

Liberty University English Department

Subtext in a Screenplay: More than Meets the Ear

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Dr. Durrell Nelson

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By

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Dedication

From the Artist Statement to my *Air Tax* Screenplay, I dedicate this work to my family and friends who walked beside me over these years of study. I also dedicate it to those who will read and, Lord willing, watch *Air Tax*. May they be moved ever closer to the Lord.

Acknowledgments

I am blessed by everyone who hiked with me on this mountain of a journey.

My family, who have been with me from the beginning, experiencing the highs and lows alongside me.

My friends and colleagues, who cheered me on and walked beside me for varying distances.

My professors, who hopped onto the trail to give me guidance and provide needed tools for the journey to be a success.

And most importantly, God, who is the ultimate Guide and Creator of creativity. May He be glorified and honored through this work.

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Abstract

The creative manuscript for this thesis is a screenplay titled *Air Tax*. It is a dystopian story set in a western society where the ruling power has created two classes of people. Where one class is part of the elite, the other must watch their activity level as they are taxed on the air they breathe. A rebel group works to overthrow the rulers with the hope of equality and ultimate good for all. The question becomes whether the ideal will last if all guidance is human based. One way to reveal the need of guidance beyond human understanding for the good to last is through subtext. Subtext can be used in many ways to reveal deeper messages in a story. One of the most vital uses of subtext in *Air Tax* is the continuous appearance of a thick book. The book's first appearances on the screen are meant to draw attention to its importance before a character ever states the importance. Even when its value is stated, the name of the book is not revealed until the end. The power of subtext provides a deeper meaning and in *Air Tax* that meaning will point to the only Guide leading to success.

Section I. Artist Statement

Before my family moved into our home, the previous owner planted grapes which grew up a trellis built next to the back of the house. Those first years it produced small clusters of grapes, but the raccoons ate them and we stopped pruning the vine as we should. To keep the raccoons away, we decided to pull down the trellis and chop back the vines.

What is interesting about grape vines is their persistence. Even without the trellis, every year they grow up the house's siding, though no grapes appear. The vines also have a way of growing beneath the surface of the ground and appearing in other parts of the yard. My life as a Christian writer is like a vine. Though I am a Christian and have writing ideas, both need the right conditions to flourish.

In writing, a story idea may be planted in me, but it does not always come to fruition until I come to a certain point in my growth as a writer and the idea is hung along the right kind of trellis, or genre of writing. This may take years and come by way of a genre I never experienced before.

Becoming a Writer

My writing journey began with a typewriter and a woeful cry; though I do not remember which came first. As a child, I had the opportunity to play with my father's old typewriter, writing a couple short stories and a play. About that time, I believed everyone had skills except me. Crying to my parents, I mourned not being good at anything. My father consoled me, "Emma, you're good at writing." With new vigor, I dove into the world of writing, though sporadically. When inspiration hit it was like being handed a seed. I would plant it by writing down the poem, story, or idea. The seed would come to fruition in that moment, take a few

writing sessions to germinate before growing, or stay dormant for years. The struggle was being consistent with my writing.

As inspiration was not always there, I went through periods of not writing until I left home at nineteen to do mission work overseas. At this point, I decided to keep a journal and was religious in documenting every day. Unfortunately, it was only during times I was on an adventure outside the United States when I journaled regularly. I needed expectations outside myself to push me to write, like school.

During my undergraduate studies I had to write many papers. My favorites were the creative pieces. I enjoyed my scriptwriting class and when I got to write monologues in other classes. My best writing focused on God's goodness, Jesus, and/or biblical truth.

When discussing writing, Paul Haggis shares, "I think I've only succeeded when I've done things I was really passionate about" (Seeger, *Making* 238). I am passionate about sharing the Truth of Jesus Christ and I believe those types of writings are my most powerful, but they are not the only ones I produce.

Over the years, my focus turned toward writing children's stories as I always enjoyed them. I desired to see quality children's stories produced for a Christian audience and ones that would be enjoyed outside the Christian realm while still teaching biblical values. This brought about a shift in my writing which I had to struggle through as a writer. Beginning my master's degree at Liberty University helped me work through this struggle and brought to fruition an idea lying dormant for many years.

Growing as a Writer

As I settled into a full-time job, I found myself frustrated with the time I wasted outside of work. The possibility of working toward a master's degree seemed like a good outlet. I was

hoping to find a creative writing program, but decided to try the MA in Professional Writing at Liberty University. After two classes, I decided it was not for me. I inquired about a creative writing program, and was disappointed. After a few months, I planned to withdraw from Liberty, but felt I should check the other graduate programs one last time. I saw the newly created MFA in Creative Writing. I transferred degrees and was soon motivated to write once more.

I moved away from my children's books as I focused on school assignments. Most of the fiction writing produced did not have overtly Christian messages. This was supported by professors and classmates as a way of writing as a Christian, but I did not have peace. I felt I lost my purpose for writing. With this mentality, I entered a new writing experience with a genre I had never considered as a possibility—screenwriting. I fell in love with it.

There is the side of me wanting to grab a reader by creatively telling a story and the detailer side who thrives within clear-cut guidelines. This is screenwriting. In *The Screenwriter's bible*, David Trottier explains how a “writer has two natures: the heart and the head” with one being a “passionate creator” and the other “quite conscious of the ‘rules’” (202). He later states, “Formatting is a key element of screenwriting...It is the language of the screenplay writing art” (237). The importance placed on formatting, forms a strong working relationship between my creativity and detailer-side. However, when I first entered the screenwriting class, I did not know what to expect and had no idea what story I could possibly tell.

During a talk, Stephen King explains, “My idea about a good idea is one that sticks around and sticks around and sticks around.” As I mulled over what to write, the idea for a story about being taxed for breathing came to mind. It was planted in my mind as a teenager, about twenty years ago.

I was discussing some unreasonable tax with my parents and in a passing statement one of us exclaimed how eventually there would be a tax on air. A comment was made about how it would make a great story.

During the following years, I tried to grow the idea into a story, but it never broke the surface into anything meaningful. After taking the scriptwriting course during my undergraduate studies, a ray of sunlight was cast on the seed waiting in my mind and I tried writing it as a play. It still did not break through the sod and was soon overshadowed with other focuses in life.

Even in the darkness, the seed continued gathering nourishment as the purpose of the story came to mind. I wrote the ending in novel form as a short epilogue. At this point, the thought of a whole novel was intimidating and the story stopped without really beginning. Several more years passed before the sun's warmth reached the seed. The seed of an idea would soon become my creative screenplay, *Air Tax*.

With the new genre of screenwriting coupled with an old idea, I began writing, hoping for the best. As an outline appeared, the story finally broke through the surface. It seemed to “organically emerge” with the outline being “a general guide” (Seeger 6). It was freeing.

Like a grape vine twisting around the outline and reaching beyond to anchor to whatever it could, *Air Tax* grew and produced other branches. Characters flourished and the setting came to life as I wrote. New characters appeared and the plot deepened. I found myself thriving in screenwriting. Still, the plan of not sharing about God directly in the story continued to cause me discomfort. I wondered—*What was my purpose for writing?*

The question did not keep me from writing through the screenwriting course, workshops, and even attempting to rewrite it as a novel in a fiction workshop. This brought about the question of whether I should write *Air Tax* as a novel or screenplay for my thesis project. Though

I knew getting my screenplay produced would be more difficult, I had more joy in writing the story in that genre. I settled on screenwriting. This did not alleviate my discomfort about not focusing on God. The answer finally came in the form of subtext.

In *Writing Subtext: What Lies Beneath*, Linda Seger states, “In great drama, there are words themselves and the truth beneath the words” (1). She goes beyond words, asserting another area of subtext is how “[o]bjects often carry deep associations,” (100). For my screenplay, I inserted an image—the Bible. It continues to appear at different moments. This constant showing of the book will hopefully alert the viewer to the importance of it and create a greater impact in the final scene when the name of the book is revealed.

Though not overtly a gospel message, one of the reasons for this screenplay is to make the audience think. To place their focus on the Scriptures and cause them to discuss its importance from the role it played, or did not play, in the plot.

Vision of a Writer

In all I write, my desire is to glorify God. To do this, I believe my writings are not only to be nice stories, but powerful. They should be excellent. Over the years, I have read or watched Christian works which some may consider subpar in the art world. I do not want my screenplay, or any of my writings, to fall into that category. If this is not a great enough motivation to produce quality, then I need to remember Jesus deserves excellence. In Colossians, Paul talks about how to live as a believer and encourages, “And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (*The Bible*, 3:17). The context may not be talking about writing specifically, but my writing is something I do. As a believer, what I write reflects Jesus. I should do it to the best of my ability.

As writing is done well, the hope is to influence the audience for good past the time they interact with my works. I want them not only to be drawn into the story, but to mull over the deeper message and for it to produce change for the better; whether it draws believers closer to Christ, introduces the gospel to nonbelievers, or encourages a desire to seek out the Truth.

With *Air Tax*, I want viewers to realize that though it seems good conquers evil, without God the good could morph into the same type of evil fought against. As Romans 3:12b states, after explaining how everyone is sinful, "...There is none who does good, there is not even one" (*The Bible*, all capitals removed for readability). It can be easy to rely on self and the good being done in this world without realizing that without God at the helm, eventually man's "good" will not last. This is just one of the messages in the screenplay.

No matter the genre of manuscript, I desire my writings to be more than page deep. I want them to share lessons on life and how to interact with the world. The use of subtext is a great way to do this as it helps reveal what is going on beneath the façade of people's lives or in situations.

Considering my creative manuscript, the literary context is a useful framework, acting like a trellis, to reveal my vision. Screenwriting and a dystopian context both support my main purpose of revealing a deeper meaning to the audience.

Trellis of a Writer

According to Syd Field, "A screenplay is *a story told with pictures, in dialogue and description, and placed within the context of dramatic structure*" (12). As I attempted to write *Air Tax* in other genres, I found it more difficult to move forward and the story shriveled and died, or it did not grow as fast. When I wrapped the story idea around screenwriting, it blossomed. I see the setting and the characters as they appear. It is not just a story. It is reality. To

make it feel real to an audience though requires detailed work in developing how to write dialogue and descriptions.

David Trottier explains, “Dialogue is not real-life speech; it only sounds like it” (96). The goal is to make it seem real and to do that it “should be lean” for the most part (Trottier 96). Finding the right words may flow naturally or take time. Either way, the result is worth it. I like how Trottier describes dialogue like Rice Krispies, “*Snap* is the crispness...*Crackle* is the freshness...*Pop* is the subtext” (101). There can be greater impact in the short clips of dialogue and when new, or rarely used, words and phrases are spoken. As in real life, subtext in film dialogue should mean more than they appear. Subtext can also be experienced by writing good descriptions, or screenplay action lines.

Descriptions should “[b]e specific, clean and lean” (Trottier 277). All actions matter in screenwriting and are used to paint a picture of the setting and characters. The picture appearing on the screen shows not only what is happening on the surface, but what is below through actions and dialogue. To portray this well, I need to understand how screenwriting works and about the literary context of the screenplay, in this case, dystopian.

In the same way I never considered writing a screenplay, I did not intend to write a dystopian story. I had a story to tell and it happened to be dystopian. In discussing utopian and dystopian stories, Barbara Klonowska states how “in contemporary culture, they are natural vehicles for the expression of and engaging with political and social problems” (12). My creative manuscript idea was planted in what could be “political” or “social” soil, growing up in a dystopian context. It is dystopian as it represents “a state in which conditions of human life are extremely bad as from deprivation or oppression or terror (or all three) ...human misery...” (Green). The story is about an organization, acting as a form of government, using its power to

subjugate one group of people and not another by taxing the source of life, air. This creates an atmosphere ripe for rebellion.

Though a political/societal story, it is not about the politics as much as the individual characters. Each of the main characters have their own crisis moments and resolutions. Set along the dystopian trellis the characters motivations and growth are seen visually in the screenwriting format. Clear visibility of the overarching message is what I want to accomplish as a writer and even more so as a Christian scholar.

Fruit of a Writer

The most important word of “Christian scholar” is “Christ.” Before I am a writer, I am a follower of Jesus. I think about the greatest commandment, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (*The Bible*, Mk. 12:30; all capitals removed). With my whole being, I want to love Him. This takes not only belief, but action. James 1:22 says, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (*The Bible*). This may seem like an impossibility at times, but as a believer I have the Holy Spirit helping me. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit,” Galatians 5:25 reminds me after stating in verses 22-23 that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (*The Bible*). The only way to truly live by the Spirit is to know Jesus. As Jesus says in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing” (*The Bible*). As I focus on the greatest commandment, the second greatest naturally follows, “...‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (*The Bible*, Mk. 12:31, all capitals removed). If I truly love God and those around me, then everything would be

as it should. However, this is not the case as I sin and need to continually focus on Jesus to keep growing spiritually. Thus, my life as a Christian writer comes only after my life as a Christian. How I live affects how I write. As being a Christian means doing life with Jesus, the being of a writer is through the doing of writing.

I need to put the work in to make everything I write the best it can be. Before I can do that, I need to complete my writings and understand they will not be great at first. In *The Protagonist's Journey*, after Scott Myers encourages writers the need for multiple edits, he asserts, "Instead of cringing at the thought of writing an imperfect draft, embrace it. Allow yourself the freedom to have some fun with each scene" (338). Though I know the logic behind this rule, I edit as I write. This causes me to have unfinished projects.

Myers goes on to explain, "By reaching The End, you will not only know your story at a much deeper level...you will have broken through a psychological barrier. Instead of, 'I want to write this story,' you can say, 'I have written this story'" (338). As a Christian scholar, I have messages to share through my stories about God and the world. This matters little if I do not have the discipline to finish the first drafts. Even after completion, as experienced with *Air Tax*, it takes work to edit and make a story the best it can be. This requires being aware of my characters, setting, how the plot develops, formatting rules of the chosen genre, and my audience. Through this whole growth process, I have realized the importance of subtext in writing, and in life.

Subtext is not only used in writing to reveal deeper meanings, but it surrounds me at work and on the street. People walk around with pasted on smiles when all is not well. What is below the surface may be revealed in the way they talk or their actions. If I am not looking to catch a glimpse of what is inside someone, it goes unnoticed. As a believer, I need to focus more on those around me, read the subtext, and reach out with the love of Jesus. As writing is a doing

art, so the believer's life is one of action. In moving forward, eyes open, there will be continual growth.

Conclusion

Like how a vine must have a life source to survive and good conditions to flourish, sometimes it takes the right genre and moment for a story idea, like *Air Tax*, to feel the sun's warmth. When it does bud, it takes time to nurture until it comes to fruition. There needs to be perseverance in writing. Syd Field supports this when he says, "Talent is God's gift; either you've got it or you don't. But writing is a personal responsibility; either you do it or you don't" (23). I understand the need to focus on making my writings the best they can be. I also know it can only be done as I rely on Jesus to guide me. The problem is when I become my own raccoon.

I could destroy a work by not doing what I need to through self-discipline, doing my best, or by worrying. This is in the realm of my life as a believer and as a writer. My prayer is to live my life devoted to Christ. My life needs to be growing and producing the fruit of the Spirit as my writing grows and produces a message used by the Lord to reach the world.

Section II. Critical Paper - Subtext in a Screenplay: More than Meets the Ear

“*Subtext* is a thought or idea that is not directly or overtly expressed” (Seger, *Making* 171). This is true in life and writing.

When taking care of people with dementia, it is vital to realize they do not always know how to communicate what they need. This may cause them to communicate through actions or other ways which do not make sense. Caregivers must be in tune with those in their care to find how to fulfill those unmet needs (Weber). This is a form of subtext—indirect meaning. It should be utilized in a written world to make it more believable and to draw people into the story. As subtext is a part of life, it can help bring a story to life.

James Scott Bell describes subtext in a scene as an iceberg. “The underneath, while it can’t be seen, manifests itself above the surface, subtly, adding layers that the reader absorbs subliminally” (107). Though only the iceberg’s top is visible, there is a sense more lies below the surface as characters interact. In screenwriting, a task of the writer is to reveal what is not seen, or heard. Though subtext often refers to dialogue, there are other areas of subtext to consider. Linda Seger labels these areas as “gestures, actions, genre, and underlying script objectives” as well as “behaviors...images” (*Writing* viii, 3). If used well, these other areas of subtext can draw the viewer further into each moment and give greater understanding to the whole story.

This essay is meant to help define the subtext areas of genre, objective/theme, gestures/actions/behaviors, and imagery for better understanding of each. It is also meant to be a guide of how subtext is used in secular screenplays.

As the secular film industry encourages the use of subtext to relay its messages, it should be utilized even better in Christian films to portray the importance of God’s Truth. One reason for this thesis’ screenplay, *Air Tax*, is to emulate a dystopian story with focus on pointing

audiences back to the importance of God and His Word, His guidance. For without God, every system, good or bad, will eventually fail. To share this message powerfully and without being “preachy,” the different areas of subtext can be included within the screenplay as used in produced films. However, subtext is not something squeezed into a screenplay to check it off a “must-haves” list. The purpose is to use it effectively. To accomplish this, it is important to understand these different areas of subtext.

Discovering the Origin: Genre

When approaching a kind of film, viewers have expectations. If watching a comedy, they expect to laugh. If it is a horror movie, to be scared. Still, stories are meant to carry a greater message. According to Linda Seger, “the genre and the story itself represent more than what’s on the surface” (*Writing* 112).

In discussing science fiction, Seger states, “The story line in any good sci-fi film usually intends to tell us something about our own social issues on earth...bad choices and mistakes...ineffective way we relate to one another...people who think they can defeat others...” (*Writing* 119). A science fiction story may be exhilarating, but subtext provides the meaning.

Within the sci-fi context, lies the dystopian genre. StudioBinder makes this connection as both “belong to the larger category of ‘speculative’ fiction...what might happen to society if humans don’t deal with existential threats such as climate change, nuclear war, over-population, or authoritarianism” (Green). To better understand the idea of dystopia, it is good to understand its history.

Before dystopia was utopia, or the concept of “Nowhere” (Morley). Sir Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in the sixteenth-century and, according to the Introduction by Henry Morley, it was written as an attack on “the chief political and social evils of his time.” Sir Thomas More’s

closing remarks in the story support this statement. After listening to what the character, Hythloday, has to say about Utopia, he writes, “I cannot perfectly agree to everything he has related. However, there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments” (More). The notion of an ideal place is pleasant though not realistic.

From this comes the idea of dystopia, or as a footnote for the word from an eighteenth-century poem explains, “an unhappy country” (Budakov). According to Christos Efstathiou, this idea was further emphasized by authors like Yevgeny Zamyatin (*We*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), and George Orwell (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*) who “all published in the interwar period,” a time where “an optimistic vision of the future was at that point abandoned due to their common disbelief in progress and/or fear of political change” (280). As the world looked at the chaos around them at that time, they had to wonder how bad the future could be and write about the possibilities. This is a part of the subtext of dystopian genre—what bad could happen.

For Christians, it is not surprising how sin infects the world at its core. It is only natural for bad to occur and become common place. When writing for the screen, writers need to consider how best to reveal the “bad” taking place for people. It must take the viewer into another world or time. Different films reveal the genre in varying ways.

The Hunger Games is the first movie of a trilogy based on a book series written by Suzanne Collins. The story is set in a society where, like gladiators, children fight to the death in a kind of arena for the entertainment of the power class. The reason for this is described in the first words of the screenplay, “The cause was a rebellion...districts of Panem rising up against

the Capitol...The Capitol decreed that those twelve Districts – as a brutal reminder of their treasonous rebellion – would forever suffer a punishment...The Hunger Games” (Ray 1).

Equilibrium is another example of a dystopian story set up in a city where people take a drug known as interval to numb their emotions while anything that could produce emotion is destroyed. Because, as the opening television narrator of the screenplay reminds everyone, “...for decades, for no better reason than mutual contempt, civilization hovered on the brink of nuclear war...if Man were to survive into the future, he must find a way to govern his emotions before they governed him into non-existence” (Wimmer 1). To create this “peaceful” state, a group of elite fighters called Clerics are trained to destroy all items that arouse emotion and “sense offenders,” those who oppose the emotionless State.

The “bad” which happens in *The Humanity Bureau* focuses on a United States thrown into a famine setting where people struggle to find food and clean water. Where an agency has control of transferring people to New Eden. It is supposed to be a kind of new start for people though no one who goes there is heard from again. As the opening words read, “In the near future. After economic catastrophe and climate change came famine...Society collapsed. Manufacturing and industrial production of food and goods ceased.” If these words are not enough to set up the genre, the final words confirm it, “America built walls around itself and its cities. The government gave sweeping powers to a single agency whose task was to assess and separate those citizens who were deemed a burden to the system...The Humanity Bureau.”

The dystopian genre is not always a human against human conflict, but can be technology versus human as seen in *The Matrix*. The story is set in a world which seems normal, but is only real in the human subconscious as people are plugged into a giant computer program called The Matrix. Unbeknownst to humans, they are used as batteries, keeping the artificial intelligence

alive. The film came out in 1999, a time when computer technology was on the rise. Right from the opening of the film, the computer screen and scrolling numbers signal technology as a part of the film. Then there is the shift from the screen past the numbers as if entering the system before the first characters and world are seen. As the first scenes play with the character Trinity fighting police and computer agents, abnormal feats occur, like jumping a great distance from one roof to the other or her disappearance after a truck seemingly demolishes a phone booth she is in. These small details reveal this world is not what it seems.

Knowing the genre of a story, will set a foundation for including impactful subtext as “the genre and the story itself represents more than what’s on the surface” (*Writing* 112). If the world can create identifiable settings to place the viewer in a specific genre, Christians should strive to create a world which is clearly seen as well. As the genre is established, writers must work to enhance their stories more by providing subtext in other ways, like the underlying objectives or themes.

Finding the Underlying Objective and Theme

David Trotter discusses the theme of a story as “the *moral* of your story” (92). The big picture of why the story is written and what message is meant for the audience. Linda Seger delves deeper through the analogy of a river. As a river may seem peaceful on the surface, there is a fast-flowing undercurrent not seen until something disturbs it. Subtext is like this, “films rich in subtext have hidden goals under the surface” (*Writing* 128). She refers to each of these goals as a “subtext-objective” or “super-objective” (*Writing* 129). There are multiple ways to do this, but one way is for characters to be striving for the same thing overall. Linda Seger uses a case study of *Ordinary People*, describing how each character wants “to return to normal” or at least

“relate to the idea of normal” (*Writing* 133). Though they do it differently the theme of normalcy becomes more and more evident based on this common goal.

Considering *The Hunger Games*, the main objective of multiple characters is to survive the Games. However, beneath the overarching goal runs other super-objectives. One has to do with change. It is not only about survival, but about changing the rules. This is seen as a threat to the authority of the ruling power, particularly President Snow.

The subtext for this begins to play out from the start as the main character, Katniss, ignores signs of trespassing to hunt for food. This underlying objective continues as she is the first ever to volunteer to play in the Games instead of another (her sister, Prim), when she helps others in the Games, and when she undermines the ruling power by her willingness to commit suicide, thus producing no winners, instead of killing her friend, Peeta. The theme of changing the rules is supported as the Gamemaker also changes the literal rules. Mid-game he establishes there could be two winners only to change it back to one at the end of the Games. To stop Katniss and Peeta from committing suicide he quickly changes the rules back to two winners.

In *Equilibrium*, the main character, a Cleric named Preston, seeks to follow an ideology promising to keep the peace in a war destroyed world even to the point of killing his partner. A super-objective flowing below the surface is the power of the human emotions.

Though Preston begins without emotions, he starts to feel after he kills his partner, Partridge, who he discovers has stopped taking his interval. Though Preston does not seem to feel, he tries to give Partridge a chance to be put on trial. As Partridge cocks his own gun, Preston shoots him. Though he remains emotionless, his desire to not kill Partridge places doubt on his lack of feeling anything even with the drug. Later, when Preston's interval vial shatters after he “knock[s] the morning's dosage off the counter onto the concrete floor,” his emotions

become evident as he chooses not to replace it (Wimmer 21). He eventually comes out of his emotional fog and takes part in a rebellion to oppose the system he was willing to kill for.

The Humanity Bureau has a strong message of survival and being obedient to what is set forth as best for everyone. Taking a closer look, there is the theme of hope. Hope the United States is still free and life is out there.

Noah Kross helps send people to New Eden, believing there is no hope where individuals live while there is in New Eden. For himself, he continues to look back on a time when he went fishing in Canada and holds onto the possibility the lake is still there in a world devastated by famine. Rachel holds onto the possibility plant life could be somewhere besides New Eden even when Noah tries to convince her it is false hope. Once he discovers the real false hope is New Eden, he doubts the lies about there being no lakes in Canada. As hope drives Noah toward Canada, after saving Rachel and her son Lucas (who ends up being his son), Rachel's little flame of hope wavers and almost goes out. Lucas shows signs of hope through his optimism when he holds onto an advertisement from an eighty-year-old comic book because as he says, "It's got my nuclear submarine on it. As soon as I save six bucks, I can order one."

Though Noah and Rachel never see their hope realized as they are killed, Lucas reaches those who can help. The truth ends up being revealed to the United States and people begin fighting back. The end reveals Noah's hope accomplished through Lucas by him jumping into the lake he hoped was still there. Hope is realized in the next generation, a hope for the future.

There are a few identifiable themes in *The Matrix*. The initial main objective of the resistance is to find the one person, Neo, in the Matrix who they believe can destroy the system enslaving humans. As the story unfolds, a greater theme layered throughout the film is control.

Artificial intelligence has control over humans in *The Matrix*. The resistance wants to break that control by finding someone who can take control of the system. Neo wishes to have control, as he explains after Morpheus asks if he believes in fate, “No...Because I don’t like the idea that I’m not in control of my life” (Wachowski 28). Ironically, at this point the computer has control of his life. On the other hand, there is The Oracle who prophecies about the role of different characters and who, in a sense, are then controlled by their fate.

There is also a contrast between gaining control and desiring to give it up. One of the resistance members, Cypher, proves to be a traitor when he grows tired of the hardships and agrees to betray the others in exchange for being put back in the Matrix, or as he says, “Ignorance is bliss” (Wachowski 61).

By the end, Neo’s interaction with the Matrix and computer agents is reversed. Where once they controlled him, he now can break the Matrix rules, thus controlling it.

One theme which runs a little deeper and less obvious throughout the film until the end is the power of love. The beginning interactions between Cypher and Trinity reveal she is watching Neo, though the purpose is not fully realized. Later, it is revealed her fate is to fall in love with Neo. When he dies, it is her confession of love which brings him back to life inside and outside the Matrix. It is after this moment when he takes control of the program.

It is important for a writer to realize the themes and objectives of the story may not always be evident until later in the writing process or even when the story is done, but he/she must remember to “[j]ust keep writing” (Trottier 92). As the story formulates, a common theme may begin to appear. Writers can always go back and add more subtext to support the theme of a story, or simply to create depth to scenes and characters. Some of these areas of subtext are gestures, actions, and behaviors.

Revealing through Movement: Gestures, Actions, and Behaviors

“The gestures and action tell the truth, even if the words lie” (Seger, *Writing* 80). Imagine a couple washing dishes.

The husband scrubs a plate in methodical circles, front, back, and along the edge. He places it in the empty drying rack. The wife snatches it from the rack, gives it a quick swipe with a rag, and places it in the cupboard. Leaning back against the counter, she twists the towel until it cannot be twisted anymore, shakes it loose, and repeats the gesture. Dipping a glass in the water, the man runs the scrubby around the inside of the cup, the outside, and the rim before setting it out to dry. In a flash, the wife wipes the glass and sets it in the cupboard. These actions go on for a few more dishes. Finally, after putting a bowl in the cupboard the woman slams the door shut. The husband places another plate on the rack and asks, “Are you okay, Hon?”

The wife does not look at her husband as she grabs the wet plate, and shoves it into another cupboard, barely touching it with the rag. “I’m fine,” she says, banging the cupboard shut. She looks at him, “Why?”

There is evidence in this scene that not all is “fine.” Not knowing the context may keep the observer from knowing exactly what is wrong, but based on the gestures, actions, and behaviors, there is more than meets the ear—subtext is happening. With the wife’s quick motions and twisting of the rag she could be an impatient person to the point of finally getting upset. The husband’s methodical behavior could be a disorder or reveal his personality. The order the husband washes the dishes may also be the problem. It could be the wife asked him to wash like dishes together and he did not hear or wants to annoy her. Depending on the context, these observations could mean something more.

Characters in *The Hunger Games* reveal subtext through their gestures, actions, and behaviors as well. A few examples are when residents of the different districts show respect to Katniss by holding up three fingers with an outstretched arm. This is a distinct sign of respect and occurs after Katniss does something deserving of respect. The first time this occurs is when she volunteers to take her sister's place, an action that also reveals her love for Prim (*The Hunger* 19). A behavior portraying Haymitch's character is when he arrives at supper drunk, another drink in hand. Even after he sets the drink down, he "reflexively reach[es] for a bottle of white gin" (24). There is a sense he has a memory, or memories, he wishes to forget.

In *Equilibrium*, eye movement is one of the first gestures telling there is something below the surface. As Preston coldly kills sense offenders and destroys art, Partridge stands by giving him side glances and there is a yearning in his eyes as he watches the Mona Lisa burn. As Preston begins to feel there are many actions showing the return of his senses.

After he pushes a beautiful sense offender, Mary, in front of a mirror, he stares as he sees their reflection. In the morning, he claws at the tinted paper covering his bedroom window like a trapped animal and sees the sun shining through the city's skyline. At a raid, he gets blood on his gloved hands and his eyes stare shocked before he pulls the gloves off and runs his hand over bullet holes in the wall. He finds a trove of sense treasures and runs his hands over the items before placing a record on a phonograph. When Beethoven begins to play, he freezes, dropping a snow globe, before breaking down in tears. Later, when he looks over Mary's confiscated sense items, he pulls out a ribbon, smells it, and hides it in his pocket. Other actions which reflect Preston's emotions returning are when he keeps a puppy and rearranges his desk to look contrary to everyone else's.

Another obvious behavior is the focus placed on him and other Clerics practicing their handgun skills known as Gun Katas. They do it with the discipline of martial artists and in the final conflict the training serves him well.

Another character who shows revealing behavior is Preston's daughter playing with her food. With a look from her brother, she quickly sits up and eats normally. Something seems off and later it is revealed the children have stopped taking their interval as well and must put on an act.

As is common in many movies, it is the little gestures, actions, and behaviors which reveal a great deal in *The Humanity Bureau*. Rachel is respectful and hospitable to Noah even when he says she and Lucas must go to New Eden. Yet, when he seems to care little about the fact Lucas would miss a recital he practiced for, she slaps Noah. Moments later, Lucas falls from the roof and Rachel uses up the rest of their clean water to wash him. These small actions and behaviors reveal a mother who loves her child.

Something important to Noah is the memory of fishing in Canada as a child. This is revealed early on in his home when he speaks with another agent from The Humanity Bureau, Adam. Noah practices casting with a fishing pole and is unconcerned when he hooks a Monet painting on the wall.

Even side character's actions and behaviors reveal something about them and society. After fighting with Noah, Adam is handcuffed to a radiator in Rachel's home. When Agent Porter arrives, Adam tells him the key is in the cookie jar. Agent Porter looks at the counter confused and grabs one of the containers and opens it. Adam impatiently describes which container it is. Agent Porter probably never experienced a cookie jar. Later, he visits Adam who is swimming in

a pool, a kind of time share. Adam tells him to jump in and splashes water at him. He steps back. As water is scarce, Agent Porter never swam before and drowning is a real possibility for him.

Neo, in *The Matrix*, is a character whose behaviors reveal a change in mentality. Neo starts out as a cautious and fearful person. This becomes obvious when he tries to escape from his office building through a roof as Agents are coming to arrest him. He is fearful to move along the outside of the building to reach scaffolding which will take him to the roof. The fear causes him to be arrested. Even after leaving the Matrix, he lacks confidence to walk through a simulation of a busy street without bumping into people. This is contrasted to Morpheus who walks through the crowd without incident. Before this training, he tries his hand at a simulation where he must jump from one roof to the next over a large distance. Morpheus does it with no effort. Though Neo does it, he ends up losing confidence and plummets to the street below.

Later, he must make the decision to save Morpheus or not. His fear is gone as he and Trinity march into where Morpheus is held, carries out epic gun fights, and rescues Trinity from being destroyed in a helicopter without flinching. The change in his actions and behaviors reveals the change inside him. It becomes most evident after he comes back to life with the small gesture of Neo picking a bullet out of the air as a rain of bullets freezes in front of him before they fall to the ground. If there is any doubt of Neo's confidence, it is demolished when he dives into Agent Smith and destroys him from the inside.

It is not only about what is being said on the screen, but what characters are doing and how they are acting. Focusing on using these details well will help draw a viewer into the story. It is also not only the larger details but the small ones, especially if they are repeated, that a viewer will notice and create bigger impact. Not only are the close-up details important, but the details surrounding what is seen, like imagery.

Utilizing Imagery

As a writer, it is important to consider ways to use imagery to support subtext because it “will carry unconscious associations...more than just what we see—it will imply a whole range of other meanings and emotions” (Seger, *Writing* 92). This not only includes specific objects shown, but the colors chosen in clothing or ambience. The use of color can be powerful as it “affects the perception of reality, controls attention, and can trigger neuro-physiological processes in the brain” (Kovsh 213).

An interesting use of imagery in *The Hunger Games* is the use of daylight. As the Games begin in the arena, the day seems a bit hazy and yet clear, almost mundane. It makes quite a contrast against the killings that occur. There is a sense it is a typical day, but it is not; though it is somewhat normal in the dystopian world. There are also the contrasting colors and lifestyles between the districts and those living in The Capitol. The people of the districts wear simple clothes of muted color, insignificant, and those in the Capitol dress in brightly colored clothes reminiscent of clowns or an elaborate case of dress-up. Their lifestyles are also at the extremes of very little food in the districts to opulence in the Capitol.

Equilibrium uses a lot of dark or cool colors throughout. Darkness can be associated with bad happenings. The color appears most prominently with the fire that consumes what the darkness deems evil, or when Preston, dressed in white, confronts the “Father” in the final conflict. It is the age-old contrast associated with good and evil. More warm colors appear and grow brighter as Preston begins to feel.

Besides color, powerful visuals come by way of the destruction of cherished items like the Mona Lisa and antiques. Then there are the dogs who are killed and the puppy who escapes only to give a pitiful whine to Preston who is told to return it to be destroyed, but he cannot. The

polygraph test is also an important prop as Preston must take it to prove his emotions to the rebellion and later, he must take it to prove he has no emotions before he sees “Father.” However, the latter proves he feels a great deal at first before he controls his emotions into a flatline and ends up defeating “Father.” The large screens throughout the film with the leader giving instructions on how to live and the almost zombie way people act is reminiscent of a dictatorship like Stalin’s.

Within the first minutes of *The Humanity Bureau*, the brown colors of the clouds, the arid landscape, and the whistling wind create a sense of devastation, hopelessness. In the next moments a billboard with the words, “A new life awaits you at New Eden,” scrolled across it confirms the world is in decay. Images of dead cattle and fish carcasses add to the loss of what once was. This is contrasted with Noah’s memories of fishing as a child. The greenery of the trees surrounding a lake enhanced by the gurgling of water, all signifying life. It is only as the lie about nothing being able to grow is revealed that green trees appear further north, a symbol of growing hope.

The Matrix uses color by filtering the real world and the Matrix with different colors. Whenever characters are in the Matrix, there is a greenness to the images which “create an unnatural effect of another reality” (Kovsh 211). When characters are not plugged in, the scenes feel more natural or have a blueish tinge.

Some forms of subtext are used to prepare a viewer for a later time, as when Neo is lectured in his boss’ office. He is distracted by the squeak of squeegees cleaning the windows high above the street. Minutes later, Neo must climb out of a window to the cleaning scaffolding, but it does not feel out of place as the window cleaners were introduced earlier. Just as the

squeegees noise was used to draw attention, a more important noise to the story is the ring of a telephone.

When a telephone rings it signals a link between the Matrix and the real world. Picking up a specified ringing phone is what safely removes a person from the Matrix. In a dire situation, it becomes the lifeline. If it is destroyed, then characters must find another telephone to survive.

A good way to utilize imagery is to understand their associations. To understand them will come from personal experience; however, not everyone is the same. A writer should also observe the world and engage with others to gain a greater understanding of associations they may have. This is not only important to remember concerning imagery, but for all areas of subtext.

Conclusion

To make the fictitious feel real is to draw upon reality. “We see subtext all around us. We should be able to remove the words and read the body language, in real life or in film” (Seger, *Writing* 84). Just as a caregiver must be aware of the underlying needs of someone with dementia, so should all people be aware of those around them. In society, this has become harder as life is fast-paced and technology provides access to distraction every second. People are encouraged to look after themselves over others.

Paul speaks about this self-focus when he says, “...in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self...” (*The Bible* 2 Tim. 3:1b-2a). This is apparent in our society and it is easy to be drawn in. Followers of Jesus need to stop looking down at their own interests and look at the subtext happening in the world. People are hurting, though it may only be seen in subtext. This is why it is important to look around and realize there is more than meets the ear in this world, but God offers true hope.

In considering the secular films mentioned, each one ends with a kind of hope, a step toward freedom or reform, but there is no guarantee it will last as humans are human. The only way for anything good to last is by keeping focus on God and His truth. One way to do this in film is for Christians to use subtext well. The *Air Tax* screenplay attempts to use it effectively in bringing to light the importance of the Bible and need for reliance on Truth.

Section III. Creative Manuscript – A Screenplay: Air Tax

By

Emma J. Smith

FADE IN:

MONTAGE:

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - MORNING

-- The sun rises, its light falling across a grayish world of skyscrapers and stark homes.

-- The wind rustles drooping leaves of trees in a park.

-- Light washes over a deserted rusty playground as a swing sways and creaks.

END MONTAGE

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - DAY

A TEENAGE COUPLE sits on a bench in dull clothing, wearing oxygen masks. Each holds a canned drink with straws.

The boy adjusts his mask to finish his drink. He sets the can on the ground, lifts a boot-clad foot, and stomps down on it.

BLACKNESS

PRE-LAP - A sneakered foot hits the sidewalk and pushes away.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DOWNTOWN - DAY

VALERIE DENTNER (22) runs mask less, brightly dyed hair bobbing, through the downtown of the metropolitan city. Her bright clothes contrast the washed-out colors around her.

She dodges shuffling WEST PEOPLE, Westforders. Most of them wear oxygen masks.

She runs by a kiosk where a DEADPAN PERSON doles out money to the KIOSK WORKER after the worker scans his neck.

She passes a burnt-out Romanesque Revival style building. A broken-down stone sign reads, "Greenford Municipal Building."

As she leaves the downtown area, she passes a billboard reminding everyone: "HEALING THE EARTH COMES AT A COST, BUT IT'S FOR THE GOOD OF ALL."

Valerie does not look at the sign as she approaches a wrought iron gate set across the middle of the road. The words "East Greenford" are molded into its top.

Valerie goes through a smaller gate at the side.

EXT. EAST GREENFORD - DAY

Valerie runs past immense homes with EAST PEOPLE, Eastonites, working and playing in yards and along the street, not a mask in sight. Her clothes are no longer out of place.

She runs up a long driveway bordered by tall trees. At the end is a mansion on an expansive lawn with a dense wood at its back and sides.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

Valerie lounges at a long table reading a book and eating eggs.

DORIS (60), in skirt suit and apron, sets a plate of toast by Valerie as DAMIAN DENTNER (51) enters. His tall suit clad frame stops in the doorway, his eyes fixed on Valerie.

Valerie ignores him, running a hand through her bright hair. Damian sits as Doris serves him eggs.

DAMIAN
(to Valerie)
What are you reading?

VALERIE
It's R.B. Tellin's book "The Rise
and Fall of the Economies of the
World."

DAMIAN
(sarcastically)
Why read that? You could be reading
the latest fashion magazine.

VALERIE
Oh, I agree, but I'm thinking I
should start easy. Baby steps you
know.

DAMIAN
You could put that knowledge to use
at Air Tax Services.

VALERIE
Yeah right.

DAMIAN
Why attend a prestigious university
if you weren't coming to ATS?

VALERIE
For the laughs.

DAMIAN
Then what? What do you want?

VALERIE
(whispers)
I wanted time...

Damian strains to hear.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
(louder)
I want my life to be mine... I'm
telling you, my life is mine.

DAMIAN
Your life is yours, you --

VALERIE
-- I don't want to be bogged down
by rules --

DAMIAN
-- some rules need --

VALERIE
-- or expectations, or duties, or --

DAMIAN
(firm and gentle)
-- Valerie! You can, live your
life. What do you want? With your
advantages you can --

VALERIE
-- I ran in West Greenford...

DAMIAN
I said no going to West Greenford!

VALERIE
My point made.

DAMIAN

You can run. Why not go to East Greenford Health Center? I hear you can choose a location to run in the Running Zone.

VALERIE

They aren't open that early.

DAMIAN

I'll call and --

The doorbell echoes through the room. Father and daughter stare at each other until Doris walks in.

DORIS

Eric McPherson, sir.

Damian remains fixed on Valerie.

DAMIAN

Have him come in.

ERIC MCPHERSON (42), his neat suit not quite concealing his strong build, enters with a manila envelope.

ERIC

I have the paperwork, Mr. Dentner.
And...

Eric looks at his watch.

ERIC (CONT'D)

...your meeting with The Head starts shortly.

DAMIAN

Yes, coming.

He and Eric head to the door, but Damian hesitates.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

(to Valerie)

I will call the health center, and they will open early.

Valerie sits in the dining room alone until she hears the door shut, then races from the room.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - VALERIE'S ROOM - DAY

Valerie runs into her princess themed bedroom and to a window overlooking the driveway. She watches Damian and Eric drive off in Eric's white Hummer.

She glances at a photo of a younger Damian (30s) holding a little girl (6). A pretty young woman (30s), has her arms wrapped around him and the girl. Everyone is smiling.

Valerie reaches out to the young woman's face before she turns the photo around. Valerie's puffy cat, MICRO, lays on the bed staring at her.

VALERIE

What? Nothing I do is good enough.
I'm done trying.

As Valerie changes into a cute dress, a large scar on her leg is visible. A pair of leggings is pulled on, covering it.

She tugs the leggings down into a pair of ankle boots, grabs a purse, kisses Micro, and leaves the room.

MONTAGE:

INT. EAST GREENFORD - CONVERTIBLE/MALL - DAY

-- Valerie drives down a street in a red convertible Mustang.

-- She goes into a high-end store in a mall and leaves with shopping bags.

-- She spies a cute pair of shoes, enters the store, and appears again with another bag.

-- She visits a couple more stores, each time coming out with another bag or two.

-- She walks through the mall, loaded with bags, her phone chimes, she looks at it, and heads in a new direction.

END MONTAGE

INT. MALL COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Valerie stares at her latte as she swirls it. She sits at a table by a coffee kiosk. Next to her, PAIGE WHITTON (23), adjusts her pantsuit and picks up her espresso.

IRIS THOMPSON (22) leans across the table toward Paige and Valerie, the green smoothie in her hand is in continuous movement, her bangle bracelets jingling.

IRIS

...Then he said if my daddy wasn't so rich, he would ask me to the ATS Freedom Ball.

Iris takes a slurp of smoothie.

PAIGE

What? How could he say --

IRIS

-- Wait, wait, wait. Then he said, "What the hey, I'll ask you anyway."

PAIGE

Wow, what a line! What did you say?

IRIS

I said, "Then my answer is yes, how can it be anything less."

Iris and Paige laugh. COFFEE SHOP PATRONS whisper. Valerie shifts to take her bags.

PAIGE

So, Valerie, are you going to the Freedom Ball?

IRIS

Why ask, Paige? She is Damian Dentner's daughter.

PAIGE

I suppose she has --

VALERIE

-- Actually, I'm not.

Valerie downs the last of her latte.

IRIS

What? You can't not go.

VALERIE

I can, and won't go.

Paige points at Valerie's bags.

PAIGE

She's teasing, Iris. She probably already went shopping for the perfect dress.

IRIS

Oh, that makes sense. I mean, how could she not go to the Freedom Ball. Valerie, what are you going to --

Iris and Paige turn to an empty seat. Valerie walks away with her bags.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - VALERIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Valerie enters her room with the bags. She opens a closet and throws the bags on top of other still full shopping bags.

She walks into her connecting bathroom and the sound of water can be heard. Micro, sits up from where he is laying on the bed.

Valerie re-enters the bedroom dressed in sweats and a matching sweatshirt. She picks up Micro and curls up in a big overstuffed chair.

EXT. DENTNER MANSION - VALERIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The night outside looks in through Valerie's window as she picks up her economics book and a notebook. She takes notes as she reads.

EXT. EAST GREENFORD - DAY

The next morning, Valerie runs past the East Greenford Health Center and through the gate leading to West Greenford.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - DAY

The sun rises over the deserted playground and empty paths.

Valerie runs through the park and stops outside it to take some deep breathes. She hears a commanding voice.

ATS AGENT (O.S.)

Come on, move it.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - RESIDENTIAL AREA - DAY

Valerie jogs around a corner to see a black vehicle, license plate "ATS2," and Eric's white Hummer.

Hiding behind a hedge, she watches two ATS AGENTS, in black suits, escort a boy, TOBY BELLARD (10), away from a house.

Toby resists and looks over his shoulder back at a house where another AGENT and Eric stand with ANN BELLARD (28).

The agents hold Ann by the shoulders and have two long batons crossed in front of her. Ann removes an oxygen mask covering her nose and mouth as she struggles to pass the batons.

Eric squeezes a nerve in her shoulder. She sinks and Toby breaks free from the agents.

TOBY

Stop! Let my mum be.

The agents catch Toby and shove him into the black vehicle. Valerie takes a step forward only to step back.

ANN

(to Eric)

Please, don't take him. I can pay.
I just need more time!

Eric signals for the car to leave and it drives away.

ERIC

According to The Head, time is up.

Eric releases Ann's shoulder and she sinks to the ground.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(to Ann)

It's for the good of all.

Valerie blinks away tears as she races down the street in the opposite direction, picking up speed.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Valerie limps into her home, discards her shoes into the front hallway closet, and averts her eyes when she sees her reflection in the hallway mirror.

Damian enters the hall through an ornate wooden door. He holds a double-handled briefcase and talks on a cell phone. Valerie stares at him.

DAMIAN
It's done then?... On my way now.

He sees Valerie.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
We'll talk when I get there.

Damian hangs up and slides the phone into his inner suitcoat pocket.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
(to Valerie)
Are you just getting back? I
thought you left for the day.

VALERIE
Who was that?

Damian opens the closet and pulls out an umbrella.

DAMIAN
Eric.

VALERIE
What'd he want?

DAMIAN
Just business.

VALERIE
I saw him this morning.

Damian fails in sliding the umbrella between the handles of his briefcase but does not look at Valerie.

DAMIAN
Where did you run today?

VALERIE
West Greenford. You won't need the
umbrella. Sun's shining.

The umbrella slides securely into place across the top of Damian's briefcase and he looks over at Valerie.

DAMIAN
Didn't I tell you not to run there?

VALERIE
Didn't I say my life is mine?

Damian squeezes the briefcase's handles.

DAMIAN
Stay away from West Greenford and
enjoy the privilege of living here.

Damian points at the door.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Those people aren't like us.

VALERIE
Oh, I don't know, but they seem to
have two arms and two legs "like
us." I mean, that little boy and
mother could have easily been mom
and me. Right?

DAMIAN
Don't you speak of your mother! She
was nothing like them!

Valerie steps back as Damian turns away a moment before
turning back.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Okay...you say you're like them.
Then get micro-chipped and pay,
like them.

Damian goes to leave, but turns back and lifts his briefcase
holding the umbrella.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
And you never know when the weather
may change.

Valerie stands taller.

VALERIE
Fine... I'll get micro-chipped now.

She disappears up the stairs. Damian spins a gold band on his
right pinky as he abandons the front door and briefcase,
going back through the ornate door.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - DAY

Damian walks over to a large desk and stares at a photo like
the one in Valerie's room. He picks it up, focusing on the
young woman's radiant face. One of his tears drops on it.

Damian grabs a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the glass
before setting the picture down and drying his own eyes.

He continues staring at the photo and rubs his watch face. Damian realizes he's rubbing his watch and pulls his hand away.

His cellphone gives him a start. He takes a breath before answering the phone.

DAMIAN

Hello... No, I haven't left yet...
Yes, I'll bring it.

He hangs up, retrieves a USB drive from a secret drawer in the side of his desk, pauses to look at the photo, and exits.

INT. ATS OFFICES - NOTED RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Valerie sits with a CROWD in the center of the cramped room. On one side, a pursed-lipped RECEPTIONIST (60s) is busy at her desk.

At the back wall, an array of tall fake houseplants sits inside large planters. Droning classical music competes with a TV on the wall.

Valerie watches the TV as a tour of ATS' oxygen mask factory shows FACTORY WORKERS on an assembly line. The FILM NARRATOR'S voice drips like syrup.

FILM NARRATOR (O.S.)

...The oxygen mask provides the air you need to breathe and collects your carbon dioxide polluting nature's air, thus protecting the environment.

A time-lapse clip plays of a withered plant becoming healthy.

FILM NARRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

When your carbon dioxide canister is full and your air tax paid, you can obtain a new one and we'll take care of the old. After all, it's for the good of all.

The screen goes black for a moment before the video replays.

Valerie gets up to stretch and takes a few steps. A TEEN GIRL (18) slips into Valerie's vacant seat.

Valerie sees the girl and opens her mouth to speak when movement by the planters stops her.

Valerie catches a glimpse of Toby's face, the boy she saw ATS take earlier, peeking out from around a planter.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Valerie Dentner.

Valerie looks away and back at the planters. Toby is gone. She glances around as she approaches the reception desk.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
You Valerie?

VALERIE
Yes, I'm --

The Receptionist stops Valerie with her finger as she answers a ringing phone.

RECEPTIONIST
(into phone)
Hello, ATS Micro-Monitoring
Department, it's for the good of
all...

The Receptionist does not look at Valerie as she hands her some papers and points over her own shoulder.

Valerie looks and sees a man, FREMONT BASSET (25), shifts from one foot to the other. Fremont lurches over, his hand thrust out in front of him.

FREMONT
Valerie Dentner?

Valerie ignores his hand. Fremont adjusts his unevenly buttoned sports jacket with his rejected hand.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
Well, Miss Dentner, I'm --

VALERIE
-- It's Valerie.

Fremont snaps to attention, pointing to his metallic nametag.

FREMONT
Fremont Basset, but just call me
Fremont... or anything really,
except late for dinner.

Fremont chuckles but Valerie does not react.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Right, so, I'm the micro-chipping specialist who will handle setting up your air tax plan.

Fremont reaches for the papers in Valerie's hand. Valerie holds them tight.

VALERIE

What does that mean?

Fremont tugs on the papers but Valerie does not release them.

FREMONT

Well, I will be asking you a few questions about your activity level, measure your lungs oxygen capacity, and insert a small chip in your neck with all the information needed for a tax collector to bill you accordingly.

Valerie relinquishes the papers.

VALERIE

Fine.

She walks through a door Fremont opens for her. They exit the reception area into a narrow hallway.

INT. ATS OFFICES - OFFICE AREA HALLWAY - DAY

They walk pass closed office doors lining the hallway. Fremont gives her a side glance.

FREMONT

Damian Dentner is your father, right?

Valerie focuses ahead.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

I was surprised to see your name --

VALERIE

-- Why?

An OFFICE WORKER approaches from the opposite direction. Fremont moves to make room for the worker to pass by.

FREMONT

Why was I surprised?

Fremont tries straightening his clothes.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
 Damian Dentner is... Damian
 Dentner. Aren't you exempt, or
 something, from the tax by being
 his daughter?

Valerie suddenly stops.

VALERIE
 Who says I'm exempt from
 anything...

Her voice lowers to a whisper.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
 ... or that I even identify as his
 daughter?

FREMONT
 Are you on the outs with your
 father?

Valerie's look causes Fremont to step back.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
 Well, I mean, I thought you are
 exempt based on Mr. Dentner's
 relationship with The Head, and --

Valerie steps closer to Fremont. Fremont winces.

VALERIE
 -- What do you know about The Head?

FREMONT
 I-I don't know much. He's The Head,
 right? That's all I got.

VALERIE
 Do you know who he is?

FREMONT
 No, no one does...

His eyes begin to water.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
 ...please move your foot.

Valerie's foot is planted on top of one of Fremont's scuffed shoes. She steps off it.

VALERIE
So, no one --

A piercing alarm sounds as flashing lights turn on.

FREMONT
That's the evacuation alarm, we
gotta get outta here.

Fremont guides Valerie back to the reception area.

INT. ATS OFFICES - NOTED RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Fremont disappears as Valerie heads to the exit with the crowd of people. Someone bumps into her. She drops her purse and its contents spill across the floor.

VALERIE
(grumbling)
Great.

Valerie picks up her items as people stream by. She starts to leave the now empty reception area when she hears a voice.

CALM GUARD (O.S.)
Yes, it's been evacuated. We're
bringing number 2-9-5-9 through
now.

Valerie crouches behind the planters as CALM GUARD and ANGRY GUARD appear escorting a disheveled Toby. The numbers "2959" are on a label sewn to the front of Toby's gray coveralls.

Calm Guard adjusts a radio earbud as they head toward a security door labelled "Do Not Enter. Personnel Only."

As Calm Guard types in a code, Toby tries to run. Angry Guard grabs the back of Toby's coveralls.

TOBY
(angrily)
Let go! I wanna go back to Mum.

Angry Guard tries to keep him from squirming.

ANGRY GUARD
(to Toby)
Quit it! You're not going back. If
you're not careful, you'll end up --

Angry Guard yelps as Toby bites down on his arm but does not escape.

ANGRY GUARD (CONT'D)

(to Toby)

You little...

(to Calm Guard)

...You got that door yet.

Calm Guard opens the door and helps drag Toby through.

CALM GUARD (O.S.)

Doubt this one will make it through
the program.

ANGRY GUARD (O.S.)

You think.

Valerie watches as the door clicks shut. She goes to inspect the keypad and tries opening it. She hears people reenter the building and makes a dash to the planters.

As she arrives, someone covers her mouth and pulls her through a stairwell door as people reenter the reception area.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY

Valerie pulls away and stares at Fremont. He straightens his clothes before staring back.

FREMONT

What? You would've been discovered.
Come on.

He races down the stairs but looks back when Valerie remains planted. Fremont looks down and up the stairs past Valerie.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Let's go. We got --

VALERIE

-- Don't ever do --

Fremont continues to look around.

FREMONT

-- Yeah, yeah, don't ever do that
again. Got it. Can we go, and not
get caught?

Valerie sits on the step

VALERIE

Why?

Fremont finally looks at her a moment before continuing down the stairs.

FREMONT

Because I thought you were curious about The Head. You can't find out locked up in an ATS secure cell.

Valerie hears an opening door further up and follows Fremont. After going down a few flights, they stop at a coded door in a dead end.

VALERIE

So, not the hero type.

Fremont pops off the number panel's casing, exposing wires underneath. He switches a couple of wires, and there is a click.

He peaks into an empty hallway and waves Valerie through the door with a flourish.

INT. ATS OFFICES - SECURE OFFICE AREA - DAY

Valerie passes Fremont but whips back on him.

VALERIE

You could --

Fremont's hand covers her mouth again.

FREMONT

(whispers)

Not yet.

Valerie remains silent as they sneak along. She glares at Fremont's back as they pass gaudy planters and enter another stairwell.

INT. ATS OFFICES - SECURE OFFICE STAIRWELL - DAY

Valerie follows Fremont down another flight of stairs to an emergency exit door. With a push on the crash bar, they leave the building.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DAY

Valerie turns to face Fremont her mouth ready to speak, but Fremont is already near the end of the block.

VALERIE

Hey!

He looks back and points at a large banner hanging off the side of the ATS building. Valerie takes in the large words, "One Breath may Cost You, but It's for the Good of All."

FREMONT (O.S.)

Consider!...

Valerie focuses back on Fremont.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

...maybe it's not for the good of all.

Fremont tilts an imaginary hat before disappearing around the corner. Valerie turns and walks in the opposite direction. Her walk turns into a jog and then a run.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Valerie enters her home and heads upstairs. She stops when she hears her father's voice. The ornate door is slightly open.

DAMIAN (O.S.)

Yes, I'm already home... Haven't you done it yet?

Valerie peers through the crack and sees Damian on the phone.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - DAY

DAMIAN

(into phone)

Of course there's room for another one. There's never been a limit, Martin... Do I need to send Eric?... Good... Yes, I'll look.

Damian gets the USB drive out of the secret desk drawer and sticks it into his computer.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

It's #307... Yes, Turpentine Street... Yes, a six-year-old girl. Do I need to verify everything?!

Damian hangs up the phone when a door shutting is heard. He investigates the hallway. It is empty.

INT. WEST GREENFORD - VALERIE'S CAR - DAY

Clouds form as Valerie drives down the street. She follows her phone's GPS, the display showing her destination is Turpentine St. She drives past Toby's house.

QUICK FLASHBACK:

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - RESIDENTIAL AREA - DAY

Agents drag Toby from his mother.

END QUICK FLASHBACK

INT. WEST GREENFORD - VALERIE'S CAR - DAY

It begins to sprinkle as Valerie speeds up, hits a curb, and blows a tire. She stops the car, grabs her phone, and gets out.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DAY

Valerie sees a sign that reads "Turpentine Street" and runs down it. The rain comes harder.

She slows when she sees two black vehicles, license plates "ATS1" and "ATS3," parked outside a home.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DILLMAN'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Valerie sees COOL AGENT and FIERY AGENT holding LYLE DILLMAN (20s) to the ground. There is blood on Lyle's face. TRACY DILLMAN (20s) stands nearby holding AMBER DILLMAN (6).

NERVOUS AGENT and QUIET AGENT hold Tracy's shoulders, and MARTIN GROOMER holds a clipboard, favoring an eye.

MARTIN

(reading from clipboard)

As I was saying, "Because overdue air tax notices have gone unheeded, by order of The Head, your air tax grace period has expired, Thus --

LYLE

-- We never received nothing! ATS said we had time, we had --

MARTIN

-- you shall hereby pay in such a way that is for the good of all...

Martin wipes the rain from his eyes and smarts when he touches his blackening eye.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

As you cannot pay for your child's good, we will take said child --

TRACY

-- Not my baby!

MARTIN

-- and teach her the Air Tax Service way. Furthermore, this transaction is permanent."

Lyle struggles harder and Tracy holds Amber tighter as agents grab her. Valerie takes a step forward. Amber shrieks.

AMBER

Make them stop! Help me, Mommy!

Valerie freezes as the struggle over Amber continues. Trees sway as a strong wind blows. The wind grows louder and transforms into the sound of a raging fire.

FLASHBACK:

INT./EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DENTNER HOUSE - DAY

YOUNG VALERIE (6), the girl from the pictures, huddles in a bedroom. Smoke drifts under the door.

JENNY (O.S.)

Valerie! Valerie!

Young Valerie reaches her hand out to touch the door but snaps it back.

YOUNG VALERIE

(coughs)

Help me, Mommy!

JENNY (O.S.)

I'm here, baby! Stand back from the door.

Young Valerie scoots away as an axe destroys the door's latch and it swings open.

JENNY (30s), the young woman from the pictures, stands outside burn marks on her arms and face.

Jenny drops the axe and pulls Young Valerie close as they struggle down the stairs. Near the front door, a beam falls, pinning Young Valerie's leg to the floor.

YOUNG VALERIE
(shrieks)
It hurts, Mommy! Make it stop!

JENNY
(croaks)
It's okay, baby, Mommy's got you.

Jenny frees Young Valerie and carries her out the front door as FIREFIGHTERS and PARAMEDICS arrive. Jenny collapses.

Young Valerie clings to Jenny. Paramedics pull her away as others surround Jenny.

YOUNG VALERIE
Mommy! Let me go! No!

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DILLMAN'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Young Valerie's screams mingle with Amber's.

AMBER
Let me go! No, I don't wanna go!

The agents almost have Amber as agents beat Lyle into submission. The rain stops as Valerie grabs a big stick from the ground and charges.

VALERIE
No!

Valerie swings the stick and knocks Cool Agent to the ground. The agents rush her. She whacks Martin in his good eye and strikes at the others.

Lyle stands, and Tracy, with Amber, support him. Valerie places herself between the Dillmans and the agents.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
(to the Dillmans)
Go!

They stay still.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
(to Lyle)
Save your family!

Lyle hesitates before running with Tracy and Amber. Fiery Agent and Quiet Agent try to chase them, but Valerie deters them with the stick.

The agents struggle with her, finally subduing her. The recovered Cool Agent and Martin take her to a vehicle while the other three chase the Dillmans.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DAY

Fiery Agent, Quiet Agent, and Nervous Agent chase the Dillmans as they zigzag through the streets.

The Dillmans slip into an apartment building's garbage shelter. The agents run by.

INT. WEST GREENFORD - GARBAGE SHELTER - DAY

The two longer enclosed sides of the shelter are lined with dumpsters while the two short sides are open.

Lyle, Tracy, and Amber hide behind a dumpster. Amber begins to squirm. Lyle whispers, as they all do.

LYLE
Have to stay still, baby girl.
We're not safe yet.

TRACY
Lyle, who was that woman?

LYLE
No idea...

AMBER
Why did she help us, Daddy?

LYLE
I don't know. Now, we have to be
quiet.

Lyle peeks out. He waves for his family to follow. They head toward an opening.

Quiet Agent and Nervous Agent enter from one end and Fiery Agent enters from the other end of the garbage shelter.

NERVOUS AGENT
(breathing hard)
Give us the kid, and we'll leave.

Lyle pushes Tracy and Amber behind him.

LYLE
Not going to happen.

Fiery Agent steps forward.

FIERY AGENT
I always did enjoy the hard --

He suddenly falls to the ground unconscious. The other two agents look around before also dropping to the ground.

A man in khakis, ART JAMESON (48), walks in holstering a gun.

From the opposite door a burly man and woman, MURREY (51) and DELLA BLAKE (45), enter holstering guns. Murrey adjusts the satchel over his shoulder.

TRACY
A-a-are they dead?

Art pulls a dart out of Fiery Agent's neck and holds it up for Tracy to see.

ART
No, Ma'am. Just tranquilized.

Murrey and Della retrieve their darts and the men get the agents sitting up unconscious next to the dumpsters. One falls over and Lyle tries sitting him up again.

MURREY
(Irish accent)
Ah, leave him. They'll be picked up by ATS sooner or later.

Tracy pulls Amber closer.

TRACY
Should...shouldn't we go then?

Della wraps an arm around Tracy.

DELLA
(Irish accent)
Don't worry, love. They aren't that quick.

ART
It's a good thing we had business
in the area.

Murrey points his bushy bearded chin toward Lyle.

MURREY
Looks like you already had a bit of
a tussle. Air tax?

Lyle nods as Tracy squeezes Amber tighter. Amber squirms.

AMBER
Let go, can't breathe.

Amber's set down. She stares at Art, Murrey, and Della.

AMBER (CONT'D)
Why'd you help us, like that bright-
haired lady?

ART
Because that's our business, honey.
What lady?

AMBER
I don't know. But her hair was
really pretty.

FREMONT (O.S.)
Was it short?

Fremont leans against the doorframe.

ART
There you are.

Fremont holds out his phone with an image of Valerie for the
Dillmans to see.

FREMONT
Is this the lady?

TRACY
Yes, that's her! Do you know her?

FREMONT
Yes I do.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DILLMAN'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Valerie calmly stands by an ATS vehicle as Cool Agent snaps a
picture of her with his phone and works on his phone.

Martin touches a bump forming by his non-blackened eye.

MARTIN
Why... Who are you?

VALERIE
You don't know?

MARTIN
How should I --

Cool Agent taps his arm.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
-- What?!

He shows his phone to Martin.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(to Valerie)
You're Valerie Dentner?

VALERIE
Yes.

Her voice lowers to a mumble.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
I'm getting tired of being asked.

Martin coughs.

MARTIN
Well, Miss Dentner, I suppose I
should call your father and --

VALERIE
-- Why?

MARTIN
To see what he wants me to do.

VALERIE
What would you do if I wasn't
Damian Dentner's daughter?

MARTIN
I'd, take you back to ATS and lock
you in a secure cell.

VALERIE
Then do it.

Valerie gets into the ATS vehicle.

MARTIN

Do what?

VALERIE

Lock me up.

Valerie shuts the door and closes her eyes.

Martin and Cool Agent look at each other. Martin waves him to get in the car.

MARTIN

Great.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Damian stares at the ceiling, the landline phone against his ear. Doris sets a tray containing a dainty tea set with sugar and cream on his desk.

DAMIAN

(into phone)

And where is she now?

Doris prepares a cup of tea. Damian's voice lowers.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

No, leave her. I'll call tomorrow.

Damian hangs up and regards the photo of his family. Doris hands him the cup. He accepts.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Doris, what am I doing wrong?

Doris heads to the door.

DORIS

I couldn't say, sir.

DAMIAN

I mean, how do I get her to listen?

Doris stops. Damian stares at his cup as he swirls the tea.

DORIS

My father used to say, "Listening can start or end on either side of a conversation, but it should really start with you."

Doris exits. Damian chugs his tea.

INT. ATS SECURE CELL - NIGHT

Valerie sits on a cot, in an enclosed room but for the small window above her and steel barred window on the door.

At a clanking metal sound, she rushes to the door. Eric arrives with a tray of food.

VALERIE
Is he coming?

Eric slides the tray through a slot at the base of the door.

ERIC
No, you're here for the night.

Eric heads back down the hallway.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Think of it as a time to reflect.

Valerie ignores the food, tears escaping her eyes.

INT. BURNT OUT AUTO REPAIR SHOP - NIGHT

Fremont sits at a plywood table illuminated by a hanging naked bulb. Behind him, a partially burnt sign saying, "Jameson & Son's Auto" and a rusting workbench is visible.

Art sits across the table looking through a pair of reading glasses as he plays solitaire.

ART
Are they settled?

FREMONT
Yeah, Murrey and Della took them to the Hive.

ART
You said you had a plan?

FREMONT
Kind of.

Art sets another card.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
It's more of a possibility. I don't know how it will end, or if the beginning will be the end.

ART
So, it could be our end?

Art moves a stack of cards to another stack.

FREMONT
Or it could be just what we need to
finish this.

Art sets the deck down and removes his glasses.

ART
Alright, what's your possibility?

INT. ATS SECURE CELL - DAY

Light streams into Valerie's cell as she paces. The metal clanking noise draws her to the cell's door as Eric opens it.

ERIC
Come on, I'm taking you home.

VALERIE
Where's my father?

Eric walks away. Valerie hesitates then follows.

INT. WEST GREENFORD - ERIC'S WHITE HUMMER - DAY

Eric's Hummer pulls onto the street. Valerie's finger creates invisible designs on the passenger side window.

ERIC
Don't mark up my window.

VALERIE
Is it yours, or just a token for
doing the dirty work?

Eric's face remains emotionless.

ERIC
I worked hard to buy this vehicle
and plan for it to last.

Eric stops at a light.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You could achieve something if you
worked hard.

Outside Valerie's window a bushy-bearded man (Murrey), wearing suspenders and a side satchel bag, leans against a fence. The man glances up from a thick book and smiles.

Eric drives on. Valerie turns and sees the man shove the book into his bag as he walks away.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Your father just wants --

VALERIE
-- Stop. Just, don't obstruct my life.

ERIC
Sure, I wouldn't want to impede your aimless course.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DAY

Murrey walks down a street lined with boarded up shops. Fremont strolls up from between a couple shops.

FREMONT
Well?

Murrey picks up a plastic cup and places it on an overflowing garbage can. It tumbles off.

MURREY
Just came out.

FREMONT
Thanks. See ya later.

Fremont jogs off. Murrey corkscrews the cup into the top of the garbage can.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sunlight shines in through a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows. Damian watches SHUFFLING WESTFORDERS on the street.

He walks back to his large desk where there is a picture of a beaming young Valerie and Jenny. He focuses on young Valerie.

Eric enters the office.

DAMIAN
Is she home?

ERIC

Yes.

DAMIAN

How was she?

Damian motions to a leather chair opposite his desk. Eric sits.

ERIC

Irritated, but she was no problem.

DAMIAN

No doubt being in the cell reformed her outlook.

Eric looks Damian square in the face.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

What is it?

Eric remains silent.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Say it!

ERIC

I don't think it made a difference to have her stay --

DAMIAN

-- but it could with time.

ERIC

But can we risk it?

Damian and Eric stare at each other. Damian looks at Young Valerie. Eric follows his eyes.

ERIC (CONT'D)

She's not a child anymore.

Eric walks to the door.

ERIC (CONT'D)

It only takes a small gust of wind to destroy a house of cards. Consider the greater good, Damian.

DAMIAN

I know.

Eric leaves. Damian spins the ring on his pinky as his focus moves to Jenny. As he looks, imaginary flames roar up from the bottom of the frame, enveloping her smiling face.

The roar is cut short when Damian slams the photo face down on the desk. Sweat is visible on his brow.

He presses the sides of his watch. The face opens and reveals a compartment. Damian pulls out a small red and white pill.

He considers the pill and then replaces it in the watch. He sets the picture frame upright and dials on his phone.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Doris, I want you to do something.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Valerie heads to the front door, purse in hand, as Damian enters through it. She attempts to get past him. Damian shuts the door.

DAMIAN
 Going out?

VALERIE
 Obviously.

DAMIAN
 You may want this.

He opens the hall closet and pulls out a wheeled suitcase.

VALERIE
 Why is --

DAMIAN
 -- you may be gone awhile.

Damian opens the door, revealing a dark ATS vehicle outside. Cool Agent stands by the driver's door while Fiery Agent and Nervous Agent flank the back passenger door.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 You're going to the oxygen mask
 factory. Since you like Westforders
 so much, why not help them on the
 assembly line.

Damian pushes the suitcase toward her. Valerie grabs the handle and marches past. He grabs the purse from her hand.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

This can stay, all you need is at
the factory.

Valerie's rigid form walks to the vehicle.

EXT. DENTNER MANSION - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Cool Agent gets in the driver's seat as Fiery Agent tosses Valerie's bag into the trunk. Nervous Agent opens the back door for Valerie.

Nervous Agent, Valerie, and Fiery Agent sit in the back with Valerie in the middle. They drive off.

INT. ATS VEHICLE - DAY

Valerie looks at Fiery Agent who has a swollen, purplish mark on his cheek.

VALERIE

What happened?

Fiery Agent gives her a glance.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Right... When I...

Valerie watches run-down shops of West Greenford go by.

They stop at a stoplight and Valerie sees Murrey leaning against the pole.

He makes eye contact with her as the vehicle moves. She looks back but Murrey is gone.

There is a loud pop and the car swerves. Cool Agent pulls over and investigates.

COOL AGENT

(to the agents)

It's a flat.

Nervous Agent gets out followed by Fiery Agent. Valerie starts to follow.

FIERY AGENT

(to Valerie)

Stay put.

He slams the door. Valerie turns to the other door.

VALERIE

Yeah, I don't think so.

She shoves it open.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - MAIN STREET - DAY

The yells of the agents follow Valerie as she races across the street.

NERVOUS AGENT (O.S.)

Hey!

FIERY AGENT (O.S.)

Stop her!

COOL AGENT (O.S.)

Get after her!

As Valerie runs, Della trips and falls into a garbage can in front of her. Its contents strew across the sidewalk. Valerie takes a quick left into a busy side street.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - MARKET STREET - DAY

Valerie squeezes between CROWDS OF WESTFORDERS browsing in front of small stall shops. Most people wear oxygen masks.

Some people move aside as the agents race past, while others move together and are shoved aside.

A fruit cart suddenly rolls into the middle of the street and Fiery Agent crashes into it. Cool Agent crashes into him and Nervous Agent narrowly misses the pair. Nervous Agent stops.

FIERY AGENT

(to Nervous Agent)

Don't lose her!

Nervous Agent continues the chase. The other agents get up but a crowd forms around them. They push people aside.

Valerie hits a wall of people and makes her way to the side of the street and down an alley.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - MARKET STREET ALLEY - DAY

Large worn Oriental Rugs hang between the two buildings forming the sides of the alley. Valerie wrestles through them and comes to a high wall in her path.

An Oriental Rug covers the wall of one of the buildings.

She attempts to climb over the high wall but spins around at an agent's muffled yell.

NERVOUS AGENT (O.S.)

This way!

Valerie tries climbing over again. The sound of rugs being swatted grows louder and the voices become clearer.

COOL AGENT (O.S.)

Around this rug.

FIERY AGENT (O.S.)

I know!

Valerie grabs a broken piece of cement and faces the hanging rugs. A hand reaches out from behind the rug on the building and pulls Valerie behind it.

Fiery Agent and Cool Agent appear and inspect the brick wall. Nervous Agent arrives.

COOL AGENT

You actually saw her come this way?

NERVOUS AGENT

Yeah... At least, I think she did.

FIERY AGENT

Well, did she or not?

NERVOUS AGENT

I'm positive she did.

FIERY AGENT

Bet your life on it?

COOL AGENT

Stop it! Let's go, she's not here.

Nervous Agent studies the rug on the side of the building.

NERVOUS AGENT

Do you think she went behind that?

He grabs the rug's edge and yanks. It stays put. The other agents join him as he wrestles with the rug.

COOL AGENT

Forget it. It's glued down.

NERVOUS AGENT
Doesn't that seem strange?

FIERY AGENT
No, it doesn't! This is West
Greenford.

COOL AGENT
Come on.

Cool Agent and Fiery Agent run back through the hanging rugs.
Nervous Agent glances once more at the rug before following.

INT. WEST GREENFORD - HIDDEN TUNNEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Valerie sits against a cement wall while Fremont stands by a
brick wall listening. He pushes the wall outward. It pivots
on a hinge at its middle, allowing him to peek outside.

Valerie drops the cement piece as she takes in the blackened
glass panels covering the ceiling.

Light shines through areas where the black paint chipped off.
At the far end of the room, stairs head underground. Fremont
closes the wall.

FREMONT
Close, huh?

He waits.

VALERIE
What? Should I say thank you?...
Fine, thank you.

Fremont heads to the stairs.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

He disappears.

Valerie looks down the now empty stairs.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Fremont?

Valerie scurries down the stairs.

INT. GREENFORD TUNNEL SYSTEM - DAY

The stairs lead to a dimly lit train platform. Valerie almost falls off onto rusting train tracks. The lights are set in the arched ceiling of the tunnel.

Down the tunnel, Valerie sees Fremont disappear. Valerie follows and notices a tunnel leading away from the tracks.

She heads down it. Valerie's pursuit of Fremont continues a short time with her losing and finding him in the maze of tunnels.

A soft glow of light appears, growing brighter until she reaches an arched opening and enters a bright cavern.

INT. THE HIVE - MAIN HUB - DAY

Valerie looks around the hexagon shaped room, a passageway in each wall, and up at the high domed ceiling.

FAF MEMBERS, Fafers, chat in groups, tinker with odds and ends at tables, and enter or exit through one of the other five passageways.

FREMONT (O.S.)

It's something, huh?

VALERIE

Is this still West Greenford?

FREMONT

Yup, well the underneath part, and then some.

Fremont indicates the room.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Welcome to The Hive.

VALERIE

The what?

FREMONT

The Hive, also known as FAF Headquarters. We're Freedom Air Fighters... Fafers.

He crosses the room. Valerie trails behind.

Fafers fill tranquilizers at tables and check dart guns. Most ignore her except STRONG FAFER (20s) and THIN FAFER (20s) who give her a quick glance.

Fremont stops by a passageway. As Valerie arrives, a voice echoes across the room.

 AMBER (O.S.)
That's her!

Amber runs toward her with Lyle and Tracy close behind. Amber wraps her arms around Valerie's waist. Fafers grow interested.

 VALERIE
Uh, hi.

 TRACY
Thank you so much.

Tracy reaches over her daughter and gives Valerie a hug.

 VALERIE
Uh, you're welcome...

She tries to step back but Tracy and Amber cling to her.

 LYLE
Come on, let the girl breath.

Tracy and Amber let go.

 LYLE (CONT'D)
 (to Valerie)
We are truly thankful.

 VALERIE
It, it was nothing. But how did you
end up here?

Fremont looks at a wall camera and enters the passageway.

INT. THE HIVE - CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Art sees Fremont on a computer screen look at the muted camera and disappear. Amber is acting out their escape.

Fremont enters the hexagon shaped room, smaller than the previous. Long tables with computers line the room manned by a handful of CONTROL FAFERS.

He joins Art in viewing the screen.

 ART
What did she say?

FREMONT
Haven't talked with her yet.

Art pulls out a Jack-of-Clubs and flips it from the back to the front of his hand.

ART
We still need time to get things in place.

FREMONT
We've had plenty of time, Art! We need to speed things up. ATS came for two kids on the same day... and they would have both been taken if not for her.

ART
Fremont, are your motives for the good of FAF or yourself?

FREMONT
It's for freedom, Art. Freedom.

ART
But is it freedom for all or your freedom?

ART (CONT'D)
Can we trust her not to betray us?

FREMONT
It's a possibility.

ART
Go get her.

Art heads toward the passage entrance. He offers his hand as Fremont and Valerie enter the Control Center.

ART (CONT'D)
(to Valerie)
Art Jameson.

Valerie takes it.

VALERIE
Valerie.

The three head down another passage.

INT. THE HIVE - ART'S OFFICE - DAY

Art, Fremont, and Valerie enter a smaller hexagon room. A desk, made from paint splattered sawhorses and a door, has blueprints and schematics strewn across it.

Four metal folding chairs are scattered around the room. A worn rug, like in the alley but smaller, hangs on a wall.

Against another wall rests a weathered patio table with a coffee maker, coffee supplies, and mismatched mugs on top.

Art, Fremont, and Valerie at the door desk.

ART

Do you know who we are, Miss Dentner?

VALERIE

You're Freedom Air Fighters, and it's Valerie.

ART

Do you know what we do?

Valerie shakes her head.

ART (CONT'D)

FAF's goal is to free everyone from Air Tax Service's control. We have people, like Fremont, who have infiltrated ATS to gather information in order to expose their lies and destroy --

VALERIE

-- But ATS isn't all bad. I mean, helping the environment is for the good of --

FREMONT

-- You really think forcing people to pay taxes on the air they breathe helps the environment?... It isn't even everyone. Why is East Greenford exempt?

ART

Fremont.

Art turns to Valerie.

ART (CONT'D)

What you think, isn't always what is... Why did you help Amber and her family?

VALERIE

It wasn't right. She deserved to be with her family.

ART

But it was ATS.

VALERIE

Then maybe it was a mistake. There could be a logical explanation. As you say, what you think isn't always what is.

FREMONT (O.S.)

Does murder have a logical explanation?... Who gave ATS control over life and death?!... Who?

Fremont walks stiffly back through the passageway.

ART

(to Valerie)

It isn't just parents who lost their kids... It goes the other way... If not for you, Amber would have been taken.

VALERIE

Why am I here? So you could thank me personally?

ART

We want --

MURREY (O.S.)

(Irish accent)

-- I see she made it safe and sound as expected.

Murrey enters and shakes her hand.

MURREY (CONT'D)

Name's Murrey, and you're Valerie.

VALERIE

You're the man at the stoplights!

MURREY
It must be the beard.

He inspects the desk.

MURREY (CONT'D)
No coffee, Art? Did you even offer?

ART
We're having a bit of a discussion,
Murrey.

Murrey heads to the coffee maker.

MURREY
The best reason for coffee. Want
some, Val?

VALERIE
Decaf?

Murrey's expression freezes on his face.

MURREY
If that's what you want.

ART
(to Valerie)
FAF needs --

A scraping noise interrupts him. Murrey pulls a chair closer to the coffeemaker.

ART (CONT'D)
FAF needs someone working for ATS
with higher clearance to access
files.

VALERIE
That has nothing to do with me. I
don't work for ATS.

ART
But you could, you're Damian
Dentner's daughter. You could gain
access to files none of my people
can. And I'm sure your father has
useful information somewhere in
your house too.

In the background, Murrey pulls out the thick book from his satchel and begins reading.

ART (CONT'D)

With your help, we could destroy
ATS sooner.

VALERIE

You're so set on destroying ATS,
but what about the people working
there? Or the people of East
Greenford?

ART

Many people have been blinded by
ATS. When the truth is known,
hopefully people will side with our
cause.

VALERIE

And those who don't?

ART

We used to have fair laws in
Greenford, and a judicial system.
We simply want freedom for all
again.

VALERIE

And what about my father?

ART

What about --

VALERIE

-- Maybe he doesn't know as much as
you think. Would he get a break?

ART

If he truly doesn't know what is
happening and has a change of
heart, yes... But is that likely?

MURREY (O.S.)

Coffee's ready!

Murrey walks over with three mugs, setting one in front of
Valerie and Art. Valerie goes to drink but tilts the empty
mug toward Murrey.

VALERIE

It's empty.

MURREY

You said you wanted decaf.

Murrey takes a drink of is full mug.

MURREY (CONT'D)
 Ah, come with me, it's about time
 for dinner. There should be...
 decaf.

Murrey walks with Valerie to the passageway. Art stops Murrey
 as Valerie exits.

ART
 Murrey --

MURREY
 -- Trust me. Food will do us all
 good.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DAY

As dusk descends, Fremont walks by the Styrofoam cup still
 crowning the garbage can and between two boarded up buildings
 to a street lined with boarded up homes.

EXT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Fremont approaches a paint chipped Cape Cod and pulls a piece
 of plywood away from the side of the house, revealing a
 broken window.

Turning on his phone's flashlight, he enters.

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

The light reveals a dust covered living room. A magazine,
 "Today's Science," rests on a couch facing a blackened
 fireplace.

A worn easy chair holds a basket full of yarn. Toy cars and a
 looping track are on the floor. Fremont pulls a red toy car
 from the yarn basket.

The furniture remains the same as a muted scene unfolds like
 an overlay on the dusty living room.

FLASHBACK:

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

SOPHIA BASSET (30s), sits in the chair untangling yarn in the
 basket. LOUIS BASSET (40s), lays on the couch flipping
 through the science magazine.

YOUNG FREMONT (10), wearing thick glasses, races a toy car along the looping track. It flies through the air and hits Louis' magazine. Louis abandons his magazine.

Louis and Young Fremont send a red car flying into Sophia's basket. She sets the basket aside and joins them.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

The overlay dissipates like smoke at the sound of a vehicle speeding by. Fremont shoves the toy car into his pocket.

He covers the light until the sound of the vehicle fades. He turns the light toward the fireplace and removes blackened bricks.

He pulls out a 14x10 inch black plastic case. Fremont starts to open it when he hears another car.

He taps his light off and peeks through a crack in the boards covering a broken front window.

EXT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

A black vehicle slows as he passes the front of the Cape Cod. The back window rolls down and a hand appears, throwing out a bit of trash.

QUICK FLASHES:

EXT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

-- A man's suit coated arm rests in the open window of a black vehicle as he snaps his fingers.

-- Louis and Sophia lay in the front yard, lifeless.

-- A weeping Young Fremont is dragged away.

END QUICK FLASHES

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Fremont clings to the black case as the noise of the vehicle fades.

INT. DAMIAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Damian faces Eric.

DAMIAN
Where is she?!

Eric stares back steadily.

ERIC
We're still looking but we are not
ruling out the possibility --

DAMIAN
-- There's no way she could have
just vanished.

ERIC
If, she's been kidnapped by an
individual... or group... you will
probably get a call.

DAMIAN
Group? In other words, we could be
dealing with an insurgence. Is that
what you're saying?

ERIC
Yes, sir.

DAMIAN
Then, I had better get a call
tonight, Eric... Or I had better
see Valerie here in person.

INT. THE HIVE - MAIN HUB - NIGHT

Tables run down the center of the room with tables of food to
the side. Fafers pile food onto trays.

Valerie and Murrey, with food, sit with Ann Bellard.

MURREY
Ann, I want you to meet Valerie.
She's new to the The Hive as well.

Ann looks at Valerie through damp eyes.

ANN
(whispers)
Nice to meet ya.

VALERIE

Same.

Murrey focuses on his tray of food.

MURREY

Nothing quite like a good meal...
Ann, Valerie saw Toby at ATS.

ANN

Did you say anything to him? Is he
alright?

VALERIE

No, I wasn't able to say anything
to him but... he seemed alright...
Ann, what happened?

ANN

ATS. I got sick and lost my job at
the factory. Couldn't pay the tax,
so they...

DELLA (O.S.)

Now hear this, dearie...

Della sits beside Ann.

DELLA (CONT'D)

...we've got a plan, but you've got
to stay strong. Hear me?

Della turns to Murrey.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Ain't that right, love?... Murrey!
You reading that musty old thing
again. There's a crisis here.

Murrey looks up from his thick book.

MURREY

Sounds like you've got it in hand,
love. And I do believe this book
may be the key --

DELLA

-- to everything.

MURREY

That's right.

Murrey continues reading.

DELLA
 (to Valerie)
 You Valerie? I'm Della...

She indicates Murrey.

DELLA (CONT'D)
 ...This old coot's wife.

Ann gives a loud sneeze.

DELLA (CONT'D)
 Let's get you to a bed, love, for a
 nice lie down.

Della and Ann leave. Valerie stares at Murrey's downcast head.

FREMONT (O.S.)
 You still reading that old book?

Fremont stands beside Valerie.

MURREY
 Just finishing up this passage.

He takes a moment to finish and closes the book.

MURREY (CONT'D)
 It'd be worth you reading it.
 There's a reason it was in that
 fire with the laws and chronicles.
 I believe they're words to live by.

FREMONT
 So you say. But it doesn't really
 help us now does it?

MURREY
 Well, probably more so than we
 think. If we would --

FREMONT
 -- Murrey, I need to talk with
 Valerie.

MURREY
 And I've got kitchen duty.

Murrey slides the book back into his satchel and picks up the trays before crossing the room.

VALERIE
(to Fremont)
Rude much?

FREMONT
I doubt you wanted to hear him
ramble about some musty old book he
recovered from a fire like two
decades ago... And I do need to
talk with you.

Valerie follows Fremont to one of the cavern walls. As they reach it, a staircase carved into the cavern wall is visible.

Fremont and Valerie ascend and stop on a small platform overlooking the cavern.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

VALERIE
For bringing me here?

FREMONT
For getting angry.

Valerie stares at him.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
What?

VALERIE
Is that all you wanted to say?

Fremont pulls out the red toy car and hands it to her.

FREMONT
That's the last bit of my
childhood... My father was a
scientist dedicated to finding ways
to care for life, all life, in
Greenford...

Fremont takes the car back.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
Dad went to work for ATS believing
they had the same vision of caring
for people and nature alike. Soon,
ATS became the ruling power in
Greenford and divided it... ATS
executives were soon moving to the
East.

(MORE)

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Those living there who were not part of ATS' upper echelon were relocated in the West. My dad was told to move to the East... He refused.

Fremont studies the cavern wall.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

He continued working for ATS in hopes of changing it. Then, those in West Greenford were taxed for breathing. My father confronted The Head and was fired. Dad swore to stop ATS...

Fremont presses hard on the wall near a crack. There's a click and the wall moves inward, outlining a door.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

...ATS stopped him instead.

Fremont pushes the door open.

VALERIE

How do you know it was ATS?

FREMONT

After my parents and I were dragged from our home, the last words I heard before the gunshots were, "By order of The Head..."

VALERIE

What about you?

He motions for her to follow and they go through the door.

INT. ATS OFFICES - BREAK ROOM - DAY

A marble counter with a sink runs the length of the room and is set on hardwood cupboards. Matching cupboards line the wall above the counter.

A small window is set into the back wall.

Paige pulls an espresso machine to the front of the counter and is careful not to touch her pantsuit against it.

She easily pulls out a cup from the overhead cupboard, examines it, and replaces it.

MARTIN (O.S.)
Not more than spotless, huh?

Martin stands in the doorway, his two black eyes poorly concealed with foundation.

PAIGE
Don't you agents have your own break room, Martin?... And what happened to your face?

MARTIN
Nothing. I just... didn't sleep well.

Paige pulls out a cup.

PAIGE
Uh-huh... So, what did you want?

Paige prepares her espresso.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
Well?

MARTIN
(whispers)
What's Iris' favorite food?

PAIGE
Food?

MARTIN
Yeah, I want to --

ERIC (O.S.)
-- When did socializing become more important than your job, Martin?

Eric's frame fills the doorway.

MARTIN
Never, sir. I was just asking Paige a quick question... It was definitely work related...

Martin looks over at Paige who ignores him.

ERIC
If you're so intent on working... Why are you ignoring my calls?

Martin fumbles for his phone.

MARTIN
I didn't receive any...

He looks at the phone.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
I must have turned the sound down
on accident, sir.

ERIC
That must be it...

He glances over at Paige who is busy with her espresso.

ERIC (CONT'D)
(to Martin)
How do those black eyes feel?

A red hue covers Martin's face except where foundation is
caked on.

MARTIN
They're fine, sir.

Eric turns to Paige.

ERIC
Have you heard from Valerie by any
chance, Paige?

PAIGE
No, Mr. McPherson. Why?

ERIC
Just wondering.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Martin, get a couple men and come
to my office. Do you think you can
do that?

Martin rushes from the room. Eric follows. Paige looks after
them over the top of her espresso.

INT. THE HIVE - FILE ROOM - DAY

Valerie and Fremont enter a square room with a table and two
chairs against a side wall.

Fremont walks to the other side wall half-lined with file
cabinets. A hanging rug covers the middle of the back wall.

Valerie runs her hand along the nameplates of file cabinets lining the front wall. They read, "Civil," "Judicial," "Rights," and "Constitution."

VALERIE
What's in here?

FREMONT
What's left of old Greenford.

Fremont pulls a file and hands her a faded photo from it.

Young Fremont stares blankly back at Valerie. His gray coveralls have a label reading "027."

FREMONT (CONT'D)
That's me... before I was good-looking.

Valerie stares at him.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
I was one of the first in the "Compliance Program"... A program designed to indoctrinate children into believing the ATS way is essential in preserving all living things. Children who conform are sent to work in peon positions at the ATS offices as an adult... for the good of all.

VALERIE
Is that how you got your micro-chipping position at ATS?

FREMONT
Yeah, though I started as a cleaner. I've worked my way up but can only go so far as a "conformity kid."

VALERIE
Is that what you are? Conformed?

FREMONT
That's what I had to be.

Valerie studies Fremont's photo.

FLASHBACK:

INT. ATS OFFICES - NOTED RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Toby is dragged by Calm Guard and Angry Guard.

CALM GUARD (V.O.)
Doubt this one will make it through
the program.

ANGRY GUARD (V.O.)
You think.

END FLASHBACK

INT. THE HIVE - FILE ROOM - DAY

VALERIE
What happens if a child doesn't...
make it through the program?

FREMONT
He's sent to the oxygen mask
factory.

VALERIE
Along the assembly line?

Fremont takes the photo.

FREMONT
The Carbon Monoxide Center.

Fremont heads back to the cabinet.

VALERIE
What do they do there?

Fremont shoves the file into its drawer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Fremont?

FREMONT
They clean the returned carbon
monoxide canisters.

VALERIE
What does that mean?

FREMONT
What do you think?

VALERIE
Do they, get sick?

Fremont slams the drawer shut.

FREMONT
Yeah, they get sick... and then
they usually die!... That's why we
need you to work with us. You can
help stop ATS from hurting these
kids, and everyone.

VALERIE
Alright... What do I do?

FREMONT
Great, let's chat with Art, but
first...

Fremont walks to the rug on the wall.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
...you should know.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Damian eats at the table. There is an empty place setting at
the other end. Doris enters with a water decanter.

DAMIAN
Anything?

DORIS
No, sir.

She fills his glass and leaves.

EXT. EAST GREENFORD - WOODS BEHIND DENTNER MANSION - NIGHT

The full moon brightens the night, revealing a large boulder
sunk into the ground and surrounded by trees.

A light appears at the base of the boulder as Fremont crawls
out from a large crevice, holding a flashlight. Valerie
follows.

They push through thick brush. Valerie gets twigs stuck in
her hair.

VALERIE
I thought you were going to take me
home?

FREMONT

I did.

After walking a short distance, Fremont turns off the light and they crouch behind some bushes.

They view the back of Valerie's home, a warm light from the windows illuminating bits of the manicured lawn.

VALERIE

These are my woods?

FREMONT

Yeah, haven't you ever been in here before?

VALERIE

Was never allowed to.

FREMONT

Poor, sheltered girl.

VALERIE

Which way should we go from here?

FREMONT

You mean you. I got you home.

VALERIE

Right, we shouldn't be seen together.

Valerie starts to head straight to the back of the house. Fremont stops her.

FREMONT

Follow the woods down to the road and go around to the front. We don't need anyone thinking you came from the woods.

VALERIE

I know.

She walks away.

FREMONT

Valerie.

VALERIE

What?

Fremont presses the flashlight into her hand.

FREMONT

You may need this, but keep it low.

He pulls the twigs from her hair.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

You can do this... Bright Hair.

Valerie makes her way through the woods as Fremont heads back the way they came.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Damian throws the napkin from his lap to the table and gets up as Valerie enters. Valerie avoids his eyes.

VALERIE

Hello, Father.

Damian sits back down.

DAMIAN

Dinner's getting cold. Doris!

Doris appears, sees Valerie, and disappears again. Valerie takes a seat as Doris reappears with a full plate and stands to the side.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

(to Valerie)

Come to my study when you're finished.

He turns to Doris.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Be sure she comes.

Damian leaves the room.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Damian sits at his desk, his finger running the circumference of his watch. There's a soft knock at the door.

DAMIAN

Come in.

Valerie enters, eyes averted.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Valerie, sit down.

She moves to stand before his desk.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
I said --

VALERIE
-- I will work for ATS.

She looks at him.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
I want to work for ATS.

DAMIAN
I said, sit down.

Valerie complies.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Where were you?

VALERIE
Needed to think.

DAMIAN
Where?

VALERIE
No where in particular... I just...

Valerie looks at Damian.

QUICK FLASHBACK:

INT. DENTNER HOUSE - DAMIAN'S STUDY - DAY

Young Valerie sits on the edge of the chair, feet dangling.

YOUNG VALERIE
I won't do it again. I promise.

END QUICK FLASHBACK

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Damian focuses on Valerie.

VALERIE
 ...think about my actions, and what
 you told me about being a
 Dentner... I've learned what is
 important, Father. Give me a chance
 at ATS.

Damian looks at the photo of his family.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
 Give me a chance for Mom.

DAMIAN
 You should go to bed.

VALERIE
 But --

DAMIAN
 -- Now, Valerie.

Valerie marches to the door.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 I expect to see you at the offices
 tomorrow...

Valerie glances back. Damian indicates her hair.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 ...after you become presentable.

INT. ATS OFFICES - LOBBY - DAY

ATS WORKERS wait at elevators as Valerie crosses the room,
 black hair in place and briefcase in hand. She stops in front
 of Eric.

ERIC
 I heard you decided to do something
 worthwhile with your life.

VALERIE
 You're pep talk was a real winner.

ERIC
 Yes, I'm sure that's what did it.

They walk toward the elevators.

VALERIE
 Are we going to see my father?

Eric stops in front of an elevator set apart from the rest. He scans his badge on a panel and they enter.

INT. ATS OFFICES - ELEVATOR - DAY

They stand in front of a panel ranging from B to 20.

VALERIE
The Head then?

Eric scans his badge and presses "10."

ERIC
I'm taking you to your work space.

The elevator stops and Eric exits.

ERIC (CONT'D)
And I'm introducing you to your handler.

VALERIE
My what?

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR - DAY

They pass glass enclosed conference rooms and a room of computers and technical equipment.

As they pass the computer room, a sign on the door reads, "10 Server." Paige watches from inside at a computer.

They turn down narrower hallway containing small glass enclosed offices. Eric and Valerie enter one.

INT. ATS OFFICES - VALERIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Stacked boxes cover half the office. The other houses a desk with two chairs in front and one behind it. On the desk's edge is an untidy stack of files.

Valerie squeezes between a box stack and the desk to get behind the desk. Eric indicates the boxes.

ERIC
Enter this data into the computer.

VALERIE
Really? You know my skills would be best utilized in an executive capacity.

Eric looks beyond Valerie through the glass. Martin walks toward the office door.

ERIC
(to Valerie)
Finish this job and we'll see.

Martin enters.

ERIC (CONT'D)
This is your handler, Martin
Groomer... but I believe you've
met.

Eric leaves.

VALERIE
(to Martin)
I don't need a handler.

Martin straightens the stack of files on the desk.

MARTIN
And you didn't interfere with ATS
procedures either.

Valerie re-messes the file stack.

VALERIE
Alright, Mr. Raccoon, where should
we start?

Martin grabs a binder from the top of one of the boxes and plops it on the desk in front of Valerie.

MARTIN
You, can start by reading these
instructions and transfer data.
I...

Martin indicates the office located beyond the glass wall behind Valerie, identical to her's minus the boxes.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
...will be over there with these
wary eyes.

Martin exits.

Valerie pulls a small purse, notebook, and pencil from her briefcase, placing them near the desk's corner.

She begins reading the binder but looks over her shoulder at the office behind her. Martin looks at her.

Valerie shoves the pencil and notebook back into her briefcase. As she reaches for her purse, she knocks it off the desk.

It hits the floor and the top flips open. A make-up compact and red car spill out. Valerie picks up her purse and items, studying the car. She returns to the desk and begins work.

MONTAGE:

INT. ATS OFFICES - VALERIE'S OFFICE - DAY

-- She reads the binder and makes notes.

-- In a new outfit, she pulls files out of boxes and plops them on her desk.

-- In another outfit, she types at the computer and drinks from a mug nearby.

-- She continues to type. Her clothes continue to change as the piles of files on her desk dwindle, grow, and dwindle.

END MONTAGE

INT. ATS OFFICES - VALERIE'S OFFICE - DAY

While typing, the database suddenly closes. She notices a file on the desktop labelled "Compliance Program." She tries opening the file but it is password protected.

She grabs her mug and discovers it empty.

INT. ATS OFFICES - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Valerie stands with a mug of steaming liquid, looking out the window at the gray sky. A partially full coffee pot sits on the counter.

Martin enters and places a mug in the sink.

MARTIN

Hard at work?

VALERIE

You should know.

MARTIN
I know you're not interested in
helping ATS.

VALERIE
What do you know?

PAIGE (O.S.)
That is a good question.

Paige enters.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
(to Martin)
What do you know?

MARTIN
Go inhale an espresso, Paige....
and I hope it goes down the wrong
pipe.

He disappears out the door.

VALERIE
He doesn't seem to have a sense of
humor, does he?

PAIGE
Not one bit.

Paige prepares an espresso.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
You know he's the one taking Iris
to the Freedom Ball?

VALERIE
Serious?

PAIGE
I suppose we should be nicer to
him.

VALERIE
But do we? Don't you think it would
be fun to embarrass him at the
Ball?

PAIGE
Definitely... You plan on going
then?

VALERIE
No... I don't know.

PAIGE
How's the clerical work going?

VALERIE
You know?

PAIGE
Everyone knows.

Paige raises her hand and punctuates the air as if reading a news headline.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
"Daughter of The Head's Leading
Executive Assigned to Menial Task."
When news like that is heard, it is
difficult for people to keep it to
themselves.

Valerie refills her mug. Paige picks up her cup.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
I heard you interfered with the
agents. But you wouldn't dare,
right?

VALERIE
You make it sound like I said
everyone should have free air.

PAIGE
What you did was far worse.

VALERIE
I let emotions blind me to
reality...

The sun breaks through the clouds and lights up the break room.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
...but it won't happen again.

PAIGE
That's wise. ATS higher ups don't
appreciate being undermined...

She lifts her espresso cup.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
... or slacking on the job.

VALERIE
Then I should get back...

She heads to the door but turns back.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
You work in IT, right?

Paige nods.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Do you have passwords for file folders on my computer? I appear to be locked out.

PAIGE
You may not be allowed access.

VALERIE
Knowing I would be using that computer, why would the files be there if I couldn't have access?... Besides, as you say, the uppers don't like being undermined. They wouldn't take a chance, right?

Paige pulls out a pen and paper from a drawer, writes something, and hands it to Valerie.

PAIGE
This should work, but if asked... you have short-term memory loss.

The paper reads, "Harpoon."

INT. ATS OFFICES - VALERIE'S OFFICE - DAY

At her desk, Valerie pulls out her compact. She views Martin through the mirror, he glances up. She puts the compact away.

Valerie rests her gaze on the boxes. With pointed movements, she places them in a row behind her desk, first one layer, two, three, and then four.

She opens a file folder on her desk, enters data on the computer, and flips to the next page in the file. Martin strides in and indicates the box wall.

MARTIN
What's that?

VALERIE
They, are boxes.

MARTIN
Obviously. But why are they there?

VALERIE

I needed a way to organize the clutter. It would be a waste of company time to re-enter what I've already entered. Right?

MARTIN

As your handler, my job is to --

VALERIE

-- make sure I'm doing my job.

Valerie turns her monitor and file toward him.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Care to check?

MARTIN

I need more coffee.

He heads down the hallway.

Valerie minimizes the database page and clicks on the "Compliance Program" folder. A password window appears. Valerie types in "Harpoon."

A window pops up with files labelled with numbers.

Valerie clicks the "2959" file. She scans the contents and types on her phone before hurrying from the office.

INT. ATS OFFICES - OFFICE AREA HALLWAY - DAY

Fremont studies a file when his phone chimes. The text is from, "Bright Hair," and it reads, "Talk. Emergency."

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Damian paces before grabbing the phone. Someone knocks on the door.

DAMIAN

Come in!

Eric enters.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

I was just calling you.

Eric begins to sit.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
You won't be here long.

Eric straightens.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
How is she?

ERIC
There's nothing to report, sir. I
hear she is doing what we asked.

DAMIAN
You hear?

Damian rubs his watch face.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
I want you to know. You hear me?

ERIC
But of course.

Damian looks at some papers. Eric does not move.

DAMIAN
Still here?

ERIC
We may have a problem, sir... It
appears someone accessed a
"Compliance" folder on an
unauthorized computer.

DAMIAN
Who?

ERIC
We're still working on finding out.
But there is a possibility...

DAMIAN
Do you believe she accessed it?

ERIC
If she did...

DAMIAN
Who was in charge of keeping an eye
on her?

ERIC
I'm sure it wasn't her, sir.

DAMIAN

I hope not. But it proves we may have a mole in our midst. I hope you find him.

EXT. ATS OFFICES - ALLEYWAY - DAY

Fremont enters the alleyway from the offices and sees Valerie.

FREMONT

What's the Emergency?

VALERIE

We have to stop them?

FREMONT

Stop who?

VALERIE

ATS!

FREMONT

We are.

VALERIE

No, we have to stop them from moving him!

FREMONT

Moving who where?

VALERIE

Toby. He didn't make it in the program! They're moving him to the factory and we have to stop them, Fremont, we have to! What if he gets sick, or what if he...

FREMONT

How do you know, Valerie?

VALERIE

I, I found a file on my computer. A friend gave me the password.

FREMONT

I never saw you as being stupid.

VALERIE

How dare --

FREMONT

-- Yes, stupid. All we worked for and you... may have destroyed everything... Put everyone in harm's way.

VALERIE

I didn't tell anyone.

FREMONT

And your friend? And do you think ATS doesn't know the file was accessed?

He indicates the building he came from.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Now they'll be on the alert to something going on. They won't --

VALERIE

-- I had to do it... I had to know. Now I have to do something.

FREMONT

We will, but we have a greater goal here. We have to stay --

VALERIE

-- I saw it happen!... I saw Toby being taken, heard his mother's agony... and I didn't do anything. I almost did, but that doesn't count, does it?... I won't not do anything now. I know when he's moving and I plan to get him. Are you going to help or not?

Fremont considers her.

FREMONT

Alright, but we'll do it my way.

VALERIE

Of course.

Fremont pulls out scrap paper and pencil. He writes something down.

FREMONT

For starters, you'll need this.

He hands her the paper.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
Here's what we'll do.

INT. ATS OFFICES - VALERIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Valerie enters data. The time on the computer reads "2:55."
She glances up to see Martin walk by with a mug.

Valerie takes her phone and walks down the hall to a
stairwell door. She pulls out the paper Fremont gave her,
types a number on the keypad, and enters the stairwell.

INT. ATS OFFICES - NOTED RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Fremont stands near the tall plants, holding a briefcase. The
receptionist is on the phone as PEOPLE sit and stand around.
The video on the TV plays in the background.

INTERCUT - VALERIE'S MOVEMENTS/FREMONT'S MOVEMENTS

Valerie races down the stairs and enters another floor.

Fremont glances at his watch. It reads, "2:57." He reaches
into his pocket and pulls out a small contraption with an
antennae and button on it. He pushes the button.

Valerie peeks through the stairwell door at a deserted
hallway.

In the Noted Reception Area, there is a loud squeal and the
TV blacks out. As everyone covers their ears, Fremont escapes
through the stairwell door and races up the stairs.

Valerie walks down the hallway. Her phone reads, "2:59."

Fremont types in a code at a door and walks into an empty
hallway. He speeds down it and enters another stairwell.

Valerie approaches a fire alarm.

Fremont stops at another door and pulls a gun from a holster
hidden beneath his jacket before entering.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DESERTED RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Calm Guard and Angry Guard sit in a bare reception area. Toby
sits between them. His coveralls appear loose.

ANGRY GUARD
Why are we here?

CALM GUARD
 Got a memo to bring 2-9-5-9 here
 before heading to the factory...

Angry Guard indicates the empty room.

CALM GUARD (CONT'D)
 ...It was signed "Damian Dentner."

ANGRY GUARD
 Still.

Fremont appears behind them as he enters and aims the gun.

CALM GUARD
 If Damian Dentner says be here, I
 say --

He hurtles to his feet.

ANGRY GUARD
 What --

Angry Guard grabs at his neck as Calm Guard collapses. Angry
 Guard falls to the floor. Fremont appears in front of Toby.

FREMONT
 Want to go home?

Fremont pulls out clothes from his briefcase.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
 Put these on.

Fremont pulls the darts out of the guards and walks back the
 way he came, reloading his gun. He looks down the empty
 hallway.

Toby appears at his side dressed in faded clothes and a
 billed cap. Fremont replaces his gun. The fire alarm sounds.

FREMONT (CONT'D)
 That's our cue.

INT. THE HIVE - CONTROL CENTER - NIGHT

Fremont watches Valerie pace.

VALERIE
 I don't regret what we did. But ATS
 knows someone on the inside did it.
 They won't rest until they find the
 culprit.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

With Martin reporting on me, it won't take long before they know it's me. And then what?

FREMONT

Don't worry, they won't link it back to you.

VALERIE

How do you know?

FREMONT

Because I gave you my ID code.

VALERIE

What were you thinking!

FREMONT

I knew it would be beneficial all around. It was the only way. ATS is looking for the inside man, right?

Valerie avoids his eyes.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Right?... If evidence points to me, they won't be suspicious of you, right?

She finally looks at him.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

I can't go through the ranks any faster, no matter how much ATS trusts me. With your connections, you can gain fast access. The only thing you lack is trust. We'll have to figure that one out.

VALERIE

But they'll throw you in a cell or worse.

FREMONT

No, they won't. I will have, disappeared.

VALERIE

But what if --

FREMONT

-- it's for the greater good.

ART (O.S.)
Unfortunately.

Art stands at the entrance of the passageway leading to his office. He flips an Ace card between his fingers as he approaches a computer.

ART (CONT'D)
I don't like how you compromised
our mission, but we can't change
it...

He gazes at a monitor. In the screen, Ann holds Toby.

ART (CONT'D)
...and another child is safe.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Damian's fist slams down on his desk.

DAMIAN
A memo!

Angry Guard and Calm Guard avert their eyes.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Care to try again?

ANGRY GUARD
Well --

Calm Guard stops him with a kick as Eric enters with a tablet.

DAMIAN
(to guards)
Get out!

He turns to Eric.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Deal with them.

Eric indicates for the guards to leave and they do. Eric hands the tablet to Damian.

ERIC
We know who took Toby Bellard.

The tablet shows a picture of Fremont.

DAMIAN

Basset.

ERIC

His identification code was used to
access the boy.

DAMIAN

So he's our mole.

Eric takes the tablet and types something.

ERIC

I believe he didn't do it alone.

He hands Damian the tablet.

DAMIAN

That proves nothing.

Damian looks out the window. A FATHER holds the hand of a
YOUNG CHILD as they shuffle under a street lamp on the
sidewalk.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Nothing.

INT. GREENFORD TUNNEL SYSTEM - NIGHT

Valerie, Fremont, and Art step out of a tunnel and onto the
rusting train tracks.

ART

(to Fremont)

After showing her out, make
yourself scarce.

Fremont heads down the tracks.

ART (CONT'D)

(to Valerie)

I hope you find a way to gain ATS'
trust...

Valerie turns to follow at Fremont.

ART (CONT'D)

...because as of now, you've lost
mine.

Art disappears back into the tunnel and Valerie moves to
catch up to Fremont.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Eric and Damian stand by the window.

ERIC

Basset was assigned to be her micro-chipping specialist. I could be wrong, but I have a plan to know for sure.

Damian rubs the face of his watch before heading back to his desk. He motions Eric to have a seat.

INT. ATS OFFICES - VALERIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Valerie sits at her desk typing in data.

PAIGE (O.S.)

Nice office.

She stands in the open doorway.

VALERIE

Cozy isn't it.

Paige moves a box to sit down.

PAIGE

I haven't seen you in the break room these last couple days.

Valerie finishes with a folder and places it in a box.

VALERIE

Been busy.

She closes the box and adds it to the box wall behind her desk. She sets another box on her desk and pulls out a file.

PAIGE

I see that.

Valerie continues typing.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Do you really think all this work is going to move you up in the ranks?

VALERIE

Eric said --

PAIGE
-- Eric always says things.

VALERIE
What else can I do?

PAIGE
Well, maybe this will give you a
hint.

Paige pulls out an envelope and holds it out to her.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
This is from --

IRIS (O.S.)
-- Knockity-knock...

Iris breezes in, paisley dress flowing, bangles jingling, and
hair in orderly chaos.

IRIS (CONT'D)
...So this is your beautiful --

Iris inspects the room.

IRIS (CONT'D)
-- ly Officey office.

She curls up on the other chair.

IRIS (CONT'D)
What a day. I've been shopping for
the Freedom Ball.

PAIGE
Is this your fourth time shopping?

Iris flips through a file.

IRIS
Fifth. What is all this?

Valerie places the file out of Iris' reach.

VALERIE
Private information.

IRIS
It's fine, my daddy is privy to all
the important stuff anyway. He says
it's fine I'm here. It's actually
happenstance I saw you two. I came
to see --

MARTIN (O.S.)

-- Iris?

The three women turn to see Martin standing in the door.

IRIS

Marty Boy!

Iris rushes to him.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I got a new dress for the Ball.

Martin's face glows like a sunburn without a trace of black eyes.

MARTIN

I thought you said the last one was perfect?

IRIS

Oh, it was, but this one is more perfecter. We need to talk about what you'll wear.

MARTIN

Again?

IRIS

Silly boy. Come on!

Iris tugs Martin out the door. Paige and Valerie burst out laughing.

PAIGE

The Ball should be fun.

VALERIE

Oh, I needed that.

PAIGE

That bad?

VALERIE

I'm treading mud down here. I could be an asset to ATS.

PAIGE

Then this should yank you from the mire and send you right up to the top...

She places the envelope in front of Valerie.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
...literally.

INT. ATS BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator door opens with Valerie standing alone inside with her briefcase.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAY

She steps into a tastefully decorated area containing a desk and chair. On the desk is a computer, multi-line phone, and nameplate reading, "Valerie Dentner, Receptionist."

Eric stands near a crash bar door labelled "Emergency Exit."

ERIC
Welcome, Miss Dentner.

Eric indicates the desk.

ERIC (CONT'D)
This is your new work space.

Valerie inspects the area.

VALERIE
No boxes?

ERIC
This is an executive floor, Miss Dentner. You are expected to keep it orderly.

He indicates the computer.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Everything you need is on there. Instructions are in the drawer to the right.

Valerie stows her briefcase and pulls a binder from the drawer.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Should anyone arrive for Mr. Dentner...

He indicates one set of double doors with an ID card reader and a nameplate reading "Damian Dentner, Executive," by it.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 ...or myself.

He points to a single door with a nameplate reading "Eric McPherson, Executive Assistant."

ERIC (CONT'D)
 Follow the instructions in the binder. Any questions?

Valerie glances at another set of ornate double doors with an ID card reader and no nameplate.

VALERIE
 What if someone asks for The Head?

ERIC
 You will contact me or Mr. Dentner. Any other questions?

VALERIE
 Why change my job?

ERIC
 You have proven yourself.

VALERIE
 How have --

ERIC
 -- Isn't this what you wanted? Then listen to my instructions and be grateful.

He enters his office. Valerie opens the binder.

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - BASEMENT - DAY

Fremont stands in front of a cracking stone and mortar wall. There is a pair of protective earmuffs covering his ears. He stares ahead.

On the far end of the room sits a wooden structure made of railroad crossties. Attached to the front is a fresh silhouette target.

Fremont raises a 9mm handgun and the sound reverberates off the walls as he takes successive shots at the target.

The target has a close grouping of holes around the silhouette's heart. Fremont turns to a table. A filled clip and his phone sit on top.

He removes the empty clip and his phone vibrates. The screen displays, "Bright Hair." He places the gun and clip on the table and removes the muffs before answering.

FREMONT

Hello?

VALERIE (V.O.)

I'm here.

FREMONT

Where?

VALERIE (V.O.)

By some executive offices. I was transferred.

FREMONT

What happened?

VALERIE (V.O.)

I received a top floor security pass and note telling me.

FREMONT

Did they give a reason?

VALERIE (V.O.)

Just that I'd proven myself.

FREMONT

How?

VALERIE (V.O.)

Does it matter? I'm here.

FREMONT

Well tread lightly, it could be --

VALERIE (V.O.)

-- I know to be careful. But, we're one step closer, and one of the offices up here could be The Head's.

Fremont stares at the target.

VALERIE (V.O.)

You there?

FREMONT

Yeah. Keep alert and let me know what you find out.

VALERIE (V.O.)

Will do.

Fremont puts his phone down and retrieves his gun. He slams the full clip in and empties it into the target.

There is a new grouping in the silhouette's head. Above the grouping there are two holes, one in each word of "The Head."

INT. THE HIVE - ART'S OFFICE - DAY

Art and Fremont are at the makeshift table. Murrey is sitting by the coffeemaker reading from the thick book.

ART

Don't like it.

FREMONT

Come on, it's one step closer to destroying ATS.

ART

It happened too fast. Something's up.

FREMONT

What do you say, Murrey?

MURREY

Yup, something's up.

ART

(to Murrey)

Thank you. Why don't you join us?

MURREY

Coffee's not ready.

The coffee maker beeps.

MURREY (CONT'D)

Now it is.

He puts the book away and pours three cups of coffee.

FREMONT

This was supposed to be good news.
We're one step closer to The...

Fremont's pause draws Art and Murrey's attention.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

...end of ATS' rule.

Murrey sets three mugs of coffee on the table.

ART
Let's hope so.

Murrey pulls out the book again and begins reading. Fremont and Art watch him. Murrey glances at the men and taps the book.

MURREY
These are words to live by. If we're close to taking down ATS, we need to know how to avoid its pitfalls.

ART
You're serious, aren't you?

MURREY
Very. One thing this book says is that it's good for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, among other things. If we don't know how to properly deal with situations that come our way, what's to keep us from becoming like ATS?

FREMONT
Because we're not them! They're killers!

MURREY
But they weren't always, were they?

Fremont turns away from Murrey.

MURREY (CONT'D)
(to Art)
We need wisdom in unifying West and East Greenford and base it on something more than past laws.

ART
Yeah, we know how well those laws kept a rein on ATS. What else you got there, Murrey?

FREMONT
As if an old book and reminiscing ever got anyone anywhere.

Fremont marches from the room.

INT. ATS OFFICES - TOP FLOOR - DAY

Eric approaches Valerie at her desk and hands her a file.

ERIC

Find the current numbers for these
departments.

Eric heads to Damian's office, scans his ID, and enters.

The intercom button on Valerie's phone lights up by the
"Damian Dentner" label. Valerie pushes it.

VALERIE

Yes, Fa-- Mr. Dentner?

DAMIAN (V.O.)

Hold all calls.

VALERIE

Yes, sir.

Valerie turns back to her computer but notices the intercom
light is still lit. She reaches toward it.

DAMIAN (V.O.)

Do you have a solution, Eric?

Valerie stops.

ERIC (V.O.)

Yes, a full system reboot.
Unfortunately, it leaves our files
vulnerable.

DAMIAN (V.O.)

Including the "H-file?"

ERIC (V.O.)

Yes.

DAMIAN (V.O.)

How is that a solution! That's the
one thing I want protected.

ERIC (V.O.)

Sir, the risk is minimal. The only
way the "H-file" can be accessed is
from your computer.

DAMIAN (V.O.)

Don't forget we still have a mole.

ERIC (V.O.)

True, but everyone on this floor is above reproach.

DAMIAN (V.O.)

Yes, but moles are good at digging holes where they want to go... We need a time when everyone is accounted for... like the Freedom Ball!

ERIC (V.O.)

Yes, sir, all employees will be accounted for.

DAMIAN (V.O.)

Then do it. And Eric... I still want that mole.

Valerie clicks off the intercom as Eric opens the door.

INT. THE HIVE - ART'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Art and Murrey face Fremont and Valerie across the table.

FREMONT

Are you not hearing her? ATS is vulnerable!

MURREY

Don't feel right.

ART

There's an old saying about things not being as easy as they appear.

FREMONT

Isn't there also one about not missing an opportunity? This is our chance to finish this.

VALERIE

Didn't you need me to gain access to information that would expose ATS? I got it. Why aren't you using it?

DELLA (O.S.)

Would you all quit making this racket and get on with it?

She stands at the entrance of the tunnel.

MURREY

I thought you were asleep, love.

DELLA

Couldn't sleep, so took a turn watching the cameras... Besides, who can sleep with you all carrying on like you are.

VALERIE

(to Fremont)

Can everyone hear us?

DELLA

Course not. The point is you all are wasting breath arguing when you could be making a plan.

MURREY

You want us to take this chance?

DELLA

Why not?

ART (O.S.)

Could be a trap.

DELLA

(to Art)

Haven't you ever taken a gamble before?

ART

Fine, we'll do it.

DELLA

Fine.

She turns to Murrey.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Your turn to watch the cameras. I'm going to bed.

She leaves.

MURREY

Of course, my love.

He follows Della out.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - HALLWAY/VALERIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Damian knocks on Valerie's closed bedroom door and opens it. The light from the hall shows her bed is still made.

A sleeping Micro lifts his head momentarily. Damian closes the door.

INT. THE HIVE - CONTROL CENTER - NIGHT

Murrey reads from the thick book and glances at the computer screen showing empty rooms. He stands with the book and does a little jig as he reads.

Valerie enters from Art's office, mug in hand.

VALERIE

Bored?

MURREY

Not at all. When you have music in your heart dancing can't be helped.

VALERIE

Did Della give you a goodnight kiss?

MURREY

She did, but that's not the reason I'm dancing.

He sets the book down.

MURREY (CONT'D)

This book is full of music that reaches down into the innermost part of one's being.

He presses one hand to the book and the other over his heart.

MURREY (CONT'D)

It's full of life... as if it's breathing.

VALERIE

You say so.

MURREY

I'm not the one who says so.

Valerie gives him the mug of coffee.

VALERIE

I just wanted to give you this.

She turns to leave.

MURREY

Valerie.

She looks back.

MURREY (CONT'D)

When this is all over...

He looks to the book.

MURREY (CONT'D)

...you will need this for a fresh start... I'm giving it to you.

VALERIE

You keep it. When we start again, you can give us your words of wisdom.

MURREY

Yeah, when we start again.

Valerie faces the tunnel.

MURREY (CONT'D)

Val.

She pauses before turning back. Murrey lifts the mug.

MURREY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

She hurries back through the tunnel.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Damian twists the ring on his pinky. The room is lit only by the moon.

He puts the family picture in a desk drawer. His watch shows "2:00" as he opens it's compartment, taking out the pill.

He plays with it, leaves it on his desk, walks away, and grabs it. He looks out the window, holding the pill inches from his mouth.

The light of the moon reveals movement across the side lawn as two shadowy figures emerge from the woods and stop before melting away from each other.

Damian watches one retreat back into the woods and the other move along the edge of the lawn toward the front of the house.

Damian replaces the pill and stands at the door. There is the sound of a door opening then closing and footsteps passing. He starts to twist the doorknob but he lets go.

INT. ROYAL GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Damian, in a tuxedo, steps into a circular ballroom. Valerie, in a bold-colored gown with a clutch purse, holds his arm.

They pass a dance floor strewn with dots of color as ELEGANT WOMEN and DASHING MEN dance under a vaulted ceiling.

There is a distinct gathering of bold and pastel clothing remaining in their palette with little mingling.

Damian and Valerie walk under a balcony circling the dance floor to a staircase accessing it. They pass live CLASSICAL MUSICIANS playing a waltz.

On the balcony, groups of Elegant Women and Dashing Men chat. WAITERS move around with trays of hors d'oeuvres and champagne.

Damian and Valerie ascend and are met by Eric, all in black.

ERIC

It is good to see you this evening,
Miss Dentner... Sir.

DAMIAN

(to Valerie)
Enjoy the ball. I need to speak
with Eric.

Valerie brushes past Eric. He gives a slight bow, revealing the butt of a gun in a shoulder holster.

She glances back to see Damian and Eric walk away and pulls her phone from the clutch, typing.

IRIS (O.S.)

Valerie, you're here!

Iris rushes over in her bold gown, Martin in tow, his suit the pastel of her gown's color. Paige follows in a bold gown and holding a clutch with a chain handle.

Valerie slides the phone back into her clutch as Iris spins.

IRIS (CONT'D)
What do you think?

VALERIE
Fitting. Which dress number?

PAIGE
Her first.

IRIS
I should never have doubted my instincts. When am I ever wrong?

She grabs hold of Martin again.

IRIS (CONT'D)
Just like my thoughts about this cutie.

MARTIN
Not as right as I am about you.
Want to dance?

Iris takes his arm as they walk to the staircase. Paige links arms with Valerie.

PAIGE
Let's see if we can find an espresso in this place.

They pass a door with a label reading "Ladies," and Valerie looks across the balcony. Damian and Eric converse on the other side.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Fremont, wearing a backpack over his jacket, and Art move up the stairs. Both are in black. Fremont pulls his phone from a pocket and turns the screen to Art. It reads, "E and D here."

Della and Murrey, come up the stairs also in black, their dart guns ready. Murrey's satchel hangs across his chest.

At the landing, Fremont pulls out a card with Valerie's photo and taps it against the keypad. They all go through.

INT. ATS OFFICES - TOP FLOOR - NIGHT

Della and Murrey station themselves near the desk as Fremont and Art head to Damian's office. Fremont places the ID against the card panel. The doors don't budge. Art tries.

ART

Nothing.

Fremont takes the casing off revealing a mess of wires which he works to sort.

MURREY

(to Fremont)

Well?

Art holds up the ID.

ART

No access.

DELLA

What's happening?

FREMONT

Just have to figure out which wire.

Della grabs a wire and yanks it free.

DELLA

It's always the red one.

FREMONT

There are three red ones.

Della looks again.

DELLA

I didn't see the other two. Well,
let's see if I got the right one.

Murrey opens a door. Della heads back to the desk, dart gun at the ready, and Murrey opens the door wider.

MURREY

Gentlemen. She is quite --

Art and Fremont disappear into the office.

MURREY (CONT'D)

-- We'll keep watch.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Fremont takes off his backpack. Art inspects the room before looking in Fremont's direction.

As Fremont sits at the computer, his jacket shifts, revealing the 9mm tucked in his pants. Fremont turns on the monitor. A screen shows a reboot in progress.

FREMONT

See, no trap.

Fremont pulls an external hard drive from his backpack.

ART

So far. Why the gun?

Fremont attaches the device.

FREMONT

Don't worry about it. Let's just find that "H-file."

INT. ROYAL GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Valerie looks over the balcony at Iris and Martin dancing. Paige, champagne in hand, joins Valerie.

PAIGE

They just won't stop.

Valerie scans the balcony then looks again.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

What's up, Valerie?

VALERIE

I need to use the Ladies' Room.

PAIGE

I'll join you.

Paige places her glass on a passing waiter's tray.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

This stuff goes right through.

INT. ATS OFFICES - TOP FLOOR - NIGHT

Della watches the room while Murrey moves around. He stops by the other set of double doors.

MURREY

Whose is this you think?

DELLA

Murrey, don't go messing. We've got one mission.

MURREY

Yes, my sweets... But could it be The Head's?

Della moves toward him.

DELLA

Don't you do what I think you're thinking of doing, Mr. Murrey Blake.

MURREY

Should we?

DELLA

Fine, no harm in trying.

Murrey places a hand on a doorknob.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Art watches Fremont type, wait, and type some more.

FREMONT

This makes no sense.

ART

Should we abort?

FREMONT

No, let me try one more thing.

Art indicates the screen.

ART

There.

Fremont clicks on the file labelled "H-file."

INT. ROYAL GRAND BALLROOM - LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Valerie stands in an area with two cushioned chairs on either side of a small table. A potted plant sits on top. She types on her phone. Paige is heard in a connecting room.

PAIGE (O.S.)
This is why I drink espresso.

Valerie types, "Can't find E or D!"

PAIGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Who you texting, Valerie?

Valerie looks up and opens her mouth to speak but no words come out. She stares at something before her.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The computer screen shows the "H-file" downloading as Fremont pulls out his phone.

FREMONT
We should go.

ART
We're so close.

Fremont holds up his phone which reads, "Can't find E or D!"
Art grabs the phone as Fremont goes to pull the device out.

ART (CONT'D)
Wait!

Art hands the phone back. It reads, "Never mind, found them."
Fremont slides the phone back into his pocket and looks at the transfer bar reading "92%."

FREMONT
Almost there.

INT. ATS OFFICES - TOP FLOOR - NIGHT

Murrey begins to turn the nob.

DELLA
Wait.

Murrey stops as Della pops off the ID card reader's cover. There are no wires inside. Murrey tries the door and it opens. They go inside.

INT. ROYAL GRAND BALLROOM - LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Valerie stares at Paige who looks at Valerie's phone in one hand, the clutch dangling on the chain on her wrist. In the other hand, she holds a small gun.

PAIGE

"FB?" Fremont Basset, I presume.

Paige circles around Valerie and locks the bathroom door.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

You look surprised.

Paige shakes the gun at a chair and Valerie sits.

VALERIE

People don't point guns at friends.

PAIGE

We're ATS bred. Friendship doesn't exist.

VALERIE

My father --

PAIGE

-- knows. In fact, I'm supposed to keep you here until I hear from him, or Eric.

Paige lounges in the other chair.

VALERIE

I haven't done anything. I was just promoted.

PAIGE

We know you're the mole. All you needed was an opportunity. So, I came up with the "H-file."

VALERIE

So it has nothing to do with The Head?

PAIGE

You won't find anything about The Head in our system. I've looked. Your father's the only one with information on that man, if he exists.

VALERIE

Then what's the "H-file?"

PAIGE

A safeguard.

VALERIE
Safeguard?

PAIGE
Let's just say, if your mole
friend, or friends, make it out of
the building, we'll find them.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The "H-file" loading screen reaches "100%" and Fremont yanks
the device from the computer.

FREMONT
Let's move.

Art and Fremont exit Damian's office.

INT. ATS OFFICES - TOP FLOOR - NIGHT

Murrey and Della re-enter the receptionist area as Art and
Fremont leave Damian's office.

ART
We got it.

Murrey and Della exchange looks.

FREMONT
What?

MURREY
There's something strange --

The ding of an elevator door silences everyone. As the
elevator doors open, they exit through the emergency exit.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Murrey, Della, and Art head down the stairs. Fremont pulls
out his phone, types something, and follows.

INT. ROYAL GRAND BALLROOM - LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Paige looks down at Valerie's phone.

PAIGE
You got a text from "FB."

She holds the phone toward Valerie. The text reads, "Someone here. D E there?"

PAIGE (CONT'D)
They should get a reply. But before
that, I should...

Paige focuses on Valerie.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
...say thank you.

Paige begins texting. Valerie smashes the planter against Paige's head and she falls from the chair. Valerie's phone drops from her hand and the gun skids away.

Valerie picks up her phone and rushes out.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Murrey takes the lead and after several landings he disappears. A moment later there's shouting.

MURREY (O.S.)
Run!

Fremont, Art, and Della head for the last landing where Fremont tries the ID card with no luck.

Della sees Murrey hustling up the stairs, three AGENTS chase him. One Agent gets close, baton extended.

DELLA
(to Fremont)
Hurry!

Fremont tears open the box, exposing the nest of wires.

The baton Agent swipes at Murrey, catching him in the knee. Murrey stumbles. Della shoots her dart gun, taking out the agent, and rushes to help Murrey.

Fremont tries sorting the wires. Art grabs the lot and pulls. He opens the door and they run through followed closely by Della and a limping Murrey.

INT. ATS OFFICES - NOTED RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

They enter the area, chairs lining the center of the room. Art holds the door shut.

ART
Get a position!

They hear the Agents struggling to get through the door as Art strains. Murrey flattens next to the door and pulls a loose dart from his satchel. Della ducks behind a chair.

Fremont races around the plants to the other stairwell door and tears off the casing.

Art lets go of the door and steps to the side. As the Agents rush in, Murrey stabs the dart into one and the other gets it from Della.

Art and Della help Murrey to Fremont who opens the door.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Down more stairs, Fremont stops and dispatches another door. He peeks into the hallway and signals everyone to follow.

INT. ATS OFFICES - SECURE OFFICE AREA - NIGHT

They sneak down a deserted hallway, past gaudy planters, to the other stairwell exit.

As the others disappear through the door, Murrey reexamines the planters from the door before hobbling out.

A man steps out from behind a planter. He presses a button on his phone and holds it to his ear.

DAMIAN
Headed your way.

EXT. STREETS OF WEST GREENFORD - NIGHT

Valerie exits the Royal Grand Ballroom as it starts to rain. She sees there is no response on her phone from Fremont to her message, "Set up. Get out!"

She tries calling. The rain comes down heavier. She sees the ATS building in the distance and races toward it.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - NIGHT

Fremont, Della, and Art spill out from ATS into the rain. Fremont crosses the street, Della close behind. Art pauses at the door.

Della looks back and stumbles in a water filled hole. Murrey exits the building and goes to her, holstering his dart gun. Art follows. Fremont stops and turns back.

MURREY

(to Della)

Now what you doing playing in the puddles, love, and without me at that.

DELLA

Won't you ever grow up? We have to go.

MURREY

Not as long as we're together, me dear.

He pulls her up and they follow a step behind Art. Fremont strides ahead, holstering his dart gun.

VALERIE (O.S.)

Fremont!

Valerie throws her arms around him.

Behind Fremont, Valerie sees Art holstering his dart gun. Beyond him, Della, dart gun put away, helps a limping Murrey.

Valerie's eyes stray to movement at the corner of the building. Eric approaches and pulls his gun.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

No!

Fremont, Art, and Murrey turn. Murrey sees Eric and looks at Della who is just beginning to turn. He pushes her to the ground, moving in front of her. A gunshot rings out.

DELLA

Murrey! No!

Murrey steps back and collapses into Della's arms. They fall to the ground. She presses her hands over the hole in his heart.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Come on, my love, don't go.

Fremont rushes past, pulling his 9mm and shoots at Eric. The shot ricochets off the building. Eric disappears around the building.

Valerie kneels with Della as Art checks Murrey's pulse.

ART
He's gone.

DELLA
No!

Fremont stands at the ready.

ART
Fremont, we have to go.

DELLA
No, I won't.

There is scuffling by the ATS Building as Agents round it. Fremont lifts his gun but Art stops him.

ART
Get them out of here now!

Fremont puts the gun away and grabs Della. She clings to Murrey.

DELLA
Leave!

The agents line-up against the building at the ready as Valerie tries to pry Della's hands open.

VALERIE
We have to go! What would Murrey want?

Della loosens her hold enough for Valerie and Fremont to pull her away. Art watches the unmoving agents as he reaches for Murrey's dart gun. He touches the satchel instead.

He pulls the satchel off Murrey, slides it over his own shoulder, and grabs Murrey's dart gun. Art pulls his own.

ART
I got this old friend.

He squares off with the line of agents, gun in each hand.

ART (CONT'D)
What are you waiting for?!

Eric appears around the corner with Fiery Agent. Blood drips from his ear.

ERIC
(to Fiery Agent)
Keep him alive.

Fiery Agent signals the other Agents. They charge. Art shoots. The first agents go down.

INT. THE HIVE - MAIN HUB - NIGHT

Della slumps on the floor with Tracy and Ann hovering around her. Valerie sits at a table of technical equipment and a laptop. Fremont stands nearby.

Fafers, including Strong Fafer and Thin Fafer, keep their distance as they stare at Valerie. Fremont slings his backpack onto the table.

FREMONT
(to Fafers)
We have to prepare a counter
attack.

Strong Fafer indicates Valerie.

STRONG FAFER
With her? Look what's happened
since she joined us.

Lyle appears from the crowd.

LYLE
She saved my family!

STRONG FAFER
Yeah, that's what started this
whole mess.

Lyle steps toward Strong Fafer, fists on guard. Fremont pushes them apart.

FREMONT
(to Strong Fafer)
We can't change what happened but
if we don't do something now, we
may never have a chance.

THIN FAFER
I say we take that chance and stop
here.

Fafers all around nod in agreement.

VALERIE
We can't. Stop now and everything
we gained will be a loss.

STRONG FAFER
And what exactly have we gained?

He looks at Lyle who lurches forward. Fremont stops him.

FREMONT
ATS thinks they've won. The Head
won't be --

THIN FAFER
(to Fafers)
-- I say we take this one here...

She points at Valerie.

THIN FAFER (CONT'D)
...to ATS and disappear. We'll take
the losses.

Fafers advance toward Valerie. Fremont and Lyle set
themselves as her guards.

DELLA (O.S.)
Stop!

Everyone freezes as Della approaches.

DELLA (CONT'D)
(to Thin Fafer)
That loss... includes my Murrey.

Her eyes roam the room, catching the eyes of Fafers.

DELLA (CONT'D)
And what about Art?

No one meets her eyes.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Cowards.

She waves a hand at Valerie.

DELLA (CONT'D)
You blame her, want to give her to
ATS? I pushed for this operation.

She settles her eyes on Thin Fafer.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Take me too.

Thin Fafer stays put.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Come on, take me.

Della focuses on Strong Fafer. He looks away.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Then keep silent.

She turns to Fremont.

DELLA (CONT'D)
It was empty.

FREMONT
What was?

DELLA
When you were getting the "H-file,"
we went into the other fancy
office. There was nothing there.

FREMONT
Why would --

Valerie suddenly stands.

VALERIE
Fremont, did you get the "H-file?"

Fremont pulls the external hard drive from his backpack.

FREMONT
Right here.

Valerie flips open the laptop.

VALERIE
Open it.

Fremont connects the device and accesses the file.

FREMONT
Strange.

VALERIE
What?

FREMONT
It's blank.

VALERIE
There is something.

He keeps typing as Della, Lyle, and the others move closer. Fremont shows the computer. A blueprint map is on the screen. A red dot is over one section.

FREMONT
They found us.

Murmuring begins among the Fafers.

VOICES OF FAFERS
I knew it! Let's grab what we can!
I'm out of here! Where do we go?

Fafers scatter.

DELLA
Hold it!

Everyone stops.

DELLA (CONT'D)
(to Fremont)
Can you scramble the signal?

Fremont continues typing.

FREMONT
Maybe for a short time.

Della examines the people and room.

DELLA
Plan Zed it is.

VALERIE
Plan Zed?

DELLA
Don't you think we didn't plan for
this?

She turns to the Fafers.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Spread the word.

As Fafers, Ann, Tracy, and Lyle get busy, Della grabs Strong Fafer and Thin Fafer.

DELLA (CONT'D)
You two keep watch.

They disappear from the room. Valerie stares at the laptop.

DELLA (CONT'D)
 (to Fremont)
 Deal with the File Room...

She glances at Valerie.

DELLA (CONT'D)
 ...and take her.

Della turns to leave.

FREMONT
 Della, are you --

DELLA
 -- No. I'm not.

She disappears down a corridor. Fremont sets a hand on Valerie's shoulder who gives a start.

FREMONT
 Let's go.

VALERIE
 Something... yeah, let's go.

INT. ATS SECURE CELL - NIGHT

Damian peers through the bars of a secure cell. Murrey's satchel in his hand. A bruised and swollen Art lays on a cot. Damian lifts the satchel.

DAMIAN
 This seemed mighty important to
 take it off a dead man.

He opens it and peers at the book inside.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 No idea why, but it can rot in a
 cell with you.

Damian kicks the satchel through the tray hole of the next cell.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 It's over, Art Jameson. We're going
 to find your mole nest. Why don't
 you tell me what other moles you
 have burrowing in my backyard.

ART
 Yes, it's over.

INT. THE HIVE - FILE ROOM - NIGHT

Fremont walks to the rug on the wall, moves it aside, and presses a point, the wall swings out. He enters a passage.

Valerie, now dressed in dark pants and top, waits in the room, stacking the empty boxes he hands her. Fremont re-enters and points at a row of cabinets.

FREMONT

Empty those.

Valerie fills boxes as Fremont empties the other row.

INT. THE HIVE - ART'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Della watches by the coffee maker as Fafers carry bags, computers, and the like, through the open rug door. She picks up an empty mug, cradling it between her hands.

INT. THE HIVE - FILE ROOM - NIGHT

Valerie hands boxes to Fremont as he re-stacks them beyond the rug door. She inspects the empty drawers and discovers a yellowed paper crammed into one.

It is a newspaper page. The article reads, "MUNICIPAL BUILDING FIRE SPREADS TO RESIDENTIAL AREA." Valerie scans it and lets out a silent scream. Fremont closes the rug door.

FREMONT

All set.

Valerie doesn't move. Fremont takes the article.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

This was when The Head burned down the Municipal building trying to destroy all this.

He indicates the empty files.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

I guess it got out of control... This was one of the last printings before ATS shut the paper down.

Valerie grabs his arm and pulls up her pant leg, revealing the burn scar. She taps the page.

Fremont reads, "...among the homes destroyed was Damian Dentner's, of the newly founded ATS, resulting in the death of his wife and injury of his daughter."

Fremont guides Valerie to a chair.

VALERIE
He's responsible?

FREMONT
Valerie, we need to leave now.

VALERIE
The Head murdered my mother.

FREMONT
Yes, he did. But we have to leave.
We'll deal with him later.

VALERIE
Yes.

She folds the paper and exits the room. Fremont pulls over cabinets.

INT. THE HIVE - ART'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The last of the Fafers pass Della through the rug door. Fremont and Valerie jog in with Strong Fafer and Thin Fafer close behind.

STRONG FAFER
They're coming!

Everyone disappears down the passage except Della. She sends the mug in her hand hurtling into a wall. It shatters. Della pushes the rug wall back in place as she exits.

INT. THE HIVE - MAIN HUB - NIGHT

Eric, with bandaged ear, surveys the near empty room. Agents spill in behind him and race toward the tunnels like lines of ants.

A laptop, facing away, and hard drive sit on a table. Eric turns the laptop screen. There is a blueprint map and red dot. He makes a phone call.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Damian sits in the dark, cellphone to his ear.

DAMIAN

They probably found another hole to be scared in... No, we don't have to worry about them, Eric. Send everyone home.

He hangs up.

INT. BURNT OUT AUTO REPAIR SHOP - NIGHT

Fremont shuts the door after Della, Valerie, Strong Fafer and Thin Fafer enter. The group moves to the workbench.

Fremont pushes a button behind it and the bench moves away from the wall. He opens a trap door in the floor. After everyone climbs into the hole, he follows and closes it.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP TUNNEL - NIGHT

Fremont pushes a button next to the trapdoor and continues down the short ladder.

INT. BURNT OUT AUTO REPAIR SHOP - NIGHT

The workbench moves back into place.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP TUNNEL - NIGHT

Della, Thin Fafer, Strong Fafer, Fremont and Valerie walk single file down a dimly lit dirt passage. Della swings open a metal door at the end.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP BUNKER - NIGHT

The group enters a large concrete room with another metal door on the opposite side.

Thin Fafer and Strong Fafer join other Fafers sitting on long wooden crates eating MREs. Della and Fremont follow.

VALERIE

Wait.

Della and Fremont give her their attention.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I have to go back to my house.

FREMONT

You can't.

VALERIE

Paige said something about not knowing The Head but my father could have information... I have to see.

FREMONT

No.

VALERIE

He probably isn't even home.

FREMONT

Valerie, it's too great --

DELLA

-- Let her go. Information about The Head would help.

FREMONT

Alright, but I'm going with.

DELLA

Fine. We'll continue Plan Zed.

Della walks away.

INT. DENTNER MANSION - DAMIAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Valerie and Fremont sneak to the desk, phone flashlights on. Fremont types at the computer.

FREMONT

This doesn't make sense.

VALERIE

What?

FREMONT

The few files here are software. This computer is clean.

VALERIE

There has to be something.

Fremont peruses the study.

Valerie searches the desk area and pulls the family photo from a drawer. She throws the picture onto the desk and fiddles with the secret drawer. It opens.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Fremont.

She holds up the USB stick. He opens it on the computer.

FREMONT

Need a password.

Valerie shines her light on the desk and hovers over her mother's face.

VALERIE

Try "Jenny."

Fremont types it in and a window opens with several files. He clicks on, "Compliance Program."

FREMONT

Let's see who started this.

Documents appear and he clicks on "Memo." It is signed, "By order of The Head." He opens another file labelled, "Division of Greenford." The documents are also signed, "The Head."

FREMONT (CONT'D)

We know.

He opens the "Factory" file and one of its documents.

VALERIE

There.

The document is signed, "The Head Director."

FREMONT

It's different but hardly helpful.

He continues opening files.

FREMONT (CONT'D)

The information here is gold. Even
ATS' strongest supporters should
see their true colors.

He clicks on a file labelled, "The Article," and opens a document titled, "Articles of Association."

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Here's something.

He stops scrolling at the words, "Air Tax Services."

FREMONT (CONT'D)

Know that.

He continues scrolling and suddenly stops. Valerie looks closer.

VALERIE

Can't be.

The document reads, "Founder and Head Director: Damian Dentner."

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Damian hangs up his cellphone and suddenly bulldozes around the room throwing and destroying whatever he can.

In the process he knocks over the photo of his family and the glass shatters on the floor. He sinks into the glass shards as he holds the picture and cries.

His crying turns into laughter.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - NIGHT

Valerie and Fremont close the gate separating East and West Greenford.

FREMONT

What are you going to do?... He's your father.

VALERIE

He is my father.

She hands Fremont the USB stick.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

What are you going to do?

Fremont takes the stick and puts it in his pocket.

FREMONT

I have to go.

He separates from Valerie. She walks, jogs, and then runs.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP BUNKER - NIGHT

Della faces the Fafers.

DELLA

You know the plan, now get to it.

Fafers head to the trapdoor while others open the crates.

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Fremont pulls the black box from the fireplace.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - NIGHT

Valerie runs around the park, passing the rusting playground.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - RESIDENTIAL AREA - NIGHT

Fafers knock on doors at run down homes and speak with those who have answered.

EXT. EAST GREENFORD - RESIDENTIAL AREA - NIGHT

Fafers knock on mansions. Silhouettes of people converse.

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Fremont opens the box revealing bullets and a clip. He refills the clip in his gun.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP BUNKER - NIGHT

Fafers distribute rifles from the crates. Strong Fafer hands Della one.

INT. FREMONT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

The living room becomes more visible as the morning arrives. Fremont surveys it with gun in one hand, clip in the other. He slams the clip into his gun.

BLACKNESS

PRE-LAP - A rifle is cocked.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP BUNKER - DAY

Della slings the strap of the rifle over her shoulder.

DELLA
This ends today.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - DAY

As the light of day appears, Valerie stops running and pulls out the newspaper page. She drops into a rusty swing. It creaks.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - DAY

The swing, with no rust, squeaks as Young Valerie rises into the air. A younger Damian pushes her.

YOUNG VALERIE
Higher, Daddy.

Damian pushes harder as they both laugh.

YOUNG VALERIE (CONT'D)
I'm going to jump!

DAMIAN
Wait!

Valerie jumps but skids forward on her hands. Damian comes her side.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Valerie, you never listen.

Valerie holds up her scraped hands.

YOUNG VALERIE
Daddy, make it go away.

DAMIAN
I can't, princess.

He brushes dirt from her hands.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
You have to deal with the pain of
your choices.

YOUNG VALERIE
Why?

DAMIAN
Because we all have to... it's
called facing the consequences.

He picks her up.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
 But I bet Mommy has something that
 will help with the pain.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - DAY

The newspaper sits on the rusty swing as Valerie walks away.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP BUNKER - DAY

Fafers finish loading rifles and strapping them on. Fremont hands Della the USB stick. Valerie enters and silence ripples across the room.

VALERIE
 Not a very lively pajama party, is
 it?

DELLA
 How are you, dear?

FREMONT
 (to Valerie)
 I told them.

VALERIE
 (to Della)
 I'm here.

FREMONT
 Are you coming?

Valerie takes a rifle from the crate.

DELLA
 It's your --

Valerie cocks it.

VALERIE
 The sun is rising.

DELLA
 (to Fafers)
 Move it.

She heads out the opposite metal door followed by a stream of Fafers.

FREMONT
 (to Valerie)
 What are you going to do?

VALERIE
 What I have to. What about you?

Fremont joins the stream, Valerie close behind.

INT. ATS OFFICES - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Paige holds an ice pack to her head looking at her phone as she waits for her espresso.

MARTIN (O.S.)
 Tripped over your dress and hit
 your head, huh?

Martin holds an empty mug in the doorway. Paige slides the phone into her jacket.

PAIGE
 Iris has a big mouth.

MARTIN
 But a pretty one.

PAIGE
 Go away, Martin.

He places the mug in the sink.

MARTIN
 Whatever you say, Klutzy.

INT. ATS SECURE CELL - DAY

Art is awakened by a muffled boom and a crumbling noise. He painfully makes his way to the cell door.

Della's face appears on the other side of the bar window. Strong Fafer, Thin Fafer, and others stream pass behind her.

DELLA
 Good to see you alive.

She works to unlock his cell.

ART
 Good to be.

The door swings open and Della helps Art out. He looks down to the far end where a hole now appears in the wall. Lyle and other Fafers crawl in over the debris.

ART (CONT'D)
Plan Zed?

DELLA
I guess you and Murrey were right about digging that extra tunnel and setting the charges.

ART
I didn't think it'd work. Murrey is the one... he had a knack.

Fremont and Valerie rush over.

VALERIE
You're alright.

ART
Yeah, fine.

DELLA
(to Fremont)
You know what to do.

Fremont signals the Fafers to follow as he and Valerie leave the area. Strong Fafer joins Della in helping Art.

ART
Wait.

He turns to the cell next to his.

ART (CONT'D)
Open this.

Della opens it and Art picks up Murrey's satchel. He offers it to Della.

DELLA
Don't want it, or to hear about it.

Art loops it over his head and shoulder.

ART
Where to?

DELLA
We find ourselves a server room.

INT. ATS OFFICES, DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Damian stares out the window. Eric enters and surveys the trashed room.

ERIC
Are you alright, Sir?

DAMIAN
Of course, Eric. We stopped a mole
and disrupted the nest.

Damian watches Westforders on the street trudge along in oxygen masks.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Let's enjoy a normal day.

INT. ATS OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

ATS WORKERS go about their business with files.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY

Lyle ascends the stairs with two Fafers, stopping at a door. Thin Fafer and other Fafers continue the ascent.

INT. ATS OFFICES - NOTED RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The Receptionist ignores the PEOPLE scattered around the room. Fiery Agent stands by the planters watching everyone.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY

Thin Fafer and two others stand on a stairwell landing waiting at the door.

INT. ATS OFFICES - LOUNGING AREA - DAY

Martin laughs with Cool Agent, Nervous Agent, Quiet Agent, and some other Agents.

INT. ATS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY

As the Fafers make their way up the stairs, Fremont and Valerie stop at another landing with a couple Fafers.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Paige types at a computer in the glass encased room labelled, "10 Server."

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Eric stands by Damian.

ERIC
Sir, we should make a --

DAMIAN
-- Just one normal day like before.

ERIC
Damian.

DAMIAN
One day, Eric!

Eric takes his leave.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Paige's fingers fly over her keyboard set on a partially pulled out tray.

STRONG FAFER (O.S.)
Move away from the computer, miss.

Strong Fafer holds his rifle by his side. Paige starts to stand but reaches for something out of sight on the keyboard tray.

She pulls out her small gun and whips around. She freezes as she stares down the barrel of Della's rifle.

DELLA
I wouldn't, dearie.

Della guides her to another chair. Art plugs the USB drive into Paige's computer and taps away on the keyboard.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Well?

ART

Good stuff. It won't be long until
I have the truth of ATS flooding
the servers and every other
computer, and phone, in both
Greenfords.

As Della and Strong Fafer remain intent on Art's progress,
Paige makes a dash for the door. Strong Fafer catches her.

She thrashes at his face. He keeps holding her but tries to
protect his face. Della punches her. Paige crumples to the
floor. Strong Fafer checks her pulse.

STRONG FAFER

She's breathing.

DELLA

Of course she is.

ART (O.S.)

Done and ready.

Della pulls out her phone and types.

DELLA

Let's finish this.

As Art presses a key on the keyboard, Della presses a key on
her phone. The fire alarm goes off.

MONTAGE:

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAY

-- Lyle and his Fafers storm into the Noted Reception Area.
People move to the center, raising their hands. Fiery Agent
slips toward the other stairwell and disappears.

-- Thin Fafer and her group enter the ATS hallway and gather
the ATS workers together.

-- Fremont, Valerie, and the Fafers surround Martin and the
other Agents in the lounging area.

END MONTAGE

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Eric bursts into Damian's office as the alarm blares. Damian looks out his window.

ERIC
Something's wrong, Damian.

DAMIAN
I see.

Eric hastens to follow Damian's gaze. In the distance WESTFORDERS in dull clothing approach, pulling oxygen masks off. Not far behind race EASTONITES in their bright clothes.

Eric pulls out his phone.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
It's too late, Eric.

ERIC
No! I fought too hard for this to let it slip away.

DAMIAN
How long did we expect to play god before realizing we can't?

ERIC
Yes, give up, you great Head. I'll show you which one of us is truly the powerful one.

Eric rushes from the room not bothering to close the door. Damian watches the waves of people grow closer.

INT. ATS OFFICES - LOUNGING AREA - DAY

The fire alarm stops as Fremont and the Fafers keep their rifles trained on the raise-armed Agents. Valerie exams the room.

VALERIE
(to Cool Agent)
Are there any more of you on this floor?

COOL AGENT
You kind of got us at a bad time. Late night and all.

NERVOUS AGENT

There are more of us on other floors. You're outnumbered.

FREMONT

We've taken care of them.

FIERY AGENT (O.S.)

Not all of them.

Fiery Agent holds Valerie at gun point.

FIERY AGENT (CONT'D)

You may want to set those rifles down.

The Fafers obey. Fremont sets his against a chair.

FIERY AGENT (CONT'D)

Martin, take her rifle.

Martin comes over and takes the rifle from Valerie.

FIERY AGENT (CONT'D)

Maybe I should just kill this one to teach --

The tip of Valerie's rifle presses against Fiery Agent's head.

MARTIN

Not today.

He pulls Valerie from Fiery Agent and takes his gun.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(to Agents)

Your guns too, Gents. It's been a hoot.

Fafers confiscate the guns.

VALERIE

(to Martin)

You're a...

MARTIN

A mole? I am, or was. It wasn't tasteful, but sometimes you have to make sacrifices for the greater good... Right, Fremont?

Martin turns to Fremont but he's gone. Valerie looks around and sees his rifle by the chair.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Where'd he run off to?

Valerie grabs Fremont's rifle and heads to the stairwell.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Now she's leaving.

Martin addresses the Fafers.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Not much for celebrating, are they?

Fiery Agent's pocket vibrates. Martin pulls out his phone. He turns it off and places it in his own pocket.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Guess you won't be doing Eric's
dirty work today, Big Fella.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Della looks at her phone.

DELLA
Greenford citizens are here.

She addresses Strong Fafer.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Help them access this building.

Strong Fafer passes Paige as he exits. Paige stirs and looks at the backs of Della and Art. She pulls out her phone.

INT. ATS OFFICES - TOP FLOOR - DAY

Eric paces, periodically checking the phone in his hand. It vibrates. The ID reads "Paige" and the text says, "10th floor server, count 2, urgent."

Eric calls the elevator and gets on.

INT. ATS OFFICES - ELEVATOR - DAY

Eric presses the "10" button and the door slides shut. He pulls his phone and sends a text before unholstering his gun.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

At the desk, Damian inspects the pill in his hand and looks up to see Fremont standing in the office.

DAMIAN
Basset, right?... You look like
your father. He and your mother
were good people.

Fremont raises his handgun.

FREMONT
Don't speak about my parents... you
killed them.

DAMIAN
A lot of people died because of me,
but there are only three I truly
regret... your father... mother...
and...

He shows the pill.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
...But this little pill will make
it all go away, cast me into
oblivion.

FREMONT
Don't think about it. You don't
deserve to take your own life.

DAMIAN
But you deserve to take it?

Damian moves the pill to his mouth.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Then take it.

INT. ATS OFFICES - LOUNGE AREA - DAY

Agents sit with hands on their heads as Fafers, and gathering Westforders and Eastonites, guard them.

Martin's phone vibrates and he looks down at a text. The ID shows it is from "Eric" and reads, "Meet 10 server. Bring backup."

MARTIN
(to Fafers)
I need back-up.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Della watches Art work on the computer. They hear the ding of the elevator.

DELLA

I'll go.

Della leaves the server room and a gun blast is heard. Art looks out to see Della sprawled in the hallway. He limps toward the door and is shoved from behind.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The pill brushes Damian's teeth. Fremont begins to squeeze the trigger.

VALERIE (O.S.)

Wait!

Valerie stands in the doorway.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Don't do this.

FREMONT

He may be your father, but --

VALERIE

-- he has to suffer the consequences for his actions. I agree. But not by you...

She turns to Damian.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

...or you.

DAMIAN

You don't understand, I killed my Jenny. I need to be --

VALERIE

-- punished. I'm sure you will, but I want you to live.

Valerie passes Fremont as she heads toward Damian.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Daddy...

Damian looks at Valerie, she suddenly transforms in his eyes. He sees her as Young Valerie.

YOUNG VALERIE
...please don't do it.

She transforms back to her adult self.

VALERIE
You will be judged, but I need time
to forgive you.

Damian places the pill on his desk.

FREMONT (O.S.)
His judgment is now but you don't
have to see it. Leave already.

Valerie steps in front of Damian.

VALERIE
Go ahead, shoot.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Art rolls to face Paige as she advances. He hooks her ankle with one foot and presses her knee with the other. She falls backwards, hits her head, and lays still.

Art scrambles to his feet and spins to face Eric in the doorway.

ERIC
I thought we locked you up.

He points his gun at Art.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Guess we shouldn't have kept you
alive.

Another shot rings out. Eric falls to the floor. Della is raised up on an arm, her rifle pointed at the server room.

DELLA
For my Murrey.

She collapses back onto the floor.

INT. ATS OFFICES - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

FREMONT
Move, Valerie.

VALERIE
No... You don't want to do this.

FREMONT
I do.

VALERIE
You want to become like him?... It
may not kill you physically, but it
will kill you.

Valerie pulls his arms down.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
I don't want you to die.

He puts his gun away.

FREMONT
(to Damian)
Justice will be served. Let's go.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR - DAY

Art kneels by Della's body. The elevator dings. Art grabs Della's rifle and stands at the ready. Martin comes out followed by Fafers.

ART
Martin! You want to give me a heart
attack.

Martin approaches but turns and raises his rifle toward the server room. Paige comes out, gun in hand. Martin's bullet hits her as she pulls the trigger.

She falls but her shot strikes Art. Martin catches him and lowers him to the ground.

MARTIN
Stay with us.

ART
Find Valerie...

INT. ATS SECURE CELL - DAY

Valerie shuts the cell door behind Damian. Fremont waits down the hall.

DAMIAN
What happens now?

VALERIE

You will be tried for your crimes
and suffer the consequences of your
choices.

DAMIAN

It's only fair.

She moves away.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Valerie... I love you.

VALERIE

I know.

DAMIAN

I hope you can forgive me.

VALERIE

Me too.

DAMIAN

And Valerie... Help guide this city
better than me.

As she meets Fremont, Martin rushes in.

MARTIN

(to Valerie)

Art wants to see you.

INT. ATS OFFICES - 10TH FLOOR - DAY

Blankets cover Della and Paige's body and faces. Art lays
with a blanket up to his chest. Valerie is at his side.

ART

You did good, Val... You and
Fremont... need to set this city to
right... Will you do that?

VALERIE

Yes.

Art reaches for the satchel and hands it to her.

ART

Murrey wanted you to have this. Use
it as a guide and your plans will
be successful... Smile... We've
won.

Art dies. Valerie holds the satchel and falls into Fremont's arms.

FREMONT
We'll set things right.

VALERIE
Yes, we will.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - DAY

Sunlight radiates over West Greenford's bright homes and clean streets. The vibrant leaves of the trees sway.

SUPER: "Seventy years later"

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - PARK - DAY

INDIVIDUALS and a COUPLE in bright clothing run along paths.

CHILDREN are active on a bright colored playground.

A 92-year-old Valerie watches from a bench. The burn scar on her leg is visible below the hem of her capris. Her left-hand rests on a cane, a gold band on her ring finger.

The top of a billboard peeks over the trees. It reads, "WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND? YOU!"

Valerie scans the happy activity and stops on a still form at the base of the playground. WILSON (6) sits building a sand tower.

WILSON'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Wilson, what are you doing?

WILSON'S MOTHER jogs over to him and pulls him to his feet while still jogging in place.

WILSON'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
We still need to meet our energy
quota for the day.

She pulls him after her.

WILSON'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Come on, get running.

As Wilson follows, his foot hits the sand tower. A black monitor is attached to his ankle.

Valerie stares at the scattered tower as a cloud darkens the spot. Thunder claps in the distance.

Valerie sees the monitors on everyone's ankles or at their waists. The monitors have green bars flickering upward. Some have more bars than others.

Valerie walks through the park. The sunshine and smiles are replaced by shadows and frowns.

EXT. WEST GREENFORD - VALERIE'S HOME - DAY

Valerie reaches a home near the park and is about to go in when she looks at the billboard from earlier.

The bottom half is visible and the whole reads, "WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND? YOU!...YOU MUST MOVE TO SUSTAIN IT. - BASSET ENERGY"

Raindrops hit the billboard as Valerie enters the house.

INT. VALERIE'S HOME - DAY

She looks through the large front window at the downpour. PEOPLE continue jogging by. She pulls the curtain, shutting them out.

The room is reminiscent of Damian's study. The same desk and chairs surrounded by shelves of books.

She hobbles to a bookshelf and scans the titles. She moves to the next shelf and so on.

She yanks books off shelves, letting them drop to the floor as she looks behind where they sat.

Slumping into a wingback chair, she sends a book near her sliding toward the bookshelves with the end of her cane. Instead of going under, it stops with a thud.

Valerie kneels and pulls out Murrey's old satchel. Wiping dust off, she pulls out the thick book.

Inside the cover, she finds an unopened envelope. The note inside reads, "If you want the world to go right, these are the words to live by."

Valerie flips to the first page with words. It reads, "HOLY BIBLE."

THE END

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