

FEMALE VOICE
23th floor. Security and
Counterintelligence.

They continue their conversation as they walk down the
HALLWAY, towards a pair of BULLETPROOF GLASS DOORS.

BEN
But they *can't* be real.

ROGER
Oh they're real. Maybe not by
birth, but surgically conjoined.

BEN
Ugh. Who wants to see *that*?

ROGER
People pay top dollar for it.

As they walk and talk, SENSORS imbedded on the wall flash as
they SCAN THEIR RETINAS.

BEN
For what, exactly?

ROGER
Depends on how much you're willing
to pay. If you can't find it in
the red zones, it doesn't exist.

The DOORS OPENS automatically in front of them. They enter
without even having to slow down.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Anyway, what about *your* weekend?
What did you do?

BEN
Barbecue.

Roger LAUGHS as the DOORS close between us and them.

ROGER
You guys are too sweet.

INT. CHRYSALIS BUILDING - LAB - DAY

A TEST SUBJECT sits in a small, nondescript room, his scalp
connected to an EEG through a series of electrodes. He
watches a SCREEN WALL that shows a series of HEADSHOTS of
people of different ages, races and gender: A YOUNG WOMAN, A
MIDDLE-AGED ASIAN MAN, AN ELDERLY AFRICAN AMERICAN...

WE PULL BACK to reveal that we're watching this through...

A ONE-WAY MIRROR--

Behind it, Ben watches the experiment along with CHAD (40s), his boss, a gray bureaucrat, and JULIAN (50s), an inscrutable man that stands behind them. A computer monitor shows the same headshots, but here the IMAGES ARE BLURRY, UNSTABLE. People's features are in constant flow, shifting, mutating...

START →

CHAD

(to Julian)

The Torchlight software scans the subject's brainwaves and translates them into images. Literally shows you what they're thinking-- most importantly, what they're dreaming. Traitors can't lie in their sleep, right?

JULIAN

What's the accuracy?

Chad looks at Ben: you're the engineer, you take this one.

BEN

We're at sixty-five percent... For now.

JULIAN

And that's going to hold during REM?

BEN

(admits, reluctant)

No. We expect to lose about ten points when the subject's asleep.

Julian processes this, rubbing his knuckles. We notice a TATTOO of a SNAKE peeking from under his cuff and we realize: he's the man with the scalpel from the opening scene.

Chad awaits his reaction, nervously. When Julian speaks, he does so deliberately.

JULIAN

What happened yesterday in Jakarta... someone's going to end up in the Boiler Room for that. Do you know what goes on down there?

CHAD

We've all heard stories.

JULIAN

If you really knew, you wouldn't send someone my way on a fifty-five percent chance he's guilty.

BEN

~~We--~~

CHAD

(cutting him off)

I'm as disappointed as you are, sir. Fifty-five percent is unacceptable. But we'll pick up the pace. That's a guarantee.

A tense beat. Then Julian nods: alright. And he exits the room. Ben is left feeling he's been thrown under the bus.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Is there a problem?

BEN

No problem. Torchlight's learning. It'll hit seventy-five percent in six months.

CHAD

Good.

BEN

But not before.

CHAD

What are you trying to say, Ben?

BEN

Just that maybe you should be careful about the promises you make. Especially to him. I mean, "we've all heard stories," right?

Ben exits the room, his point made. Left alone, we can see a sense of dread invading Chad.

EXT. MILWAUKEE - DAY

~~END~~

The CAMERA flies over the majestic skyscrapers of downtown to reveal the maze-like narrow streets of the RED ZONES...

CHAD

22.

51.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Alan turns to the door and puts his own palm against its surface. The door reads his hand and OPENS. Alan produces a SMALL BLACK BOX and hands it to Ben.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Well, see if you can stabilize the inhibitors. The pitch always ends up frying the circuits.

BEN

I'll see what I can do.

INT. CHRYSALIS BUILDING - BATHROOM STALL - DAY

CLICK. CLICK. Sitting on the toilet, Ben opens the two latches on the box and lifts its cover.

Inside, he finds a TRIGGER-SHAPED DEVICE, and two electronic EARPLUGS. The Whistle...

Ben considers it for a beat, nervous, unsure. Is he ready?

Finally, he squeezes one of the earplugs and both come to life with a very low hum and a tiny blue light: they're on.

CUT TO:

A TABLET falls into a glass of water, DISSOLVING WITH A SIZZLE.

INT. CHRYSALIS BUILDING - CHAD'S CORNER OFFICE - DAY

On one of the top floors, Chad's massive office displays a breathtaking view of the financial district of Milwaukee.

Severely hung over, Chad squints at the GLARE of the sun on the glass of a neighboring skyscraper. He slides a finger over his desk and the WINDOWS DARKEN, dimming the sunlight.

Chad takes a sip of his medicine when suddenly, BEEEEEP! The intercom makes him flinch. His head is killing him.

START →

CHAD

What now?

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Mr. Larson is here to see you.

Chad lets go a tired sigh.

CHAD
Let him in.

The SECRETARY (25) opens the door and Ben walks in.

Chad leans back on his chair and points at the one in front of his desk. An invitation to sit.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Ben...

As he takes a seat, Ben notices his boss's bloodshot eyes, the medicine on the table...

BEN
Crazy night, huh? I woke up myself to this horrible splitting he--

CHAD
(curt)
How can I help you?

Chad is not only back to his "boss mode", he's also in a shitty mood. He'll have none of last night's familiarity.

As Ben talks, the CAMERA closes in on his EAR, revealing a faint blue hue and a barely audible hum: the EARPLUGS.

BEN
I've been thinking. About
Torchlight. How to speed things up.

Still talking, Ben slips a hand inside his pocket and wraps his fingers around the TRIGGER.

BEN (CONT'D)
The learning process is just a matter of man-power, and putting in more hours.

And CLICK! Ben squeezes the trigger. The WHISTLE emits the faintest high-pitched frequency. Chad doesn't seem to notice.

CHAD
Tell me something I don't know.

Or maybe he does notice. Chad starts to fidget uncomfortably in his chair as the faint high-pitched noise floats in the background. He's not feeling well.

BEN
What I'm suggesting here is double shifts.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm happy to do overtime, come in
on weekends, get more test
subjects...

CHAD
Sure, and go over budg--

A WAVE ON NAUSEA interrupts Chad mid-sentence. He
immediately covers his mouth. Ben pretends not to notice.

BEN
We could bring volunteers from the
Red Zones. Shouldn't be too
costly.

CHAD
But the security clearance process
would be a nightmare. Look, Ben--

Suddenly, a second wave of nausea, intensified by a cramp.
Chad flinches, in pain.

BEN
Are you OK?

CHAD
I'm fine, I'm fine. It's just--
(another cramp)
Excuse me a second, will you?

Chad jumps out of the chair and storms out of the office.

SECRETARY (O.S.)
Sir, are you alright?

END

As soon as the door closes, Ben rushes to the other side of
the desk. He doesn't have much time.

A swipe on the desk's surface and a section of it rises and
tilts, turning into a TOUCH SCREEN. Ben navigates the
interface as fast as he can, until he finds the FOLDER he was
looking for.

When he clicks on it, a WARNING appears: "**CLEARANCE LEVEL 5.
DNA IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED**" And a small section of the
table opens, revealing...

...a TINY NEEDLE.

Ben produces the vial with Chad's sample and carefully places
a DROP OF BLOOD on the needle.

The computer starts analyzing the sample, a DOUBLE HELIX
being formed on screen.

As he gets closer, Ben seems to grow more nervous, more insecure, his eyes darting across the room, watching the other lines. Does he have something to hide?

ARMED GUARD (CONT'D)

Step up, sir.

It's his turn. Here we go...

Ben places his briefcase on the belt and steps into the scanner. He spreads his legs and raises his arms. The machine buzzes as the sensors spin around him, constructing a detailed 3D image of Ben on the screen.

Blink, blink, blink... All the devices in his pockets are highlighted one by one, their contents analyzed: A list of files rapidly cascades on the screen when, suddenly...

AN ALARM GOES OFF. Hysterical. Deafening.

Ben stays still, legs spread, arms in the air, as the crowd gasps and the guards spring into action.

Behind him, we can see a SQUAD OF GUARDS running across the lobby, making their way past the drones, approaching him...

...and then, surprisingly, RUSHING PAST HIM towards...

...the NEXT BODY SCANNER.

And then we see it. It's actually the next scanner that has set off the alarm, all its LIGHTS FLASHING RED.

The armed guards surround the scanner, weapons drawn, barking a cacophony of orders to...

...CHAD, who stands terrified, covered in cold sweat, inside the machine.

ARMED GUARD (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

Sir. Sir? You can go now.

Ben snaps out of it, and steps out of the scanner.

BEN

Thank you.

Ben calmly picks up his briefcase and walks away, doing his best not to look back as Chad is dragged out of the scanner.

CHAD

Wait. Wait! There must be a mistake!

FYI

START →

As he's roughly frisked, Chad sees the WARNING flashing on the screen: "WARNING: UNAUTHORIZED EXTRACTION. CLASSIFIED FILES". What the hell?

And then, a Guard pops Chad's briefcase open, and produces something familiar:

A SMALL SPHERE, the portable drive Ben used to copy the classified files. He planted it in Chad's briefcase.

Chad's eyes widen in disbelief.

CHAD (CONT'D)

That's not-- that's not mine!

But the guards ignore him. They pull his arms behind his back and slide a pair of PLASTIC HANDCUFFS around his wrists.

CHAD (CONT'D)

THAT'S NOT MINE! IT'S NOT M--

Suddenly, a BLACK CAPTURE HOOD falls over Chad's head. Two guards grab him by the arms and drag him, kicking and screaming, out of the room. And now we realize: Chad was the man in the hood we saw at the beginning of the episode!

Immediately, the lobby goes back to normal. The chatter resumes as if nothing had happened.

~~END~~

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - DUSK

Ben's car parks itself on the driveway and Ben steps out of the vehicle, somber, disturbed.

The neighborhood is cheery, in contrast: TWO BROTHERS play catch on a nearby house while a ROOMBA-LIKE DEVICE mows the lawn, a WOMAN reading a tablet on her porch...

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ben drops his briefcase by the entrance and immediately walks to the dining room.

There, he opens a sideboard, revealing a collection of LIQUOR BOTTLES. He takes the WHISKEY and pours himself a generous serving. Neat.

Ben downs the whiskey in one gulp. It burns as it goes down his throat, but the pain feels good.

He stays there in silence, with his eyes closed, until...