PLACEBO

by

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INT. RANSACKED OFFICE - DAY

A doctor's office in chaos.

An upturned desk blocks the shattered windows. Stray papers and broken glass litter the floor.

    COLE (V.O.)
    My name is Cole Kinsella. Three weeks ago I was eating out of trash cans on the streets of New York. Someone offered me a way out. Who was I to refuse?

The body of a DOCTOR slumps against the wall in the corner of the room, his brains decorate the wall behind him, a pistol gripped in his lifeless hand.

A bloodstained document in his other hand bears the letterhead: The Rosenthal Institute.

Distant shouting O.S.

A heavy boot KICKS IN THE DOOR.

COLE bursts into the room wielding a fire-axe. He's in his thirties, three-day beard, t-shirt and jeans soaked in blood - not his own.

On Cole's signal, Shannon, a waif-like girl in her late teens, scrambles into the room. Her face is pale, hair matted with blood. She holds a table leg with a nail sticking out of it.

She collapses into the corner opposite the doctor, pulls her knees up to her chest and sobs.

Cole glances up and down the hallway then shuts the door and barricades it with a filing cabinet.

He approaches the doctor's body, pries the gun from his hand and chambers a round.

He strides over to the window and peers through the cracks, glimpses of smoke and fire outside.

    COLE (V.O)
    When you're a fugitive, days can seem like weeks. Weeks like months.

He looks over at Shannon, her head buried in her lap. She sings in a soft whimper.

    SHANNON
    You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy, when skies are gray...
COLE (V.O.)
Yesterday there were twelve of us, this morning, only five. Now, it's just the kid and me.

Cole turns back to the window, he can't bear to look at her.

COLE (V.O.)
They took us off the streets, twenty-four strangers, lost souls with nothing to lose, nothing to live for. We were promised money, a fresh start, a new life...

Cole pulls a chair up off the floor and sits. He wipes the bloody gun on his jeans, a distant look in his eyes.

COLE (V.O.)
The Rosenthal Institute... two hundred miles from civilization... no phones... no internet... no hope of anyone finding us any time soon.

He gazes at Shannon, her voice trembles as she sings.

SHANNON
You'll never know dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away.

COLE (V.O.)
They split us into two groups. Shannon and I were in B wing - the control group... of course, we didn't know that at the time, but when the killing started, the mutations... there was no doubt.

Cole runs a hand through his thick, greasy hair. His gaze is far, far away.

COLE (V.O.)
An injection for breakfast, two pills after lunch, an afternoon of psychological tests... it was a breeze... but then we were only taking the placebo.

Cole sits back in the chair and swallows hard, choking back tears.

COLE (V.O.)
Within a couple of weeks the atmosphere changed, the people on A wing changed. The onset of their madness was swift... shocking.  
(MORE)
COLE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Whatever the doctors were testing
here... they weren't prepared for
the results... Not by a long shot.

Cole stands and walks over to Shannon. He strokes her hair,
tries to comfort her, but her sobs grow louder.

COLE (V.O.)
Most of the guards and doctors are
gone; dead or running scared,
driven out by the mutations... but
it isn't them they're after... it's
us.

A THUD at the door. The cabinet rattles but holds firm. Cole
wraps his arms around Shannon. Oblivious.

COLE (V.O.)
The ones that stayed hunted us
down... All of us. They didn't care
that we were the control group...
the only sane ones left... they
wanted to erase all evidence we
ever existed.

Another THUD.

Cole snaps out of his trance, rises and heads for the door,
gun raised.

Another THUD rocks the cabinet, then another, then...

A MUTANT bursts through the door, once human but now
hideously deformed, its head swollen and bloated.

Cole swivels into a firing stance and unloads THREE SHOTS
into its chest.

The mutant staggers back, then lurches forward again, baring
razor sharp teeth.

Cole whips the axe from his belt and slams it into the
mutant's neck.

Shannon doesn't even stir as the blood splashes on her face.

The body drops to the floor. Cole drags the carcass into the
room, checks the corridor then barricades the door again.

He stares down at the mutant's body.

SHANNON (O.S.)
You told me once, dear, you really
loved me, and no one else could
come between. But now you've left
me, and love another. You have
shattered all my dreams...
Cole stoops and removes the axe from the mutant's neck.

COLE (V.O.)
This abomination used to be Eddie, one of the test subjects from A wing, a real joker, laugh a minute. That was until the drugs took hold... until the hunger started.

Cole sets the axe atop a filing cabinet and pulls open one of the drawers. He rifles through the documents inside.

COLE (V.O.)
It's been two days since the guards lost control, two days we've been fighting to survive, trapped in our sterile prison... We'd run if there was anywhere to go, if we thought they wouldn't find us...

Cole pulls out a file marked "Clinical Trials." It bears the Rosenthal Institute logo.

COLE (V.O.)
By my last count there were only four of them left... With luck, the effects of the treatment would wear off... they'd get better, realize the error of their ways... Until then, our best hope was to stay and fight.

He flips open the folder, scans the list of names.

Cole studies the page, blinks in disbelief.

On the page, the heading reads: 'Clinical Trials - A Wing. Below is an alphabetical list of twelve names. Cole traces a finger down the list to the surnames beginning with 'K'.

His name isn't there.

Next to each name is the word: Placebo.

SHANNON (O.S.)
The other night dear, as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms...

Cole's hand trembles as he flips to the next page: 'B Wing' He traces a finger down the list. Shannon's name is there, then his.

Next to their names: RGL-17 Psychotropic Compound.
Cole glances at Shannon. She lifts her head and stares at him with glassy eyes and a haunting smile.

SHANNON
But when I awoke, dear, I was mistaken, so I hung my head and I cried.

Cole looks at Eddie's body, his bloated and deformed head, his razor sharp teeth.

He blinks... looks again.

Eddie's mutation is gone. Just a normal guy with three bullets in his chest and an axe wound in his neck.

Cole looks down at the documents in his hand. The folder falls from his grip, the papers flutter to floor and stain dark with blood.

Cole meets Shannon's gaze again.

She lets out a bitter laugh.

Bewildered, Cole grips the gun, holds it up in front of his face.

SHANNON
You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy, when skies are gray. You'll never know dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away.

He looks at her one last time, then points the gun at her as we...

CUT TO BLACK.

A GUNSHOT.

A slow beat and then...

Another GUNSHOT.

THE END