

EMPLANT

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - DAY

Storefront doors open. In creeps EMILY--20, sheepish, wide-eyed--like a moth to a flame.

Sales associate DAN--30, fit, handsome, phlegmatic--moves in.

DAN
First time?

EMILY
Is it that obvious? Can I still
come in?
(point to her head)
Even if I don't have...

DAN
Of course. Most people start with
the VR stations right up the main
path. I'll be around if you have
any questions. I'm Dan by the way.

EMILY
Thanks, Dan.

DAN
Enjoy yourself, Emily.

Dan walks away. Emily realizes she's wearing her STUDENT ID. Embarrassed, she tucks it away and moves on.

The showroom--an Apple Store meets arcade with a hookah lounge vibe--is cavernous and crowded.

Emily walks the busy main boulevard, gawking at the stunning interactive augmented reality displays and holograms.

The hip crowd of fit young adults chat with ASSOCIATES or repose on HI-TECH RECLINERS.

A big EMPLANT LOGO and the name "LUNICA" loom above all.

On a jumbo screen, HAPPY USERS give heartfelt testimonials.

HAPPY USER 1
It's the perfect invention.

HAPPY USER 2
I lost 150 pounds!

HAPPY USER 3

It's like a friend that always has
your back.

HAPPY USER 4

Emplant saved my life.

Emily creeps into an arcade-like grove of VR STATIONS--wide
luminous booths, each with a shadowy figure moving inside.

Overwhelmed, she retreats... and bumps into Dan.

DAN

Hey there. This station is opening
up if you wanna give it a try.

He points to an empty booth lighting up beside her. She shyly
enters. Inside she finds sleek VR GOGGLES and puts them on.

POV: EMILY

Several icons appear before her.

We hear EMA--a feminine AI voice (Siri/Alexa).

EMA (V.O.)

Enhance your life with Emplant.
What would you like to do today?

Emily points to the house-shaped RHODE ICON. It bounces. A
scrolling light scans her body. The walls dim to black.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RHODE - DAY

VIRTUAL EMILY opens her eyes and admires her CG body.

Surrounding her is a virtual suburban neighborhood populated
with fantastic characters and extravagant houses.

SUNFLOWER DAN--a humanoid sunflower--approaches.

SUNFLOWER DAN

Hey there. It's Dan.

VIRTUAL EMILY

Oh! Wow. Cool avatar!

SUNFLOWER DAN
Thanks. Wanna take a walk? Just put
one foot forward to move.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - DAY

In the station, Emily awkwardly places one foot forward.
Outside her booth is Dan--frozen, eyes closed, slight smile.

EXT. THE RHODE - DAY

Virtual Emily and Sunflower Dan stroll down the block.

SUNFLOWER DAN
This is The Rhode. You can build a
house here, customize it however
you want, invite others over to
play games, whatever. Anybody who's
anybody is on here.

VIRTUAL EMILY
It's really amazing.

SUNFLOWER DAN
Yeah but this is nothing compared
to what it's like without the
goggles. The sensations are--

VIRTUAL EMILY
Yeah my brother told me all about
it. He just got fit. I wish I could
afford it right now.

SUNFLOWER DAN
Hold that thought, Emily.

He snaps his fingers.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP SPACE - NIGHT

Now floating among the stars, Emily gawks at distant nebulae.

SUNFLOWER DAN
We've got an ongoing special
promotion...

Dan conjures 3D MODELS & GRAPHICS between his hands as he lists the corresponding features.

SUNFLOWER DAN (CONT'D)
 E4 Student Edition. Vitals Monitor,
 Thought-To-Text, and Unlimited
 access to the Bank of Knowledge.
 With promotional discounts, tax
 breaks and rebates, you can get fit
 for 70% off list price...

Emily is disturbed by the final EMPLANT BRAIN MODEL--a brain hugged by what looks like a daddy long-legs spider.

She mimes 'taking off glasses' and disappears.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - DAY

Emily exits the booth. Dan is waiting for her.

POV: DAN

Emily has an aura. Beside her, a dialogue prompt: "ASSIST"

DAN
 Everything OK?

EMILY
 Sorry. The price is great but...
 I'm still a little creeped out by--

DAN
 Integration?

EMILY
 Yeah.

POV: DAN

"INTEGRATION" flashes. Another prompt appears: "SYMPATHIZE".

DAN
 I hear you. It was a little weird
 for me at first too. But now it's
 like second-nature.

EMILY

Yeah. That's what my brother said.
Hey, thanks for your help, Dan.
You've been really nice.

DAN

My pleasure. Thanks for stopping
by, Emily.
(after a beat)
Oh, before you go, could you help
me test out a new enhancement?
It'll just take a sec.

EMILY

OK, sure.

Dan closes an eye, makes a frame around Emily with his fingers, looks through and blinks. A stunning image of her appears instantly on the jumbo screen. She's floored.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(pointing to the image)
Did you just-

DAN

Yes.

EMILY

(pointing to her eye)
With your-

DAN

Uh-huh.

EMILY

Is that included with the-

DAN

Yep.

Emily reconsiders.

Watching them from nearby is a bored and envious associate.

THOMAS--nearly 40, slacker, wilted, average.

THOMAS (V.O.)

You've seen the ads or you know
someone who has one. Everyone is
talking about it.

Emily smiles and shakes Dan's hand.

CUT TO:

INT. FITTING ROOM - DAY

In a dentist's office designed by Apple, an attractive person in a lab coat invites us to sit in the FITTING CHAIR--a luxurious recliner with two robotic arms behind the headrest.

Emily takes a seat.

THOMAS (V.O.)
 For many, the choice is simple.
 Emplant is the future. Integration
 is inevitable.

She grips the armrest as the chair reclines.

THOMAS (V.O.)
 Still some resist.

The robotic arms unfold swiftly, aiming a gun-like INJECTOR and LASER at the top of Emily's head. She closes her eyes.

THOMAS (V.O.)
 They say this initial rejection is
 a natural response.

OVER BLACK;

A HISS and a WET JAB.

CUT TO:

TITLE:

"EMPLANT"

Injected into a brain cavity is an EMPLANT--a spidery micro-transistor. It moves squid-like between brain hemispheres, nestles in, spreads it's thin appendages out, and glows.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - NIGHT

Thomas locks the storefront doors and pauses to check the luminous FRONT DISPLAY--featuring a pebble-sized Emplant in a clear box surrounded by screens displaying close-up footage.

It's intricate, alien but anatomical, sleek and sexy.

Hypnotized Thomas is startled by a distant voice.

BEN (O.S)

Thomas!

Across the floor, waiting beside the rear exit, is BEN--store manager, late-30s, very fit, groomed, confident.

BEN (CONT'D)

We're waiting...

THOMAS

Sorry!

Thomas jogs across the floor to meet Ben and they exit.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Uncomfortable cold silence as Thomas follows Ben down a corridor with multiple doors. They enter one.

INT. SHOWROOM BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In a cushy employee lounge, Thomas and Ben join the half dozen other associates gathered around a water-cooler filled with M-WATER--a bubbly blue liquid.

BEN

Thanks for hanging around everyone. Great job today. Pre-sale numbers are beyond target. You guys are breaking your own records. Go ahead and give yourselves a round of applause.

The associates applaud. Thomas puts on his jacket.

BEN (CONT'D)

I asked you to stick around because I know everyone has been wondering about the launch delay. Well I just got word. Lunica is about to announce to the world...

The associates look eager. Thomas looks disappointed.

BEN (CONT'D)

...that the E5 has been approved! Official launch is next week!

The associates applaud and hi-five. Thomas claps reluctantly.

BEN (CONT'D)

OK, settle down. Settle down. So obviously this means we've got work to do. Extended seasonal hours start tomorrow. I need you all here bright and early and ready to rock! A little bonus here to get you started... Lunica sent over the first associate enhancements. I'm forwarding you all an early copy for upload.

All are excited except Thomas.

He pulls a SMARTPHONE with a cracked screen from his pocket, taps the onscreen notification from Ben. A document loads: "RECOG 1.0 - SALES ENHANCEMENT".

He flips through pages of DIALOGUE TREES.

He realizes everyone else has become silent, frozen still and smiling like mannequins. The water cooler BUBBLES. He sighs.

INT. SHOWROOM EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

From a nondescript metal door, jovial associates file out with Ben and grumpy Thomas at the rear.

BEN

(when others are gone)

Tom, can I talk to you for a second?

Thomas, fleeing, gathers himself and returns.

THOMAS

Yeah, what's up?

BEN

You were late again.

THOMAS

Yeah, I know. Sorry. I've been--

BEN

You know the rule. Three times in a row and you get another demerit. Can I help you in some way? Maybe give you a wake up call tomorrow?

THOMAS

No, Ben, I don't need a fucking wake up call. I'm not incapable of--

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(takes a breath)

I'm sorry. I'll be on time. OK? I
gotta run.

Thomas walks off. Ben, doubtful, watches.

INT. MIDTOWN MALL - CONTINUOUS

Thomas passes struggling shops in a near-obsolete marketplace

INT. FRESH FOODS ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

He gazes through a trendy supermarket window before entering.

INT. FRESH FOOD CHECKOUT - CONTINUOUS

Bored cashier ANABEL--20-something, laid-back unapologetic
rebel unicorn--smirks when sees Thomas offering cash for GUM.

While she rings him up, he tries to speak but fails.

She hands him change and smiles. He avoids eye contact, nods,
and quickly leaves. She's mildly amused.

INT. CITY BUS - NIGHT

The bus is crossing a bridge. Thomas sits in the rear
studying a complex dialogue tree on his phone.

Excited PASSENGERS near him gawk at something outside.

PASSENGER 1

There it is!

Thomas looks. In the distance, perched over the bay, is
LUNICA CITY--a massive pyramid made of trusses, with a small
city suspended within (see Shimizu Mega-City Pyramid).

PASSENGER 2

Lunica City? Wow! It's huge!

PASSENGER 1

I heard the waiting list for
apartments is like five years long.

Thomas, unimpressed, goes back to his phone.

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Thomas walks by shady characters in a dissolving ghetto.

EXT. CHURCH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

He rings the doorbell of a crumbling Presbyterian church.

Opening the lofty door is RADAMES--70s, grounded and jocose.

RADAMES

Thomas! Come in, come in. Party's
just getting started.

Thomas enters.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Radames leads the way through the dusty, neglected interior.

RADAMES

We missed you last week.

THOMAS

Sorry, work has been crazy.

They exit through a side door.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Radames leads them down to a door labeled "Sunday School".

RADAMES

Well I'm glad you made it. It's
just not the same without you.

Thomas responds with a polite smile. They enter.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

In a dim room used mostly for storage, Thomas and Radames
take seats in a circle with 3 other people.

One of them rises, Steve--40s, bookish, timid, out of touch.

STEVE

OK I think that's probably everyone
this week. Welcome, Noble Savages!
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

Thank you for once again dragging
your flesh-bodies out into the
cold. How was everyone's week?

All respond with groans.

RADAMES

Same shit, different day.

STEVE

I want to begin by sharing
something very interesting with
you.

Steve pulls out his smartphone.

STEVE (CONT'D)

An article about the recent, nearly
record-breaking solar flares! Have
you heard about this?

No one responds or looks interested. He scrolls and taps.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hold on. I thought I had it
bookmarked...

He's interrupted by BERNICE--30s, undeterred quixotic hippie.

BERNICE

You know that's such a coincidence,
Steve...

Rolling his eyes is DARRELL--20s, street poet thug.

DARRELL

Oh here we go.

Steve deflates.

BERNICE

My charter of the Unbroken Society
has spent over 150 combined hours
this month meditating to try and
sway the favor of the collective.

First there was the E5 delay. And
now this, uh, solar thingie
happened-- I really think there is
some kind of connection there. I
really do.

DARRELL

Bernice, none of those things are related.

BERNICE

Darrell, if you truly believe you are powerless, then powerless you will be!

DARRELL

I *believe* this government favors economically viable business. And I *believe* you and your friends have no effect on the sun.

THOMAS

Sorry, Bernice. Lunica is about to announce it. The E5 launch is next week. I've already got data for the ReCog enhancement.

DARRELL

Of course ReCog was approved. It turns users into security cameras.

RADAMES

What the heck is ReCock?

STEVE

RE-COG. It records video of what you see.

DARRELL

Or what you think you see...

BERNICE

What about that guy whose head exploded?

DARRELL

His head didn't explode. A nanotube filament pinched a blood vessel. But the guy had a pre-existing--

THOMAS

Um, I haven't heard anything about head explosions. The delay was because of the bill in Congress.

STEVE

And the anti-integration lobby.

DARRELL

It's all part of the show. They wanna make it seem like there's a real debate happening. But the powers that be have already made the choice.

BERNICE

Well we can't just stand by and do nothing. We need to take action.

DARRELL

Sitting in the park trying to change things with your mind is not action. You have to go out there and talk to the people, show them the truth behind the lies.

(rapping)

Expose the illuminati code. Excel, expel the endless intel-

STEVE

Darrell, please, no rapping tonight.

BERNICE

We all have a say in what we do as a species, Darrell. But you must let your voice be heard throughout the conscious unconscious, by merging with the cosmic flow of-

DARRELL

You're in a cult, Bernice.

BERNICE

UBS is not a cult!

DARRELL

It's a cult.

BERNICE

OK well then you're in the cult of Wu Tang.

DARRELL

(laughs)

What? Are you serious right now?

BERNICE

You didn't even read the articles I sent you, did you?

DARRELL

Written by your cult leader? Hell
no. How you gonna bring up Wu-Tang?

Steve rises to calm them down. Radames just laughs. Thomas is trying to tune them all out when he hears his name.

STEVE

Thomas?

THOMAS

Huh?

STEVE

I asked if there's anything you'd
like to talk about tonight.

THOMAS (V.O.)

(nearly all at once)

I hate my job. Should I get fit?
Ben hates me. Checkout girl is too
young for me. Should I get fit? I'm
getting old. I'm getting fat. I'm
sick. I'm dying! Should I get fit?
I don't know what to do!

THOMAS (CONT'D)

No. Can't think of anything. Excuse
me, I need to use the restroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Radames and Thomas stroll down the sidewalk.

RADAMES

And there they were- snooping
around in the back lot. Got a
measuring tape and everything. Damn
developers. Landmark status means
nothing to them.

THOMAS

(halfhearted)

Yeah. Wow.

Radames studies pensive Thomas.

RADAMES

So, you were extra quiet tonight.

THOMAS
I'm just tired.

RADAMES
Uh-huh. I spoke to Dr. Wen.

THOMAS
No kidding? How's he been?

RADAMES
Really good. He's working for
Lunica now.

THOMAS
So he finally got certified as a
Fitter? Good for him. A lot of GPs
are doing that these days.

RADAMES
Yep... Steve thinks you'll be the
next to stop coming.

THOMAS
(considering it)
I appreciate you inviting me to
these things. But wasn't Noble
Savages supposed to be a book club?

RADAMES
You're the one that picked War and
Peace. I read it sometimes when I
need help falling asleep.

THOMAS
Well, it's a nonuser support group
now. Everyone who stopped coming
got fit. It's just you, me, a new-
age Luddite, a rapping conspiracy
theorist, and a guy who spends his
free time watching footage of the
sun.

RADAMES
Yeah but they're good people. Hey,
did you ask checkout girl out yet?

THOMAS
It's not a good time right now.

RADAMES
(laughs)
Yeah, right. You used that excuse
already. How's Benny doing?

THOMAS

Good. I think he's gonna fire me.

RADAMES

What? Benny wouldn't do that. You two are friends.

THOMAS

That was a long time ago, Radames. He changed since he got fit. And he's right to fire me. I haven't sold anything in months.

RADAMES

Maybe it's time for a change.

THOMAS

Who's gonna hire me? I'm unfit, almost 40, with no useful skills. Besides, Lunica is a good company.

RADAMES

I don't know how you do it Thomas. Working where you work, you'd think the curiosity alone would get you.

THOMAS

You said it yourself, Radames. It's not what you know that gets you, it's what you don't know. Just be thankful you're too old for an Emplant. The rest of us have to make a choice- integrate or be obsolete.

The two stop in front of a small, beat-up house.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And here's where you usually give me some sort of sage-like advice.

RADAMES

Nah, I got nothing.

Radames walks up to the front door.

THOMAS

Really? No quotes? No lecture about how I need to stop spinning my wheels and move forward?

RADAMES

See, you already know what you gotta do. You just gotta do it.

(MORE)

RADAMES (CONT'D)

Living is risky business. If you ain't dying, you ain't living. Hey, how's that?

THOMAS

Sounds like a bumper sticker. Maybe stick with the quotes.

Radames laughs and enters the house. Thomas considers his words before walking away.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A bus pulls away. Thomas walks towards a massive prison-like apartment complex.

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Thomas enters a cramped and messy studio, adds another unopened pack of gum to the pile on his dresser.

THOMAS

Resume.

A large section of the wall lights up. A B&W video plays. It's the intro to: "The Midnight Files" (Twilight Zone). Smokey voiced ROB CARLIN narrates while Thomas undresses.

ROB CARLIN (V.O.)

Now is the hour for questions only the brave can ask. Join us as we venture into The Midnight Files.

INTERCUT:

INT. FUTURISTIC LIVING ROOM - DAY

A gorgeous mother and her homely daughter calmly debate.

MOTHER

Darling, don't be ridiculous. You're finally old enough to pick a new identity.

Thomas searches the refrigerator- mostly condiments.

MOTHER (O.S.)

You should be excited! You haven't even opened the face book yet.

In the freezer, he's tempted by a carton of ice cream but takes the healthy microwave dinner instead.

MOTHER (O.S.)

When I was your age, I couldn't wait for my transformation day.

DAUGHTER

Mother, I don't want to be transformed. I like the way I am.

Thomas considers his own gut as dinner spins in the microwave

MOTHER (O.S.)

Sweetie you're not making sense.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

This is for your own good.

DAUGHTER

I don't want to be beautiful. I want to be me!

Thomas, now sitting in bed, chokes down his bland meal.

MOTHER (O.S.)

What's wrong with being beautiful?

MOTHER (CONT'D)

After all, isn't everybody?

END INTERCUT:

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - DAY

Beside an empty carton of ice cream, an alarm clock reads "7:45" and BUZZES for way too long.

Finally, Thomas notices and leaps out of bed.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

On a packed bus, Thomas is squashed between passengers, some frozen like mannequins. He checks his smartphone: "8:35"

EXT. CITY SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas weaves through the thick crowd in a domed public square (Grand Central Station meets Times Square).

The ceiling is also a SKYSCREEN--a flexible display with a virtual sky and flashy advertisements. "8:55" hangs there.

EXT. MALL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas slows to a stop. The bustling entrance is blocked by a lively vagabond, JACK--50s, unkempt, eccentric but eloquent.

JACK

(to patrons)

Do not be fooled by the shiny objects and soft music. Within these walls lies a den of silent horror, an abattoir for your soul.

Enhance your life. Bleh! Beware the pied-pipers song! Lunica is not a hospital for your consciousness. It is a hospice!

Thomas attempts to sneak in. Jack intercepts, shuts the door.

JACK (CONT'D)

Here's one of them now. Hello--
(reads name tag)
Thomas. Off to spread the Lunica virus?

THOMAS

I'm just trying to make rent.
Excuse me.

Jack gets serious, peers into Thomas' eyes.

JACK

Hold on... You still alive in there?

Thomas notices a burly MALL GUARD approaching. Jack sees him too and backs off.

JACK (CONT'D)

(playful warning)
Don't do it.

Jack gives the finger to the guard and runs away. Thomas studies him before entering.

INT. SHOWROOM EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas rushes inside.

INT. SHOWROOM BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas busts in to find it empty. He checks his smartphone: "9:05". Dan enters. Thomas tries to act natural.

THOMAS

Hey, Dan.

DAN

Hey, Tom.

Dan fills up his water bottle from the cooler.

THOMAS

So... No meeting?

DAN

Yeah. About an hour ago.

Thomas looks perplexed.

DAN

You forgot about the extended hours didn't you? We open at eight now.

Thomas remembers.

DAN

Ben was looking for you.

Dan exits leaving an apprehensive Thomas.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

In a cushy manager's office, anxious Thomas sits across from frozen, reclined Ben. On the DESK between them is a FOLDER. Thomas eyes it until Ben reanimates.

BEN

Sorry about that, Tom. That was the regional director at Vita Labs. She wants us to fit their entire east coast office- over 860 fittings. Happy fucking holiday!

THOMAS

(unenthusiastic)

Wow, that's really great.

Ben's smile turns into a serious pout.

BEN

Tom. We haven't talked in a while.
You look tired.

THOMAS

I had a late night.

BEN

Are you still meeting with that
bible group?

THOMAS

It's not a bible group. We only
meet in a church because Steve is
the caretaker. Radames says hello,
by the way.

BEN

Yeah I've been meaning to give him
a call soon. Look, Tom, I'll get
straight to the point. I'm not
going to try to talk you into
anything. We've been through that.
You know, by law, Lunica can't make
you integrate. But the fact is you
haven't hit your targets in months
and I've got Rosalind from the head
office asking about you every two
weeks.

THOMAS

So, I'm fired then?

BEN

No, Tom. I'm not trying to fire
you. I'm trying to help you.

THOMAS

By giving me an ultimatum?

Ben stares at Thomas then down at the folder.

BEN

You see this desk? I don't need
this desk. I don't need it to hold
a computer or a lamp or a photo of
my wife. It only exists to hold
things like this folder.

THOMAS

What's the folder for?

Ben opens the folder.

BEN

The folder's for you. It has the results from your last physical exam. I didn't want to just email it.

THOMAS

Why? Am I dying?

BEN

No. You're not in the best of health but nothing to be concerned about. It's your declining logistics scores...

Ben turns the folder towards Thomas who snatches it up.

THOMAS

What? You mean those dumb quizzes they make you take?

A report features a photo of Thomas and a simple graph with a jagged line sloping down.

BEN

It happens to a lot of men our age. Your brain isn't getting the exercise it needs. You'll start to forget things. Your mind will play tricks on you. The worst part is you don't realize it's happening.

THOMAS

Those tests happen at five in the morning, Ben. I'm barely awake when they're asking me that stupid shit.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. FITTING ROOM - DAY

Thomas, shirtless and covered with electrodes, runs in place. On his head, what looks like a bedpan buzzes and flashes.

EMA (V.O.)

What is your least favorite color?

Thomas is perplexed.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Thomas tosses the folder back on the desk.

THOMAS

How do you even get that kind of question wrong? Lunica is just doing this to pressure me.

BEN

Nobody is trying to pressure you into anything, Tom. You were over an hour late today.

THOMAS

But I-

BEN

It doesn't matter why. The fact is, if I log this in, there is a good chance Lunica will fire you. Contrary to what you may think, I don't want that to happen.

(after a beat)

Now, you've used up all your vacation and sick days. But you're allowed a temporary leave of absence for medical reasons.

THOMAS

Medical leave? For what?

Ben glances down at the folder.

THOMAS

For getting old?

Ben rises and leads Thomas towards the exit.

BEN

It's just a loophole, Tom. And it's already been done. Besides, like you said, you're tired. You need rest. Think of this as a bonus vacation. Take a trip somewhere tropical. I promise your job will be here when you're ready to come back.

Ben gives Thomas a hard pat on the back.

BEN

Oh, one more thing...

Ben hands Thomas a FLASH DRIVE bearing a NEW EMPLANT LOGO.

BEN (O.S)
I had this specially made for you.

Thomas looks unsure. Ben gently pushes him out of the office.

BEN
Just take a look. No pressure. I'll
see you in a few weeks.

Ben closes the door on an uneasy Thomas.

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, dazed, wanders through the showroom absorbing the activity before exiting through the entrance.

INT. FRESH FOODS ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas pauses to again gaze through the window at his crush.

INT. CHECKOUT - CONTINUOUS

Anabel, bored, watches people use the AUTO-CHECKOUT scanner.

INT. FRESH FOODS ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Too weak, Thomas leaves.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

He sits in the back mindlessly fiddling with the flash drive.

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

In bed, awake and pensive.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. OCEAN (RADAMES' BOAT) - DAY

On a small, rustic fishing boat.

Flustered, nerdy TWEEN THOMAS struggles to reel in a fish. Chubby, uninhibited TWEEN BEN offers him encouragement.

Watching them is Radames, looking more middle-aged.

And MAY--Thomas' mother, tired, protective, perseverant.

MAY

You were right, Radames. He really needed this.

RADAMES

I did the same thing for little Benny when he lost his Dad. I think the they're gonna get along well.

Thomas' pole is yanked from his grip. Ben laughs. Thomas too.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAFFITIED STAIRWELL - DAY

TEEN THOMAS peeks around the corner. Satisfied, he returns to sit beside TEEN BEN, who is lighting a joint.

Ben takes a hit and passes. Thomas hits it. They both cough.

May rounds the corner. The boys freeze. She yanks Thomas up.

INT. GAUDY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Abashed Teen Thomas sits, May paces before him.

MAY

I don't want you hanging around him! You'll end up a druggie loser like your father.

May deflates and hugs her son.

MRS. TALE

You're better than that, Thomas.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE CUBICAL - MORNING

Thomas looks neat but unhappy at his desk. A mail clerk hands him a PINK SLIP. He stares at it. His phone rings. He answers

THOMAS

(dazed)
Hello? Yes?
(Floored)
She's what?

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

A big photo of May beside a coffin. Thomas, still dazed, is comforted by a line of black-clad mourners.

Radames, wiping away tears, pats Thomas and moves on.

Ben, chubbier and less groomed, approaches. Thomas perks up.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Ben and Thomas are several drinks in.

THOMAS

Wait wait wait. You own a Redwire?
The electronics store that sells
batteries and shit?

BEN

Its a franchise. I was working
there and the option came up. I had
some money saved, so I made a bid.

THOMAS

Wow. Good for you, man.

BEN

What about you?

THOMAS

Actually, I was just laid off.

BEN

Fuck. Do you need a job? You could
come work at my store, until you
find something better...

Thomas mulls it over.

CUT TO:

INT. REDWIRE - NIGHT

Slacker Thomas locks the front door of a modest electronics shop (Radio Shack). A sign on the door reads "WE DO NOT CARRY EMPLANT."

Ben is studying sales figures on a LAPTOP.

BEN

We barely made enough to pay for today's electricity.

THOMAS

Did you look over that proposal from Lunica?

Ben plops a spiral-bound document on the counter.

Thomas picks it up and flips through. The cover reads "LUNICA/REDWIRE - AGREEMENT & PLAN OF MERGER"

BEN

They say we won't have to get fit but I'm sure that'll change.

THOMAS

Well I'm definitely not getting one.

BEN

Yeah. No way.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM (UNDER CONSTRUCTION) - NIGHT

Thomas studies the brand new Lunica logo hanging on the wall. Behind him, a fit and groomed Ben hangs his head.

BEN

It's really not bad. I've been losing weight. It really works.

THOMAS

That's not the point. You could have done all that without it.

BEN

Maybe. I don't know. Look, If you don't want to get fit, I'll support you, no matter what Lunica says.

Thomas looks doubtful.

BEN

Don't worry about it, Tom. It's still my store and we're still friends.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - DAY

Thomas eyes the flash drive once more. Finally, he grabs it, plugs it into a laptop, and puts on his clunky VR goggles.

His apartment fades away and he is left floating in black space. The new Emplant logo appears big before him.

INT. ARMAND LUNICA'S OFFICE - DAY

A fancy office loads. Thomas checks out the designer chair he's in and the surprising sight ahead.

Sitting in a throne-like recliner is ARMAND--50s, stylish, aristocratic and charming. He rises and approaches Thomas.

3D Text appears and floats between them: "Armand Lunica President & Founder of Lunica Inc."

ARMAND

When I entered the world of biomedical engineering twenty years ago, my goal was to create something revolutionary, something that would change our very way of life. Since its creation, Emplant has done that and much more.

Armand walks over to a window overlooking the city.

Thomas makes a square with his fingers. We zoom into the frame, closer to Armand and the breathtaking view from atop Lunica City.

ARMAND

We at Lunica envision a world where we are always connected to those we love. A world without sickness or despair, without conflict or confusion. A world in which we can truly live as one. I believe the E5 will bring us one step closer to realizing that dream.

Armand walks back to stand before Thomas.

ARMAND

We want to show you some of the new features of our latest model, the E5. If you are one of the few who have yet to experience the transformative effects of Emplant...

Thomas glares up at him.

ARMAND

I believe the E5 will make you a believer. Now, let's take a look at the future!

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Radames holds a phone to his ear. Behind him, Steve is on a ladder changing a light bulb.

STEVE

Radames, could you--

RADAMES

One second.

INTERCUT:

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It's messier than usual. A cell phone rings. Thomas, lying on the floor, disheveled and scruffy, sits up.

We see his smartphone ringing on the cluttered nightstand. He crawls to it and clumsily knocks over a few items.

Radames smiles when he hears someone pick up.

THOMAS (OVER PHONE)

Hello?

RADAMES

Thomas! You're alive. How are ya?
Is this a good time?

Steve struggles to maintain his balance.

STEVE

Radames?

Radames waves dismissively at Steve.

Thomas wipes the sleep from his face.

RADAMES (OVER PHONE)

Steve says hello. How is your vacation going?

Thomas looks at the mess--a mix of half-empty food containers, cans and bottles, and unfinished projects.

THOMAS
Fine. I've been--

He steps in a puddle of something.

THOMAS
...resting.

RADAMES (OVER PHONE)
Think you'll make it tonight?
Steve's making cookies.

He searches the empty fridge.

THOMAS
I'm not sure.

A partial joint rests in an ashtray. Thomas picks it up, puts it between his lips, and searches for a lighter.

RADAMES (OVER PHONE)
OK, well I hope we see you later.
Otherwise, enjoy the rest of your
vacation.

He attempts to light the joint but realizes he's holding the flash drive. He stares at it.

THOMAS
Hey, Radames, you wouldn't happen
to know where Dr. Wen's new office
is...

Thomas opens the door to a closet. There is only one garment hanging up, a suit. He grabs it and holds it out in front of him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE TO LUNICA CITY - DAY

On a highway over the bay, a city bus passes through a massive open gate that leads to Lunica City.

EXT. LUNICA CITY PROMENADE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, looking cleaner and fresher, enters the sprawling indoor park that is the ground floor of the structure. City buildings hang above like massive stalactites.

EXT. LUNICA CITY RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

In the center of the promenade, a reception desk and metal detectors block the entrance to the elevators. Thomas is not happy to join the long line of people waiting to enter.

The woman in front of him waves hello. MS. FULMER--early 40s, anxious, barely containing her emotions.

MS. FULMER

So much for that 'old dog new tricks' theory.

THOMAS

Excuse me?

MS. FULMER

(Very moody)

Don't worry. I was 38 when I got fit and I picked it up no problem. Of course, I was always very good at learning new things. My teachers used to say that about me. Just do the exercises you'll be fine.

THOMAS

Um. I'm actually just visiting a friend.

MS. FULMER

I'm in for a complete reboot. I forgot my logout password. I mean, I set it up years ago and never once used it. I know it's three memories but I can't remember the third one. Ugh! What an idiot I am!

Thomas is concerned about the attention she is attracting.

THOMAS

Uh...

(points to her head)

What happened to your...

MS. FULMER

Oh. Car accident. I was thinxting with my sister and then all of a sudden- smack!

She claps her hands together loud like two speeding cars.

MS. FULMER

It's not my fault. The guy who hit me was off-satellite. Self-driving.

(MORE)

MS. FULMER (CONT'D)

Can you believe it? How can people be so careless? Anyway, I guess things were sort of rattled a bit because EMA hasn't been working right. I'm just upside down without her! And it's not even my fault!

She stares off in deep despair. Thomas looks puzzled.

MS. FULMER

What happened to yours?

THOMAS

What? Oh. No, I'm not fit.

MS. FULMER

Ugh!

Ms. Fulmer turns away in disgust. Her face changes to awe.

MS. FULMER

Oh my God. It's him!

In the center of the promenade, a single glass elevator shaft lights up as a car descends and opens. Armand Lunica exits with an entourage of ASSISTANTS and GUARDS.

Everyone is in awe of him as he passes, except Thomas.

A humorless LUNICA GUARD--more marine than security--motions for Ms. Fulmer to step forward. She quickly does.

Thomas steals a final look at Armand as he exits.

The guard lets Ms. Fulmer in, motions for Thomas to approach.

LUNICA GUARD

Installation voucher?

THOMAS

I don't have a voucher. I'm a Lunica employee. I'm just visiting a friend.

Thomas produces his EMPLOYEE ID. The guard looks skeptical.

LUNICA GUARD

I'm gonna need you to step over here for a retinal scan.

He motions for Thomas to stand in front of a RETINAL SCANNER. Thomas complies and notices the radio on the guards belt.

THOMAS
You guys use radios?

LUNICA GUARD
It's a standard redundancy.

THOMAS
Like if the Emplants stop working?
Does that happen often?

LUNICA GUARD
Never. Please hold still, sir.

The scanner reads his eye. A red light turns green. Satisfied, the guard gives Thomas back his ID. Thomas steps forward and enters an elevator-like transport car.

INT. LUNICA CITY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Thomas walks down a hotel-like hall scanning the door numbers. He notices Ms. Fulmer exiting a room ahead. He waves but she's preoccupied with a newfound serenity. Offended and surprised, he enters the room she exited.

INT. FITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A young and attractive ASSISTANT escorts Thomas in.

ASSISTANT
Have a seat. Dr. Wen will be right in.

The assistant exits. The fitting chair seems like a hissing cobra, jaw unhinged.

THOMAS
Take a seat?

Thomas cautiously sits and wiggles his butt into the seat.

THOMAS
Kinda comfy...

The door opens. In walks DR. WEN--40s, kind-faced, playful but stern. Thomas sits up.

DR. WEN
Thomas Tale!

They shake hands.

THOMAS

Good to see you. Wow, you look great.

DR. WEN

Thank you. How have you been? Are you still getting together with The Savages?

THOMAS

Yeah. It's just a handful of us left but they're, you know, good.

DR. WEN

I see. So, what brings you here today, Thomas?

THOMAS

Well, I always enjoyed the discussions we had. I was bummed you stopped coming around.

DR. WEN

My apologies. I've just been so busy. My old practice couldn't stay afloat in this economy but now that I'm a Fitter, I hardly get a day off. But I love it. Lunica takes great care of me and I feel like I am really helping people.

THOMAS

Ever seen anything strange?

DR. WEN

Strange? Like what?

THOMAS

Like anything out of the ordinary. Any problems or malfunctions? Anyone's head explode?

DR. WEN

(laughing)

It's a computer. Malfunctions are to be expected. If the hardware fails, we fix it or get a brand new one. And no, there have been no head explosions.

THOMAS

What about the users? Have you noticed any odd behavior?

DR. WEN

I'm not sure I understand.

THOMAS

Well, I met this woman in the lobby who got into a car accident...

DR. WEN

Ms. Fulmer? It was a minor issue, very common after head trauma. The odometer had to be re-calibrated.

THOMAS

Yes, but she seemed really emotional without it.

DR. WEN

Well she's still recovering from an accident. Wouldn't you be upset if you lost your spouse?

THOMAS

Her spouse? She didn't mention that.

DR. WEN

Thomas, the users that come in are a little inconvenienced, unorganized at most. Imagine how you'd feel if your computer crashed, or you lost your phone.

THOMAS

(under his breath)
Or your soul.

DR. WEN

I'm sure you know there have been no reported cases of anyone being harmed by an Emplant. Quite the opposite. It has saved hundreds of thousands of lives since its creation. My life included.

Even as a doctor, you don't really get a clear picture of your health until it is staring you in the face every morning.

Thomas, I know everything there is to know about Emplant--how it's built, how it works. I assure you there is no way it can harm to you.

THOMAS

What about what you don't know?

Dr. Wen studies Thomas for a moment.

DR. WEN

It's been nice seeing you Thomas
but I'm afraid I have clients to
see.

EXT. LUNICA CITY ENTRANCE - DAY

Thomas exits and notes the swirling gray clouds in the sky.
He follows a sign with a SUBWAY SYMBOL and "To City"

EXT. CITY SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas exits the subway station. On the skyscreen, the new
Lunica logo spins above like a massive UFO. He moves on.

INT. FRESH FOODS ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas looks through the window again.

Anabel's unusually busy. The auto-checkout is being serviced.

Thomas notices something at his feet and picks it up.

A TINY DAISY. He studies it and gets an idea.

BEGIN FANTASY:

INT. FRESH FOODS CHECKOUT - CONTINUOUS

Anabel, scanning items, removes an apple from the basket and
observes the flower wrapped around it's stem.

ANABEL

Oh wow, how did that get there?

Thomas, looking uncharacteristically suave, shoots her a
confident smile.

THOMAS

I don't know but...

He takes the apple, nonchalantly removes the flower, and
gently places it behind her ear.

THOMAS
It's yours now.

She smiles and bites her bottom lip.

END FANTASY:

INT. FRESH FOODS ENTRANCE - DAY

Thomas, now determined, heads inside.

INT. FRESH FOODS CHECKOUT - CONTINUOUS

He carefully twists the flower around the apple stem, places it into his basket of healthy food items, and waits his turn.

Ahead of him is MARK--30s, well-dressed, fit, snobby.

ANABEL
I'm sorry, sir. The scanner is being upgraded so I need to scan them individually.

MARK
That's what the enhancement is for. You guys should be prepared. I have to wait for you to scan every item?

ANABEL
Again, sorry about that sir. It will only take a few more seconds.

She quickly scans and bags the items. Mark swipes a credit card and snatches up the bag.

MARK
Your job's going to be obsolete soon anyway.

He walks off. Anabel, disgusted, puts the empty basket aside. Thomas steps up. He struggles to think of something to say.

THOMAS
He must have the new obnoxious prick enhancement.

Anabel, mildly amused, quickly scans and bags the apple without noticing the flower.

Thomas panics and fishes the apple from the bag.

THOMAS
(unconvincing)
Oh, look at that.

Anabel looks at the apple, unaffected.

ANABEL
It's an apple...

Thomas realizes the flower has fallen off.

THOMAS
No, there was a--

He checks the bag, then the floor, picks it up, dusts it off, and shows it to her. She still looks confused.

THOMAS
It's yours.

He attempts to put it behind her ear. She recoils. He places it down, swipes his card, nods, and leaves. She's amused.

INT. MIDTOWN MALL - CONTINUOUS

Thomas storms through the mall.

THOMAS
(to himself)
Stupid, awkward, old, piece of shit
fucking loser.

He's about to take the escalator down when he notices a crowd by the Lunica Showroom entrance. He's drawn to the fray.

INT. SHOWROOM FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

A long line of people wait impatiently by the front door.

A sign on the door reads: "Closed for one hour."

Thomas peeks inside. No one around. He's intrigued.

INT. SHOWROOM EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas feels like he's sneaking in.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A familiar voice draws Thomas to the conference room. He sneaks over and peeks inside.

INT. SHOWROOM CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dim. Ben and the associates are gathered around a long table looking up at something invisible to Thomas.

Circling the group is Armand Lunica.

ARMAND

We mapped a 12% drop in serotonin levels between surveys nine and ten. In just fifteen days the comparative data looked like this...

The associates gasp. Hanging over the table, they see a vibrant 3D MAP stippled with yellow and orange spheres.

Armand taps a few spheres. User data pops up beside each.

ARMAND

Now you can see again, the fractal pattern emerging. And when you add all the endorphin and hormonal data...

Armand sweeps his hand. Blue, green, purple and magenta balls bounce onto the map in distinct geometric patterns.

ARMAND

You can see all the phantom energies at play.

Ben, inspired, applauds. The associates join him.

To Thomas they are reacting to nothing.

The lights turn on. He ducks back into the hall.

A meaty fist grabs him by the shirt and pulls him in. A gun is shoved in his face. Thomas raises his hands.

It's the prick from the checkout, Mark, looking satisfied.

MARK

Gotcha.

Ben runs up behind him.

BEN
It's OK. He works here!

MARK
He hasn't been cleared.
(To Thomas)
What's your RF?

BEN
He's not fit.

ARMAND (O.S.)
Then he must be very good at his
job.

All eyes on Armand. He signals Mark to let go and approaches.

ARMAND
Welcome, Mister...

BEN
Thomas Tale, visual manager.

ARMAND
Ah yes. The showroom looks very
nice, Mr. Tale.

BEN
Mr. Lunica came by to share some of
the interesting user data they've
collected.

ARMAND
Just some curious observations.
Although, you probably can't see
it. Is that why you chose not to
attend the meeting, Mr. Tale?

BEN
Thomas was actually on an emergency
leave of absence.

ARMAND
(to Ben)
What, he cannot speak? Is this his
emergency?

THOMAS
No.

ARMAND
So, are you feeling better, Thomas?

All eyes on Thomas. Ben looks tense, the other employees-amused or apathetic. Thomas musters some courage.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWROOM EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - DAY

A forlorn Thomas exits and walks away. Realizing he forgot grocery bags, he abandons them and continues on more pitiful.

INT. MIDTOWN MALL - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, dazed, rides the escalator down.

INT. FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Still dazed, Thomas sits with a bland meal before him.

Anabel, fast food in hand, plops down across from him.

ANABEL

Hi there.

He's frozen. She chomps her greasy food and happily chews.

ANABEL

(with mouth full)

Sorry, I'm so hungry.

THOMAS

No, it's--you're... fine. Hello.

ANABEL

Mm, you don't mind if I join you, right?

THOMAS

(masking excitement)

No. Please.

ANABEL

Thomas, right? You know, we've worked the same shift forever but I've never seen you down here.

THOMAS

Yeah. I usually don't eat this kind of-- Um, you're Anabel, right?

ANABEL
 (tugs her nametag)
 Yeah but call me Ana. Only my mom
 calls me Anabel.

THOMAS
 Pretty busy today, huh?

ANABEL
 Yeah, normally I'm bored as fuck.
 Nobody pays with cash anymore.

Thomas reflects.

ANABEL
 So what's it like working for
 Lunica, Thomas?

THOMAS
 Oh, you know... good medical plan.

ANABEL
 I bet you guys are super busy, what
 with the E5 and all. Is that why
 you're all dressed up?

THOMAS
 What? Oh. No. I- It's actually my
 day off.

ANABEL
 Well, jeez. What are ya doing
 hanging around here? The benefits
 can't be that good.

He's laughs. She seems flirtatious. He gets nervous.

BEGIN FANTASY:

ANABEL
 (alluring)
 So, Thomas...

They both reach across the table and passionately make out.

END FANTASY:

Flustered, he takes a big sip of his drink.

ANABEL
 (alluring)
 So, Thomas...

He freezes, feeling tested.

ANABEL

Do you think you could... hook me
up with a discount on an E5?

Reality is dumped on Thomas like a bucketful of ice water.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Thomas, at his lowest, walks down the busy street.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

Thomas broods in the back.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. SHOWROOM CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

ARMAND

So, are you feeling better, Thomas?

THOMAS

(after a beat)

Yes, I am. Thank you. I was
actually coming by to talk to Ben
about my fitting date.

Ben relaxes. Armand seems satisfied. Thomas forces a smile.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, still brooding, looks down at the phone in his hands.
On screen, a text addressed to Radames reads:

"not gonna make it tonight. talk soon."

He hits send and is relieved.

EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The bus climbs an on-ramp from dim and congested streets.

It merges seamlessly with a steady stream of traffic on a
highway that cuts through the city. The sky looks angry.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

Thomas notes the churning clouds and drops of rain.

He looks around the bus, settling on a woman falling asleep, nodding her head, close to hitting a bar in front of her.

He leans his head against the glass, still watching, pitying, sympathizing, also falling asleep.

The bus stops short and her head finally slams into the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS' NEW BEDROOM - MORNING

A BREEZE and GENTLE RUSTLING of leaves.

THOMAS--fit, attractive, tanned and groomed, renewed--wakes.

Rested, he sits up. In a white room, a picture window offers a breathtaking view of the sun rising over distant mountains.

He soaks it in.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Good morning, Ema.

EMA (V.O.)
Good morning, Thomas.

Thomas gets out of bed and begins stretching.

The white room dissolves into a classy master bedroom. The picture window, to a hi-rise view of the city and cloudy sky.

EMA (V.O.)
Thomas, would you like to see your
daily vitals?

THOMAS (V.O.)
Go.

Health stats appear before him--mass, vitamin levels, etc.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Recommendations.

EMA (V.O.)
Drink 8oz of M-water.

He exits the bedroom.

INT. THOMAS' NEW LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

His new place is lofty, minimalist, classy.

INT. THOMAS' NEW KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The refrigerator is packed with healthy foods. He grabs a bottle of M-Water.

He drinks. A gauge beside him fills, turns from red to green.

INT. THOMAS' NEW BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, undressed, looking ripped, brushes his teeth. There's a real-time model of his teeth on the mirror. A prompt flashes: "100% clean". He spits into the sink.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas looking slick in his sporty business attire, gets in his POD CAR--a driverless electric vehicle for one.

INT. POD CAR - CONTINUOUS

Thomas sips coffee while studying employee data superimposed on the darkened windshield. Outside is a blur.

A CHIME and a pop-up alert: "Call from Ben".

THOMAS (V.O.)

Answer.

On the windshield is BEN'S AVATAR--a 3D hologram of his face.

BEN'S AVATAR

Thomas, you're headed in early.

THOMAS

I'm meeting with the lighting specialist. I've been analyzing the showroom traffic and picked out a few new spots for ReCog pitches.

BEN'S AVATAR

Sounds great.

THOMAS

I've also taking a look at the sales...

BEN'S AVATAR

So have I. I think it's time to get rid of Jimenez. His numbers have been low.

THOMAS

I was going to suggest the same thing. He isn't volunteering for enhancements. Frankly, I think he's just here for the paycheck.

BEN'S AVATAR

OK let's terminate him ASAP. I've got meetings in LC all morning. Catch you at the gym later?

THOMAS

See you then.

Ben disappears. Thomas smiles and sips his coffee. He swipes away the data and replaces it with a virtual countryside.

EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Under a gray, rainy sky, Thomas' pod, in a river of traffic, flows through a canyon of buildings towards a smoggy city.

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - DAY

A line of a dozen sales associates stand at attention. Some look eager, some nervous. Their uniforms bear the new logo.

THOMAS

Congratulations, You have the most sought-after positions in the industry, working for one best companies in the world.

All eyes are on Thomas standing before them like a commanding officer.

THOMAS

This product sells itself. If you miss your quotas, you will be replaced. There are hundreds of people lined up to take your place.

A associate looks nervous.

THOMAS

You are more than just Lunica associates. You are pioneers. Brave explorers returning from the edge of possibility. You have the answers to the questions everyone is asking. Don't just tell them...
 (dramatic beat)
 Show them!

The associates look properly motivated. Thomas opens the front door and lets a crowd of eager patrons in.

EXT. UPPER SQUARE BISTRO - DAY

Fifteen stories above the street, suspended between skyscrapers, is a manicured park with a classy bistro.

Thomas is sitting at a table alone, eyes closed.

INT. EMPRINT APP - DAY

In a formless black space, Thomas sculpts the face of a statue resembling Anabel. He compares it with a reference floating beside--a selfie of Thomas and Anabel on a ski-lift.

THOMAS

Ema. Where is Ana?

EMA (V.O.)

Ana's status is not available.

A CHIME opens a portal in the black space. The bistro and a smiling waiter can be seen. The black fades.

EXT. UPPER SQUARE - DAY

Thomas nods politely at the waiter beside his table.

WAITER

Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Tale. Would you like a drink or appetizer while you wait?

THOMAS

Let's give her 5 more minutes.

WAITER

Very well, sir.

YELLING from across the park distracts them. A drunk vagrant resembling Jack shouts at pedestrians. He waves at Thomas.

Thomas avoids eye contact as he approaches.

JACK (O.S.)
(drunkenly)
Hey. I know you.

The waiter blocks Jack's path.

WAITER
Sir, you need to leave this area.

JACK (O.S.)
Oh no. They got you too.

Thomas notices the mall guard approaching and perks up.

JACK (O.S.)
It's just me. It's just me.

Jack runs off, chased by the guard. Thomas sips his drink. Someone gasps. He finally looks.

Jack is climbing over the fence at the edge of the park, the guard at his heels. Thomas rises from his seat, concerned.

Jack reaches the other side of the fence and inches along a support beam. The street is 100 ft below.

Thomas pushes through the crowd to get a closer look.

The guard stops pursuing, extends a hand out to Jack.

MALL GUARD
Nobody is going to hurt you. Just
take my hand.

Thomas is at the fence. Jack looks down at the street. He turns to the crowd and locks eyes with Thomas.

It's not Jack. It's Radames!

Thomas grips the fence.

RADAMES
(weeping)
If you ain't dying, you ain't
living.

Radames smiles and jumps. Thomas and others yell out. Radames, looking peaceful, falls down to the street.

The shocked crowd slowly disperses. Thomas, dazed, returns to his seat. The waiter also returns to his side.

WAITER

Apologies for that, Mr. Tale. Can I get you something?

THOMAS

(as if nothing happened)
Yes. I'll have the quinoa salad with avocado, please.

EXT. WINDING COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

We approach two cyclists riding side-by-side on a picturesque mountain road. It's Ben and Thomas.

BEN

When did you last see him?

THOMAS

It's been a while. I didn't even recognize him at first. I thought it was someone else.

They speed swiftly into a sharp turn.

BEN

You alright?

THOMAS

Yeah. I'm fine. Surprised mostly. I thought Radames was stronger than that.

BEN

What did the police say?

THOMAS

He lost his house not too long ago. He must've started drinking again. I should have kept in contact. I got too busy--

BEN

Hey man, it's not your fault. He could have reached out to you if he wanted help.

THOMAS

Yeah. True.

Thomas is distracted by a DOORBELL.

THOMAS

Someone at the door. I'll talk to
you later.

Ben waves goodbye. Thomas stops cycling. The scene dissolves.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS' NEW LIVING ROOM - DAY

Thomas dismounts the stationary bike and answers the door.

He returns with a bouquet of roses.

A card from from Ana reads: "Sorry about lunch. Heard what
happened. Talk soon. <3"

THOMAS

Flowers?

He pulls a rose from the bunch and smells it, unimpressed.

EMA (V.O.)

Thomas, you are injured.

He's been pricked by a thorn.

EMA (V.O.)

It is recommended you disinfect and
bandage the wound.

Blood drips from his finger and hits the floor.

An image of Radames' body hitting the pavement flashes.

Thomas' face twitches. He moves on, nursing his finger.

INT. EMPRINT APP - NIGHT

Once again in the black space, Thomas aggressively kneads the
face of his virtual clay statue. It no longer resembles Ana.

Defeated, he hangs his head and winces.

The black room shatters around him.

INT. THOMAS' NEW LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, in his recliner, rubs his temples. There's a BANDAGE
on his finger.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Time?

EMA (V.O.)
9:58 PM.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Why do I have a headache?

EMA (V.O.)
Diagnosing.
(after a beat)
No problem detected.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Well, I detect one. Run advanced
diagnostic.

EMA (V.O.)
Running Advanced Diagnostic. This
will take a moment.

Thomas sips some M-water. A SPRINGING noise alerts him.

A pop-up message from Ana reads:

"Hey T. Sorry just getting out. Crazy day. Just gonna crash.
Let's reschedule, K? <3"

Thomas looks indifferent.

EMA (V.O.)
Advanced Diagnostic complete.
Vitals normal. No problems
detected.

INT. THOMAS' NEW BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

In bed now, he's falling asleep. Fade to black.

BEGIN NIGHTMARE:

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - MORNING

Unfit Thomas wakes in his old apartment to a BUZZING alarm.
Disappointed but not surprised he slams the snooze button.

INT. THOMAS' BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas, nude, lazily brushes his teeth and stares at his own
reflection--once again pale, soft, and wilted.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

Miserable Thomas is squeezed between vacant-eyed passengers.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sitting across from frozen Ben, Thomas forces a tight smile when he reanimates.

BEN

Sorry 'bout that, Tom. So how was your vacation?

THOMAS

Restful.

BEN

Excited about your fitting date? I put together a sweet package for you, a souped-up E5, just like mine, top of the line. Don't you worry about cost. It's all on me.

THOMAS

(insincere)

Cool. That sounds great. Thanks.

Ben doesn't respond.

THOMAS

(after beat)

Sorry, I really mean that. Thanks for being patient with me.

Ben only stares off. Thomas becomes frustrated.

THOMAS

You know, if you're going to take a call, at least say something.

Thomas goes from irked to concerned.

Ben is clenching his jaw and trembling.

Thomas stands, places a hand on Ben's shoulder.

Ben pants, his watery eyes lock on Thomas'.

THOMAS

Ben, you OK?

A loud CRACK. Thomas' face is sprayed with blood. He jumps back, wipes his eyes and looks again, aghast.

Ben, eyes rolled back, gushing wound on the front of his scalp, convulses in his seat. Whipping, wire-thin tentacles shoot out from the wound. Thomas, horrified, shrinks back.

An egg-sized EMLANT CREATURE--War of the Worlds meets Velociraptor--erupts from the wound like a newborn chick.

Dripping blood and brain matter, it props itself up on its tentacles. A light inside it darts around like an eyeball.

Thomas inches towards the exit. The Emplant studies him.

Ben jumps to his feet, lets out a desperate moan, and takes a few jerky steps forward. Thomas finally fumbles for the door.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Thomas spills out of the office, scrambles down the hall and ducks into the break room.

INT. SHOWROOM BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A handful of chatting sales associates stop and look at him.

THOMAS
(breathless)
Ben is-- His head just...

The associates look unimpressed.

THOMAS
Just call an ambulance! Hurry! He's-

Thomas peeks out into the hall.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

It's empty and quiet. A succession of CRACKS draws his attention back inside.

INT. SHOWROOM BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The associates are now zombies driven by bloody Emplants. They reach out, moaning.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He backs into the wall. Ben is also approaching, reaching.

Thomas runs towards the showroom.

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas busts in and halts. The showroom is riotous. Blood-soaked associates driven by Emplants are strangling patrons.

Thomas backs up against a wall. Dan and a few other associates notice Thomas and move in. He slides to the ground, terrified. The associates close in.

THOMAS
(desperate)
No. Oh God, no! Please!

END NIGHTMARE:

INT. THOMAS' NEW BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fit Thomas wakes with a shout. He sits up in bed, looks around his new bedroom room, and is relieved.

INT. THOMAS' NEW BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He splashes water on his face. Ben's avatar is superimposed on the mirror looking puzzled.

BEN'S AVATAR
A nightmare?

THOMAS
Crazy, right? I haven't had one in a long time. It was so realistic.

BEN'S AVATAR
Did you run a diagnostic?

THOMAS
Ema says I'm fine but I've had a headache all day.

BEN'S AVATAR
A headache? Hmmm. Sounds like your Emplant needs a check-up.

THOMAS
Yeah, sounds like it.

BEN'S AVATAR

Just sit tight and try to relax. If anything, try a reboot or shut her down.

THOMAS

OK. Thanks, Ben.

BEN'S AVATAR

Anytime, buddy. See you soon.

Ben disappears and Thomas exits.

INT. THOMAS' NEW LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas sips a GLASS OF M-WATER and climbs into his recliner

THOMAS

Relax, Thomas. It's just a glitch.

He puts the glass down, takes a breath, and closes his eyes.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Open Emprint.

EMA (V.O.)

Opening.

Everything around Thomas fades to black.

INT. EMPRINT APP - CONTINUOUS

Thomas studies his sculpture which looks nothing like Ana.

THOMAS

Way off. Ema, load photo reference.

EMA (V.O.)

Searching... No reference loaded.

THOMAS

(puzzled)

Ema, browse all photos.

Images surround--Thomas, nature, Ben, Dan, bowling, BBQing, posing with Armand Lunica. No Ana. Thomas is confused.

THOMAS

Ema, show me ski vacation photos.

New images of snow capped mountains and ski-suited figures. He flips until he finds a photo of him on a ski-lift alone.

He's shocked. The black room shatters.

INT. THOMAS' NEW LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas sits up and thinks.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Where is Ana?

EMA (V.O.)
That name is not listed in your
contacts.

THOMAS
Are you kidding? She's my--
(to himself)
Why am I reasoning with a broken
computer?

Thomas rubs his temple.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Initiate system shutdown.

Three rings appear before him.

EMA (V.O.)
Enter shut down code when ready.

He closes his eyes.

A memory of catching a fish flashes.

One of the rings turns into a green dot.

He concentrates.

A flash of May dead on a hospital gurney.

The second ring turns green.

He takes a breath.

An image of a faceless woman flashes.

The third ring flashes red.

He opens his eyes, shocked, and nurses his head again.

EMA (V.O.)
Thomas, I am concerned about your
well-being. Recent trauma may have--

THOMAS
Remote shut down.

EMA (V.O.)
Host cognitive instability
detected. Advanced settings
disabled.

THOMAS
Call Ben!

He grabs his M-water and moves to the tinted window.

He takes a healthy swig. Ben appears on the glass.

BEN'S AVATAR
Thomas, everything alright?

THOMAS
Sorry to bother you again, Ben. I
know it's late. My Emplant is
really acting strange and I can't
shut her down.

BEN'S AVATAR
Wow. That's really odd. OK. Sit
tight. Did you try a reboot?

THOMAS
Settings are blocked. Think you can
get someone at LC to do a remote
shutdown?

BEN'S AVATAR
I think so? Are you're OK, bud?

THOMAS
Yeah, it's just really weird.
(chuckles)
Ema thinks Ana doesn't exist.

BEN'S AVATAR
Who?

Thomas glances over at the counter. The roses are gone.

He drops his glass. It shatters on the floor.

BEN'S AVATAR
Thomas, are you there?

THOMAS
Yeah, sorry. I'm here.

He studies his finger. The bandage is gone.

BEN'S AVATAR

Ok, Tom. I'll order that remote shutdown ASAP. Try and get some rest. We'll get a technician out to you first thing in the morning.

THOMAS

Yeah. Thanks.

Ben disappears. Thomas is left dazed.

EMA (V.O.)

Thomas. The system instability you are experiencing is the result of recent trauma.

THOMAS

Shut up.

EMA (V.O.)

Repressed emotions may be impairing your cognitive ability.

THOMAS

Shut up!

EMA (V.O.)

It is recommended you immediately seek the services of a trained professional psychologist or neur--

THOMAS

SHUT UP!

Silence.

THOMAS

Ema?

He relaxes.

He sweeps up the broken glass, sprays the floor with cleaner.

On his knees, furiously wiping, a stray shard cuts his hand.

THOMAS

Fuck!

He rises, nursing it.

INT. THOMAS' NEW BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the sink. Water runs over his bloody hand exposing the embedded shard. He plucks it out, tosses it down the drain.

He stares at the wound and the blood.

Another flash of Radames' body hitting the ground.

Thomas swells with anguish. He doubles over the sink, crying.

THOMAS
(sobbing)
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Drops of blood pepper the sink. He wipes his nose, rises to look at his reflection. His face is flushed, head shaking.

Sobs turn to yowls. A CRACKING inspires a scream. Blood splatters on the mirror, pours into the sink.

He screams as the Emplant creature hatches from his skull.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. WRECKED CITY BUS - DAY

Light filters through a shattered window.

Unfit Thomas wakes up in a bus turned sideways.

He nurses his blood-stained head and notes the safety glass stuck to his bloody hand.

Looking around, he spies the sleepy woman crushed under a seat and several more bodies scattered about. The driver is impaled to his seat. Thomas, sickened, rises.

EXT. DEVASTATED CITY HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Thomas climbs from a broken window and stands atop the bus.

The road is filled with smoking wreckage. Plumes of black smoke rise up from various locations up to the horizon.

The sky is fiery and surreal. Thomas is floored by it all.

A wave of nausea makes him double over and vomit.

His smartphone is dead. He tucks it away and walks along the highway, snaking around the wrecks, searching for life.

THOMAS

Hello!?

Shots of twisted metal and body parts. He quickens his pace.

THOMAS

Can anyone hear me!? Hello!?

Out of gas, he stops and catches his breath.

A nearby car isn't heavily damaged. The driver looks asleep and unscathed. He approaches, shakes her gently.

THOMAS

Hey.

She doesn't wake. He checks her pulse.

THOMAS

Alive. What is...

(realizing)

Wait a second. Hold on. This has to be a dream. I'm still dreaming.

Inspired, he perks up with new resolve.

THOMAS

(laughs)

It's a dream!

Thomas lightly slaps his cheek a couple of times.

THOMAS

Come on, wake up. Wake up!

He gets grounded, smacks himself hard, almost topples over.

THOMAS

Ow.

JOSH (O.S.)

Why are you doing that?

On the opposite road is JOSH--8, stoic, on the spectrum.

THOMAS

Um... Hi there. Are you OK?

He doesn't answer. Thomas moves to the edge of the road. A wide gap separates them.

THOMAS
Where's your mom?

Josh points to a wrecked car with a shattered windshield.

Thomas, feeling brave, climbs over the railing. The street is a dozen stories below. Josh eyes him suspiciously.

JOSH
What are you doing now?

THOMAS
I'm going to come over to your side to help you.

JOSH
Help me do what?

THOMAS
I don't know. To protect you.

JOSH
But you're a stranger and you were just hitting yourself.

THOMAS
I was making sure-- OK. My name is Thomas. What's yours?

JOSH
Josh.

THOMAS
OK, Josh. Now we're friends. Step back. I'm going to jump across.

JOSH
You're not going to make it.

THOMAS
Yes I will.

JOSH
It's too wide.

THOMAS
I can make it.

Thomas gets ready. The gap seems wider now. He reconsiders.

THOMAS
Is your Dad around?

CUT TO:

EXT. DEVASTATED CITY HIGHWAY - DUSK

Thomas dabs his head wound while walking down the highway. Across the gap, Josh, skipping atop cars, keeps pace.

JOSH
How come all the cars crashed?

THOMAS
The storm must have knocked out the satellite system.

JOSH
Yeah but my Dad said the cars on the highway can't crash.

THOMAS
Where does your dad work, Josh?

JOSH
At the mall.

THOMAS
No kidding? I work at the mall too.

JOSH
Mom said Dad has to work there because he can't get his shit together.

Thomas reflects.

JOSH
Do I have to live with him now?
It's OK because he has all the game systems. But his house smells like skunks. Ever smell a skunk? There are skunks near my grandparents house. They live upstate on an island and have an apple orchard. Do you like apples?

Thomas and Josh take the off ramp down to the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Thomas and Josh walk down the sidewalk. Bodies are scattered about. LOOTERS pick their pockets and raid shops. An old woman in a hospital gown passes with her IV stand in tow.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

A crowd of shaken survivors are gathered around barrel fires.

NATE--20s, heroic--is in the center of the crowd speaking to them via the human microphone.

NATE
Until the blackout is over...

CROWD
Until the blackout is over...

NATE
We need to check the bodies and
find out who is...

CROWD
We need to check the bodies and
find out who is...

NATE
Who is dead and who is still... you
know

CROWD
Who is dead and who is still... you
know...

Someone speaks to Thomas.

JACK (O.S.)
Don't waste your time.

Jack is nearby, reposed on the hood of a car, sketching in a pocket NOTEBOOK.

JACK
They have no idea what's going on.

THOMAS
Do you?

JACK
The inevitable. The bowing crutch
has broken. They outsourced their
cognition and now their social
economy is bankrupt.

THOMAS
OK...

JACK
Sun's setting. You might want to
keep an eye on the lad.

Thomas turns to find Josh gone. He scans the crowd and spies him entering the mall. Thomas pursues while Jack watches.

INT. MIDTOWN MALL - CONTINUOUS

More looting and general mild chaos. Everywhere people are arguing. Thomas weaves through it, searching.

An elderly SHOP OWNER armed with a shotgun defends her business. Thomas sees Josh entering a shop called SHOE DEPOT.

INT. SHOE DEPOT - CONTINUOUS

Looters exit as Thomas enters. He searches the isles until he finds Josh kneeling beside a sales clerk, PAUL--Josh's dad.

THOMAS
Hey, buddy.

JOSH
He's asleep.

Uncomfortable silence.

THOMAS
I...

JOSH
I'm hungry.

INT. FRESH FOODS (LOOTED) - CONTINUOUS

Thomas and Josh enter. There's no one at the checkout.

The shelves are almost bare, the isles littered with bodies.

Josh munches on animal crackers as Thomas leads him to the back of the store, to a door marked "Employees Only".

JOSH
I don't think we're supposed to go
in there.

THOMAS
It's OK. I know someone who works
here.

Thomas slowly opens the door... and is hit in the stomach.

Winded, he falls to his knees. Josh winces.

Anabel emerges armed with the mop. She relaxes when she recognizes Thomas, helps him up.

ANABEL

Oh my God, Thomas! I'm so sorry! I thought you were another looter!

THOMAS

(winded)

It's OK. We kinda are.

Josh offers Anabel back the stolen box of crackers. She misunderstands and takes a cracker.

ANABEL

Is this... your son?

THOMAS

No.

JOSH

No.

THOMAS

Ana, this is Josh. I've been keeping him company until his parents...

ANABEL

Are they...

JOSH

Asleep.

ANABEL

What is going on, Thomas?

THOMAS

I don't know. There was some kind of storm. It caused a blackout.

ANABEL

But then why is my phone dead?

This piques Thomas' interest. He looks at his own dead phone.

ANABEL

And what happened to all these people?

On a hunch, Thomas checks the heads of the fallen bodies.

ANABEL
What are you doing?

THOMAS
Checking them for a fitting scar.
Every user has one.

He locates the crescent-shaped scar on the victim's scalp.

THOMAS
They're all fit.

ANABEL
So?

THOMAS
I think the storm affected our
technology. It knocked out the
power and satellites, drained all
the batteries... And I think it put
everyone with an Emplant into a
coma.

Ana and Josh soak it in.

ANABEL
What about you? You're fine.

THOMAS
I don't have an Emplant.

Anabel is confused. Josh retrieves and munches another cracker.

ANABEL
Fuck.

She grabs a bottle from a wine rack, opens it, and takes a healthy swig.

THOMAS
It's just a theory. I'm sure
whatever's happening is only
temporary. Someone has to be
working on a solution.

ANABEL
Who? Anyone who's anyone has an
Emplant.

Thomas reflects.

ANABEL
So, what, we just wait?

Thomas nods. A RUSTLING alerts everyone's attention.
Nearby, looters fight over a box of chocolate bars.

ANABEL
How about we wait outside?

THOMAS
It's getting dark. It's not safe
out there.

ANABEL
It's not safe *in here*. I feel like
I'm hanging out by the cheese in a
rat trap. We need to go where
there's nothing anyone wants to
steal.

Thomas pulls keys from his jacket pocket. Ana shoots him a
knowing look. Josh, curious, eats another cracker.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWROOM EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The trio, with groceries, hustle in.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anabel, with a cup of M-Water, tip-toes around the bodies of
fallen associates before entering the conference room.

INT. SHOWROOM CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas lights the last of many candles. Anabel enters and
looks around. Packing blankets on the table serve as beds.

ANABEL
(sarcastic)
Nice.

Thomas puts a finger to his lips and points to Josh asleep.

ANABEL
(quieter)
Oops. Sorry.

She takes a seat and sips the M-water.

THOMAS
You sure you want to drink that?

ANABEL

Why?

THOMAS

Do you know what's in that?

She looks at the cup, curious.

ANABEL

Electrolytes?

THOMAS

Not the liquid, the other stuff.

ANABEL

The bubbles?

THOMAS

M-Water is not carbonated.

(after a beat)

They're nanomachines. They help collect data for the Emplant.

She looks at the cup, disgusted.

THOMAS

Don't worry. They'll just pass through your system in a few hours.

ANABEL

So that's why it's so expensive?

THOMAS

Yeah. Why did you think?

ANABEL

I thought it was just chic.

She puts the cup aside and inspects the makeshift beds.

ANABEL

Do you really think we'll be here all night?

THOMAS

Until we can get a better idea of what's happening, I think the safest bet is to stay here and wait for the power to come back on.

ANABEL

What if it doesn't come back on?

THOMAS
 (after considering)
 Well, then at least we'll have the
 day off tomorrow.

He opens a bottle of wine. She smiles.

LATER

They're lying on the beds, drinking and eating crackers.

ANABEL
 (buzzed)
 ...then I sang in a punk band for a
 while. It was fun but, ugh,
 musicians are such assholes. I also
 tried voice-acting for a bit. That
 was cool but super competitive. Oh!
 Check this out...

Thomas prepares to be impressed.

ANABEL
 (uncanny Ema impression)
 Enhance your life with Emplant
 version 5.0.

He's legitimately impressed.

THOMAS
 That's a great Ema impression.

ANABEL
 (as EMA)
 Hello, Thomas, what would you like
 to do today?

THOMAS
 Ok, you're freaking me out now.

She laughs and takes a swig of wine. Thomas admires her. She notices. Embarrassed, he lies down. She studies him.

ANABEL
 Thomas, why didn't you get one?

THOMAS
 An Emplant? I don't know. I just...
 (acknowledging)
 I was afraid.

ANABEL
 That this would happen?

THOMAS

I never imagined something like this could happen. Honestly, I think I just hated how popular it had become. I hated how... I needed it to fit in, to be good enough.

ANABEL

I know what you mean. I think that's why I waited so long. Speaking of which, I won't be needing that discount.

THOMAS

I figured as much.

ANABEL

I'm glad we finally talked. I was wondering how many more packs of gum it would take before you said something.

THOMAS

I don't even like gum.

They both laugh and shush themselves for Josh.

LATER

The the candles are half-melted and they are asleep.

The lights flicker on.

Thomas wakes and sits up. Before he can get excited, the lights go out, disappointing him.

A faint distant BANG.

Anabel, sleepy-faced, sits up.

ANABEL

(whispering)

What was that?

The lights flicker on again and stay on.

ANABEL

The power's back on! Where's Josh?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Thomas, holding a candle, peeks his head out of the conference room. The hall is empty. He and Anabel tiptoe out.

ANABEL

Where did all the bodies go?

The lights flicker out. Another bang from their left.

THOMAS

(calling out)

Josh?

Anabel follows Thomas as they creep down the hallway towards Ben's office. Thomas turns the knob.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark. Someone is at the desk. Thomas is straining to comprehend when the lights flicker back on.

It's Ben, face-down in a splatter of blood. He sits up, nose busted and bloody, and mumbles like a drunk fighting sleep.

THOMAS

Ben? Are you OK?

They creep closer. Ben finally notices Thomas.

BEN

(casual)

Oh hey, Tom.

The lights flicker out again. Ben's head slams down again, flicking blood at Anabel. She screams and heads for the exit.

Thomas lifts Ben up and reclines him back in his chair.

He looks gone. Thomas backs away.

THOMAS

I'm sorry, Ben.

INT. SHOWROOM HALLWAY - NIGHT

The lights flicker again. Anabel is marching down the hallway, appalled by the sprinkles of blood on her shirt, when Thomas catches up to her.

THOMAS

Ana, wait.

ANABEL

Nope.

THOMAS

Hold on-

ANABEL

The power's back on, Thomas. I'm getting out of here.

THOMAS

Wait, it might not be safe just yet. Something weird is going on.

ANABEL

No fucking duh!

(points to Ben's office)

I don't know what the hell is going on with that dude but, at this point, I really don't care. I just want to go home and take a hot bath before things get--

INT. LUNICA SHOWROOM - NIGHT

Thomas and Anabel enter and are immediately awestruck.

ANABEL

...really weird.

They come up behind Josh who is already transfixed.

The showroom is alive with activity like any other day. Fit users are up and calmly interacting with associates.

Upon closer inspection, they all seem brutish and child-like.

Dan is nearby, daydreaming. Emily approaches him.

EMILY

Hi.

DAN

(proud)

Hey. You like it, right?

EMILY

(shy, euphoric)

Yes. I like the pictures.

Thomas and Anabel exchange concerned looks.

An associate named ROGER--20s, attractive--grabs Emily by the arm and pulls her away from Dan.

ROGER
Buy things from me!

Dan grabs Emily's other arm and pulls her back.

DAN
Not yours!

ROGER
(pointing to Dan)
You! Too much!

USERS look on and comment.

BOOKISH USER
That's not very fair.

MEATHEAD USER
Kill him!

Dan and Roger begin a tug-of-war with Emily. She yelps. A cheering and jeering crowd forms around them.

Thomas, Anabel, and Josh huddle together.

A drooling man hugs a kiosk, defending it. The bookish patron rants and raves. The meathead head butts a screen.

Emily screams.

THOMAS
Let her go!

Roger and Dan stop and look at Thomas. The room is silent for a beat. Dan finally laughs. The others join in.

The frenzy and tug-of-war resume. Roger and Dan tug Emily's arms with all their strength.

Thomas and Ana look away. A hideous TEARING is accompanied by Emily's SCREAM. Josh looks on, wide-eyed, impressed.

Roger falls back, Emily's freshly severed arm in his grasp. Dan pulls Emily close, howls and beats his chest.

She's dazed and staggering. Blood pours from her shoulder.

The crowd slowly disperse. Dan goes back to his sales pitch.

DAN
You wanna buy more things?

Emily nods and collapses. Dan shrugs it off.

Shocked Thomas, Anabel, and Josh look at each other.

INT. SHOWROOM FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The trio hastily exit the showroom.

INT. MIDTOWN MALL - CONTINUOUS

The mall is bustling with the same behavior.

Two users with head wounds smile and lick ice cream cones. A user in their underwear is screaming at all who pass. Another looks like they are having a bad trip.

The trio creep like tourists through a bad neighborhood.

ANABEL

(whispering)

What the fuck? What the fuck? What
the fuck?

THOMAS

Shhh. Just keep calm.

They take the escalator down. Everywhere are voices of people with no inner monologue in various states of distress.

A naked man taunts Anabel. She quickens her pace. Josh looks behind them, searching.

ANABEL

Josh, sweetie, we have to go.

JOSH

But, my Dad...

They hesitate.

A shot rings out, The elderly store-owner with the shotgun is executing encroaching users.

Thomas, Josh and Anabel finally run to the exit.

EXT. DESTROYED CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

They screech to a stop. Chaos surrounds. Fires and SCREAMS.

The skyscreen glitches over a bloody battle. Users tear non-users apart. Some fight back, others flee.

Thomas and Anabel hesitate. Josh runs away.

JOSH

Dad!

Paul is in the crowd searching when he recognizes Josh.

Thomas and Anabel catch up. Paul notices Anabel and becomes enraged. He pushes Josh aside, lunges at her. Thomas defends.

A POLICE OFFICER intercepts, smashing Paul's face with a club

POLICE OFFICER

Stop or I'll kill you!

The officer chases Paul away.

Josh, weepy, watches his father abandon him.

Thomas picks him up.

THOMAS

Come on, buddy. We gotta get out of here.

The trio try to flee but are surrounded by fighting crowds.

A BICYCLE BELL attracts their attention.

Jack, armed with a bat, rides by on a vintage bicycle.

JACK

Are you kids ready to get out of here?

He knocks an attacking user out of the way. Anabel follows him with the other two in tow.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The trio chase Jack as he zigzags around the chaos, knocking violent users, ringing his bell, and singing "My Way".

JACK

(singing)

For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself, then he has naught!

We pass more drunken users engaged in acts of violence, barbarism and/or depravity. A lone IV stand.

Thomas and Anabel focus on Jack but Josh notices everything.

JACK
Excuse me! Coming through!
(singing)
The record shows. I took the blows
and did it my way!

The trio follow Jack into a dark alley.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

They come to a halt in the center of a concrete courtyard.
Jack's bicycle is lying on the ground.

ANABEL
Where did he go?

JACK (O.S.)
Down here.

Jack's head pokes out of a nearby manhole. Josh heads for it.
Thomas and Anabel reluctantly follow.

INT. SEWER CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Thomas slides the manhole cover into place and listens. When
the shouts and footsteps grow faint, he descends.

An empty steamy corridor awaits. He inches forward.

THOMAS
(whispering)
Ana?... Josh?

Thomas turns a corner and comes up behind them.

INT. JACK'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They look around the space--an eccentric hovel, cluttered
with electronics, books, and oddities. Jack is gathering some
of the items and stuffing them into his pockets.

JOSH
This is where you live?

JACK
Well, it's not much to look at and
my roommates are literally vermin
but I do get free wifi, so...

He rummages through a bin filled with tools.

ANABEL
(whispering to Thomas)
You know this guy?

THOMAS
(whispering)
No.

JACK
Oh, Thomas. That hurts my feelings.

THOMAS
Why did you bring us here?

JACK
I just had to get... a little
something.

Jack happily shows them a large pair of bolt cutters. The trio recede in fear. Jack rolls his eyes.

JACK
You think I brought you here to
bludgeon you to death?

He shoos them out. Confused, they oblige and turn the corner.

Jack quickly types something on his computer keyboard. There is a CLICK and a HISS. He soaks in the place before exiting.

INT. SEWER CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Jack turns the corner to join the others. A small explosion destroys his room. The trio flinch but Jack moves on unfazed.

JACK
Off we go!

They follow him further down the corridors. At every turn he takes a second to get his bearings.

JOSH
You blew up your house.

JACK
Indeed. It was a fair hovel but the
neighborhood has gone to shit.

ANABEL
Thanks for saving us back there...
um--

Jack stops in his tracks.

JACK

Oh, I'm sorry. One little cataclysm
and all my manners go out the
window. Please, call me Jack.

ANABEL

Jack. I'm Ana and this is Josh.

JOSH

(waves)
Hello.

JACK

(polite bow)
Pleasure to meet you, lady and
squire.

They continue on. Jack searches for an exit.

THOMAS

Where are you taking us?

JACK

We need to stay mobile.

Jack finally finds and climbs a ladder.

EXT. BACKLOT - CONTINUOUS

A manhole cover lifts. Jack peeks out. The coast is clear, he
climbs out followed by Anabel, Josh and Thomas.

They sneak across the dark silent lot. Jack approaches a rack
full of locked-up bicycles and inspects the locks.

JACK

(To Anabel)
Purple or Green?

Anabel thinks it over.

THOMAS

We're going to steal these bikes?

JACK

I imagine the owners will have far
more pressing matters to concern
themselves with.

ANABEL

Green.

JOSH
Do I get a bike too?

JACK
Of course, lad. Let's see if they
have one your size.
(observing the rack)
Ah yes. Oh, 18 speeds! Very nice.

THOMAS
And where are we going to go?

JACK
Well the riverside is lovely this
time of year but the floor is open
to suggestions, Thomas.

ANABEL
We could go to my place downtown.

JACK
We should really try to get out of
the city.

JOSH
There are people coming.

Josh points to the end of the alley. A gang of users are shouting and jumping like chimp hooligans.

Thomas, suddenly motivated, gets on a bike.

THOMAS
I know where to go. Follow me.

The group ride away and exit the lot at the other end.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The quartet ride across the pedestrian walkway.

Thomas looks down-river, at Lunica City glowing on the horizon. Jack speeds up to match his pace.

JACK
(nods at Lunica City)
Lights are on. Someone's home.

THOMAS
You think they're like the others?

JACK

Maybe. But if I wanted to find any answers, that's where I would look first.

Jack speeds up. Thomas looks unsure. Anabel catches up.

ANABEL

This is more exercise than I've had in like six months.

(nods to the sky)

Have you noticed the sky?

A multi-colored aurora (Northern Lights) shimmers above.

THOMAS

Yeah. There's someone where we're headed who might be able to explain what that is.

They continue riding across the bridge.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Thomas rings the doorbell. Steve, answers, armed with a SWORD. He relaxes when he recognizes Thomas.

STEVE

(kindly)

Oh hey, Thomas.

He lets them in.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The church is full of refugees. Whole families are asleep on the pews. Some pray at the altar. There are many orphaned children.

STEVE

Sorry about the sword. We had a few, uh, violent visitors.

RADAMES (O.S)

Thomas!

Radames is nearby, handing bottles of water to some shell-shocked refugees. He scampers over. Thomas hugs him.

THOMAS

Good to see you, old friend.

Jack clears his throat.

THOMAS

Oh. Radames, Steve, this is Josh, Ana and Jack. We met in the city after the...

STEVE

Major coronal mass ejection. Solar flare.

ANABEL

That's what made the sky all weird?

STEVE

Yep. That's cosmic radiation seeping into a hole in our atmosphere.

ANABEL

Gnarly.

RADAMES

(whispers to Thomas)
That checkout girl?

Thomas shushes him.

THOMAS

Have you heard from Darrell or Bernice?

Steve shakes his head.

An uncomfortable silence.

RADAMES

(jovial)
Who wants hot chocolate?

Josh and Ana immediately raise their hands. Jack too.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The group sit around sipping hot chocolate.

THOMAS

The mall was overrun. We barely got out of there alive.

ANABEL

They were like animals. Their eyes... It's as if all the humanity was gone.

RADAMES

And this is only happening to people with Emplants?

THOMAS

First they were comatose. Then when the power came back on, they were like this, like...

JOSH

Like babies.

The bell rings. Steve gets up and grabs his sword.

STEVE

I'll get it.

ANABEL

I'm surprised so many people are coming here.

JACK

Historically, the town church was a safe refuge from war. I suppose you can thank Lunica for renewing the peoples' faith in God.

THOMAS

Why do you hate Lunica so much?

JACK

Beacause I used to work for the company, back in the early days. I was a computer scientist on the development team. But I left before the first model was introduced.

ANABEL

So do you have any idea what happened?

JACK

Well, it's not just because of a solar flare. I can tell you that.

Darrell busts in carrying an OLD TV. Steve follows.

DARRELL
They're storming the gates!

Darrell plugs in the TV and extends it's rabbit ear antennae.

RADAMES
Where the heck you'd find that?
That things older than me.

STEVE
I think it came with the building.

DARRELL
It still works.

Darrell notices Thomas and nods.

DARRELL
(looks at the others)
Who are these people?

THOMAS
Ana. Josh. Jack. This is Darrell.

JOSH
Is that a computer?

DARRELL
Nah, man. It's a TV. The Unbroken
Society has been broadcasting UHF.

STATIC as Darrell turns the dial. The group gather around.

DARRELL
This is the channel.

ANABEL
Excuse me. What gates are being
stormed?

DARRELL
The gates to Lunica City. They want
a war, we're giving them war.

RADAMES
Who?

DARRELL
The elite. Who do you think is
behind this?

On screen, shaky footage from within a marching crowd.

DARRELL
OK, here we go.

Darrell turns the sound up. Amid static, a CROWD chants.

CROWD
Whose city? Our city! Whose world?
Our world!

INTERCUT:

EXT. BRIDGE TO LUNICA CITY - NIGHT

Dozens of people march across the highway. At the end of the road, a massive gate bars the entrance to Lunica City.

CROWD
Whose city? Our city! Whose world?
Our world!

Among them, a teen CAMERAMAN focuses on nervous teen WILLIAM.

WILLIAM
Are we live?

CAMERAMAN
Yeah, we're live. We're live.

In the classroom, all eyes are glued to the screen.

RADAMES
Jesus. They're just kids.

William leads the cameraman through the crowd.

WILLIAM
OK. My name is William. If there's anyone still watching-- We're not sure what happened but, as of now, everyone is basically saying that there was, like, a power surge. And now everyone with an Emplant is like... well, you know, they're basically...

CAMERAMAN
They're zombies-

WILLIAM
They're messed up. So, we've got a pretty big group of nonusers here. I would say, uh, a couple hundred?

CAMERAMAN

Like three thousand.

WILLIAM

A bunch of us marched here straight from the power station. Now we're at Lunica City trying to, uh, you know, to figure out what's going on--what they're doing to fix the problem.

RADAMES

The Luddites got the power back on, how bout that.

JACK

They've got the right idea.

DARRELL

Where are the guns? They should be armed.

STEVE

Is that... Bernice?

Bernice is at the head of the march, arms locked with fellow hippies, some holding up signs and pics of their CULT LEADER.

RADAMES

Good gravy. It is her!

Darrell is doubly riveted.

JOSH

Who's Bernice?

Bernice watches as two fellow protesters inspect the empty guard booth. They look back at the crowd and shrug.

A moment of confusion. The gate begins to shift.

WILLIAM

It's opening! The gate is opening!

A unit of heavily-armed Lunica guards in riot gear emerge.

WILLIAM

Guards are coming out. They have semi-automatic rifles.

A guard barks something unintelligible into a megaphone.

WILLIAM

OK, they're saying something. Can't make it out.

CAMERAMAN

They're telling us to leave. Fuck you, pigs!

The guards point their rifles at the crowd. Some protesters run away. Bernice and others sit and begin to meditate.

JOSH

Are they gonna shoot those people?

ANABEL

No. They wouldn't do that.
(to Thomas)
Would they?

Thomas doesn't answer. Anabel attempts to cover Josh's eyes but he peeks out from between her fingers.

William leads the camera towards the guards. He raises his hands as he approaches them.

WILLIAM

We are unarmed and peaceful. We just want to talk. Please--

A guard hits William in the head with his rifle.

Gasps and protests from the crowd. The guards press forward.

William, nursing a head wound, retreats with the cameraman.

Bernice sees the guards approaching and breathes deeply.

The guards fire. William and the cameraman are gunned down.

The camera falls. Distorted SCREAMS & GUNFIRE cut to static.

The room is silent for a moment.

DARRELL

Those mother Fuckers!

ANABEL

(weeping)
How could they do that?

THOMAS

Maybe they weren't in control.

DARRELL

Of course not! They're puppets!

STEVE

Darrell, please calm down.

DARRELL

(livid)

Fuck calm! I've been calm all my life! I was calm and let shit like this happen! I used to criticize people like Bernice. But in the end, she had the balls to bring it to Lunica. She's fucking dead now and I'm hiding in a fucking church!

JACK

He's right. We should go there.

ANABEL

Are you kidding? Why would we want to go *there*?

THOMAS

We don't know what's going on inside Lunica City.

DARRELL

Isn't it obvious, Thomas. Lunica and his cronies are over there drinking champagne and laughing at us. This is a culling, y'all! They been planning this shit for decades. Working Joe's are out there killing each other while the elite are locked up safe in the LC penthouse.

RADAMES

Alright, alright. If that's true, what would be the point of going down there?

JACK

The Lunica main servers are there. If I can access them I might be able to figure out a solution. You won't find another Emplant scientist without an Emplant...

They look dubious.

JACK

(to Darrell)

We didn't see everything that happened on that bridge. Those guards may have detained a few of the protesters. Your friend may still be alive.

DARRELL

Yeah. OK. OK. So how do we get in?

ANABEL

I can't believe you are actually considering going down there after what we just saw.

DARRELL

We have to do something! For Bernice.

JACK

The docks! We approach from the rear, on water. Security will be minimal. If we leave now we can get there before sunrise.

ANABEL

Are you guys nuts? They have guns.

The sound of Darrell cocking a 9mm attracts everyone's attention. He tucks it into his belt.

DARRELL

So do we.

STEVE

I think we need to slow down a bit and really think about-

DARRELL

You don't understand, Steve. Bernice and I...

(after a beat)

I'm going down there now, with or without ya'll.

JACK

I'll go with you, mate.

They head for the exit.

THOMAS

Wait. Take my employee ID. It might help you get in.

Thomas offers his ID.

JACK

A retinal scan would be more useful.

Thomas considers it. He looks at Anabel.

ANABEL

Oh no, you're not thinking of going with them are you?

JACK

Frankly, just your eye will do.

ANABEL

This is crazy. Are you just gonna swim up to Lunica City?

DARRELL

We'll get a boat.

ANABEL

Where are you going to find a boat?

RADAMES

I've got a boat.

All look at Radames.

RADAMES

Marina's just a few blocks from here...

ANABEL

OK. What about the battery? It's probably drained, right?

THOMAS

She's right.

STEVE

For the record, I agree with her 100%. Personally, I'm not leaving the church. Someone needs to stay with these people.

But, hypothetically, if you did need to get the boat started... There's a portable battery charging upstairs...

Anabel looks betrayed. They all consider for a few beats.

JOSH
Can I drive the boat?

Anabel shakes her head.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY RIVER - NIGHT

Under a Northern Lights sky, Radames' fishing boat travels downriver towards the Lunica pyramid.

Darrell looks pensive. Jack sketches in his book. Radames shows Josh how to drive. At the stern are Thomas and Anabel.

ANABEL
(studying the sky)
I know this is because of the storm
and it's probably bad but it looks
pretty as fuck.

Thomas agrees.

ANABEL (CONT'D)
What are we doing, Thomas?

THOMAS
(considers)
If what you said is true, that
anyone who's anyone has an Emplant,
then it's up to nobodies like us to
save the day. It's what Bernice
would have done.

ANABEL
You think Jack is who he says he
is?

THOMAS
I don't know. We trusted him this
far. If he is telling the truth, he
might be the only person who can
help the users.

ANABEL
And if they can't be helped? If the
world is like this forever...

THOMAS
(considers it)
Well... Josh's grandparents live on
an island with apple orchards...
(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I suppose we could bring him there
and, I don't know, start over?

ANABEL

(considers it)

Maybe this is the PTSD talking, but
that doesn't sound half bad.

She leans her head on his shoulder and they look at the sky.

EXT. LUNICA CITY PIERS - NIGHT

The boat quietly approaches an automated shipping port.

DARRELL

(whispering)

There are cameras everywhere.

JACK

If anyone was watching, they would
have responded by now.

The boat pulls up to a dark corner of the dock. Jack and
Darrell jump out and scope the area from behind a container.

In the open freight entrance not far away, a guard is asleep
at his post. Beyond him, a retinal scanner and more doors.

JACK (CONT'D)

Thomas, we'll need your eye. We
should be able to slip into the
maintenance system from there.

RADAMES

Long way to the top.

THOMAS

(to Darrell)

Are you sure about this?

Darrell pulls the gun from his belt and grounds himself.

DARRELL

Yeah. Yeah. We got this.

He moves on. Jack bows to all and follows.

JACK

Ravi d'avoir fait ta connaissance!
Thanks for the ride!

Thomas begins to follow but Josh tugs his hand.

JOSH
Be very careful.

Thomas gives him a smile and a hug.

Anabel leans over and kisses Thomas on the lips, to which Radames gives a thumbs up. She looks him in the eyes.

ANABEL
You heard the kid.

He dutifully nods and runs to catch up with Jack and Darrell.

INT. LUNICA CITY (REAR ENTRANCE) - CONTINUOUS

The trio enter a loading bay and slow to a sneak.

Ahead, a security checkpoint leads to a set of doors marked "PROMENADE". The apish guard is asleep in his recliner.

As they sneak by, a STATIC BURP from a radio wakes the guard.

The trio freeze. The guard leaps to his feet.

THOMAS
Whoa! Whoa! I work for Lunica! I'm here to... I'm visiting a friend!

He offers his ID. The guard just stares at it, drooling.

DARRELL
This is pointless.

Darrell draws his gun, aims it at the guard.

DARRELL (CONT'D)
Open the fucking door, you Nazi!

The guard lunges at Darrell, tackles him to the ground. Jack and Thomas pull the guard off and throw him aside.

JACK
(to Darrell)
Shoot him!

Darrell hesitates. The guard pounces on Jack, mounts and strangles him.

JACK (CONT'D)
(choking)
Shoot him!!

Thomas grabs the gun, knocks the guard out, and returns it to stunned Darrell's hand.

Jack rises, nurses his throat, and snatches the gun away.

JACK (CONT'D)
How about you let me handle the
guards?

Darrell shyly nods and collects himself.

Thomas retrieves his ID and uses the retinal scanner.

The doors swing open, leading to a winding corridor.

JACK (CONT'D)
Thanks for seeing us in, Thomas.
You should get back to the others.
We'll find our way from here.

THOMAS
Are you sure you guys want to do
this?

Darrell, determined, nods. Jack winks.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
OK. We'll wait around until
sunrise.

Darrell and Jack exit to the corridor.

Thomas turns back, pauses to take the kayoed guard's radio.

EXT. LUNICA CITY PIERS - CONTINUOUS

He sneaks back to the boat. The others are eager for a report

THOMAS
They're in. I told them we'd wait
until sunrise.

ANABEL
What's with the walkie-talkie?

THOMAS
Oh. I figured we could listen in,
just in case they-

A distorted yell from the radio startles all.

They look to the freight entrance. Darrell and Jack run out.

JOSH
That was fast.

Darrell stumbles and scrambles behind containers. Two armed guards exit and search the area. Jack heads back to the boat.

JACK
The promenade is crawling with guards.

The guards close in on Darrell's position.

ANABEL
Holy shit. What do we do?

Thomas thinks. He looks down at the 2-way radio.

RADAMES
What is it Thomas? You got an idea?

THOMAS
Maybe. It's crazy.

JACK
Good ideas usually are. Let's hear it.

THOMAS
Ana, remember that Ema impression you did in the conference room?

ANABEL
Yeah?

Thomas offers her the radio. Anabel's look is incredulous. Josh and Radames look confused. Jack intuits the plan.

JACK
You can't be serious.

ANABEL
That's not going to work.

THOMAS
You got a better idea?

They don't.

JOSH
They're gonna find him!

The guards are seconds away from discovering Darrell. She reluctantly takes the radio. Thomas signs 'hurry'.

ANABEL
(into radio)
Uh....Hey.

The guards on the pier stop and look around.

THOMAS
We got their attention. Keep going.

ANABEL
(whispering)
What should I say?

THOMAS
Tell them to put down their
weapons. But do it like Ema.

She gathers herself.

ANABEL
(convincing)
Throw your guns away.

The guards look down at their guns.

ANABEL (CONT'D)
(impeccable)
I suggest you throw your guns into
the water.

They swiftly comply. Anabel is astonished and excited.

ANABEL (CONT'D)
It is recommended you turn around
and return to your post.

Once again the guards comply. Ana gets giddy.

ANABEL (CONT'D)
Stop.

They stop.

ANABEL (CONT'D)
Touch your toes.

They obey. Josh laughs.

ANABEL (CONT'D)
All guards please report to the
locker room, take off your clothes,
and squeeze each other's balls.

Radames stifles a cackle.

The guards jog back inside, shedding their gear.

JACK
I can't believe that actually
worked.

Darrell runs over to meet the others on the dock.

DARRELL
What happened?!

THOMAS
I think Ana just took care of all
the guards.

ANABEL
I wish all men were that easy to
control.

RADAMES
We're not?

THOMAS
What's the situation inside?

Darrell and Jack exchange a solemn look.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNICA CITY (PROMENADE) - NIGHT

Doors open to a silent promenade littered with bodies.

RADAMES
It's a goddamn massacre.

They make their way across the floor, soaking in the horrors.

JOSH
The guards did all of this?

DARRELL
Looks like it. Murdered them all.
Execution-style.

ANABEL
Why?

JACK
A man with a gun doesn't need a
point in order to win an argument.

INT. LUNICA CITY (RECEPTION) - CONTINUOUS

Darrell goes behind reception and studies the monitors.

DARRELL
(grim)
We're too late.

The screens show security footage of the front gate with bodies everywhere.

DARRELL (CONT'D)
They're all dead.

They disperse, defeated. Ana and Radames sympathize.

JACK
I'm truly sorry about your friend.
But we need to keep moving.

Thomas studies the interactive map, showing flashing red lights surrounding the ground floor.

THOMAS
I think the whole city is on lock-down. There's nowhere to go.

ANABEL
Let's just get out of here.

RADAMES
I vote for that.

JACK
(agitated)
There must be a maintenance shaft or something. Dammit, we've come this far!

A bell attracts everyone's attention. The glass elevator shaft lights up. An empty car descends and opens. All look unsure except for Jack who promptly enters.

JACK (CONT'D)
Going up?

They pile in. The door closes.

The elevator rises to the apex of the Lunica City pyramid.

INT. ARMAND LUNICA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator door opens. The group cautiously exit.

ARMAND (O.S.)

Welcome!

The group look to the left. Armand, looking unkempt, is pouring himself a glass of whiskey.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Can I offer anyone a drink?

The group is preoccupied with Mark, dead on the sofa, gun in hand, blood on the wall. Armand takes note.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

(defensive)

Oh-- He did that to himself.

He sluggishly makes his way back to his recliner.

ANABEL

(whispering)

Is he...?

ARMAND

Like everyone else? No...I'm just a little drunk. I've been watching you since you approached on the river. Very clever by the way. I must know, what on Earth did you do to those guards?

DARRELL

Cut the shit, asshole. My girlfriend is dead because of you.

ARMAND

My condolences, young man. But I didn't kill your friend. I've been trapped in here with my bodyguard. I might have starved to death if you hadn't shown up.

DARRELL

Don't act like you aren't the one behind this. Why aren't you like the rest of them?

ARMAND

I didn't get your name...

(to Thomas)

I remember your name. Thomas, right?

JACK (O.S.)

Do you remember my name?

Jack, lingering behind the group, finally steps forward, looking determined. Armand sobers instantly.

ARMAND

Hello John.

JACK

I told you this day would come.

ANABEL

You know each other?

ARMAND

You didn't tell them who you are, John? This is one of the most brilliant nanotech scientists on the planet. This is the man that invented Emplant.

All are stunned.

ANABEL

(incredulous)

Why do you live in a sewer?

JACK

Because my opinion was-- How did you put it, Armand? Regressive?

ARMAND

If it were up to you we would still be beta-testing.

JACK

If it were up to me millions of people would still be alive!

ANABEL

OK, I'm really lost. Can one of you explain what the hell is going on?

JACK

The reason Mr. Lunica isn't like the others is because he has a different Emplant. A more expensive one. It's how the product was originally designed.

ARMAND

If we used the materials you specified, no one would have been able to afford it.

THOMAS

What's different?

JACK

Armand's Emplant has platinum nano-plating. Everyone else has monatomic gold plating. Things that size don't always obey the laws of physics. We knew early on the gold was unstable. When high levels of radiation were applied, the gold atoms would shift position and cause all sorts of errors. In one test, the Emplants fused with the test animal's brain and it was left catatonic.

All soak in the revelation.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to Armand)

But you thought my findings were nonsense. You were no scientist, all you saw were dollars signs. You excommunicated me and did it anyway. But you still used the original design for yourself.

ARMAND

Oh please. Don't pretend like you knew this was going to happen. No company could plan for an event like this. How can you discount everything Emplant has accomplished because of one setback!?

JACK

Setback?! Armand, the streets are roaming with homicidal maniacs!

ANABEL

OK! OK. Stop arguing. Can we talk about how we're going to fix it?

Armand and Jack look doubtful.

ARMAND

My dear, things are far more complicated than you know.

Armand activates a wallscreen. The Rhode icon appears.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

When the power was restored, the servers rebooted and the Emplants came back online. And, to my surprise, the users went back to interacting as usual.

On screen, hundreds of avatars walk and chat on The Rhode.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

The beings you see roaming the streets are merely discarded husks. Their active consciousness is engaged in the Emplant intranet, beyond time and space.

It's likely they are oblivious to this separation. To their conscious minds, our world is but a dream.

Bereft of their higher brain functions, their bodies are left to act on instinct and habit, and are likely incapable of any further information retention.

I tried to explain this to poor Mark over there but he just started moaning and grunting like a wounded animal. It went on for hours. I was merely voicing my frustration when I suggested he kill himself. Loyal to the end.

Just like the guards that killed your friend, just doing what they are trained to do. Only now, without rational thought or restraint. Without choice or doubt.

All soak in the unnerving reality.

THOMAS

There must be a way to fix this.

ARMAND

We were fixing them. Emplant was the levy that broke--a dam holding back what was always brewing just below the surface. Humans are savage creatures by nature. In some ways, they are more human than ever.

JACK

You're a sociopath, Armand.

ARMAND

Until Emplant, society relied on religion and culture to domesticate the savage within. I told no lies. I did not take away their freedom. I gave them access to everything. I gave them power!

JACK

You gave them a distraction! An illusion. Technology was meant to help man, not live his life for him. People trusted you with their very consciousness and you recklessly squandered it!

ANABEL

So can this be fixed or what?

ARMAND

No. If I shut down the servers, they all die. There is nothing we can do from here. The problem is now in the minds of each of the Emplant users. But we mustn't be so pessimistic.

(looking out window)

Look at that sky. The Earth is practically glowing. Everything is different now. Can you not feel it in your bones? Can you not see what we have gained?

My grandfather fought in the great war and even on the ruins of the battlefield he could see the light of peace shining in the distance.

This is a second chance, a clean slate. We can rebuild the world anew, better than it was.

(places hand on Jack)

Together.

Jack bows his head, thinking.

THOMAS

No. There has to be a solution.

JACK
I'm afraid he's right. It can't be fixed.

THOMAS
What? Just like that you're giving up?

JACK
I've known it all along.

THOMAS
Then why did we come all the way down here?

JACK
For this--

He shoots Armand in the head. He falls to the floor, dead.
Jack hands the gun to Darrell and enters the elevator.
The shocked group slowly file in and the doors close.

INT. LUNICA CITY ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

All look shocked and dazed as they ride down.

EXT. LUNICA CITY PIERS - DAWN

The group head to the boat. Jack breaks away. Thomas follows.

THOMAS
Jack, wait!

JACK
Sorry bout all that, Thomas.

THOMAS
You didn't have to kill him.

JACK
Had he lived, he would have done it all over again.

THOMAS
So what do we do now? The world is full of lunatics...

JACK
Not completely. It has people like you and your friends.

THOMAS

What about you?

JACK

No use in preaching to the choir.
I've done my bit. I think I might
take a lesson from you and go fall
in love.

Thomas stops following, glances back at the others. He watches Jack disappear around a corner, then rejoins the group.

Weepy Darrell looks at his gun before tossing into the water.

DARRELL

Let's go home.

ANABEL

Jack's not coming?

THOMAS

No.

RADAMES

He left his book.

Radames hands Thomas Jack's notebook.

EXT. CITY RIVER - DAY

The boat leaves the bay. Radames diligently steers. Darrell looks pensive. Sleeping Josh and Anabel cuddle up on Thomas.

He flips through the journal--the pages filled with technical jargon and masterful sketches--and stops on a quote.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Thou builder of machines, who dost
not see! That which thou mad'st to
drive, is driving thee.

EXT. BRIDGE TO LUNICA CITY - DAWN

Jack walks down the highway of bodies.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Ravening, tireless, pitiless its
strain.

EXT. CHURCH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Steve opens the door and is happily surprised. It's Bernice, bruised but smiling with fellow survivors.

THOMAS (V.O.)
For thy last ounce of work from
hand and brain. To make the engine,
blind that it must lead.

INT. ARMAND LUNICA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Armand lay dead on the floor.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Fast and yet faster on the race of
greed.

Attribution: "Charles Buxton Going, Industrial Engineer."

Thomas absorbs it and admires his sleeping companions.

The boat heads up river as the sun rises over a smoking city.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A dozen partially-clothed guards squeeze each other's balls.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END