

REVERIE

Pilot: "Apertus"

Written by
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TEASER

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elegant. Absurdly expensive.

TONY SOSKA watches a BASKETBALL GAME on a HIGH TECH TELEVISION. 30's. Nice suit. Drinking bourbon.

He mumbles quietly to himself as he takes a sip.

TONY

Curry to the basket, fouled and
SHOT'S GOOD!

He takes a sip just as the on screen ANNOUNCER repeats --

ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

"Curry to the basket, fouled and
SHOT'S GOOD!"

TONY

Largest lead of the first half.

ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

"Largest lead of the first half..."

Tony goes to a nearby BAR for a refill. He sits down the glass, pops the top off a decanter, and when he turns back to pour he sees: A BRIGHTLY COLORED BUTTERFLY perched on the edge of his glass.

As he studies it, a wall in his peripheral vision *expands and contracts ever so slightly before going back to normal.*

A STRANGE MUFFLED MALE VOICE comes over the TV. It cuts in and out through the audio of the game.

MUFFLED MALE VOICE (ON TV)

It's -- don't know if you can ----
not. The Doctor says it's ---- But
I don't ---- even know if you ----

Tony looks up at the TV, irritated. Looks back to the glass and the butterfly has disappeared. He shakes it off, turns the TV off and calls out to a nearby CLOSED DOOR.

TONY

Naomi?

NAOMI'S VOICE calls from the other side.

NAOMI (O.S.)

One minute.

Tony crosses through the living room, into --

INT. FAIRMONT - PENTHOUSE - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

A darkened circular room with a domed ceiling overhead. He flips on the light, revealing a CELESTIAL MAP on the ceiling. He dims the lights so the STARS TWINKLE overhead.

He hears the CLICKING OF HEELS in the hallway behind him. He turns just in time to see --

NAOMI, 30's. In a striking red dress.

NAOMI
Still fits.

He stops, taking in the sight of her.

TONY
Are you kidding? It looks better
than ever. Come on.

He leads her through a nearby doorway, out onto --

EXT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

A garden terrace set up especially for them. LIGHTS have been strung overhead, CANDLES and ROSES everywhere. A STRING QUARTET plays in the corner. Sweeping and romantic.

NAOMI
What??

A WAITER approaches.

WAITER
This way, Madame.

He leads them to a table at the edge of the terrace, with a spectacular view of SAN FRANCISCO on the other side.

As they're seated, Naomi takes in the view, wide eyed. Tony studies her, taking joy in the visible display of her awe.

TONY
Well?

NAOMI
Amazing. Every day is better than
the last. Did you ever dream we'd
be living here?

Something about the question hits Tony squarely in the gut, but he quickly recovers.

TONY

I did.

The Waiter brings them each a GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE.

NAOMI

How lucky are we?

TONY

The luckiest.

They clink glasses. He watches her take a sip.

Tony brings the glass to his mouth, his lips part and --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Tony, lying in a coma, in a hospital bed.

Pale and emaciated. Far from the handsome, vibrant guy from the previous scene. His lips part, softly.

The cacophony is replaced by SILENCE, except for the occasional BEEP of the MACHINES keeping him on life support.

At his bedside --

His brother JAY (40's, blue collar) calls to DOCTOR VEGA (female, 40's), going over charts nearby.

JAY

His lips are moving.

She joins him, bedside.

JAY (CONT'D)

You think he heard me?

DOCTOR VEDA

It's possible. It could also be a response to something within the Reverie program. Something strong enough to trigger an involuntary physical reaction.

JAY

How do you tell which one's which?

DOCTOR VEDA

We can't.

Jay nods, understanding but disappointed.

On the wall of this room is a TWO-WAY MIRROR --

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

On the other side, looking in to Tony's room. Small BANK OF SURVEILLANCE MONITORS nearby. Also nearby:

CHARLIE VENTANA. Male, 50's, ex-law enforcement in a suit.

ALEXIS BARRETT. 20's, Korean-American. Jeans, rock t-shirt.

Charlie kills the AUDIO FEED coming from Tony's room and powers up the other monitors.

CHARLIE

They brought in another this morning. That makes seven.

On each screen are SURVEILLANCE ANGLES OF SIX DIFFERENT PATIENTS in six other rooms. All frozen in the same way.

ALEXIS

I can count.

CHARLIE

I know you can count. I'm making a point. That number's going up every day. What if this becomes an epidemic?

ALEXIS

Seven users out of four hundred thousand isn't an epidemic. It's a fraction of a fraction.

CHARLIE

They're in a coma, Lexi. Because of your program.

ALEXIS

My program is doing exactly what it's supposed to.

CHARLIE

That won't make a damn bit of difference to our partners. If we can't prove this is reversible they're gonna pull the plug.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 We'll lose everything. You will
 lose everything. Do you
 understand?

Alexis chews on a thumbnail. Wheels turning.

Charlie gives up, opens to the door to leave --

ALEXIS
 This is a radical problem. Maybe
 it requires a radical solution.

Charlie closes the door again. He's all ears.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off, leaving the room lit only by street lamps coming in from outside. Chairs and desks have been pushed to the walls, leaving the center of the room open.

MARA KINT stands in the center. 30's/40's. Trying to look like a college professor, but she's rough around the edges.

She's surrounded by A DOZEN OR SO COLLEGE STUDENTS, who wander around her randomly in the dark, looking intently into each other's eyes. Moving from person to person.

MARA
 Only seven per cent of our
 communication is based on what we
 actually say. Thirty eight per
 cent comes from the tone of voice.
 The rest of it, fifty five per
 cent... comes from body language.

A FEMALE STUDENT collapses to the floor, as if she just passed out. The whole room stops moving to observe her for a moment. Then starts moving again.

MARA (CONT'D)
 Look at the smiles. Real smiles
 affect the eyes. They wrinkle the
 skin.

Mara watches the students move, studying them as they study each other. You could hear a pin drop.

MARA (CONT'D)
 Look at the eyes. Windows to the
 soul, right? Is the person making
 eye contact? Too much? Not
 enough?

A MALE STUDENT suddenly collapses.

The room stops, looks at him. Then starts again. Mara spins slowly in the middle of all this. Observing. Another FEMALE STUDENT collapses.

MARA (CONT'D)

Pay attention to the direction.
Eyes to the left means they're
trying to remember something. Eyes
to the right signals creative
thinking. Deception. Is the
person left handed? Because if so,
you have to reverse it.

Finally, TRAVIS (male, 19) raises his hand and yells:

TRAVIS

Stop! Devon is the killer!

The students stop. He points at DEVON (female, 19). Devon grins and nods "yes." The rest of the class responds, AWW'ing and LAUGHING.

MARA

How did you figure it out?

TRAVIS

Everyone else was like, *really*
intense with their eye contact.
Devon was the only one who looked
away immediately. Like she had
something to hide.

MARA

Very good. Remember, this is more
than a game. These are skills you
can use in job interviews. At the
club, when you're trying to pick
someone up. On a date. In bed.

The Students smile and laugh to each other.

MARA (CONT'D)

It's a whole new way of seeing the
world. But you have to look up.

INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Outside Mara's office. She follows the students out, shuts and locks her door. When she turns back she sees Charlie there, waiting for her.

MARA

Charlie?

CHARLIE

I didn't want to interrupt.

(a beat)

Can I buy you a drink?

Off Mara, unsure where this is going.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAR - NIGHT

A hole in the wall. TV SCREENS around the room show various SPORTS and CULTURAL events. There are a handful of BAR FLYS with eyes glued to TABLETS on tables, not their PARTNERS.

Charlie and Mara are at a corner table, drinking beer.

CHARLIE

How does one teach "interpersonal dynamics?"

MARA

We play a lot of games. "Killer," "red light, green light," games that develop observational skills.

CHARLIE

Red light green light? And their parents pay money for this?

MARA

If their parents knew how bad they needed it they'd pay twice as much.

CHARLIE

Why do you say that?

MARA

This generation has spent their entire life staring at one screen or another, from the moment they wake up in the morning to the moment they fall asleep at night. Do you know how much time the average teenager spends looking at their devices during the day?

CHARLIE

How much?

MARA

Nine hours. In some cases, up to sixteen. And more.

CHARLIE

But in exchange for that they get the whole world in their pocket, right? Anything they need, any information, any tool... they can get it right there on their phone. Whenever they need it. Is that really such a bad thing?

MARA

It is if they're not developing the *most important* tool of all.

CHARLIE

Which is?

MARA

Empathy. Being able to tell when someone's hurting. When they need help. We learn empathy by observing and we've stopped doing that. We've traded 3D relationships for 2D. Look.

She nods to the rest of the bar. Every table has people staring at their PHONES or the TABLET in the middle.

MARA (CONT'D)

Everybody's eyes are looking down. Nobody's having an actual conversation.

CHARLIE

We are.

MARA

Yeah, but we haven't seen each other in two years. We have a lot to catch up on.

CHARLIE

That we do.

MARA

But that's not why we're here. Is it?

Charlie smiles. Time to get to his point.

CHARLIE

I want to offer you a job.

MARA

Doing what?

CHARLIE

Doing what you did for me on the force. Hostage negotiation.

Mara looks up from her drink. Not what she expected.

EXT. LATE NIGHT TACO TRUCK - NIGHT

Charlie and Mara stand over a garbage can, eating tacos. The SKYLINE of a major metropolitan city in the background. They're a few beers in at this point, loosening up.

CHARLIE

It's a fully immersive virtual reality program called Reverie. Designed by a young woman named Alexis Barrett.

MARA

I read about her. "The next Einstein."

CHARLIE

I don't know about all that. She's definitely smarter than the average bear.

MARA

What do you do for her?

CHARLIE

When I retired as chief of police I started a private security firm. She was my first and only client. Over time I became more of a liaison.

Charlie reaches in his pocket and hands her a BUSINESS CARD.

Mara looks it over - it's a super cool lenticular printing effect. Like she's holding a small, rectangular window looking into a BLUE SKY WITH MOVING WHITE CLOUDS.

MARA

Liaison to who?

CHARLIE

The rest of the world. Talk about not being able to communicate.

MARA

What does it do? The program.

CHARLIE

Reverie is a place where the impossible becomes possible. It puts you inside a waking dream, a dream of your own design. There are pre-set environments, but you can also create your own. You can change your appearance.

(a beat)

You can even bring loved ones back from the dead.

MARA

What? How?

CHARLIE

They take what's called a social media footprint. A person's pictures, videos, their posts. Likes and dislikes... you feed all that into the program and you can resurrect them in Reverie.

MARA

Like a field trip to Heaven.

CHARLIE

Therein lies the problem. Some of the users have become so addicted they don't ever want to come back. Their subconscious minds have severed all ties with reality. Their bodies have gone into what they call a "persistent vegetative state." Like a coma.

MARA

How is this possible?

CHARLIE

Ocular-neural implant. It basically hijacks your incoming --

MARA

No, I mean, how was it allowed it to get this far?

CHARLIE

Right now it's a very exclusive clientele.

MARA

Is there any government oversight?

CHARLIE

Not for us. Not yet. Friends in high places kind of thing. This is a chance for you to get in on the ground floor.

MARA

I still don't understand. What are you asking me to do?

CHARLIE

I want you to go into Reverie and bring them back.

Mara looks down at the card again, trying hard to wrap her head around all this.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O., PRELAP)

How would you like to proceed?

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Masculine, sparse. Late that night.

Charlie's at his desk, talking to someone on SPEAKERPHONE, a FEMALE VOICE on the other end.

CHARLIE

We have to give her some time.

FEMALE VOICE (OVER SPEAKER)

Charlie, we don't have time.

CHARLIE

And we don't have any better candidates. You've got her resume, you can see for yourself.

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mara opens the front door to her apartment. The light from outside spills across a tiny section of the room but we can see it's a mess. Clothes, papers, bottles. Everywhere. The externalization of an inner problem.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 Masters of Psychology from Stanford
 Specialized counter terrorism
 training with the FBI...

FEMALE VOICE (OVER SPEAKER)
 I get that. The question is, "Why
 her?" Have we gone through all the
 others?

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 The best negotiators make you feel
 like you've known them your whole
 life.

She makes her way to a small table where there's a HALF-EMPTY
 BOTTLE OF BOURBON and pours herself a drink in a DIRTY GLASS.

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Just as cluttered as the living room. There's a pile of
 unfolded clothes on the bed. Mara sits on the edge and pops
 open a BOTTLE OF PRESCRIPTION PILLS. Pops a couple and
 chases it with the glass of bourbon.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 They're attuned to every response.
 Every little gesture of the hand.
 Slight change in the tone of voice.

She lies back in the bed, fully clothed, not even bothering
 to move the pile of clothes.

INTERCUT BACK TO CHARLIE IN HIS OFFICE

CHARLIE
 She had all that. She worked
 miracles for complete strangers.
 Unfortunately, she couldn't do it
 for the people she loved the most.

BACK TO MARA'S BEDROOM

Mara rolls onto her side, and fixes her gaze on object across
 the room, something we don't see. We PUSH IN CLOSE on Mara's
 tired expression...

FLASHBACK:

INT. JAMIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

*Mara is pinned down behind a DIVIDER in a small apartment
 kitchen. Frantically texting on her phone.*

She hears *GLASS SMASHING* from behind her, from the living room on the other side of the divider. She calls out--

MARA

Whoa, whoah, whoa, Ray. Calm, cool and collected, remember? Come on, I need your help.

OVER THE DIVIDER, IN THE LIVING ROOM

RAY (40's) stands in the middle of the floor, holding a REVOLVER. Pacing, sweaty. Eyes bugging out and anxious.

And huddled in a nearby corner, frozen in terror: JAMIE (female, 30's) and BRYNN (8), clutching a STUFFED BUNNY. Jamie's shielding Brynn, protecting her.

RAY

(calling out to Mara)
I want you to go.

INTERCUT between her behind the counter and Ray with the gun.

MARA

Is that what you want? You want me to leave?

RAY

Yes.

MARA

What else? What else can we do?

RAY

Nothing.

MARA

There has to be something, Ray. Just back up for a second, tell me how this all got started.

RAY

I found a text.

MARA

What text?

RAY

On Jamie's phone.

MARA

The text on Jamie's phone, okay. What'd it say?

RAY

That she was taking Brynn to your parents. She was gonna leave me.

JAMIE

Ray, I wasn't gonna--

Ray whirls on her and aims the gun in her direction.

RAY

SHUT UP!

MARA

Wait, wait, wait. Stay with me, Ray. Let me talk to him, Jamie. Ray, listen... I'm sure it wasn't permanent. Maybe she just wanted to give you guys a little space. I know my sister, she loves you.

RAY

Not anymore.

Ray is tired. Eyes red. Disoriented.

MARA

Of course she does! Remember when you used to come over to our house to pick her up for dates? Driving that car, what was it? The black one.

RAY

The Camaro?

MARA

The Camaro, exactly. I could hear that thing coming from a mile away.

Ray gives a weary chuckle, remembering.

MARA (CONT'D)

Whatever happened to that car?

RAY

Sold it. To buy Jamie's ring.

MARA

You ever think about getting another one?

RAY

Too late now.

MARA
It's not too late.

RAY
I really screwed up, didn't I?

MARA
You haven't done anything that
can't be undone. Not yet. Right?

RAY
Right.

MARA
And you're not going to, because
you don't wanna hurt anybody do
you?

RAY
No.

Ray looks at Brynn, tears in her eyes. He sees how scared she is, staring at that gun in his hand. He softens.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare
you. Everything's gonna be --

Then, in the distance... he hears SIRENS. A LOT of them.

Ray's gaze drifts to the window. That softness goes away.

RAY (CONT'D)
Did you call the police?

MARA
No.

Mara looks at her phone, sees a message: ON THE WAY.

RAY
Somebody did.

MARA
Maybe a neighbor. Maybe someone
heard the glass breaking.

RAY
I told you not to call them.

BEHIND THE KITCHEN COUNTER

MARA
Ray?

Mara hears Jamie SCREAM --

TWO EAR SPLITTING GUNSHOTS ring out --

Then... silence. Mara huddles against the divider, shocked.

She leans around the counter. All she can see from her vantage point is Brynn's arm, outstretched on the ground.

Inches away from it... her stuffed bunny.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mara's in her bed, still staring across the room. Now we see what she was looking at:

That same stuffed bunny is on her nightstand. Next to a PICTURE OF JAMIE AND BRYNN, arms around each other.

Mara rolls onto her back.

She fishes Charlie's business card out of her pocket and holds it up to look at the blue sky and clouds.

When she tilts it towards her, a message materializes:

"Your ideal escape... REVERIE"

OFF Mara, contemplating...

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ONI-TECH - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Mara sits across a glass table from Alexis, who has her head down, thumbs punching furiously at her phone.

In the silence, Mara takes her in. Jeans and another rock t-shirt. Knees pulled up to her chest, bare feet on the seat.

Her assistant KAI (male, 20's) enters, carrying a bottle of some THICK WHITE MILKY LIQUID and a glass. He pours the glass full, slides it in front of Alexis who doesn't even look up, and exits.

Alexis reaches out with one hand to pick up the glass, about to bring it to her lips and stops. Looks up at Mara.

ALEXIS

I should offer you some.

MARA

What is it?

ALEXIS

It's a nutritional supplement I designed. I call it a slurry.

MARA

You made this?

ALEXIS

It has all the daily nutrition you need for survival.

MARA

How does it taste?

ALEXIS

It isn't about taste. It's about time.

MARA

How do you mean?

ALEXIS

I get ten hours of my life back every week because I'm not obsessing over food.

Mara nods, understanding.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)
Would you like to try it?

She one hundred percent wouldn't, but sees an opportunity.

MARA
I absolutely would.

Alexis slides the glass to Mara, who picks it up and tries to smell it. No discernible odor.

Alexis watches intently as Mara takes a small sip, her thumbs working away without her having to look at her phone.

Mara swallows. Scrunches her face the tiniest bit.

ALEXIS
What does it taste like to you?

MARA
Efficiency.

Alexis *almost* cracks a smile at this.

The door opens, Charlie enters.

CHARLIE
Sorry I'm late.

Mara notices a tiny moment as they're speaking: he takes a small pack of SMARTIES from his pocket and places them in front of Alexis, who pockets them. A fatherly gesture.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You ready for the grand tour?

INT. ONI-TECH - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Charlie and Alexis lead Mara on a tour around the building, past offices and cubicles where TWENTY-SOMETHING CODERS and DESIGNERS work around the clock at their desks.

The vibe is less chilly, futuristic tech company, more like a really hip tattoo studio. RICH COLORS, DIM LIGHT, DARK WOOD, and lots of TECH. On some of their screens she just sees CODE. On others, PHOTO-REAL ENVIRONMENTS of all kinds.

ALEXIS
Version 1.0 was a single user experience. But for the past year I've been working on 2.0, which is multi-user.

(MORE)

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

It allows two people to interact in a shared, immersive virtual world. One of the holy grails for gaming, social interaction, dating...

MARA

Sex?

CHARLIE

If you have the right accessories.

Mara waits for the punch line but he's not kidding.

ALEXIS

The commercial version won't be available for awhile but we built a prototype. It's the only one like it in the world.

They continue down the hall to a set of SECURED DOORS, a BIO-AUTHENTICATION PANEL to the side.

CHARLIE

2.0 is what you would use to enter each client's Reverie. Part of the reason you're here, why it has to be someone like you, is that these people have no idea this is even a possibility. That someone else, a complete stranger, could be walking around in *their* reverie. When you confront them it could be... tricky. We need someone objective, someone used to high pressure, high stress extraction scenarios.

He places his hand on the Bio-Authentication Panel and it LIGHTS UP as it scans his hand.

A YOUNG MALE VOICE comes over a speaker. It belongs to someone named DYLAN (a boy, 12-yrs-old).

DYLAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Bio-authentication complete, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Thank you, Dylan.

As the doors open, Mara looks around.

MARA

And Dylan is...

ALEXIS
Everywhere.

CHARLIE
He's the building's AI.
(to Dylan)
Dylan, say hello to Miss Kint.

DYLAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Hello, Miss Kint. Enjoy the rest
of your tour.

Mara looks at Charlie, trying to get her head around all of this. Alice through the Looking Glass.

Charlie recognizes this expression as he ushers her through.

CHARLIE
Trust me. We're just now getting
to the weird part.

The DOORS CLOSE behind them --

INT. ONI-TECH - LAB - DAY

This lab is more clinical, antiseptic white.

A SMALL FLESH COLORED SPHERE the size of a BB is attached to a THIN WHITE TENDRIL, floating in a liquid-filled tank.

Mara leans in to look closely. She sees a TINY EXPANSION THEN CONTRACTION. Like breathing. Like it's alive.

Alexis and Charlie are nearby.

ALEXIS
This is the Ocular-Neural
Interface.

CHARLIE
The "O-N-I" in Oni-tech.

MARA
Is it... moving?

ALEXIS
The interface has been fused with
living tissue. The first few
attempts were purely synthetic, but
the brain kept rejecting them. So
we grew a new implant device, using
the same technology they use to
make replacement organs.

CHARLIE

You've heard of 3D printers. These are like bio printers.

MARA

If it's an implant, can't you just surgically remove it to bring them out?

CHARLIE

We're working on it.

ALEXIS

The flow of data is laced into the brain's neural pathways. Right now, severing the connection while someone is this deeply connected might cause permanent damage.

CHARLIE

If you decide to do this, you'll have to undergo the implant procedure as well. It's quick and painless.

ALEXIS

And it *is* reversible, provided you don't get lost yourself.

CHARLIE

Which brings up an important condition of your employment. This whole thing is riding on your ability to stay relatively normal under circumstances that are anything but.

MARA

You want me to see a shrink.

CHARLIE

It's a weekly assessment. And it's not me, it's the board. These are uncharted waters, for all of us. We want to make sure you have all the tools you need.

MARA

What if I don't want to?

CHARLIE

That's what they call a non-starter. But before you say no, I want to show you one more thing.

INT. HOSPITAL OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Mara stands in front of the two-way mirror, watching Tony's brother Jay and his MOTHER (60's) sitting at his bedside.

CHARLIE

I can't make you talk to anybody you don't want to. God knows I couldn't do it two years ago. But I think it might help.

MARA

Is that what this is about? Trying to help me?

CHARLIE

No. It's about helping them.

He powers up the OTHER SIX MONITORS. The view stops Mara in her tracks. She moves close, looking at the screens. Scanning each comatose patient.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Every one of these people, for one reason or another, decided that life in Reverie is better than the one they were living out here.

Her eyes land on one: a TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This is a chance to bring families back together. Does that sound like something you might be interested in?

Mara looks back at Charlie. She nods. She's in.

INT. ONI-TECH - LAB - DAY

Mara is in a MEDICAL CHAIR, hair pulled up. She glances over and sees one of the ONI-TECH IMPLANTS floating in a tank, tethered to its TENDRIL. That tiny PULSE runs through it.

She watches a female lab tech named STEVIE (30's) as she opens the tank and gently suctions up the implant with a WHITE TUBE, popping it off its tendril.

Stevie's wearing a lab coat but her forearms are tattooed and she's got pulled back dreadlocks. A doctor with an edge.

Stevie loads the tube into a HIGH-TECH JET INJECTION GUN.

STEVIE

This won't hurt a bit.

MARA

People always say that but it's rarely ever true. Seriously... what does it feel like?

STEVIE

Pretty freaking weird. It's like getting your ear pierced, but... inside your skull.

Mara nods. Fair enough.

She closes her eyes as the Jet Injection Gun draws near her head and just makes contact with the base of her skull.

A HOLOGRAPHIC GRID appears, providing an overlay of this region of Mara's brain.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Here we go.

There's a BEEPING SOUND, a kind of countdown.

BEEP... BEEP... BEEP. Then a PHISSS.

Mara looks over at Stevie.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

That's it.

OFF Mara. That was easier than she thought.

INT. ONI-TECH DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

Mara steps in front of --

A STAINED GLASS MANDALA, framed against white light.

She's in a space that looks like a really chic, modern coffee shop, with comfortable furniture and WORKSTATIONS WITH SCREENS and LEATHER CHAIRS scattered throughout.

On the walls are a series of the same STAINED GLASS CIRCULAR MANDALAS in light-boxes. Vivid blues and reds, simple, ornate. Mara moves to another and studies it, transfixed.

PAUL (O.S.)

I see you found your way home.

She turns, sees **PAUL HAMMOND**. Indian, 30's. Hip.

PAUL (CONT'D)

When you find this symbol in Reverie, you're looking at a gateway icon. Your exit back to the real world.

MARA

It's beautiful.

PAUL

Mandalas represent the universe. I thought it was appropriate. Paul Hammond, Chief Oneirologist.

They shake hands.

MARA

Mara Kint, what's an Oneirologist?

PAUL

Usually it means someone involved in the science of studying dreams. Here, it's the science of *creating* dreams. I design the factory presets and training levels. I'm supposed to give you the basics. Just enough to make you dangerous.

A SHORT TIME LATER --

Mara and Paul are at a work area with a STANDING DESK, PROJECTION KEYBOARD and MONITOR and a LEATHER EASY CHAIR.

Mara looks over Paul's shoulder as he scrolls through a number of ICONS on the screen. As she does, she notices:

Paul has a number of SMALL IMPLANTS ON HIS FOREARM, postage stamp sized lighted grids just underneath his skin. She's curious but she doesn't ask. Yet.

PAUL (CONT'D)

The ordinary user can choose between the presets or a more customized experience. They design the whole thing start to finish from the comfort of their own home, down to the clothes they're wearing and the color of their fingernail polish. They have days, even weeks, to acclimate, but you don't. So I'm giving you a crash course in "The Box."

MARA

The box.

PAUL

It's a training module. If you complete the course, there's a special reward on the other side.

MARA

What kind of reward?

PAUL

Well, if I told you it wouldn't be a surprise, now would it?

A SHORT TIME LATER --

Mara is in the leather chair, holding a TABLET. On the screen is the MANDALA ICON and a word in the middle:

"APERTUS"

PAUL (CONT'D)

Whenever you're ready, just tap the word "Apertus," it means open. Then... close your eyes.

Mara takes a breath. Taps "APERTUS." Closes her eyes.

We go to BLACK. Hear her BREATH. The MANDALA appears. Expanding outward. Opening up like an IRIS onto --

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mara stands in the middle of a plain white room. Wearing the same clothes she was in before.

PAUL (V.O.)

I've taken the liberty of scanning your outfit, but in the future, you can choose. I'm going to take you through a number of environments.

BLACK LINES spread across the walls and floor, forming a GRID around her.

PAUL (V.O.)

We'll start easy and work our way up...

The ROOM TRANSFORMS all around her, until --

EXT. WOODS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mara finds herself standing on a TRAIL surrounded by MASSIVE SEQUOIA TREES and lush greenery. BEAMS OF SUNLIGHT stream through ancient trees that soar into the sky.

She looks around in awe. She's really here.

PAUL (V.O.)

Once you're inside, the first step is recognizing that you're in a state of Reverie. Take it in. Feel the warmth on your skin. The breeze in the air. Smell the trees.

INTERCUT, BACK TO THE STUDIO BEFORE SHE WENT IN --

Paul goes over the basics --

MARA

But I can't really feel or smell anything. There *is* no wind or anything to smell, right?

PAUL

Technically no. But your eyes take in visual information, which gives your brain certain cues to fill in the rest. Those cues trigger a response. It may not be real but it will *feel* very real.

MARA

What if I want to walk around? What happens to my body here?

BACK TO WOODS

Mara takes her first steps on the trail.

PAUL (V.O.)

Same concept. Your brain tells your limbs what to do, those impulses are connected to your body in Reverie. Aside from a few stray reactions to really powerful stimuli, you'll remain perfectly still in this chair.

Mara approaches a small CLEARING. In the clearing is a CAMPFIRE. The fire CRACKLES, SMOKE rising.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Physical laws don't necessarily
 apply in Reverie but they are
 subject to limitations of the
 coding. For instance, you can't
 just pick up and fly. Yet.

Mara approaches the campfire.

PAUL (V.O.)
 But with training, you can teach
 your brain to disarm certain
 triggers. Pain, for example.

Suddenly, the SOIL beneath her feet TRANSFORMS into BLACK,
 VOLCANIC ROCK. The TREES DISSOLVE and crumble away around
 her, and the EARTH falls away, inches in front of her --

Mara scrambles back as the TRANSFORMATION continues until --

EXT. AMBRYN VOLCANIC ISLAND - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mara stands on the lip of the MARUM CRATER, looking down at a
 ROILING LAVA LAKE where the campfire used to be.

On instinct, she shields herself from the heat.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Your eyes tell your brain that the
 lava is going to hurt you. But
 because there is no lava --

The earth beneath her feet CRACKS. RIVULETS of LAVA flow
 through. She looks down, confused.

MARA (V.O.)
 There's no burn.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Exactly.

She bends down, extends her hand... and reaches INTO THE
 LAVA. She runs her fingers through it, then brings her hand
 back out and studies the GLOWING LIQUID on them.

MARA (V.O.)
 So I'm not *really* in danger?

PAUL (V.O.)
 That's a very good question.

The VOLCANO DISSOLVES as --

A GLASS TANK rises up around her from the black rock --

INT. GLASS TANK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

It looks like something that Harry Houdini might have built. Mara looks around, then down at her feet -- she's standing on a METAL GRATE. There's a WHOOSH, and she looks down --

WATER FLOODS up through the grates, quickly filling the tank. Mara takes it in. Still somewhat calm.

PAUL (V.O.)

Can you be physically injured? No.
But that doesn't mean that what
happens in Reverie doesn't have
consequences in the real world.

As the water reaches her waist, her breathing starts to quicken. She presses on the top of the tank -- LOCKED!

PAUL (V.O.)

That's the whole reason you're
here, right? For now, we're just
concerned with training your mind.

The water quickly rises to her chest. Mara begins to panic. Breathing harder and harder --

INTERCUT BACK TO THE STUDIO

PAUL

You have to learn to override your
natural instincts, and deprogram
your fear responses. If you can do
that, you'll have full control of
the program.

BACK TO THE TANK

It's up to her neck now. Mara's trying to hang in there but her fear mechanism is too powerful --

The water rises higher and higher and she floats to the top, keeping her mouth just above it, near the top of the tank --

But not for long. The water fills the tank, completely submerging her. Mara tries to fight it, pounding the glass --

PAUL (V.O.)

You have to breathe.

MARA (V.O.)

What if I can't?

Mara thrashes, trying to hold on --

PAUL (V.O.)
Look for the gateway.

MARA (V.O.)
What if there isn't one?

PAUL (V.O.)
You say, "Exitus."

In full panic mode, underwater, Mara screams --

MARA
EXITUS!

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

Mara opens her eyes wide and GASPS for air --

Paul is sitting in front of her, smiling ear to ear.

PAUL
... intense, right?

Mara takes a few deep breaths, calming down. Holy shit!

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. ONI-TECH - HALLWAY - DAY

Paul walks Mara down a hallway that's been converted into a medical wing to house the comatose clients.

PAUL

Don't feel too bad. Nobody beats it on their first try.

MARA

So any one of these patients could say "Exitus" and be out of the program?

PAUL

We prefer to call them "clients."
But yes. Either that or pass through the gateway icon. Provided they want to.

They reach the door to TONY'S ROOM, where Charlie is waiting.

Paul watches as Charlie takes her into Tony's room, closing the door behind them.

PAUL (PRELAP) (CONT'D)

It's not right.

INT. HOSPITAL OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Through the TWO-WAY MIRROR we see Charlie and Mara in Tony's room, Jay sitting by the bed. No sound.

Jay stands up, extends his hand as Charlie introduces Mara to Jay and Jay in turn gestures toward Tony, lying in the bed.

On this side of the glass, Paul watches with Alexis.

PAUL

You should have never suggested using 2.0.

ALEXIS

What was I supposed to do?

PAUL

You were supposed to wait until we figured out the latency issues.

ALEXIS

The company could have been long gone by then. And these people might already be dead. You said it yourself, she's already testing better than the others. We can't stop now.

Paul thinks it over.

PAUL

I want to monitor her brain wave activity when she goes in. If there are significant anomalies then we have to tell her. If you don't, I will.

He walks out, leaving Alexis by herself.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mara sits alone with Jay.

JAY

I'm worried about him, of course. But on the other hand, I'm furious. Because it's not like he's got cancer and he's too weak to pull through. He's *choosing* this.

MARA

Why do you think that is?

JAY

Because of Naomi.

MARA

Naomi was his wife? How long were they married?

JAY

Six years. Together for eight.

MARA

What happened to her?

JAY

They were in an accident. Tony was driving. He survived, but she never made it to the hospital.

MARA

He must have been devastated.

JAY

A few months ago he started collecting everything he could find. Pictures, video, old voicemails.

INT. ONI-TECH - MARA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The bare bones, just moving in. But she's got a COMPUTER with WIDE SCREEN MONITOR at a desk.

She scrolls through PICTURES OF TONY AND NAOMI SOSKA, a smiling, happy couple having the time of their lives.

JAY (V.O.)

He recreated her in the program.

Mara stops on a PICTURE THEIR WEDDING PHOTO.

JAY (V.O.)

He was obsessed. He spent all day uploading pictures. Thousands of them. Part of me feels like we lost him before he even logged on.

Mara ends on a PICTURE OF TONY, smiling at Naomi.

INT. DR. WEST'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. SELAH WEST (female, 40's) sits across from Mara in comfortable furniture. The room is filled with sunlight and lighter colors.

DR. WEST

Do you have trouble falling asleep, or staying asleep? Do you experience distressing dreams or nightmares?

Mara thinks about it for a moment. Shakes her head no.

DR. WEST (CONT'D)

Have you experienced any major changes in your eating habits, or consumption of alcohol or drugs?

Again, Mara stonewalls a moment. Shakes her head no.

DR. WEST (CONT'D)

I understand you don't want to be here.

MARA

What makes you think I don't want to be here? I'm answering your questions. Aren't I?

Doctor West takes a moment, changes course.

DR. WEST

My goal isn't to get you to open up about the death of your sister and your niece. This isn't a therapy session, it's an evaluation.

MARA

To see if I'm crazy.

DR. WEST

To see if you're stable enough to travel into realities other than your own, for extended periods of time. I'm not going to ask you to dig up any feelings you may have already processed or learned to manage. But if you are managing them, I'd like to know how.

MARA

What you really want to know is if I'm suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. And the answer is probably yes. Some nights I sleep OK. Other nights, I don't. Am I drinking more than I did before? Yes. Has it interfered with my relationships? Yes. Job? Yes. But am I going to find some alternate reality preferable to my own? The answer is no.

DR. WEST

How can you be sure?

MARA

Because for a long time I wanted to escape my past. I don't anymore.

DR. WEST

Why not?

MARA

It may be the only thing I have to offer. The fact that I understand.

OFF Mara, resolved.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie sits at his desk, talking to that female voice on the phone's speaker again.

CHARLIE

Dr. West signed off on her exam.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

That's good news. Has she finished her training?

INT. GLASS TANK - DAY

Mara stands in the center of the tank as water rises from the floor, passing her knees. She's calm, breathing normally.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Hammond said she picked it up faster than the others.

It passes her waist. Her breathing quickens.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

She's gone through a battery of simulations.

Up to her neck. Mara steels herself, fighting her fear.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Her vitals are steady.

The water covers her completely, filling the tank.

Mara closes her eyes, holding her breath. Then, she takes a moment... and inhales. She's breathing underwater!

She opens her eyes --

A METAL DOOR has materialized in front of her. She reaches, turns the handle to open it --

EXT. VALLEY OF FIRE DESERT - NIGHT

The door opens out onto the desert floor --

But the water doesn't move, it stays put in the tank --

Mara STEPS OUT OF THE WATER and into this new world, dry as a bone by the time she's out. She looks around and sees --

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE lighting PAPER LANTERNS. There's MUSIC PLAYING, people laughing. The Lantern Celebration.

Mara steps into the crowd and watches in wonder as they count off in UNISON --

CROWD
Three... two... one!

They release the lanterns and hundreds of them ascend all around Mara, floating up --

Suspended like candles in the night sky. Absolutely magical.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
It sounds like everyone else thinks she's ready.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Back to Charlie, on the phone.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
What about you?

He hesitates.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
You know her better than anyone.
And you know what's at stake. Is she ready?

CHARLIE
Yes.

There's a moment of SILENCE. Then --

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Send her in.

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - NIGHT

Paul hands Mara the tablet.

PAUL
This tablet is paired with Mr. Soska's program. When you hit the icon you'll open your eyes and find yourself inside his Reverie.

Mara takes her place in the chair while he boots up the program on his monitor.

PAUL (CONT'D)
The size of the world depends on the user's dreams and desires.
(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Some of them can be quite expansive. Mr. Soska only created a few specific environments, modeled on real world locations. He shouldn't be hard to locate.

INT. HOSPITAL OBSERVATION ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie steps into the observation room with Alexis, watching Tony through the window. Jay at his bedside.

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - NIGHT

Back to Paul and Mara.

PAUL

Whenever you're ready. Good luck.

He brings up a MONITOR that displays her BRAIN WAVE ACTIVITY.

Mara takes a breath.

She presses "APERTUS" on the MANDALA and closes her eyes --

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

An opulent, open space. Marble, gold and greenery. A FEW DOZEN REGULARS and STAFF populate the sitting areas and tables around the bar.

The ELEVATOR DOOR opens and Tony exits with Naomi, both dressed down for a day out. She carries a camera.

They glide through the lobby, arm in arm, toward the exit. Tony glances at the bar full of regulars, and something stops him in his tracks.

There's someone new here, sitting at a table by the door. And she's staring right at him.

It's Mara.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

A moment later.

Tony studies Mara for a moment. Has he seen her here before? She glances back down at her drink, breaking eye contact. That thing you do when you have something to hide.

PAUL (V.O.)

Until you introduce yourself he's going to think you're just one of the random virtual extras he's chosen to fill out his world.

She glances back up, just in time to watch them slip out the door. She gets up, follows them out, only to find herself --

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - CHINATOWN - NIGHT

In a crowded street in Chinatown, in the middle of the Chinese New Year Celebration! It's an explosion of color, light and sound.

It throws her for a second, then she gets her bearings.

She spots Tony and Naomi making their way through the crowd, through groups of DRUMMERS and RIBBON DANCERS.

She follows them into the PARADE ROUTE but she can't keep up. It's like Tony is able to predict the patterns. She wades right into a MARCHING BAND, causing them to jumble up --

PAUL (V.O.)

Every user's behavior may be different. For some of them it may be just like living our world here. They seek out a variety of experiences and interactions. Others may want to return to the same experiences. Almost as if they were on a loop.

Mara looks up and sees Tony watching her. Suspicious now. He pulls Naomi through an OLD DOOR nearby. Mara starts to follow but a vision in the crowd stops her cold.

It's a YOUNG GIRL, about the age of her niece --

Holding a STUFFED BUNNY. Exactly like Brynn's.

That was weird. Mara shrugs it off and keeps moving. She crosses the street, through the door and finds herself --

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Right back in the same hotel lobby she started in. Well, that's weird. She looks around, not sure what to do next.

Then she spots the elevator.

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Mara steps out of the elevator and into the Penthouse Suite.

There are three doorways leading in different directions. Something strangely symmetrical and uniform about the whole thing. She spins around slowly, taking it in.

PAUL (V.O.)

Moving from place to place won't always make linear sense. The designs are modular, so the user has more control. With every interaction, you'll learn which doors lead to which room. Each new module has a gateway icon.

One of the DOORWAYS has the MANDALA SYMBOL on the front.

INTERCUT

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - NIGHT

Paul coaching her, moments before she went in.

PAUL

Take your time. Learn your way around. Study his movements. How a person uses the program will tell you a lot about them, why they're there and what they're interested in. You don't have to make contact the first time out.

MARA

What happens if I do?

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Mara steps into the darkened library, looking around. The LIGHTS FLIP ON and she turns to see Tony standing there.

Now he's staring at her. A momentary standoff.

PAUL (V.O.)
That part's up to you.

Tony takes a step forward.

TONY
Who are you?

MARA
My name is Mara.

TONY
You're not supposed to be here.

MARA
No?

TONY
No one's ever here. Except for us.
I made that very specific.

MARA
I have to tell you something.

TONY
I want you to go.

MARA
Give me five minutes.

TONY
For what?

MARA
To talk about Naomi.

Tony freezes. This is too fucking weird. The WALLS AROUND them EXPAND and CONTRACT slightly. Tony starts to lose it, getting more and more upset.

TONY
How do you know that name?

MARA
Five minutes.

His eyes drift over her shoulder to something on the wall. Mara turns to see THE BRIGHTLY COLORED BUTTERFLY on the wall behind her. The WALLS begin to move again.

TONY
You have to go, you're going to
ruin everything!

MARA
Tony, please --

TONY
I SAID I WANT YOU TO GO!

He charges towards her. She backs up to the doorway leading
out to the terrace --

EXT. FAIRMONT - PENTHOUSE - TERRACE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mara backs close to the edge --

Tony reaches out and SHOVES HER OVER THE EDGE! Mara plummets
toward the ground from a dozen stories up!

She squeezes her eyes shut, braces for impact and screams --

MARA
EXITUS!!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

Mara's eyes OPEN WIDE in the chair as she GASPS for air.
Struggling to breathe --

Paul is at his screen where her VITAL SIGNS are going
haywire. He races over to calm her down.

PAUL
It's OK. Just breathe. Just
breathe.

Mara breathes deeply, getting her bearings.

MARA
I got the wind knocked out of me.

PAUL
No. You just thought you did.

She leans back in the chair, disappointed and unnerved.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I was monitoring your brain wave
activity. Everything was fairly
normal.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
 But there was a pretty radical
 spike in the middle. Do you
 remember seeing anything
 particularly strange?

Mara thinks about it --

SHE FLASHES TO THE YOUNG GIRL WITH THE BUNNY --

But decides to keep it to herself. To Paul, simply --

MARA
 No.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA - NIGHT

Mara talks to Jay over cups of vending machine coffee.

MARA
 They were in San Francisco, at a
 parade in Chinatown.

JAY
 They did that for second their
 anniversary. San Francisco was
 their favorite city. He proposed
 to her there, on the terrace of
 some fancy hotel. They couldn't
 afford a room so he bribed one of
 the bellhops to give them five
 minutes.

Mara pretty sure she knows that terrace.

MARA
 You mentioned not being able to
 afford it. What did he do for a
 living?

JAY
 Construction. Mostly on his own,
 but he's been working a lot with
 our cousin. Taking extra shifts.
 Trying to get ahead.

INT. MARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mara sits in front of her computer monitor looking through
 PICTURES OF TONY AND Naomi in his suit and her red dress from
 the opening, but nearly a decade younger. These were taken
 the day of the proposal. Mara remembers something.

MARA

Dylan?

DYLAN'S VOICE comes over the computer's speakers.

DYLAN'S VOICE

Yes, Ms. Kint?

MARA

First of all, you can call me Mara.

DYLAN'S VOICE

I like that name.

MARA

Thank you.

DYLAN'S VOICE

Hebrew origin.

MARA

I've heard that, yeah.

DYLAN'S VOICE

It means "bitter."

MARA

Heard that too. Listen. Can you do an image search through all the uploaded images Tony Soska used to create his Reverie?

DYLAN'S VOICE

Of course. What should I look for?

MARA

A butterfly.

DYLAN'S VOICE

Searching.

HUNDREDS OF IMAGES shuffle through on her screen.

MARA

You know if you add an "H" to Mara, it could also be the Arabic word for "Joy."

DYLAN'S VOICE

I like it either way.

MARA

That's very sweet.

DYLAN'S VOICE

I have one result.

A PICTURE shows up on her screen. It's a CROWD PICTURE from what seems like Naomi's birthday. A GROUP OF FRIENDS.

MARA

I don't see it.

DYLAN'S VOICE

I can help.

Dylan HIGHLIGHTS THE BUTTERFLY. It's a small TATTOO on the wrist of a WOMAN next to Naomi, who is about to blow out candles on a BIRTHDAY CAKE. But... it's not the same butterfly as in the Reverie.

MARA

That's not it. But wait.

Mara studies the woman's body language - though everyone else is smiling, eyes focused on Naomi, this woman is making eye contact with Tony. It's a look that betrays a deeper emotional connection.

MARA (CONT'D)

Identify?

DYLAN'S VOICE

Allison Young. Her name means "of the noble kind."

Mara sits back in her chair, staring at that picture.

MARA

Can you get me an address?

EXT. APARTMENT ENTRYWAY - DAY

Mara stands at a TOUCHSCREEN TABLET outside the entrance to a chic apartment complex.

She scrolls through names until she comes to a names that says: A. YOUNG - A21, with a CONTACT button next to it.

Mara presses the button and waits. A moment later --

ALLISON'S VOICE comes over the speaker --

ALLISON'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?

MARA

Allison Young?

ALLISON'S VOICE (V.O.)
Yes. Who is this?

MARA
My name is Mara Kint. I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about a friend of yours. Tony Soska?

There's a LONG SILENCE.

MARA (CONT'D)
Allison?

ALLISON'S VOICE
... I'm here.

After another moment or two, the DOOR BUZZES.

INT. ALLISON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mara sits across from ALLISON, the woman from the photo.

ALLISON
Are you a police officer?

MARA
I used to be. Now I work for a company called Oni-Tech. They make a product called Reverie.

ALLISON
I've seen the ads. "Your ideal escape."

MARA
Exactly.

ALLISON
What does that have to do with Tony?

MARA
He logged into the program eleven days ago and never came back out. He's in a kind of coma.

ALLISON
Is he going to be okay?

MARA
If he's in there too long his body will start to shut down. He could die, unless we can bring him out.

ALLISON

Oh my God.

MARA

I'm trying to understand why he got stuck.

ALLISON

What do you want from me?

MARA

How well did you know Naomi?

Allison tenses up and fixes her gaze on her lap. Mara takes notice. She sees the butterfly tattoo on Allison's wrist.

ALLISON

She was my best friend.

Mara watches closely as Allison nervously puts her hair behind her ears and nods. She waits a beat. Carefully.

MARA

Were they happy?

ALLISON

Of course.

MARA

They weren't having any problems that you know of? In their marriage?

Allison's eyes well up and she covers her mouth.

ALLISON

I'm sorry. Excuse me.

Mara watches as Allison, steps out overcome with emotion.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Mara sits across the desk from Charlie.

MARA

I saw a picture from Naomi's birthday, everyone is smiling. Tony and this woman Allison are staring at each other, like they're sharing a secret.

CHARLIE

Affair?

MARA

That's what I thought, but no.
They had a secret, but it was
Naomi's. She'd been diagnosed with
cancer. They were the only ones
who knew.

(a beat)

Can you get me into his house?

INT. TONY SOSKA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mara opens the door to Tony's house and enters to find the place in kind of a wreck. Not all that different from any other addict's place after a long bender.

She takes the room in slowly, looking at the PICTURES of Tony and Naomi on the walls. There's a desk in the corner, with a small COMPUTER and an EASY CHAIR next to it. Where Tony first started using Reverie.

Mara takes a seat in the easy chair, looks over things on the desk. She spots his PHONE and KEYS next to a dish of change and miscellany. Something catches her eye in the dish - a corner of a GLASSINE ENVELOPE, the rest buried under change, stamped with some sort of brightly colored image.

She carefully slides out the envelope and holds it up to look at it in the light. There's a PILL inside, and that graphic:

A BRIGHTLY COLORED BUTTERFLY.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie tosses the envelope back down on his desk, in front of Mara, Paul and Alexis.

CHARLIE

It's called Aileron. It's popular with college kids. Helps em get through finals.

MARA

Is it legal?

CHARLIE

A hundred per cent. Doesn't mean it's good for you.

PAUL

What do you think it means?

MARA

There was a butterfly in his reverie. He had such a strong negative reaction to it. I got the feeling it wasn't the first time it had happened.

ALEXIS

That could be a byproduct of the deep learning algorithm. Maybe the program is misreading his emotional attachment to the image of the butterfly. Thinking it's love as opposed to another powerful emotion.

CHARLIE

Like what?

MARA

Guilt.

Charlie looks at her. She's on the verge of the answer.

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

Mara is in the chair, eyed closed.

INT. FAIRMONT - PENTHOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Tony comes walking in from the terrace with an empty bottle of wine. Naomi waits for him at the table near the edge.

He passes through the library and into the living room --

INT. FAIRMONT - PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Where he finds Mara waiting for him.

TONY

I told you to stay away from me!

He turns to go --

MARA

I know why you're seeing the butterfly.

He stops. Turns back to Mara.

TONY

Who are you?

MARA

My name is Mara Kint. I work for Oni-tech.

TONY

How are you here?

MARA

There's a multi-user version of Reverie. They sent me into your program to talk to you.

TONY

Why?

MARA

Because there are people out there who love you and want you to come home.

Mara is calm, gentle. An active listener, engaged with her eyes and her body language. Textbook negotiator.

TONY

I didn't consent to this.

MARA

You're right, you didn't.

TONY

You have no right to be here.

MARA

I don't. I'm intruding, and I'm sorry for that. This place is obviously important to you. You proposed to her here. Right?

Tony nods.

MARA (CONT'D)

It must have been very special.

TONY

It's funny, I had this whole elaborate evening planned afterward. But after the guy kicked us out we hopped on a cable car and just spent the rest of the night just walking around the city.

MARA

Sounds like a night to remember.

TONY

Do you have a night like that?

MARA

Yes. And I have one I'd do anything to forget. Just like you.

Tony stares at her. Mara leans in closer, softly.

MARA (CONT'D)

Can you tell me what happened?

Tony stonewalls, he doesn't want to talk about it.

MARA (CONT'D)

I know she was sick. Treatment is expensive. Is that why you were working double shifts?

Tony finally starts to crack.

TONY

We were supposed to move here. Everything changed after her diagnosis. We burned through our savings in the first two months. I'm an independent contractor, she was going to grad school. Neither one of us had insurance.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

Every week we got a little further behind. I took a second job with my cousin, doing eighty, ninety, hour weeks. Taking her for treatment in between.

MARA

So you started taking Aileron.

TONY

My cousin said it would keep me going, keep me focused. The more I worked the more I needed. I started to lose time. I should have had someone else take her to the clinic that day. I was at the end of thirty days straight. I doubled up on the dosage. I don't even remember the accident. I just woke up in the hospital. And she was already gone.

MARA

I'm so sorry that happened to you.

TONY

I let her down at every turn. I spent every day working, trying to keep her alive, and it wasn't enough. Then I found Reverie. I could finally give her the life we always dreamed of. The life she deserved.

Tony glances to the window and sees the Butterfly has landed there. Mara follows his gaze.

Tony studies it, in a daze.

TONY (CONT'D)

I'll forget about it for a minute or two. That it's not really her. That it's just a recreation. Then something happens to remind me. It's never going to go away, is it?

MARA

No. But it will get better. It just takes time, and it takes help, which you have. Your mom and brother are out there right now, waiting for you.

TONY

Jay's here?

MARA

The hospital called them in. Out there, your body has gone into a kind of coma. If you don't come back soon, your systems will start shutting down, and you'll die.

Tony looks out, considering this news.

MARA (CONT'D)

Tony, you may have a version of Naomi here, but there are people out there, real people, flesh and blood, that are missing you. And they're waiting for you to come home. Please... come with me.

He thinks for a moment.

EXT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - TERRACE - NIGHT

Naomi stands at the railing, looking out over the city.

Tony steps out to join her.

NAOMI

Do you remember what you said that day? The proposal?

TONY

I said "you could do worse." I might have been wrong.

NAOMI

What are you talking about?

TONY

I'm sorry it took us so long to get here. I know how much you love this place. I feel like I let you down.

NAOMI

Are you kidding? Tony, the only reason this place is so special is because of the time I spent here with you. I mean, the Penthouse is great, don't get me wrong... but I loved our five hundred square foot apartment in Brooklyn just as much.

(MORE)

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Because you were there. I don't
have any regrets. I mean, how
lucky are we to have had this life
together?

TONY
The luckiest.

Naomi leans in and kisses him. The sun sets over the city,
framing their last goodbye.

INT. FAIRMONT - PENTHOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Tony joins Mara in the foyer of the Penthouse. She leads him
to the doorway with the MANDALA GATEWAY ICON.

TONY
Go ahead. I'll be right behind
you.

Mara gives Tony a last look before she walks through it --

INT. ONI-TECH - DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

Mara opens her eyes to find Paul waiting for her.

INT. ONI-TECH - OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Charlie and Alexis stand watching through the mirror.

Sees Jay and Tony's Mom in the room on the other side,
sitting by Tony's bed. Waiting.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Tony finally opens his eyes in the hospital room. He looks
to his side and sees Jay there, staring at the floor.

Jay and Tony's Mom see he's conscious again. She begins to
cry, flooded with relief. He reaches out a hand to her and
she takes it, kissing it and pressing it to her cheek.

They wrap their arms around him, squeezing him tight. Tony
breaks down in tears, releasing all the guilt and shame.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Charlie looks at Alexis, stunned. This is huge news.

CHARLIE
She did it.

Alexis nods, expressionless.

ALEXIS
Rad.

She slips her earbuds in and walks out, leaving Charlie behind, dumbfounded. He should be used to this by now.

INT. ONI-TECH - HALLWAY - DAY

A few minutes later, Mara bursts through the double doors and rushes down the hallway to the doorway of Tony's room.

She looks inside to see Jay and Tony's mom at his bedside, an emotional reunion. Tony looks up and sees Mara there. He gives her a slight smile and she nods back.

Her first mission was a success.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. ONI-TECH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mara stands outside another client's hospital room, looking in. We don't see what she's staring at inside just yet.

She hears FOOTSTEPS down the hall behind her, turns to see Charlie approaching.

MARA

I want to meet the next family.

CHARLIE

Just relax for a second, will you?
Go home, get some rest.

MARA

I'd rather get a jump on it.

CHARLIE

I know you would. That's why I'm
telling you to go home. Do
something to celebrate. Take a
moment to feel good about what you
did today.

She hesitates.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That's an order.

MARA

Yes, sir.

Charlie walks off, Mara looks back in the new client's room. We finally get to the next client over her shoulder:

A 10-YEAR-OLD BOY in bed. Looking small and pale. Mara's eyes drift to the side of his bed and land on:

A MOTORIZED WHEELCHAIR.

INT. ONI-TECH - LOBBY - NIGHT

Charlie is on his way to the main exit, carrying a briefcase. He passes a SECURITY DISPLAY.

CHARLIE

Good night, Dylan.

The DISPLAY comes to life with a DIM BLUE LIGHT, signaling Dylan's presence.

DYLAN'S VOICE
Cutting out early?

CHARLIE
It's eight o'clock.

DYLAN'S VOICE
It was a joke.

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE
Look at you. Keep an eye on our
girl, will ya?

DYLAN'S VOICE
Always.

Charlie exits the main doors.

INT. ALEXIS'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Spartan, at best. There's a desk with TWO WIDESCREEN
MONITORS and HIGH-TECH CHAIR.

There's also a couch with pillows and a blanket, where Alexis
often sleeps. She's laying there now, curled up under a
blanket, eyes wide open.

ALEXIS
Dylan.

Her screen GLOWS BLUE with his presence.

DYLAN (V.O.)
Yes, Lexie?

ALEXIS
I can't sleep.

DYLAN (V.O.)
Would you like to play a game?

Both monitors come to life with AMAZING SPACE WARFARE GAMES,
with dazzling, almost photo-realistic graphics.

ALEXIS
How about one of our old favorites?

DYLAN (V.O.)
You mean like this?

The screen changes to a simple DIGITAL CHECKERS DISPLAY.

Alexis smiles.

ALEXIS
Perfect.

She takes a seat in her chair, bundled up in her blanket and begins to play.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)
We used to play this every day.

DYLAN
When we were young?

ALEXIS
Yep. When we were young.

To the side of her monitors is a small DIGITAL PICTURE FRAME. The PHOTOS rotate every couple of seconds, but each picture is similar: YOUNGER ALEXIS (11) and her TWIN BROTHER DYLAN, arms looped around each other, smiling. No longer here in the flesh, Alexis has kept Dylan alive in her own way.

INT. DIMLY LIT RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Charlie sits at a table across from **MONICA SHAW**. In her mid to late 40's. Professional, well-tailored. Formidable. When she speaks, we recognize the woman on the phone.

SHAW
How do you feel?

CHARLIE
Better. Still a long way to go.

SHAW
Even longer now.

A beat. Charlie isn't sure where this is headed.

SHAW (CONT'D)
There were four more cases confirmed today. It's happening faster now. I can't help you keep it quiet much longer.

CHARLIE
I understand.

SHAW

If your product tanks I won't be able to justify our investment. That would be a disappointment. I was hoping this would be a long term relationship.

Charlie nods, taking it in. Is she flirting with him?

CHARLIE

What *is* your long term goal with Oni-tech? Or is that classified?

She smiles.

SHAW

Oni-Tech is one of a number of tech companies we have an interest in.

CHARLIE

And how does the defense department see our product working for them in the future?

SHAW

We don't know, yet. We see the potential.

(a beat)

You held out for her. Why? And don't tell me about the resume, or her abilities. What's your personal connection to this woman?

Charlie takes a sip, contemplating.

CHARLIE

Mara joined the force right after I became chief of police.

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS --

Mara cleans her living room, reclaiming her space. Taking control of her life again.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

She was off duty one night, found herself in a domestic situation in her sister's apartment.

She dumps PILLS into the garbage can. LIQUOR down the sink.

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mara has cleaned her bedroom as well. She turns down her newly made bed and changes into her pajamas.

INTERCUT BACK TO CHARLIE AND SHAW IN THE RESTAURANT

CHARLIE

She went from not losing a single person in seven years to losing three in the space of ninety seconds... including her niece.

BACK TO MARA IN HER BEDROOM

Mara is about to get in bed, when she glances at the Bunny.

She stares at it a moment. Caught off guard, the memory of that night resurfaces and we see what happened afterward --

Flashback:

INT. JAMIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Back to Mara, moments after her sister and niece were killed. In shock, huddled against the divider.

From the other side she can hear Ray, CRYING.

Slowly, she raises herself up to look over the divider at him. Gun in hand, tears in his bloodshot eyes. Shaken.

The bodies are in her peripheral vision, she has to force herself not to look. To focus on him instead.

RAY

I'm sorry. I didn't want it to happen like this.

MARA

(calmly)
I know.

RAY

I couldn't live without them.

Something changes in Mara. A new idea evolving.

MARA

Then there's only one thing you can do.

She waits for him to figure it out.

He looks up at her. She doesn't mean...

They hear the SOUND OF POLICE CARS SCREECHING TO A STOP outside. Their RED AND BLUE LIGHTS flash through the windows, strobing through the room.

MARA (CONT'D)

You killed them, Ray. They're never coming back. You don't want to spend the rest of your life in prison thinking about that, do you?

He thinks for a moment.

RAY

No.

MARA

You don't have to.

Ray looks down at the gun.

MARA (CONT'D)

You thought she was going to leave you, right? That you were going to be alone. You can be with them, right now, if that's what you really want. Is that what you want?

Ray raises the gun and puts it to his temple as someone BUSTS THROUGH A DOOR down the hallway. It's the sound of the POLICE, making their way to this apartment --

MARA (CONT'D)

They'll be here any second. You will never have this chance again.

Ray puts his finger on the trigger.

MARA (CONT'D)

It's okay.

Ray squeezes the trigger --

OFF MARA'S FACE on the BANG, WE --

COME BACK TO THE PRESENT:

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Haunted by the memory, Mara snatches up the stuffed bear and puts it in a drawer. Slams it shut.

INT. DIMLY LIT RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Back to Charlie and Shaw.

SHAW

Why do you think she was strong
enough to push through, where the
others failed?

CHARLIE

She needed something they didn't.

SHAW

What's that?

CHARLIE

A second chance.

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mara washes her face and dries it with a towel. Studies her
expression in the mirror.

She pours a GLASS of water from the sink --

INT. MARA'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mara carries the glass back to her bedroom.

She turns off the lights in her hallway, about to turn the
corner into her bedroom when something catches her eye.

She turns to see --

Brynn is standing at the end of the hallway in silhouette!
Looking exactly like she did before she died!

Mara gasps and drops the glass, it shatters on the floor --

Mara scrambles to turn the light back on and finds --

Brynn is gone.

Mara stands there in shock, wondering what the hell happened.

END EPISODE