

MARKOV CHAINS

Pilot: Déjà-Vu

By

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IAN (O.S.)
What day is it?

FADE IN:

INT. RESEARCH CENTER/LABORATORY - DAY, OCTOBER 2022

A blank LED screen. Appears --

LED SCREEN (TEXT)
10-07-2022-03:52PM.

IAN (O.S.)
Argus, I didn't ask for the time.

The screen clears up and --

LED SCREEN (TEXT)
10-07-2022.

IAN (O.S.)
Good, Argus. And where are we?

LED SCREEN (TEXT)
41.881832, -87.623177 -- BRIGHT
MEDICAL CENTER. 3401 North
California Avenue, Chicago, IL
60618.

A smile escapes from **IAN MARKOV CHAIN**'s young face.

Ian is a 20-ish athletic-built man, wearing a lab coat. The screen Ian looks at, is attached on the side of a strange machine: an oval human-sized-capsule-bed. The bed has a complex enclosure that is 2-meter-high and a mixture of glass and metal. On the enclosure is written "BRIGHT ARGUS 1.0". There is abundant electric wiring on its base.

LED SCREEN (TEXT, CONT'D)
WAITING FOR 89225 REACTOR.

IAN
Waiting for you.

As if he searches for someone, Ian looks over the screen through the Argus bed --

IAN (CONT'D)
Henry, you're ok?

A voice from the other side of the machine --

HENRY (O.S.)

I'm fine. Give me a minute.

Ian looks behind him. 3 meters away, **TWO OTHER SCIENTISTS**, one 30-ish and the other 60-ish, both in lab coats, they monitor the computers on their 2 separate desks. There are stairs and a ramp, 2 meters beyond the desks --

IAN

Burns? X? What about you?

X, 30-ISH SCIENTIST

The program is ready to run, Ian.

Burns, the 60-ish scientist looks at Ian and smiles.

BURNS

You youngsters are way too slow.

Boss is getting anxious.

Ian looks up and sees where the stairs and the ramp lead up to -- A CONFERENCE ROOM, 3 meters overhead. Through the frameless glass walls, he sees the **BOSS**, arms-crossed, standing next to a 20-ish **WOMAN IN A WHEELCHAIR**. They both watch the Argus bed.

The boss is a 40-ish man in a business suit. The lady is in a business suit as well. Her wheelchair is motorized with a controlling tablet close to her left hand and a viewing screen 50 centimeters in front of her chest.

Ian lifts an index finger up --

IAN

JUST ONE MINUTE.

The boss nods. Ian makes eye-contact with the lady for a second and turns back around.

IAN

Yo, Henry?

HENRY (O.S.)

I'm doing what I can.

IAN

Yeah, I got that. I was wondering...

Do you know anything about the wheelchair groupie?

HENRY (O.S.)
Wheelchair groupie? That's
original.

IAN HEARS something clench and sees **HENRY** rise up behind the
strange bed.

Henry is a 20-ish man, very tall and skinny, with glasses
and a lab coat on. Henry sighs --

HENRY (CONT'D)
Should be good.

Ian looks at the LED SCREEN.

LED SCREEN (TEXT)
INSTALLING 89225 REACTOR...

IAN
It's booting.

Henry closes an open hatch on the side of the machine and
walks around it. He stands next to Ian and stares at the
screen as well.

IAN (CONT'D)
So?

HENRY
So what?

IAN
Do you know her?

HENRY
Well, for starters, she built that
damn reactor that took me forever
to install.

IAN
Obviously, I know that. I meant,
other facts, like personal stuff.

Henry grimaces and looks at Ian.

HENRY
Why? Do you have a thing for her?

IAN
What? No. I'm just curious.

HENRY

You do. You like her. You have that look.

IAN

I do not. You know what? Never mind.

HENRY

And today's word is Abasiophilia.

IAN

Abasi what?

Ian looks at the LED SCREEN. There is a loading bar --

HENRY

Abasiophilia, attraction to crippled people. I mean Disabled.

IAN

You're crazy, dude.

HENRY

You don't have to be ashamed. She's actually cute but... mute too. Let's just hope that everything is still working down there.

Ian frowns and looks at Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'm guessing you'll have to expect bushes though, unless you're into that too.

IAN

I'm honestly ashamed of being your friend right now.

AN ALARMING BEEP from the Argus startles the two friends.

IAN (CONT'D)

What the hell?

Ian sees on the screen --

LED SCREEN (TEXT)

ENERGY OVERLOAD.

The screen turns dark.

Follows AN EXPLOSION. IT generates from the Argus bed's basis electric sparks that pour from its core as water from a fountain. The blast breaks the glass in the enclosure and throws down Ian and Henry.

ALL GOES DARK.

All is silent for a moment...

HEAVY SIGH --

IAN (V.O.)
What day is it?

INT. IAN'S HOUSE - DAY, JUNE 2048

Ian sits up in the sheets of his bed. He looks much older. His face is wrinkly. So many scars on his muscular chest, cuts and burns.

Seemingly puzzled, he looks around through the open space. Every furniture seems old or poorly refurbished: the duck-taped-leather sofa, the pile of DVDs by the cathodic TV in the living room, the kitchen with the worn out scratched-painting.

He lazily gets up from his bed, scratches his neck and heads for a nearby door.

THE BATHROOM -- Small and dirty. Ian enters, leans on the sink and stares at his reflection in the mirror above it.

He starts breathing, gradually heavily, and frowns.

EXT. IAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A sunny day. The façade of the small wooden house is much like the inside. Wild grass has taken over the front yard, on which is parked an electric motorcycle. Ian walks out, fully-dressed, jeans, t-shirt and a motorcycle vest. As he approaches the bike --

CHILD (O.S.)
Bye mom!

He turns his head to the right. He sees a row of houses in line with his own: solar panels on all the rooftops, similar architecture but less neglected appearance. An asphalt road traverses the neighborhood towards an agglomeration of small concrete buildings. Further away, a gigantic wall dominates the landscape. On the road, a yellow school bus full of kids is parked by the neighbor front yard.

The **FEMALE NEIGHBOR** waves to her **8-YEARS-OLD CHILD** boarding the bus. The neighbor, who is 30-ish, is rather attractive, even with the excess of makeup.

Ian's attention is drawn back to the bike. He grabs the right handle. An LED screen on the handlebar lights up.

BIKE SCREEN (TEXT)
ID CONFIRMED... HELLO MARKOV...

Ian taps the screen on which appears a speedometer. The motor starts running.

NEIGHBOR
IAN? HELLO!

Ian glances at the woman who walks up to him with a smile --

IAN
(To himself)
Oh dear.

Ian sits on the bike --

IAN
Hi Karen... How are you?

KAREN
I'm good. What about you?

IAN
Good as well.

KAREN
Going to the power plant?

Karen gets really close --

IAN
Yes I am.

KAREN
How is it over there?

IAN
Survivable as usual.

KAREN
Cool... You know that my invitation
still stands, right?

Ian nods. Karen puts a hand on Ian's cheek. He acts a bit uncomfortable.

KAREN (CONT'D)
You seem so tired... You could call
in sick and let me take care of you
today... I know how hard y'all work
to keep Jericho running... to keep us
safe from the zombies but --

Ian slightly frowns.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Everyone needs a break from this
madness once in a while.

IAN
They are not zombies.

KAREN
What?

IAN
A zombie is by definition either a
will-less human held to have died
and been supernaturally reanimated.
Strangely the word also refers to a
mixed drink made of several kinds
of rum, liqueur, and fruit juice.
They are none of these things.

KAREN
Then, what are those creatures?

IAN
People... Just sick people... Calling
them zombies is just... Idiotic. You
of all people should know.

KAREN
Ok. I... I'm sorry if I said
something that upset you.

Ian sighs.

IAN

You didn't. It's not you. Like you said I'm tired... I have to go to work. Have a good day Karen.

KAREN

Yeah, you too Ian.

Karen takes a step back. Ian rides away.

EXT. JERICHO DOWNTOWN - MOMENTS LATER

The heart of the town transpires poverty as it is crowded with modestly dressed people. They circulate between concrete buildings that could use a paint job. The cars in the busy traffic are all electric but seem to come from another age.

Ian rides his bike in the slow traffic passing in front of the façade of a 4-story concrete building: Half a hundred stairs lead up to the JERICHO CITY HALL, large letters engraved above the front entrance.

The traffic stops. He does as well. He notices after the dozen cars ahead, people crossing the street and the RED TRAFFIC LIGHT.

IAN

What the f --

ONE-HANDED MAN

CHIEF? IAN?

Ian looks to his right and sees a **ONE-HANDED HOMELESS MAN** in his late 50s approach.

IAN

COLIN, what's up?

Colin who holds a DVD passes through the stopped cars and reaches Ian.

COLIN

I got a good one. I got a very good one. It's End of road. 2019 Post-apocalyptic warfare.

COLIN (CONT'D)

Great fiction with mankind on the break of extinction... Kind of like right now. So I guess it's not much of a fiction but still a great movie.

IAN

Where did you get it?

Ian searches a pocket in his vest.

COLIN

I know a couple of philanthropic collectors like you my friend.

Ian hands a dollar to Colin. They exchange the money and the DVD.

IAN

You mean you go through their garbage.

COLIN

(Imitating Liam Neeson)

I have a particular set of searching skills.

IAN

Was that Liam? That was both unfunny and strangely good. I wonder where he is now. So many famous people just vanished.

COLIN

Probably in the flesh-eating business. LA had it pretty bad a few years back. Remember the report they did about that singer who ate his agent's leg?

IAN

Yeah, JT... The world has changed so much. What were you before... all of this?

COLIN

Me... I was a juggler.

Ian laughs. Colin chuckles.

COLIN (CONT'D)

See you around.

IAN

Yeah...

As Colin leaves --

IAN (CONT'D)

Colin?

COLIN

(Turns back)

All sales are final. No return policy.

IAN

Obviously, it's not about that. Did you sleep around here last night?

COLIN

Oh no, I had to move to 17th avenue. Downtown, the lights stayed on all night with the city hall, all the buildings and traffic lights. It was a freaking Christmas tree around here. Why?

IAN

(Shaking his head)

Just... idiocracy... Have a good day Colin.

COLIN

(Walking away)

You too chief.

Ian watches the red light turn green.

EXT. THE FOREST/THE GREAT WALL/THE HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A clear sky over the green leaves of the forest, pine trees all around us.

HEAVY IRREGULAR BREATHING -- We follow a **MUSCULAR FIGURE** limping in the shadows of the woods. IT seems human: hair overgrown on its uneven limbs, numerous tumors and open wounds visible through the torn up business suit it is wearing, the back of its head abnormally veiny.

THE FIGURE

Home.

A hedge of bushy trees stands before him. It makes a way with its arms and passes through. The light of the sun illuminates its veiny face. It's a MALE, SICKENED, A ZOMBIE with red eyes and half of its face eaten by skin cancer.

SICKENED MALE (CONT'D)

(Mumbling)

Home.

It sees --

GREAT CONCRETE WALL, 200 meters ahead after a grassy field. The walls are 40 meters high and go as far as the eye can see. There are hundreds of corpses, mutilated and laid all over the field. **ARMED SOLDIERS** stand on top of the structure, 2 every 50 meters, behind safety rails and 50 caliber machine guns.

SICKENED MALE (CONT'D)

Home.

The sickened male advances in the field, notices **2 30-ISH SOLDIERS** in the distance and starts running towards them.

ON THE GREAT WALL:

The 2 soldiers look the other way.

On the other side of the wall, there are military cabins and stairways leading up to the top. A fence separates the military camp from a highway. Beyond the highway, farms, houses, and further away Jericho Downtown. The highway seems to lead miles away to a wind farm.

SOLDIER 1

I speak of open valleys. Fertile at men's feet. Overgrown with flowers. Of captive summits. Of mountains, of clear skies. Devoured by untamed evergreens.

SOLDIER 2

That's a tough one, Jimmy...

(Looks at Soldier 1)

Is it... Is it Robert Frost?

JIMMY

Robert Frost? Not even close. It's
Emily Dickinson.

SOLDIER 2

Argh. Ok my turn... The farmhouse
lingers, though averse to square --

JIMMY

It's Robert Frost.

SOLDIER 2

Damn it!

JIMMY

(Chuckles)

Oh dear Randall, so predictable! I
don't even know the poem I just
assumed --

A SCREAM -- The 2 soldiers turn their attention to the
Sickened male RUNNING in the field.

RANDALL

Now, that's good. 3 bucks say he
makes it past the 50-yard line.

JIMMY

5 bucks. It's a limper. He won't
make it.

IN THE FIELD:

The runner gets 70 meters close, SCREAMING. A hatch,
camouflaged under the grass, OPENS 20 meters before the
wall. An automated heavy machine gun emerges and FIRES at
the runner. He is hit in the chest but keeps advancing as
bullets fly in his direction --

RANDALL (O.S.)

COME ON.

A bullet hits the Sickened male in the head. He falls.

RANDALL (O.S., CONT'D)

Damn it!

IN THE BUSHES:

A figure hidden behind branches stands --

JIMMY (O.S.)
 (Chuckles)
 You gotta pay up bro.

Another sickened male calmly observes the field. It's A ZOMBIE IN A LAB COAT that looks a whole lot like HENRY. Tall and skinny, he has less tumors and open wounds than the other zombie but his eyes' corneas are entirely black.

ON THE HIGHWAY:

Ian rides his bike at high speed. He glances at the great walls then looks ahead at the wind farm.

EXT./INT. WIND FARM CONTROL CENTRE - MOMENTS LATER

Ian parks his motorcycle between two sedans in front of a small concrete building neighboring a hangar. The place is surrounded by hills covered with the greenest grass and about a 100 wind turbines. Ian sees **A SECURITY GUARD** at the main entrance above which is written "WIND FARM CONTROL CENTRE". Ian walks towards the entrance.

IAN
 Morning Gary.

GARY
 (With a grand smile)
 Good morning chief. How are you today?

IAN
 Good. How is your family?

GARY
 Much better. Thanks for asking...
 Sir?

Ian stops and looks at Gary.

IAN
 Yes?

GARY
 I wanted to thank you for what you did. My wife wouldn't have received this experimental treatment if it wasn't for you.

IAN

Huh... What are you talking about?

GARY

(Chuckles)

It's ok sir. I won't tell anyone. I know it was supposed to be anonymous but I did my own investigation... I had to know who chose to selflessly help my family.

IAN

Well, Gary... I still don't know what you're talking about. But, I'm happy for you.

Gary nods, smiles and Ian enters the building.

A 25-SQUARE-METER CONTROL ROOM:

A MAN IN A SUIT, 20-ish and clean cut, observes **6 ENGINEERS** in uniforms working on their computers desks. The desks face a wall of visual displays, large LED screens with complex maps, graphs and indicators of all the wind turbines' states and Jericho's complete electric grid divided in 20 sectors.

A door opens behind them; enters Ian as can see the man in the suit.

MAN IN SUIT

Ian, you're early.

He extends his hand towards Ian who ignores him and walks up to the LED screens.

Ian notices an indicator on the top screen reading "%87.46 CAPACITY".

IAN

Gregory, shut down the supply in sectors 4 to 8 and run a complete diagnostic.

GREGORY, one of the engineers, looks at Ian with much confusion in the eyes.

GREGORY

Sir, it's Jericho's Downtown...

Ian gives a stern look at Gregory.

IAN

Do it now!

GREGORY

Sir... I...

Gregory looks at the man in suit as if he expects him to say something.

MAN IN SUIT

Ian, we're not doing that. The council asked --

IAN

(Approaches the man in suit)

Do you know why we never operate over 70 percent of our capacity? Do you have any idea what sorts of damages this could cause?

MAN IN SUIT

It's been a year since the council asked for the stoppage of the rolling blackouts.

IAN

The council is composed of politicians who couldn't even change a lightbulb if their lives depended on it. And, I include you in that category.

MAN IN SUIT

Maybe so but the city invested in those new wind turbines you designed. It was your idea.

IAN

The tests are months away from being complete. Our whole design along with the complete electric grid of this town is made of rehashed components, some of them dating from the 90s, before you were even born Steve.

STEVE

Everything is working fine, we haven't had an incident in years --

IAN

And why do you think that is, genius? Because we NEVER fucking operate over 70 percent. Everything in this goddamn town relies on this grid: the farms, the transports, and our defense system.

STEVE

You mean those useless guns beyond the walls. We don't even need this heavy machinery. I've never seen a zombie climb a 100-foot high wall.

IAN

They are not zombies. They are sick people.

STEVE

Keeping the lights on gives a better living to the people in this town. It fuels social activities, commerce, entertainment; people are more lighthearted, they live instead of surviving. They worry less about the threats of the outside world.

IAN

Well, maybe they should worry. Now, listen to me Steve Buchanan, when you'll have lived as long as I have and seen the horrors I've seen, you'll understand that in this world, the worst case scenario is always right around the corner.

STEVE

I understand you Ian. My father, God rests his soul, trusted you as the chief engineer, and I trust you as well even though you insist on being a dick to higher hierarchy. But as a member of the council, I have to execute its decisions.

IAN

Decision? You mean there is already been a meeting about this?

STEVE

3 days ago.

IAN

Making plans about the electric
grid without the engineer --

STEVE

Gregory was there.

Ian glances at Gregory who instantly looks down.

IAN

Then why don't you give my fucking
job to Gregory?

STEVE

We just might.

Ian stares with a frown at Steve who doesn't blink.

ALL SCREENS suddenly go black startling everyone --

STEVE (CONT'D)

What's going on?

IAN

Shit!

The screens turn back on --

GREGORY

The system is rebooting.

STEVE

What was that?

Ian approaches Gregory --

IAN

Run a complete diagnostic once
you're back online.

Ian observes the large LED screens as the maps and graphs
reappear. He notices that red dots have appeared by the
great walls.

GREGORY

I have... 5 no... 6 failed items in the
west wall defense system including
4 M140 guns offline.

STEVE

How is that possible? What happened?

Ian gives a mean look at Steve.

IAN

Why don't you ask Gregory?

Gregory acts uncomfortable. Steve shakes his head.

STEVE

Do you know what happened?

IAN

The capacitors are old and old electric devices tend to burn when there is a power surge.

GREGORY

A power surge?

IAN

Yes Gregory, a power surge. Ever heard of cascading failures? Could be anything, from lightning to an idiot trying to tap some watts from the neighbors. And since, we don't have enough sensors on the grid, we probably won't be able to route it. You people are such morons. That's what I was talking about --

STEVE

Ok, Ian?

IAN

This whole fucking system is not strong or robust enough to --

STEVE

IAN?

IAN

WHAT?

STEVE

We get it. You were right. Now what do we do?

Ian sighs.

IAN
 Shut down the supply in sectors 4
 to 8.

Steve nods. Ian heads for the door.

IAN (CONT'D)
 Call Captain Harris and tell him
 I'm on my way to fix your mess.

As he exits the room --

IAN (CONT'D)
 And FIRE GREGORY.

Gregory, startled, looks at Steve who answers --

STEVE
 (Shaking his head)
 You're not... fired.

EXT. THE GREAT WALL/THE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Ian climbs the stairs up towards the top of the great concrete wall. Ian breathes heavily and has a strong grip on the handrail. He has a backpack on and follows **A FEMALE SOLDIER**.

SHE is 20-ish, has short hair and Asian traits. She has a sniper rifle.

Ian glances at the cabins and few soldiers 20 meters down on the ground --

IAN
 (Shaky voice)
 Shit!

FEMALE SOLDIER
 (Glancing back)
 Everything ok back there?

IAN
 Yeah... I'm just... not a great fan of
 heights Lee.

LEE
 That's too bad because we have no
 doors on this side of the wall.

IAN

I know.

Ian arrives on top of the wall and SEES ahead --

An officer, a **CAPTAIN** in his early 50s, tall and athletic-built. The latter observes **6 YOUNG SOLDIERS**, including Randall and Jimmy, equipping themselves with rappel gears. Nearby, **2 ARMED SOLDIERS** watch the horizon, a sniper and another from behind a 50 caliber machine gun.

The officer notices Lee who salutes respectfully --

LEE

Captain.

CAPTAIN

(Nods)

Thank you Lee.

Lee takes position with her weapon next to the 50 caliber machine gun.

Ian approaches. Ian seems uncomfortable as he watches the surroundings. The Captain welcomes Ian with a smile and extends a hand towards him --

CAPTAIN

Ian Markov Chain. It's been ages since I've seen you here. Still afraid of heights?

IAN

(Shaking the Captain's hand)

Yeah, I don't think that's ever going away. How are you Harris?

CAPTAIN HARRIS

Never been better. It's been a quiet couple of months. Aside from the occasional wanderers, we haven't had any large group of sickened people in a while. It's as if the world is getting back to normal on its own.

IAN

I'm not sure "Normal" is a concept that'll ever apply to this... planet again.

CAPTAIN HARRIS

I can see your optimism has remained rather intact over the years.

IAN

And you're still as awful as ever at being sarcastic.

They both chuckle. Harris looks at the fields beyond the walls.

CAPTAIN HARRIS

Two of the M140 you signaled are right down below. The other 2 are 500 feet to the west. We've disengaged the neighbor guns for safety. The squad will have flags to delimitate the safe zone on the ground. I'd, of course, advise you to stay in the safe zone. We'll neutralize threats, if any, from up here... Are you ok with rappelling?

IAN

Huh... Sure.

CUT TO:

Ian, equipped, rappels down the wall with his backpack.

IAN

Don't look down! Don't you do it, idiot --

Halfway, Ian looks down and sees 5 of the 6 young soldiers, armed with assault rifles and unpacking a set of flags --

IAN

Son of a bitch.

Ian stops, closes his eyes for a second.

JIMMY (O.S.)

You're doing ok.

Ian looks to the side and sees Jimmy, 3 meters nearby, hanging there with his rappel equipment, a weapon strapped to his back and a foot on the wall.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Just keep going.

Ian nods. Jimmy descends.

Ian takes a breath and slowly descends as well.

Ian reaches the soil, welcomed by the hands of Jimmy, who helps him get out of the cord.

IAN

Thank you James.

JIMMY

Everybody calls me Jimmy.

Ian notices, about 50 meters away, Randall and another soldier placing a line of flags perpendicular to the wall.

IAN

Well, thanks Jimmy.

He looks the opposite way and sees a similar spectacle as 2 other soldiers limit the safe zone. Ian looks up and sees Harris near Lee and the 2 other ARMED SOLDIERS over-watching.

IAN (CONT'D)

Ok, let's do this as fast as possible.

Ian, followed closely by Jimmy, advances 20 meters into the field. A soldier, 10 meters ahead of them, watches the surroundings. Ian poses a knee to the ground. He unearths a lever and pulls it. A meter close, a hatch camouflaged under the grass, opens. An automated heavy machine gun emerges.

At the sight of the M140 --

JIMMY

We are everything on earth - except the gods!

IAN

Secret of the Machines... By Kipling.

Ian poses his backpack on the soil.

JIMMY

A fan of poetry, sir?

Ian pulls an electric screwdriver from the bag and --

IAN

I am a fan of anything that challenges the human mind... It's a luxury nowadays.

JIMMY

How so?

Ian dismounts an electric box at the basis of the M140.

IAN

Well... I think there are no great men left in this world, no more Einsteins, Ghandis... or Kiplings to elevate our reasoning. Maybe the pandemic took them all away because over the last years, even in this scenario where we are reduced to fight for our survival, there hasn't been much of a revolution in the way we think. If anything, we're worse. This city is... a joke.

JIMMY

Jericho seems fine to me.

IAN

Really? ... It's just a big illusion. We feast in the safety of our walls and call the sickened people zombies because it's easier that way to... forget them. We've abandoned --

A SCREAM FROM THE FOREST startles them.

JIMMY

What the fuck?

Ian stands up, and sees A PROJECTILE fly in the air. It lands at the feet of the soldier ahead of Jimmy and him. It EXPLODES into a cloud of smokes that blinds any sight in a 40 meters radius. Pushed back by the blast, Ian and Jimmy fall. Jimmy grabs Ian by the shoulder --

JIMMY (CONT'D)

We need to get back.

ON THE GREAT WALL:

CAPTAIN HARRIS
FALL BACK. FALL BACK.

Harris looks at the fields and only sees fumes as high as the wall. SUDDENLY DISTANT SCREAMS, GROWLS AND GRUNTS -- He HEARS a large crowd running.

CAPTAIN HARRIS (CONT'D)
Shit. FIRE!

SOLDIER WITH 50 CALIBER
Where, Sir? We don't see --

CAPTAIN HARRIS
FIRE IN THE DAMN WOODS!

The soldier fires the 50 Caliber machine and bullets rain above the fields towards the forest.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
ARGH! HELP ME!

In between SCREAMS and GUNSHOTS, Harris notices that one of the cords is trembling. A figure emerges from the smoke, the soldier formerly with Randall climbs up in a hurry.

CAPTAIN HARRIS
COME ON --

He is abruptly pulled down, falls and SCREAMS with a look of terror in the eyes.

CAPTAIN HARRIS
DAMN IT.

RANDALL (O.S.)
NO. NO.

Harris looks to his left and sees --

A panicked Randall appear through the cloud and run past the line of flags. A 2-meter tall figure, a **ZOMBIE** appears closely after him and jumps on his back. They tumble to the ground. Randall is bitten in the forearm as he tries to fend the creature off --

70 meters away, an M-140 lifts up from the ground and releases its destructive firepower that ends Randall and his attacker.

Horror is easy to distinguish in the eyes of the Captain.

He looks down and sees through the dissipating smoke **2 ZOMBIES** climbing the cords and even **MORE** below. He pulls his sidearm with a hand and shoots them in the head. He pulls a knife from a holster, brandishes it and freezes for a second as if he is indecisive --

Harris cuts off the cords.

IN THE FOREST:

The Zombie-Henry-lookalike, stands back to a large tree as bullets fly around. His stillness is as disturbing as the smile on his face. **ZOMBIES**, one, two, three, a dozen... run past him, through the bushes, on his RIGHT and LEFT, into the murk above the fields. One of the creatures is HIT in the head and falls by the tree.

IAN (O.S.)

THIS WAY.

Zombie-Henry looks to his right and sees 50 meters away --

IAN, followed by JIMMY. They run frenetically through the woods, chased by a dozen other zombies. A BULLET rips off the leg of the last zombie on their trail.

Jimmy looks back and SHOOTs the closest zombie in the head. Others are about 10 meters back.

IAN

DON'T STOP.

They keep running.

JIMMY

WHERE WE GOING?

IAN

JUST FOLLOW ME.

There is a small hill on their way that they climb in no time. Jimmy reaches the edge and perceives ahead a LOG CABIN downhill: wooden, small, a metal door and a single open window in the façade, it is seemingly abandoned. They run down the slope about 50 meters. Jimmy glances back at the creatures.

Ian pushes the door open -- It is empty, nothing but a mattress, a few empty cans on the floor and an old wheelchair. Jimmy follows inside. Ian closes the door after him. Small holes in the ceiling let beams of sunlight inside.

IAN

Close the window.

The door has 4 locks that Ian hurriedly closes. Jimmy takes care of the 2 locks on the window. As soon as he closes the last one there is A HEAVY BUMP into the door, followed by ANOTHER and ANOTHER -- The walls tremble.

Ian and Jimmy step away from the door. They stare at it with looks of fear.

ON THE GREAT WALL:

No more gunshots -- The murk has entirely dissipated revealing a hundred zombie corpses laying in the fields.

Through the visor of her rifle, Lee distinguishes a military corpse.

HARRIS (O.S.)

What do you see Lee?

LEE

It's Donovan.

HARRIS (O.S.)

What about James? Ian?

Searching through the corpses with her visor --

LEE

I don't... I don't see them Captain.

INT. ABANDONED LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy, weapon-ready, and Ian, leaning back to the wall, stare at the door with looks of despair. BUMPS AND KNOCKS all around --

JIMMY

We're trapped. We shouldn't have come here.

IAN

They would have outrun us...

JIMMY

(Frowns)

How did you know about this place?

IAN

I wasn't sure the cabin would still be... I lived here a while back before Jericho was built.

JIMMY

In the forest? All by yourself?

Ian gives a somber look at -- the wheelchair.

IAN

I wasn't... alone.

Jimmy looks at Ian. Markov's attention is absorbed by the old wheelchair. Jimmy reactively looks at it as well --

JIMMY

Who was it?

IAN

What?

JIMMY

The wheelchair?

Ian sighs. The bumps and knocks stop from this moment --

IAN

She was... Her name was Anna... Anna...

(Beat)

We lived here for 2 whole years. It was so different back then... And she loved it... how we were woken in the morning by the Nightingales. She loved the scent of the rain in March, Petrichor on the Gardenias' growing leaves... It used to be so peaceful... Then the construction of Jericho started, and, the more people came to seek refuge, the more zomb... sickened people populated the woods.

JIMMY

Did she... get bitten? Did she turn?

IAN

No... She had a whole other kind of disease. One that kills you very... very slowly. I never thought --

Ian frowns and stops talking.

JIMMY

You never thought what?

IAN

Do you hear that?

JIMMY

I hear nothing.

IAN

Exactly.

Jimmy takes two steps forward.

JIMMY

Maybe they've wandered away. We have to check --

Ian grabs Jimmy by the shoulder.

IAN

Wait! He is here.

AN EXPLOSION blows away the cabin's façade. Ian and Jimmy are pushed back by the blast and fall to the ground.

All is blurry to Jimmy who opens up his eyes to see figures approach -- ZOMBIE-HENRY closely followed by 2 OTHERS walk through the enormous gap in the façade. Jimmy distinguishes A DOZEN ZOMBIES standing outside. Also his weapon is half a meter out of his reach.

Jimmy crawls towards the rifle BUT the leading creature picks it up and points it menacingly at Jimmy.

IAN

Henry... HENRY?

Zombie-Henry looks at Ian. Jimmy can see that Markov is sat back to the wall and stares at the creature with googly eyes.

IAN (CONT'D)

Henry, it's you, isn't it?

GUNSHOTS NEARBY, One of the zombies is HIT in the head and falls. Zombie-Henry looks back and its follower chaotically run outside through a symphony of gunfire, screams and growls.

Jimmy perceives in the distance Harris leading Lee and 5 other soldiers descending the slope towards the cabin. They put down the bestial humanoids one after the other. As the gunshots keep going, Zombie-Henry glances at Ian, walks out and runs away past the flank of Harris' rescue group.

Jimmy sees the fight unraveling but passes out --

INT. INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

Delicate hands put a bandage around an injured forearm --

IAN (O.S.)

What's your name? Oh... Sorry, go ahead.

A **NURSE** ties the bandage around Ian's forearm. She is 30-ish and beautiful. Ian is sat on a bed.

NURSE

(Sign language)

I am Aracelis.

IAN

Go again.

NURSE

(Sign language)

A-R-A-C-E-L-I-S.

IAN

Aracelis. That's very uncommon.

ARACELIS

(Sign language)

So is your name. Were your parents mathematicians or is that just a coincidence?

IAN

I am impressed. Most people don't get it.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Most people don't get what?

Ian looks to the left and -- a few meters close, Jimmy stands by a window, with a bandage on the head. The soldier looks stoically outside at the Great Wall.

IAN

My middle name.

Jimmy looks at Ian.

JIMMY

What about it?

IAN

It's Markov and my last name is Chain so..

JIMMY

So Markov Chain.

IAN

(Looking at Aracelis)

It's a stochastic process, probability theory.

ARACELIS

(Sign language)

The idea is that one can make predictions for the future of a process based solely on its present state.

IAN

(With a smile)

Memorylessness. Only the last known state matters. It's like building a future free from the heaviness and the intricacies of the past.

Aracelis smiles as she looks into Ian's eyes.

IAN

How do you know all that stuff?

ARACELIS
 (Sign language)
 Engineering dropout.

IAN
 What branch?

ARACELIS
 (Sign language)
 Mechanical. But, I found out that
 people make more sense to me than
 machines so I became a nurse.

JIMMY
 (Looks outside)
 Nothing makes sense in this world.

Ian and Aracelis look at Jimmy who seems disgruntled.

IAN
 I'm sorry about your friends...

JIMMY
 (Frowning)
 How did you know?

Jimmy gives a puzzled look at Ian.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
 You said He is here and that... Thing
 looked at you as if it could
 clearly understand what you said.
 How... What happened back there?

Ian sighs and shakes his head.

IAN
 It was like... a hunch.

JIMMY
 A hunch?

IAN
 Yeah. I've had this strange feeling
 since I woke up that something
 unusual would happen... The last time
 I saw him, we were Lab partners at
 Bright Medical. It was 2022. I
 thought he was dead but he
 obviously mutated... differently.

JIMMY

(Frowning)

How did you know he was there?

IAN

I don't know. I had this Deja-vu kind of feeling... A flash... This will sound insane but I saw him standing right where he was. It was like I remembered it, except a moment before it happened.

ARACELIS

(She mouths)

Wow.

A door OPENS at the other end of the room. Harris enters under the eyes of the 3 people inside. He stops at the door and looks at Ian --

HARRIS

The council is ready to see you Ian. Let's go.

INT. CITY HALL/CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Files, monthly performance graphics titled "WIND FARM RELIABILITY ANALYSIS" --

A wrinkly left hand lifts up a few papers revealing a newspaper page HIDDEN within the folder -- A half-completed SUDOKU. The right hand writes a 4 in an empty case.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (O.S.)

I have seen the reports you sent us and I still don't understand how this morning's incident relates to the rolling blackouts.

IAN (O.S.)

With all due respect, Harold --

Ian stands before the council: from Ian's left to his right, Steve, a **BALD 70-ISH MAN, HAROLD** who is 60-ish, a **50-ISH WOMAN**, A **CHUNKY 50-ISH MAN**. All in business suits, the council members are sat behind a long conference table with folders and files. Behind them, a grand window gives a panoramic view of the city.

IAN (CONT'D)

I don't expect you to understand anything about the technological complexities of this matter, not that you'd be able to anyway.

The woman rolls her eyes. Harold frowns.

IAN (CONT'D)

That's my job. Bottom-line is that overusing the grid can trigger chain reactions that'd effect key components like the M-140s beyond the wall.

CHUNKY COUNCILMAN

From my understanding Harris --

Harold points at Harris, standing still by a close door, 3 meters behind Ian.

CHUNKY COUNCILMAN (CONT'D)

Handled the situation perfectly well today.

IAN

Sure, hundreds of dead people on our front yard is a great outcome.

CHUNKY COUNCILMAN

Wait... Are you referring to those creatures out there as people?

IAN

What do you think they are, councilman?

The chunky councilman squints his eyes.

STEVE

I think we should focus on the main issue here. What our chief engineer is trying to say is that today's events demonstrated that the outer world's threats are... stranger than what we prepared for. We need to be on top of the situation and not just react to it.

COUNCILWOMAN

I absolutely agree. The fact that today's attack was coordinated is unprecedented. And I'm willing to lose some level of comfort for our defenses to stay strong.

BALD COUNCILMAN

Not so fast, it's backward thinking. We need more energy in the city because it fuels the economy with in turn can be reinjected in security.

COUNCILWOMAN

Those are objectives that can be reached on the long run but you heard Ian about the current risks.

BALD COUNCILMAN

There is no risk free situation. Plus, Jericho is the safest city on the planet. If anything, this event actually showed the uselessness of the ground-level artillery.

IAN

That is the stupidest thing --

HAROLD

IAN, Careful! --

Ian sighs.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Just because you have a certain level of expertise doesn't allow you to be disrespectful... We all want what's best for the city.

IAN

Then, let me do my job... The rolling blackouts won't be forever.

HAROLD

How much more time do you want?

IAN

12 months... max.

Harold nods.

HAROLD

Well... Just like Steinbeck said, we spend our time searching for security and hate it when we get it.

IAN

(Frowns)

What... What did you just say?

HAROLD

I am to my own surprise agreeing with you.

IAN

No, just... But you said that before.

(Fast to himself)

Steinbeck said, we spend our time searching for security and blabla...

(To the council)

I heard that before. Somewhere... here.

HAROLD

What are you trying to say?

Ian paces in the middle of the room, scratches his head.

IAN

This is like it happened. This is, just like at the cabin... I see things. I remember. I remember now... IT'S HAPPENING.

The council acts surprised by Ian's behavior.

STEVE

Ian, are you ok?

IAN

(With googly eyes)

They are... inside. We need to evacuate the city, now... NOW.

HAROLD

Ian, keep yourself together.

IAN

(To Harris)

Harris, our defenses have failed.

Harris approaches Ian who acts panicked and starts hyperventilating.

BALD COUNCILMAN

(To Harold)

This is ridiculous. He has clearly lost it.

HARRIS

Calm down Ian.

IAN

The sickened have crossed the wall somehow. They are inside I know it.

Harris puts a hand on Ian's shoulder.

HARRIS

You're not making any --

IAN

(Pushes Harris's hand away)

I SEE IT. I remember now. The city is invaded. All is lost.

HAROLD

Get him out. Get him to compose himself.

Harris grabs Ian by the arm and pushes him towards the door.

IAN

No, no, wait. Something is happening. YOU HAVE TO LISTEN --

AN EXPLOSION, startles them all, the building trembles. Harris lets go of Ian. He sees through the grand window as well as all the council members a hideous mushroom cloud rise a few miles away beyond the town's buildings. Harris gives a puzzled look at Ian whose face screams confusion.

A SIREN GOES OFF and resounds in all Jericho's downtown.

Ian runs up to the window and looks down.

IAN

Oh God, look down.

Harris approaches the window and SEES on the streets large groups of people arriving from all corners, some abandoning their cars, most running towards the city hall. A closer look and he can distinguish not so far behind, ZOMBIES, HUNDREDS, pouring in from every street and chasing the people.

HARRIS

This can't be happening.

The council members approach the window and act terrified.

Ian notices Colin among other civilian running up the city hall's stairs.

IAN

(To himself)

Come on Colin.

Colin is tackled by a ZOMBIE that bites the back of his neck.

IAN (CONT'D)

(To himself)

Shit. SHIT! FUCK!

Ian puts both hands on his head.

HARRIS

We need to move.

INT. CITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

About **100 PEOPLE** act panicked on the last-floor of the city hall in an orchestra of SCREAMS and GUNSHOTS.

It's a 900-squaremeter grand open space with a central rectangular staircase above which there is a light well. Most people run around in panic. Some walk in and out of the offices, others run up the stairs. A few hang by the handrail and watch with anxiety downstairs --

A VOICE

BLOCK THE STAIRWAY.

A GROUP OF MEN hurryingly carry 2 desks from the offices to the stairway --

ONE OF THE MEN
GET OUT THE WAY.

The men pile the desks to block the stairway as other people struggle to get through.

Ian walks in through a side door. He looks around and is followed by Harris, 2 **ARMED SOLDIERS**, the congressmen and congresswoman. Ian passes through the crowd towards the handrail. He looks down and sees 5 stories down PEOPLE being chased, tackled, and bitten by ZOMBIES. Some creatures run upstairs from the lower levels as well --

IAN
(To Harris)
THEY'RE COMING UP.

Harris gestures to the 2 soldiers that follow him as he pushes through the crowd to get to the staircase.

Ian notices a **MUSCULAR ZOMBIE** climb over the desks and JUMP in the middle of the crowd. The panicked citizens RUN AWAY; one of them pushes Ian who tumbles over the handrail --

He free falls and SCREAMS. 2 stories down, his inner knee hits the handrail. The impact swings him but slows his fall. 2 stories further down, he grabs a handrail but his hands slip and he falls again -- to the ground --

Shaken up, Ian sees a **CRIPPLED ZOMBIE** approach -- and he blacks out.

INT. MARKOV APARTMENT 2/BEDROOM - DAY, DECEMBER 2022

IAN wakes up with a start in the sheets of his bed. He looks so much younger, 20-ish. He sits up and frowns --

IAN
What day is it?

Seemingly puzzled, he looks around. The ceiling is high, every furniture seems brand new and expensive. The large TV in front of his bed turns ON -- Appears on screen Chicago's landscape during winter with captions --

TV (CAPTIONS)
CHICAGO, IL, as of 7:20 am CDT.
16°, MOSTLY CLOUDY feels like 12°.
H 21° / L 10°. Precipitation 27%.

TV VOICE

Good morning Mister Chain, would you like to watch a program?

Ian sighs and scratches his neck.

IAN

Huh yeah. TV, put the local news on.

On TV appears **CARSON DOWNING**, as reads the caption on screen. He's a 40-ish news anchor in a suit behind the desk of the CSTV-news-set.

CARSON

The cure to the Calloway Flu is available. As you can see --

A video rolls on the corner of the screen: **HUNDREDS OF SICK PEOPLE**, in a hangar are rounded up by **MILITARIES** with gas masks.

The civilians are seemingly weak, pale and cough.

CARSON (CONT'D)

-- The relief is, of course, undeniable.

The video takes over the whole screen.

Some of the sick people smile and hug each other, others act confused. They line up in front of medical care stands and receive shots from a **MEDICAL STAFF**.

CARSON (CONT'D)

The crisis started 3 months ago and nearly paralyzed the whole country. To give you some statistics, in the region of Chicago alone, more than 145000 sick people and 278 deaths are accounted for this far. The National Guard and the CDC are coordinating their efforts to distribute the medicine along with the pharmaceutical provider Bright Medical. --

A VIBRATION --

Ian turns his head to see a smartphone on a nightstand.

CARSON (CONT'D)

We will receive in a moment, live from its headquarters, the CEO of Bright Medical, Adam Bright --

Ian picks it up. ONE SMS RECEIVED from HENRY --

HENRY (TEXT)

Be on time man!

CARSON (CONT'D)

-- With his insight on the distribution process.

EXT. CHICAGO DOWNTOWN - DAY

The sky is cloudy. Traffic is light. Leafless trees and some dirty snow in the streets that are slightly deserted, **PEDESTRIANS** walk the streets with gas masks and winter clothing on.

Ian drives through Chicago downtown in a black sports-car. Professionally dressed, sunglasses and a gas mask on, a winter coat and a computer bag on the passenger seat, Ian LISTENS to the CAR RADIO --

RADIO HOST

Now for those of you in the traffic out there I'd advise you to avoid Michigan Avenue --

Ian reaches a crossroad and notices that the road ahead is blocked by the National Guard: A barrier, a stationed hummer, "ROAD CLOSED" and "DETOUR" signs. **TWO SOLDIERS** divert the traffic --

RADIO HOST (CONT'D)

And basically any street around the Cloud gate since the National Guard is setting up new care and distribution centers over there. So if you've got that Calloway Flu and haven't got your shot yet, time to get out there and go get some cure.

IAN

And I'm gonna be late.

As Ian turns right, he sees in the distance a spectacle similar to what he saw on TV: **PEOPLE** line up in front of medical care stands.

RADIO HOST (CONT'D)

Now, best case scenario, everything should be back to normal by the end of the week.

EXT. RESEARCH CENTRE/SECURITY GATE - MOMENTS LATER

The parking spots are half-full in the 10000 square meters facility surrounded by a wall. A 10-story-building with a complex architecture is central to it --

THE SECURITY GATE:

There is a **SECURITY OFFICER** in a guard post encrusted in the wall. A grand sign by the closed gate reads "BRIGHT MEDICAL RESEARCH CENTRE".

Ian arrives in his sports car and stops in front of the closed gate by an electronic card reader. He rolls down the window, pulls an ID card from a pocket and waives it by the reader. A BEEP is heard --

VOICE FROM THE READER

Access granted. Good morning Mister Chain.

The gate opens. Ian drives through while rolling his window up.

INT. RESEARCH CENTER/LABORATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Ian traverses a wide hallway, no more gas mask on his face. Straight ahead, he sees **2 30-ISH SECURITY GUARDS** chatting. Markov slightly frowns. The guards are both muscular, but one is very short and the other very tall. Looking to his right, Ian notices through the frameless glass walls, a **DOZEN SCIENTISTS** in lab coats sat around a conference table.

SHORT GUARD

The last time we won we weren't even born. Stop daydreaming my friend.

TALL GUARD

I'm telling you man. We'll make it
all the way this year. We're gonna
own the Super bowl.

SHORT GUARD

Not with that quarterback.

Ian reaches the guards --

IAN

Robert?

ROBERT, the taller guard extends his hand towards Ian --

ROBERT

Ian, how you doing?

Ian shakes Robert's hand --

IAN

I'm doing well.

Ian shakes the other man's hand.

IAN (CONT'D)

(To Robert)

Glad to see you back.

ROBERT

I'm happy to be back. The doctors
cleared me yesterday.

IAN

And you came right back to work?
Don't you want to rest a little?
Take a few days off?

ROBERT

Oh hell no, I've been out for weeks
and the medical bills are seriously
straining my bank account. I had to
get back to work.

IAN

I could lend you some --

ROBERT

Oh no, come on.

IAN

Lend you some money. Wouldn't be a problem. No deadline, man.

ROBERT

It's fine Ian, really. It's very generous of you but I'm good.

IAN

Ok, man. Still glad you're back --

(Passing through)

Gotta go pretend to work.

ROBERT

(Chuckles)

Alright.

IAN

And, hum --

(Walking backwards)

Go Bears.

ROBERT

Yes, we're going all the way man.

The other guard just shakes his head and smiles.

Ian enters the laboratory. He walks past the Argus bed and glances at it. The machine looks brand new. Ian walks up the stairs. At this moment --

Henry walks out of the conference room --

HENRY

Dude, did you not get my text?

IAN

Traffic was crazy. Is the Boss...

Henry shakes his head "No". They meet halfway on the stairs and stop in front of each other.

HENRY

You're in luck. The boss called. His interview took longer than expected. The journalists kept bugging him about the dangers of AI in medical systems.

IAN

Well, people fear what they can't understand. And what we're doing here...

(Glancing at the bed)

This machine... It's pretty powerful.

HENRY

(Nodding)

Yeah... We are everything on earth except the gods. Am I right?

Ian frowns and looks at Henry.

IAN

Wait, what did you just say?

HENRY

Secret of the machines by Kipling.

IAN

What is that? Is that real? Is that a real poem?

HENRY

Yeah, you gotta read some books bro.

Henry walks past his friend.

IAN

(Looking back at Henry)

Henry?

Henry turns around and looks at Ian.

IAN

I had this strange dream... It was like (Chuckles) the zombie apocalypse. Then there was this cabin. You were there. It was you.

HENRY

Dude I gotta take a leak.

IAN

No wait, someone said to me that exact same thing. We are everything on earth - except the gods... in my dream but...

HENRY

But what?

IAN

I never ever read that book or that poem. I just...

HENRY

(Walking backwards)

That's very interesting but in such situations I give priority to my bladder. I gotta pee dude.

(Walking away)

Your girlfriend is there by the way.

Henry walks to the exit in a hurry.

IAN

(To himself)

But that's...

Ian walks up the stairs, looking down, keeping the same frown on his face.

He reaches the entrance and opens the glass door --

THE CONFERENCE ROOM:

Around the rectangular conference table, there are 8 places, rolling chairs. On one of the larger sides, Burns, sat next to X, shows him programming lines on a tablet. On the opposite side the WOMAN IN HER WHEELCHAIR types on the control tablet and seems absorbed by the viewing screen of her chair. There is also a phone on the table.

BURNS

I say we get rid of that whole block because when Argus reaches this loop, that's where we lose a lot of computational time. Instead of that we can --

IAN

Hello everybody.

All eyes turn to him to Ian. Ian makes eye-contact with the lady who reactively looks at her viewing screen as if it made her uncomfortable.

BURNS
You're late young man.

IAN
Traffic...

(With a smile)
Old man.

X
Did you realize what just happened?
You just tried to burn good old
Burns by calling him old.

Ian chuckles as he takes a seat next to the woman, gone back to her earlier activity.

BURNS
Yeah, whatever.

X
Traffic is crazy though. Had to
leave my place 30 minutes earlier
and still barely made it on time.

Ian glances at the lady who seems unbothered by all the talking. Her viewing tablet displays schematics of a reactor.

BURNS
Are you still in West Edgewater?

X
Yes but I'm trying to move a tiny
bit closer to work. Somewhere like
Uptown.

BURNS
Oh that's a terrible idea. Let me
tell you something --

Burns and X keep talking. Ian leans towards the woman.

IAN
(Whispering)
Excuse me. Excuse me!

She turns her face to him and looks at him as if she never expected him to talk to her.

IAN (CONT'D)
Yeah, it's Anna, if I remember correctly?

Anna nods.

IAN (CONT'D)
Well, Anna, my name is Ian.

Anna nods again with a timid smile.

IAN (CONT'D)
I wasn't sure if you knew my name since we never actually talked directly. It seemed like the boss... Mister Bright was always doing the talking for you.

Anna types on her control tablet and a robotic female voice comes out of the viewing board --

ANNA'S CHAIR
It is simpler that way.

This catches the attention of Burns and X who stare at Anna. She types again --

X
(Whispers to Burns)
She never talks to anyone.

ANNA'S CHAIR (CONT'D)
I don't really like to talk in public.

IAN
(Whispering)
Well, you're in luck because right now it's just you and me.

Ian smiles, which makes Anna smiles in return.

IAN (CONT'D)
I'd like to know though... And I don't mean to sound rude or anything but... Since the... incident, my understanding was that we would no longer use the reactor --

IAN (CONT'D)

And that you'd be assigned to another project. So... What are you doing here exactly?

Anna sighs, then types --

ANNA'S CHAIR

Actually to talk about the incident. We found something strange --

Anna stops typing as her attention is caught by --

THE BOSS, Adam Bright, entering the room. He is in a business suit, has a luxury watch on his left wrist and holds a tablet in his right hand.

He walks hurryingly towards the furthest end of the conference table.

ADAM

Hello Everyone. Let's get this done quick I have another interview in about --

(Looking at his watch)
2 minutes ago.

He stands behind the seat and waves his left hand up. One can HEAR A BEEP and --

A large LED screen descends from the ceiling.

Henry enters the room in a hurry and sits next to Ian while Adam types on his tablet. The screen behind him lights up.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(Still typing)
Alright. Alright --

(To Anna)
First of all, thank you Anna for coming back. I am truly sorry about your mom. She was an amazing person.

Ian glances at Anna who just nods.

Adam types on his tablet and appears a still security footage from the Argus bed a moment before the incident.

ADAM (CONT'D)

2 months ago we had a bit of a setback. If we look at the security footage of the incident...

The video of the incident plays: An explosion from the basis of the bed creates a dome of energy around the machine and the 2 scientists. Henry and Ian are thrown down by the blast. The walls shake. The machine is broken and produces smokes from all parts. Ian and Henry slowly get back up while Burns and X run towards them. The video stops.

ADAM (CONT'D)

There's nothing to see but 2 of our finest researchers probably wetting their pants.

Chuckles in the room. Adam swipes through his tablet and the video replays in super slow motion --

ADAM (CONT'D)

But Anna brought something to my attention.

The video stops at a moment when the machine HAS DISAPPEARED; the energy blast still surrounds Ian and Henry as they seem to be falling down, shadowing figures of themselves stand straight through their bodies.

IAN

(Squints his eyes)
What the hell?

ADAM

My thoughts exactly.

HENRY

(Frowning)
The machine just vanished?

ADAM

Apparently for a split second.

X

Could it just be a glitch? Maybe a malfunction from the camera.

ADAM

This was the first assumption of course but --

Adam taps on his tablet and 3 other angles appear from the scene showing the disappearance of the device with clear shots of objects and people through its former position.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I had a few digital experts leaning on the question, looking at it from all angles, and they rejected this hypothesis.

BURNS

A ton of metal and glass doesn't just... disappear.

ADAM

Anna also found this --

Adam taps on his tablet and pictures of an intact reactor pressure vessel appear on screen.

ADAM (CONT'D)

The reactor produces the raw energy and converts it into stimulus that regenerates the human cells. Anna's design was obviously over-dimensioned. That's what caused the energy burst. We all learned that at our expense but that's not what's important here.

Adam points at the screen.

ADAM (CONT'D)

That pressure vessel is pretty much all that was left from the reactor. When dated, it showed signs of aging by... 795 years.

All the others but Anna act surprised.

HENRY

What?

IAN

How is that possible?

ADAM

Well... I have a theory that might sound, I will admit, to some degree preposterous.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(Beat)

The functioning of the reactor
relies on --

A SCREAM OUTSIDE startles them all. Henry gets up.

They HEAR A GUNSHOT, ANOTHER SCREAM, NOISES of BUMPS, BROKEN
GLASSES; PEOPLE RUNNING AND YELLING in the distance as if
there is a RUMBLE.

The building's fire alarm GOES OFF.

ADAM

What in the world?

Adam picks up the phone on the table and composes a number.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I'll call security.

After a moment --

ADAM (CONT'D)

Hum... Nobody is answering.

Henry heads outside.

IAN

Dude, where you going?

HENRY

I'll check out what's happening.

ADAM

I think we should stay inside.

Henry opens the door.

BURNS

Guys, you should stay here.

X picks a cellphone from a pocket.

X

(Composing a number)

I'm calling 911.

Ian gets up and follows his friend. Henry descends the
stairs and stops halfway. Ian freezes at the glass door.
They both have a look of horror on the faces as they see --

By the laboratory's entrance, ROBERT, covered in blood. He looks around with agitation and walks past the Argus bed.

HENRY

Robert?

Robert looks at them. His face is extremely veiny, his eyes are red-blooded and his pupils dilated. An open bullet wound in the neck, he grunts --

HENRY (CONT'D)

Buddy, are you ok?

Robert runs towards Henry who is startled.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wow, hey, stop --

Henry puts his hands ahead of him and takes steps back while Ian is immobile as if fear has paralyzed him. He is not the only one as the others watch through the glass wall.

IAN

What the hell?

Robert jumps on Henry who tries to fend the sick man off.

HENRY

DUDE, STOP!

ROBERT SCREAMS in the face of Henry who is pushed back to the handrail. Henry looks at Ian --

HENRY

Ian! Help! IAN!

Ian doesn't budge. He seems terrified.

IAN

Wh -- I --

HENRY

IAN!

ROBERT BITES HENRY in the shoulder. HENRY SCREAMS. X rushes outside pushing Ian out of his way.

X

LET HIM GO!

X jumps on Robert's back and does a neck lock.

HALF A DOZEN SICK PEOPLE looking as unstable in their bloody clothes as Robert run into the laboratory. As soon as they notice the fight on the stairs, they run in direction of Henry. Ian sees the group of sickened dangerously and fast approach.

Robert pushes Henry over the handrail. X and Robert fall to the ground. The other sickened soon reach X. They jump him and devour his face and arms.

Burns SCREAMS. Adam rushes to the door, pulls a petrified Ian inside and locks the door from inside. Ian trembles on himself.

BURNS
WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT?

Robert rises up and runs towards the glass door and BUMPS head first into it. He then starts PUNCHING, HEAD-BUTTING, NUDGING the door with all his strength. A CRACK in the door upon impact --

ADAM
This won't hold up.

Adam hurryingly approaches the table and grabs its end.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Burns? Ian? Help me!

Burns puts the phone on the ground. He grabs the other end of the table. Anna, in tears, rolls out of the way next to Ian who stands, looking down, still in shock. They struggle to move the heavy table --

ADAM (CONT'D)
Ian? IAN?

BURNS
WAKE THE FUCK UP YOUNG MAN!

ANNA'S CHAIR
Ian?

Anna rolls and bumps softly into Ian who looks at her teary face. She types on her control table --

ANNA'S CHAIR (CONT'D)
We need you.

Ian nods. He walks up to the table and helps the 2 other men. They move it and tip the table so that the flat top blocks the door.

ADAM
The chairs as well.

They grab the chairs and pile them in front of the door and on the table. Burns notices **MORE SICKENED PEOPLE** pouring in the laboratory. He points at them.

BURNS
L-Look. LOOK!

The other scientists also look at the agitated sick people.

ADAM
Oh God! These are my employees.

BURNS
What is happening to them? They act like animals. Like...

IAN
Zombies.

Adam pulls a cellphone from a pocket and dials a number. He puts the phone on his ear and after a moment --

ADAM
Why isn't anyone responding?

A CRACK! Robert's fist BREAKS through the door, a chair falls off the pile that is unbalanced.

BURNS
Damn it!

Another sickened male joins Robert. The door is partially broken and as the zombies knock and push the table budes. Ian, Burns and Adam push back.

ADAM
Come on, PUSH!

BURNS
We can't stay here. They'll break in sooner or later.

ANNA'S CHAIR
Adam? Adam?

Adam looks back at Anna who points up with her left hand at A WHITE SQUARE PERFORATED CEILING GRILLE over her head. Adam looks at the grille, at Anna, then Ian.

ADAM
That could work... Ian?

IAN
Yes boss?

ADAM
The ceiling grille.

IAN
(Looking at the grille)
It's a bit high.

BURNS
It'd get us out of here to another room.

ADAM
Use Anna's wheelchair and another.
I'll help you hoist Anna up. Burns and I will follow.

The zombies KNOCK hard into the table but the 3 men hold their position.

BURNS
You'll need to do it fast.

Ian looks at Burns and nods.

IAN
Ok... Ready?

Burns nods.

ADAM
Do it.

Ian runs to Anna.

Ian rushes to get to Anna. She slides the viewing board out of his way with her left hand. He picks her up in his arms. She grimaces as if it causes her pain.

IAN
You ok?

Anna nods. He carefully lies her back to the wall opposite to the entrance. He then runs to take the rolling chair that fell on the ground. He balances it on the wheelchair seat and climbs the assemblage --

ADAM

Careful.

Ian gets on top. His head is just a few centimeters underneath the grille. He removes it and lets it fall to the ground. He climbs into the ceiling. As his foot leaves the chair, the latter becomes unbalanced and falls.

IAN

I got it.

Adam hears Ian moving and crawling; he sees Ian disappear into the whole, and reappear head first and arms out.

IAN (CONT'D)

(Gesturing with both hands)

OK I'm ready. Bring her up.

ADAM

(To Burns)

Are you ready?

BURNS

It's a bad idea... But what other choice do we have? Go.

Adam runs and puts the fallen rolling chair back on the wheelchair. The table is pushed back as the zombies try to force their way in. Burns resists with all his strength.

BURNS (CONT'D)

Hurry!

Adam takes Anna in his arms. He struggles to climb the chairs but ends up on top. Anna lifts her left hand towards Ian who starts pulling her into the ceiling with both arms.

IAN

I got you.

AN ANIMALISTIC SCREAM gets Adam's attention. He sees X, disfigured, raise up among the zombies.

ADAM

(Frowning)

Donovan?

X and his former attackers all rush to the glass door and start punching, head-butting and pushing. Burns is forced a few centimeters back. Adam jumps down and pushes with Burns.

ADAM
GO IAN. GO!

Adam glances at Anna as she disappear into the ceiling.

A HARD BLOW and the zombies break through the barrier.

INSIDE THE CEILING SYSTEM:

Ian crawls backwards through the narrow passage and pulls on Anna's both hands as she is lying on her back. He HEARS --

ADAM (O.S.)
NO! NO!

Adam and Burns SCREAM in between BUMPING NOISES, GROWLS and GRUNTS.

Ian stops. He makes eye-contact with Anna. They both look horrified.

INT. RESEARCH CENTER OFFICES/CEILING - MOMENTS LATER

A room with cubicles, **ZOMBIES** everywhere wander around, growl, grunt and occasionally SCREAM. Looking up, through the ceiling grille, one could see eyes and the tip of a head. It's Ian.

INSIDE THE CEILING SYSTEM:

Ian watches the creatures through the wholes for a moment and shakes his head as a sign of despair.

He crawls for a few meters, takes a left turn and reaches Anna who is still on her back. She notices as Ian gets closer. From where they are, they can hear the zombies' animalistic noises.

IAN
(Whispering)
Hum... They are in every room. I propose that we stay here and wait for a while... Someone will come and help us, ok?

Anna nods but her eyes reflect disbelief as well.

IAN (CONT'D)

(Whispering)

We're gonna be ok.

Ian takes her hand and holds it.

INT. RESEARCH CENTER OFFICES/CEILING - HOURS LATER

Ian still holds Anna's hand but is now lying on his back, his head close to hers. They can still hear the zombies' animalistic noises.

IAN

(Whispering)

I just froze... I saw what was happening and I knew what I had to do. In fact, I wanted to help him. But I couldn't move... It's like my body and my mind got separated at this very moment. I... I let him down... I let my best friend down... I let them all down.

Anna squeezes Ian's hand. He turns his face to her. She looks at him and shakes her head as if to say it's not his fault.

Ian looks away and tears drop down his face. He sneezes and wipes his face.

IAN (CONT'D)

(Whispering)

It doesn't matter anyway. What's done is done. If we ever make it out of here, I will... Well, who knows what's happening out there. It's been hours. How come nobody has come to help us? Why do I have this gut feeling that nothing will ever be the same?

(Beat)

No, somebody will search for us.
Somebody will come and get us...

Ian closes his eyes.

IAN (CONT'D)

Somebody will come and get us...
Somebody will come and get us...
Somebody will come and get us...

JIMMY (V.O.)

Ian... IAN?

INT. CITY HALL - DAY, JUNE 2048

Ian opens his eyes. He sees the city hall ceiling. The Crippled Zombie leans over him.

IAN

Am I dreaming?

The Crippled Zombie SCREAMS and is about to bite --

HEADSHOT. Ian sees the creature fall dead next to him.

JIMMY (O.S.)

IAN?

Ian looks around. The ground level of the city hall is swarmed by zombies. Most of them climb the stairs. A few wander around the reception desks at the center of the room. Looking in the opposite direction, Ian notices Jimmy, an automatic rifle in hands.

IAN

It's a dream.

The soldier runs to Ian and lifts him up, putting Markov's right arm around his shoulder. The scientist notices 10 meters away LEE standing by a closed stairway-exit-door. She holds an assault rifle in her hands.

They hurry towards the door but Ian is a bit dizzy.

JIMMY

Come on man.

Ian HEARS A SCREAM and looks back. **DOZENS OF SICKENED** start pursuing them.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

COVER US!

Lee shoots and puts down one, two, three of the creatures.

They reach the door, push through and descend the stairs as fast as their legs allow them to.

Lee draws a fragmentation grenade from a side pocket, unpins it and throws it. As she runs through the exit, IT EXPLODES in the faces of her pursuers.

EXT. CITY HALL/ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

A door on the side of the city hall building opens slightly. Lee points the canon of her rifle through the ajar door --

She sees 20 meters into the small alley 2 **ZOMBIES** devouring **ONE INERT MALE VICTIM** on the ground. 2 meters before this gory display she notices a sewer grate in the middle of the alley. She can also HEAR sporadic SCREAMS and GUNSHOTS in the distance.

LEE

We don't stand a chance up here. We need to get into the sewer.

Lee looks back --

At the bottom of the stairway, Ian, whispering words to himself, scratches his head and recollects himself next to Jimmy.

LEE (CONT'D)

We'll have to do it fast.

JIMMY

It's a bad idea... But what other choice do we have?

IAN

(To himself)

It is real. I remember.

Jimmy looks at Ian and grabs him by the shoulder.

JIMMY

You ok, man?

Ian looks at Jimmy and nods.

Jimmy takes his sidearm from its holster and hands it to Ian who grabs it.

JIMMY

(To Lee)

Let's put them down. I'll take the
one on the left. On my count --

Lee and Jimmy aim.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(To Lee)

Three, two, one...

They shoot simultaneously. The zombies are shot in the head
and fall.

LEE

Clear.

Ian follows the soldiers as they walk into the alley. They
check the surroundings. Jimmy takes point as they jog toward
the sewer grate.

A ZOMBIE SCREAMS. Jimmy sees the creature at the end of the
alley, 30 meters away.

JIMMY

KEEP MOVING!

5, 10, about 20 ZOMBIES pour in the alley from both
directions, frenetically running to attack Ian and the
soldiers. Ian and the soldiers have to slow down, aim and
fire. Lee and Ian cover their back. One headshot after the
other, the creatures fall dead. Ian notices among the beasts
COLIN.

IAN

Shit... I'm sorry.

Ian shoots Colin in the head. 12, 13... 16 of the sickened are
brought down. The earlier MALE VICTIM rises up, turned into
a Sickened. He stands up and runs among the other creatures
that fall ahead of him. Ian and the soldiers are 3 meters
close to the grille but the zombies are even closer. Too
close. Jimmy shoots one more in the head; but the male
victim turned zombie in the alley simultaneously jumps him.

JIMMY

SHIT!

They tumble to the ground. Jimmy is BITTEN in the neck.

Ian shoots the Zombie that attacked Jimmy. The body of the sickened lays over an inert Jimmy. Lee puts down the 4 last zombies left standing in the alley.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I - I can't move.

Ian hurries and releases Jimmy from the weight of the dead male. Lee quickly looks around. No more sickened! She then stares at Ian. The latter lies Jimmy back to the nearby wall. The bite wound on his neck is bloody and hideous.

LEE

He's done. We have to put him out
of his misery.

Lee aims for Jimmy's face. Ian looks at her and grabs the weapon's cannon.

IAN

No. I'll take care of him. You, go!

Lee frowns and stares for a second.

LEE

As you wish.

Lee opens the sewer grate and descends fast under the eyes of Ian. Markov takes another look around. No one is coming.

JIMMY

She's right.

Ian looks into the eyes of Jimmy.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I'm done.

IAN

I know.

JIMMY

It's not safe for you here.

IAN

(Nodding)

I know.

JIMMY

Then why are you wasting time?

IAN

Because I'm tired of leaving people behind. And I remember... There is a reason why these events all seemed so familiar. This is not a dream. This is not the first time I live this day. Although I can't quite figure out why my memories are so hazy, I know I've seen it all before. I remember.

JIMMY

What do you mean?

IAN

I think I... My mind... can travel through time.

Jimmy smile and chuckles but coughs blood and grimaces through his suffering.

JIMMY

(Smiling)

You're crazy Markov...

(Stops smiling)

But if you believe you can... Then save us all.

Ian nods. Jimmy's head becomes more and more veiny. His eyes are injected with blood and he starts trembling.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Don't let me turn into one of them.

A tear drops down from Jimmy's face. Ian puts his left hand on Jimmy left shoulder. He places the canon of the gun he holds on the side of the soldier's face.

IAN

This is not the first time I kill you but I hope it'll be the last.

Ian frowns.

JIMMY

It's ok... A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth...

IAN
I don't know this one. What book is
it from?

JIMMY
The bible...

Ian smiles at Jimmy.

JIMMY
(Smiling)
Thank you...

GUNSHOT...

FADE OUT:

HEAVY SIGH --

IAN (V.O.)
What day is it?

THE END.