Sound beckons from within.

And Erik strains to lift the doors, peeking in to see a dark dungeon-like lair below. An inscrutable abyss.

He descends steps...

The darkness ceding to light. BRIGHT LIGHT. Where we find a world unto itself. A bunker like you've never seen.

Fully functional, we're in a perfectly excavated - -

INT. TUNNEL - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

And Erik can't help but be reminded of the "infirmary" halls of Auschwitz.

We hear nothing but his steady breath as he wades through. Not a soul in sight.

He passes a gurney filled with medical implements.

<u>SFX</u>: *THWACK-THWACK-THWACK.*

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - - FARMHOUSE - - NIGHT

Charles looks asunder to see a MILITARY HELICOPTER circling the sky, heading for the farmhouse...

He peers back down to see the Army caravan coming over the horizon, rumbling closer.

FOLLOW THE CHOPPER

As it swoops down, depositing a chalk of soldiers via ropes onto the grass, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - - MOVING

In the proverbial cockpit with the driver, the farmhouse discernible in the distance...

DRIVER
Who the hell is that?

WINDSHIELD POV: Charles stands in front of the wagon. Unaffected by the descending troops.

Because, alas, seconds later, several DEER come trampling out onto the road, leaving the driver no choice but to - -

SCREEEEEEEEEECHHHHHHHH!

Slam on the brakes, violently fishtailing in order to avoid the animals. But leaving it vulnerable to -

SLAM. The impact of the trucks behind them.

EXT. ROAD - - FARMHOUSE - - NIGHT

A cataclysmic collision, trucks 2 and 3 slam into each other, a pile of tangled metal.

INT. LEAD TRUCK - - STATIONARY

The driver lifts his head from the cracked windshield, trying to see through the steam.

DRIVER
Son of a bitch.

He hops down to see the vehicular carnage, soldiers piling out of battered trucks, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

Erik creaks a door open to behold a spartan bunker.

He enters cautiously to see the room's vacant save a few cots and desks. Everything cleared out.

Not a single piece of metal anywhere.

The door slams shut behind him, locking him in as THE TWINS step from the shadows.

A disembodied and aurally enhanced voice follows...

DR. KLEINMEIN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Erik. Welcome. You remember the twins.

KLEINMEIN

Stands above, behind a glass partition. Observing the proceedings the way an Emperor might watch his gladiators.

ERIK

Spins, trying to locate any item that might be of use. But <u>there's nothing.</u>

THE TWINS

Move closer, on opposite sides of Erik. Blocking him in.

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
(filtered)
You'll serve a purpose yet, boy.
Now we can test our experiments out.
The uber man versus the *average* man...

This just before - <u>CRACK</u> - Twin #1 slams a fist into the back of Erik's head. Sending him clear across the room.

And already, 2.3 seconds into the brawl, Erik's on his knees. Crawling across the floor. A mere mortal.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - - FARMHOUSE - - NIGHT

The soldiers march down the soggy road, their battered trucks visible in the BG...

They trot past the Stationwagon, Charles nowhere to be found.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

Back with the mutants confined in glass cages, the water level at shoulder-height now.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

Erik evades the twins as best he can. To the utter amusement of Kleinmein.

DR. KLEINMEIN
(filtered)
You can never win, Erik...your destiny was made in that camp...behind those fences...hard as you try to tear them down, we'll always rebuild them...

Erik makes a run at Twin #2, his fist caught in the larger man's open palm. A humbling exercise.

Twin #2 squeezes Erik's hand, forcing Erik to his knees before Twin #1 kicks him in the ribs.

Erik staggers across the floor. In immense pain.

And Kleinmein can't stop laughing, his cackle echoing through the corridors below.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - - VIRGINIA - - NIGHT

Charles, soaking wet from the walk, barrels in, angling towards the visible bunker door...

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

The water level's above most of the mutants' heads, Creed slamming his fists helplessly against the unbreakable glass.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

Curled into a corner, a fetal ball, Erik endures a torrent of blows from the twins...

...A cringe-inducing barrage of fists and feet, until...

...Erik simply teeters over, a virtual pulp of flesh.

But the brothers are incorrigible, moving in for more before - -

DR. KLEINMEIN (O.S.)
Enough.

DR. KLEINMEIN

In the doorway now. Cool as the other side of the pillow.

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
I want the body mildly functional.

He enters. Glaring down at Erik:

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
You're still weak. At your core. Like all your people. You always will be.

And only now do we see the SYRINGE in his hand...

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
Your autopsy will, however, be of great use...

ERIK

Staggers to his knees. Still no threat, he murmurs:

ERIK
Please...

DR. KLEINMEIN
(to the twins)
You see? They all beg eventually.

And only now do we see Erik pulling the STAR OF DAVID chain from inside his shirt, the only bit of metal on him...

He yanks the chain off, held in his hand as if brass knuckles.

CLOSE ON ERIK'S EYES,

ENRAGED. A truly scary sight, before he...

...Spins to face Kleinmein, slapping the syringe away - which stabs errantly into Twin #1's neck...

...Makes the giant stumble back, frothing at the mouth...

ERIK

Unleashes a powerful punch to Kleinmein's nose. CRACK! Sends the doctor staggering back in a mist of blood...

TWIN #2

Watches as his brother shakes in galvanic spasms.

ERIK

Grips the wall, pulling himself to his feet...but as he looks over to the door he sees...KLEINMEIN'S GONE.

And Twin #2's angry.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

The water now nearly touches the top of the holding cases, some test subjects already succumbing to drowning deaths...

And Creed Jr.'s fists have become palms, slapping harmlessly at the glass, oxygen bubbles fleeting...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - TUNNEL - - CONTINUOUS

Charles descends tenuous steps, moving cautiously down the corridor. Daunting silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - - VIRGINIA - - NIGHT

Troops pound the soil, the hard-driving rain slowing them as they slip and slide on their way up the hill...

Once over the incline, the soldiers fan perfectly and precisely out, heading towards the stable, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

TWIN #1

On his back. And on the floor. In death's throes.

And Twin #2's enraged at the sight, his gaze going to Erik - who limps around the room.

Yet another battle to wage.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL - - BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

Charles moves further down the corridor...

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

The cases filled with water, Creed Jr's body goes slack behind the glass. Surrender in his eyes.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

BAM! A FIST. Right in Erik's face. Staggering him back.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

A GERMAN SCIENTIST steps into view, turning to expose a gun in his hand, pointed at...Charles. Only...

...Charles is no longer there.

The scientist blinks, fires, stares. Turning back to see

CHARLES

Behind him.

CHARLES
I believe you missed.

Before the scientist can scream, we - -

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

ANOTHER FIST. Strikes Erik's side. Cracks another rib.

But we STAY a bit longer now...long enough to see that Erik's indefatigable. After every blow, he rises.

Staggering back to Twin #2 - who looks to be tiring.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Soldiers storm in, ready for action, guns fixed on...

NOTHING.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

CHARLES

Enters the untended room to see the test subjects behind glass, some already dead(save one little girl who swims easily through it, gills sprouting from her neck)...

And we see his lids narrow, his eyes incendiary. *Focusing.*

But the glass is thick, and time is waning, and...

NOTHING'S HAPPENING.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

- - ERIK slams into a wall, propelled by the manipulated force of Twin #2. But he also finds himself beside the slightly ajar door - which he reaches for - but not to exit -

- To creak open a bit more. Turning back in time to see - -

TWIN #2

Who promptly flings him into the opposite wall.

And Twin #2 descends for the final blow, his entire body clenched in anticipation - -

Only Erik let's out a gruesome WAIL, evoking a CLATTER from somewhere close by...hurtling closer(os)...

And we see the door inch further open, before...

INT. HALLWAY - - BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

...All the items in the hall, surgical implements included, are launched towards - -

INT. ROOM - - BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

- - Depositing themselves in Twin #2 as if a totem pole. Scissors. Pliers. Forceps.

A bombardment that instantly decimates him. Has him timbering to the floor, DEAD.

And Erik looks down at him, far from triumphant, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - - FARMHOUSE BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

<u>WHAM!</u> Charles resorts to slamming a gurney into the glass. To little effect.

He summons a deep breath before boring a hole into the glass coffins. And then, an excruciating effort - -

EACH AND EVERY CUBICLE SMASHES

CRASH! CRASH! CRASH!

Water flooding out, would-be mutants pouring forth with it. Many still alive, if barely.

Charles goes to assist them, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALL - - UNDERGROUND BUNKER - - CONTINUOUS

Soldiers trample into frame, rifles at the ready, instantly opening fire upon sight of ERIK.

Only Erik, his powers gestating, tears a pillar from its root, the ceiling collapsing.

Thwarting the soldiers progress.

Seconds later, Charles and the surviving mutants scurry from the laboratory...

ERIK
I'm going after Kleinmein.

Before he can sprint off - -

CHARLES
Erik.

They lock eyes, no words necessary. CHARLES: *Be smart.*

Erik doesn't even nod. Simply hustles off(os), Charles and his band of renegades doing the same, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - - VIRGINIA - - NIGHT

CAR HEADLIGHTS

Blink to life like the eyes of a serpent, piercing through a cluster of brush and bark.

INT. MERCEDES - - STATIONARY

Kleinmein starts the car, speeding through the woods, eyes on the rear-view(POV)to see no threat in sight.

And he relaxes slightly, still white-knuckling the wheel as he looks ahead to see

ERIK

70 yards away... 50 yards... 30 yards...

KLEINMEIN

Bloodlust in his eyes, steps on the pedal. Going faster.

And Erik, injured from his battles, is perhaps unable to stop the car - -

20 yards... 15 yards... 10 yards...

At the last possible second, Erik steps aside to reveal a thick OAK TREE behind him.

But Kleinmein has no time to avoid it, only left to cover his eyes and HOWL before - -

EXT. WOODS - - FARMHOUSE - - VIRGINIA - - NIGHT

IMPACT. The Mercedes missiles into the tree, crumpling like an accordion. Steam pluming from its hood.

A cataclysmic collision.

ERIK

Walks calmly closer, his breath visible in the night air as a flicker of flames spurt from under the Mercedes' hood.

And Erik stops beside the car, the heat on his skin.

He looks inside the battered clump to see Kleinmein, head slumped on the steering wheel. The crumpled car trapping his body awkwardly inside.

If not dead, then close to it.

Nothing heard but the continuous BLARE of the car horn.

For Erik, it's the moment that separates forgiveness from fury, redemption from rage.

He just stares at Kleinmein, watching indifferently as FLAMES spread from the car engine...

Only now does Kleinmein rouse into consciousness...

DR. KLEINMEIN
Help me...help me...PLEASE.

Erik sees the BLUE VIAL in Kleinmein's left hand, reaching over, his hand on top of Kleinmein's.

But not to comfort...to squeeze.

CRUNCH. The vial implodes in Kleinmein's grip as the fire further expands from the front of the car...

DR. KLEINMEIN (CONT'D)
Help me, goddamn you...DON'T LEAVE ME HERE!

GOD POV:

Rain still falls, dripping from the heavens as Erik remains outside the car. Motionless.

RESUME ANGLE:

And now Erik looks down at Kleinmein one last time before he walks away. Leaving Kleinmein behind.

CLOSE ON ERIK

Tears trickling down his cheek as we HEAR Kleinmein's horrific screams from inside the car. No question as to his fate.

And Erik walks through the woods, heedless to the desperate cries echoing from behind him before he hears something else:

A RUMBLING(os)

From close by. An engine. A truck on the move,..

ERIK

Spins to his right to see SOLDIERS marching closer over a hill, another lynch mob. Nowhere to go, he looks to his left, before -

AN ARMY TRUCK

Cuts through the marsh, plowing right for him...

ERIK

Sets his feet, tries to summon powers, come what may. About to unleash his fury before he sees

CHARLES (ERIK POV)

Behind the wheel.

THE SOLDIERS

On the move, Erik vaults into the passenger seat, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - - MOVING

Charles drives as Erik settles in, secretly elbowing the residue of tears from his eyes. Recomposing.

ERIK
Where are the others?

Charles peels a curtain back to reveal (POV) *the rescued mutants in the rear of the vehicle.*

ERIK (CONT'D)
That's our army, Charles...

CHARLES
I've seen enough armies for a lifetime, Erik...

Erik trades terse eyes with the Creed-like character.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
And you, what happened to the doctor?

WAIT.

ERIK
The car crash killed him.

And Charles looks at Erik through squinty lids, appraising his friend, wanting so badly to believe, before we - -

CRANE OUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - - VIRGINIA - - NIGHT

And we look down through the dense forestry to see the Army truck divining its own path. And two distant voices:

ERIK (V.O.)
What now, Charles...?

CHARLES (V.O.)
Now...we rebuild.

FADE TO:

EXT. PLOT OF LAND - - TWO WEEKS LATER - - DAY

Insert Legend: **Upstate New York.**

WIDE SHOT: Endless acres stretch across the landscape, a green canvass upon which we see THREE PEOPLE walking...

REALTOR (O.S.)
...How big's this facility going to be?

CLOSER - - FAVOR CHARLES

Who looks from the land...to the perky REALTOR.

CHARLES
A school. Not "a facility". A place of learning.

REALTOR
(with a laugh)
Lotta' land...

CHARLES
We have much to learn.

And now we see ERIK in the BG, examining the grounds as he walks towards us...

CHARLES (CONT'D)
(to realtor)
You'll excuse us a moment...?

REALTOR
Of course...

She leaves Erik and Charles to confer, a palpable excitement to Charles as he inspects the land.

CHARLES
This is it. It's perfect.

And Erik's silent, still glancing around, before...

ERIK
Some men see what is, and ask "why"...?

Charles grins. Completes the phrase:

CHARLES
...Others see what is yet to be, and ask "why not"?

And now they both turn to face the vast and vacant landscape, Erik reminded of a plot of land in Ukraine not so long ago.

But a smile grows on his face when he says...

ERIK
You know I'm good with construction, Charles...

CAMERA RISES, enabling us to see the enormity of it all...

...HIGHER STILL until Erik and Charles are but blips, swallowed in a sea of green, before we - -

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - - LIVING ROOM - - DAY

TRACK through this humble and temporary residence, hearing sounds of construction, before we...

ENTER THE BEDROOM

Where we find ERIK. His back to us, he occupies a desk, intensely focused on some as yet unseen item(os)...

PUSH CLOSER

Circling to see the object of his attention...

A HELMET

Constructed of imperious metal, it's the headgear for which he'll one day become known...

A symbol of the distrust that will one day make him the most dangerous man in the world.

And Erik fits the helmet on his head, a king assuming his crown, before we - -

FADE TO:

EXT. AUSCHWITZ - - KRAKOW, POLAND - - <u>PRESENT DAY</u>

Back where our story began...

MAGNETO

Stands behind rows of rickety chairs. Never has a man been among so many...and looked so alone.

Arms crossed, his gaze goes to

THE STAGE

Where we see a host of flags aflutter.

Israel. USA. Great Britain. Even, mind you...*Germany.*

VOICE (V.O.)
...And we've had our successes: The capture of Adolf Eichman, the continued search for war criminals the world over...

AN AMERICAN SENATOR

Presides behind the podium, expertly surveying the crowd. Summoning appropriate emotions as he rhapsodizes.

PROFESSOR X (O.S.)
Thought I might find you here, old friend...

Magneto need not look over. He knows the voice too well.

MAGNETO
(droll)
Am I that predictable, Charles?

Moments later, the wheelchair bound PROFESSOR X appears beside him, gesturing to the ceremony as he speaks...

PROFESSOR X
Take a look around you, Erik. Maybe our capacity for change is greater than you'd like to admit.

MAGNETO
Ah, Charles, the victory of hope over experience...

FAVOR THE SENATOR

On the stage, an older but distinguished sort. It takes us a moment to recognize him as SENATOR KELLY. Now the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

SENATOR KELLY
...We must learn from the mistakes of the past. We must never forget.

MAGNETO

Watches through cynical eyes...

SENATOR KELLY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Here we stand, faced with another dangerous threat at our doorstep...

PROFESSOR X
People can change, Erik. Humans can.

Magneto stays focused on Kelly...

SENATOR KELLY
...A vicious breed of evil manifesting across the land. An evil not seen since the Nazis. If we don't learn from the past, if we don't learn from *this*...

MAGNETO
The more things change, Charles...

SENATOR KELLY
...Then we'll be standing at the threshold of another genocide. Perpetuated by a nefarious breed we've come to call "mutants".

And Magneto looks to Professor X. And only now does he say:

MAGNETO
...The more things stay the same.

And Senator Kelly continues as Magneto smiles sadly, deftly tipping his hat to Charles with:

MAGNETO (CONT'D)
I shall see you soon, my friend...

With this, he moves away from the Professor. Away from the ceremony. Away from humanity. And the - -

CAMERA SLOWLY RISES

As Magneto walks to the cursed place where our tale began...

THE GATE

And we watch as he MANGLES it apart once again...

With this, head bowed, Magneto's lost in the crowd, vanishing from view, destined to resurface, as we slowly...

FADE OUT: