

" V -T O X"

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

A city pulsing like a vein. Neon. Sirens. Glass towers inhaling light and exhaling heat.

INT. CLUB AVALON - NIGHT

A cathedral of mirrors. Bass like a heartbeat. Phones raised like torches.

On a VIP dais: CECILIA "CICI" ORMOND (22) — heiress, influencer, tabloid royalty. A living hashtag, laughing too loudly.

Beside her, SETH (28), slick, predatory charm. He produces a chrome pen with a glowing scarlet microcartridge. The logo: R-E-N.

SETH

Soft pull. Count of three. Pretend you don't love it. Then love it.

He inhales. His pupils flare. He hands it to Cici.

She hesitates, then draws. The sound hisses — thin and sharp.

The room warps.

— SOUND TUNNELS.

— A HUM beneath the bass, harmonic, human, more than human.

— Every fleck of dust becomes a constellation.

A GIRL (19), gums bleeding red, sways nearby.

GIRL

You feel it, right? We're all in the same room. The one behind this one.

Cici's eyes glisten.

CICI

Oh my god.

Phones light her face. 1.2M viewers. Comments flood:
#AngelCici #JumpQueen.

Across the room, a figure in black: MURNAU. Ageless.
Exquisite. Wrong. He watches with calm delight.

On the truss above, REN kids climb toward an open skylight,
laughing.

SETH
Go taste the air, baby. It wants
you.

Cici sets a heel on the rail—

A HAND clamps her wrist.

ALAN LINDERMAN (40s) — plain clothes, eyes sharp as folded
steel.

ALAN
Party's over.

CICI
You touching me is assault.

SETH
She's here by choice, man.

ALAN (to Seth)
Then lead by example. Jump.

Seth freezes. The crowd boos. The HUM swells, urging Cici
forward.

Murnau steps close, voice silk.

MURNAU
Let the young be young.

Cici leans— entranced—

Alan yanks her down, shoving her off the dais into a
cushioned booth below. They crash. Phones flash.

MURNAU (smiling)
Another night then.

The HUM drops to a growl.

EXT. SERVICE ALLEY - NIGHT

Alan shoves Cici into a black SUV. She thrashes, cuffed in velvet restraints.

CICI
This is kidnapping! I have
followers!

ALAN
You'll thank me when you can spell
your own name again.

He injects her arm with a clear ampule: V-TOX MICRO.

Her pupils flare, then pin. The HUM spikes— then detunes.

CICI
They can hear you.

ALAN
Good. Saves me the introductions.

Door SLAMS.

TITLE CARD: V-TOX

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Glass, marble, money.

VANESSA ORMOND (50s) — diamond-hard. JULIAN ORMOND (50s) —
tired, soft. Two bodyguards. A lawyer.

Alan stands before them, not sitting. A folder of
surveillance stills.

On-screen: freeze-frame of Cici at the club, REN pen circled.
Another still: Murnau's face magnified — perfect, uncanny.

VANESSA
You've followed her.

ALAN
Long enough to know this isn't just
a habit. It's a vector.

JULIAN
Who is he?

ALAN
Murnau. That's the name that
sticks. People don't.

VANESSA
You handle extremes.

ALAN
I remove them. Then you decide if
you can keep it gone.

VANESSA
Discretion is absolute.

ALAN
So is my fee.

JULIAN
We'll pay it.

Alan closes the folder.

ALAN
We start tonight.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The SUV eats miles. Cici in the backseat, cuffed. Alan drives
with a soldier's patience.

She glares, half-dreaming, half high.

CICI
You think you're saving me? You're
stealing me.

ALAN
You paid me to.

CICI
My parents did.

ALAN
Same wallet.

She slumps, muttering- the HUM faint in her throat.

CICI
They're calling me.

ALAN
Then don't answer.

EXT. ADIRONDACK LOGGING ROAD - PRE-DAWN

Pines crowd the road. Fog curls low. The SUV turns onto a narrow path.

EXT./INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

A box of timber and steel. Remote.

Inside: reinforced windows, UV floodlamps on tripods, medical cot, IV bags labeled V-TOX A and V-TOX B.

Alan secures doors and windows. Tests sensors.

Cici eyes the inward-facing cameras.

CICI
This is a prison.

ALAN
It's a surgery.

He tapes a coin-sized resonance node to her chest. It HUMS.
Her pupils flare.

CICI (whisper)
They're close.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Good. Let them come.

He preps a syringe.

CICI
What is that?

ALAN
V-TOX. First dose.

He injects her.

She arches — a silent scream. Flash cuts: candles, wet stone, a man's mouth at a wrist — Murnau's eyes opening.

MURNAU (V.O.)
You invited me.

Cici sobs.

CICI
Get out.

ALAN
He's not in your head. He's in the
radio. We're cutting the antenna.

He straps her gently to the cot.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Breathe. With me. Three. Two. One.

She obeys, gasping. The HUM dips. She locks eyes with him —
anchor and enemy.

EXT. TREE LINE - DUSK

Two FLOCK RUNNERS (20s), barefoot, glassy-eyed, tilt their
heads. They smile at nothing. Begin moving toward the cabin.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Alan checks a CO₂ dart gun loaded with V-TOX cartridges. UV
lamps glow faint.

Cici trembles, sweat dripping.

CICI
He's not a dealer. He's a gardener.

Alan looks at her.

CICI (CONT'D)
I saw him. In a stone room. Women
laughing while they bled. He called
it a gift.

The sensor tablet CHIMES. Multiple pings.

Alan readies.

ALAN
Company.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

Bare feet in pine needles. The Flock surrounds. Eyes bright.
Mouths smiling too wide.

FLOCK GIRL (O.S.)
Cici? We're family.

FLOCK BOY (O.S.)
Come outside. You don't belong to
him.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Cici clutches restraints. Alan watches the door flex.

CICI
I can push back. Like static.

Alan nods once.

ALAN
Do it.

She focuses. The HUM fractures. Outside, a Runner stumbles.

Alan throws open the door— fires darts. Flock SCREAMS.

He slams the door shut.

ALAN (CONT'D)
That's round one.

A new tone joins the HUM — deep, singular.

Alan freezes.

CICI
What is it?

ALAN
The headmaster.

From outside, a voice calm as velvet:

MURNAU (O.S.)
Miss Ormond. Step out, and I
forgive this man.

Alan signals: don't answer.

MURNAU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mr. Linderman. You're trespassing
in my garden. That girl is harvest.
You're a weed.

Cici shakes. Alan flips UV lamps to full. The cabin blasts in white sun.

HISSES outside. Retreating feet.

MURNAU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Power is a budget, Mr. Linderman.
You're overspending.

Silence.

Alan exhales.

ALAN
Hydrate. Round two's coming.

Cici sips, eyes wide with terror.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. CABIN - DAWN

Fog burns off the lake. Pine boughs drip. The world holds its breath.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Cici sits unstrapped on the cot, shivering under a thermal blanket. An IV bag marked V-TOX B feeds a slow drip. UV floods are angled at windows like guard dogs.

Alan sterilizes a butterfly needle. Everything is precise.

CICI
How long until I stop hearing them?

ALAN

Depends how loud you want to be.

He tapes a fresh resonance node to her sternum. A faint HUM answers, then dips.

CICI

What if I want to hear nothing?

ALAN

Then you'll hear your own head.
People relapse to turn that down.

CICI

You always this comforting?

ALAN

When it works, you'll hate me more.

She almost smiles, then cramps hard; teeth grit.

CICI

Do it. Whatever's next.

ALAN

Or we can stop.

She looks at him like he's testing her.

CICI

No. I'm not a product.

He nods once, sets a timer.

ALAN

Every five minutes I ask the same
three questions. Name, place, who
you are besides a mouth. Answer
fast.

CICI

Cecilia Ormond. Cabin. I'm a person
who keeps making today happen.

ALAN

Good enough.

He moves to a metal workbench. Unrolls a tool roll:
sterilized syringes, filter disks, a kit of unlabeled
ampules. He begins mixing micro-doses.

CICI

You cook drugs for a living?

ALAN
I cook antidotes to ruin.

CICI
That what you were in the army?

He doesn't look up.

ALAN
I was a man who did what he was
told. Then I tried not being that.

CICI
How'd it go?

ALAN
You hired me.

Timer BEEPS.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Name.

CICI
Cecilia. Cici, if I like you.

ALAN
Place.

CICI
Cabin.

ALAN
Who are you besides a mouth?

CICI
A person who keeps making today
happen.

He thumbs the timer again. Moves to the door, checks a
peephole camera: forest, empty.

ALAN
Eat.

He sets a bowl: bone broth, plain rice. A banana. She eyes it
like a test she can maybe pass.

CICI
If I throw it up?

ALAN
We clean and try again.

She eats, measured.

EXT. CABIN PERIMETER - LATE MORNING

A pair of DRONES whirr silently through the trees, matte-black, the size of hawks. They pause over the roof, IR cameras blooming.

Down on a logging road, a PICKUP idles with two CARTEL LOOKOUTS wearing hunter camo and earbuds.

LOOKOUT #1

They got lamps. Hot as noon.

LOOKOUT #2

Boss says wait for the call. He wants the girl lively.

A text pops on their phone: "SUNDOWN."

INT. CABIN - LATE MORNING

Cici sips water, staring at her own reflection in a dark TV. Her cheeks flushed, eyes raw but clearer.

CICI

I did this. I walked into it.

ALAN

That makes you fixable.

CICI

You mean responsible.

ALAN

Same word on a different day.

Timer BEEPS.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Name.

CICI

Cecilia.

ALAN

Place.

CICI

Cabin.

ALAN

Who are you besides a mouth?

Cici searches for it, shaky.

CICI

A person who... won't let the worst
thing I did be the only thing I am.

He nods; that one lands.

His phone buzzes on silent. He checks a secure message:
VANESSA: "Status? Press pressure rising." He ignores it.

CICI (CONT'D)

My mother?

ALAN

Wants a picture of a finish line.

CICI

There isn't one.

ALAN

There's a road.

CICI

And you walk it with people like
me.

ALAN

I stop you from stepping into
traffic while you remember how feet
work.

She exhales. It helps.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - BOARDROOM - DAY

Vanessa presides over a table of PR CONSULTANTS and SECURITY
CHIEF. Screens show gossip headlines, jittering graphs of
sentiment.

PR LEAD

"Hiatus for wellness" plays, but
the club footage lingers.

SECURITY CHIEF

We have chatter. Street product is spiking. REN batches labeled NOVA are Murnau-adjacent.

VANESSA

Keep the NOVA name offshore. And no police until I say.

PR LEAD

And your daughter?

Vanessa's jaw tightens.

VANESSA

She's in treatment. Privately. That's all the world gets.

A junior assistant nervously slides a manila envelope toward Vanessa.

ASSISTANT

This came from.. archives. For you only.

Vanessa opens it. A photocopy of an 1849 ORMOND LEDGER PAGE — a line item: "Disbursement to Herr Murnau — tonics." Her eyes flash and then go to stone.

She folds it back inside, immaculate.

VANESSA

Next item.

EXT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Alan string-lines tiny GLASS BELLS and FISHING LINE across trails — old-world trip alarms among the sensors.

He buries a PELLET BATTERY near the porch steps, wires leading to UV bricks.

He works quiet, efficient, the grace of repetition.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Cici stands, wobbling, does a slow set of air squats. Then a wall sit. Shakes, breathes, holds.

Alan watches from the doorway.

ALAN
That's enough.

CICI
One more.

She holds it, eyes glassy with effort. Collapses into a laugh that almost becomes a sob, but she sniffs it back.

CICI (CONT'D)
I used to buy a trainer to film me
doing three reps.

ALAN
You bought a guy to count.

CICI
Yeah.

Timer BEEPS.

ALAN
Name.

CICI
Cecilia.

ALAN
Place.

CICI
Cabin.

ALAN
Who are you besides a mouth?

CICI
A person who chooses boring
miracles.

He checks her pupils with a penlight. More normal.

ALAN
You're landing.

CICI
And then I have to stand up.

ALAN
We'll try it without falling up.

She grins despite herself.

INT. CABIN - BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Cici in the dim mirror. She touches her gums; pink, not bleeding. She leans close— for a heartbeat her reflection lags like a stream buffering. A faint HUM brushes.

MURNAU (V.O.)
You look good in honesty.

Her breath fogs. She grips the sink.

CICI
Get out.

MURNAU (V.O.)
I could make you a saint. Imagine
forgiveness you don't have to earn.

Her fingernails bite porcelain.

CICI
No.

The HUM recedes. She exhales like someone who just lifted a car off herself.

EXT. LOGGING ROAD - SUNSET

The CARTEL LOOKOUTS check watches. DRONES return to their case.

LOOKOUT #2
On sundown. Boss wants it pretty.

Headlights crest the hill: a box truck with EVENT LIGHTING CO. magnets. It parks farther down, unseen from the cabin. Three more camo men hop out. All smiles.

INT. CABIN - DUSK

Alan spreads a rough map on the table— hand-drawn perimeter, fields of fire, trip alarms, UV placement.

Cici studies it, clear-eyed.

ALAN

They'll try to wait you out. Then
they'll try to smoke us out. Then
they'll try to sell you a
surrender.

CICI

What do we do?

ALAN

Make them pay time first. Then
blood. Then pride.

CICI

And if they get in?

ALAN

They'll get in.

She nods. Accepting this is what hope looks like here.

CICI

I want to do something.

He slides over a small remote with two toggles.

ALAN

Left floods the porch. Right kills
the main breaker and trips the
battery. If I say pull, you pull
left. If I say night, you flip
right.

CICI

Pull. Night. Got it.

He hands her a soft mouthguard.

ALAN

You'll clench in the noise. Save
your teeth.

CICI

I like my teeth.

ALAN

That helps.

He checks his watch. Looks at the window: the last thread of
light dying.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Sundown always makes men brave.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Silence, then the tiniest TINK as a glass bell trembles.
Another. Then a THRUM like generators spooling somewhere
distant.

A wind carries incense that isn't incense - sweet metallic.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Alan sniffs, eyes narrow.

ALAN
They're blooming a pheromone mix.
Make the line louder in your head.

CICI
I don't want it.

ALAN
Say it out loud.

CICI
I don't want it.

He nods once. Positions himself by the doorframe, shotgun
low.

A soft footstep on the porch.

MURNAU (O.S.)
Mr. Linderman. I admire
craftsmanship. The loops on your
fishing line are neat.

Alan glances at a porch cam: a shadow where a man should be,
and then he is there, perfect in the lens: Murnau, smiling
like a patron.

MURNAU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Shall we trade? You give back my
guest, I call off the choir.

Alan thumbs his comms switch off. He doesn't talk to wolves.

CICI (whisper)
He hears everything.

ALAN

Then let him hear you say no.

Cici stares at the door like an altar.

CICI

No.

Murnau's smile flickers. Interest heightens.

MURNAU (O.S.)

You're making character. How
American.

A pop— a CS gas can clatters against the wall and hisses.
Alan boots it back out the dog door like a soccer striker. It
skitters into the dark, FOOM— a UV pellet battery ignites—
WHITE washes the porch. Screams from the dark.

ALAN

Pull.

Cici slams the left toggle. UV floods go to full. The front
of the cabin blazes day.

Shadows leap away. Flock bodies scramble like roaches. A
cartel man yanks a scarf over his face, firing blind. Rounds
thud into treated timber.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Down!

He rips a smoke grenade open, filling the room with opaque
gray. He flips a thermal visor down.

CICI (coughing)
Can't see—

ALAN (CONT'D)

They can't either. Good for us.

At the back window: GLASS SPIDERS inward— a cutting torch.
Alan shoulders the dart gun and puts a V-TOX bolt through the
pane into a thermal silhouette. A thud.

Cici's breath quickens. The HUM pushes into her like a tide.

FLOCK GIRL (O.S.)

Cici, we're cold. Come make us
warm.

CICI

Shut up. Shut up.

ALAN
Don't argue with ghosts. Talk to
me. Name.

CICI
Cecilia.

ALAN
Place.

CICI
Cabin.

ALAN
Who are you besides a mouth?

Her hands shake. The HUM jabs.

CICI
A person who—

The FRONT DOOR blows inward on its hinges. A camo BREACHER
tumbles through, smoking, followed by two FLOCK RUNNERS who
move like ballet and knives.

Alan fires the shotgun once— Breacher folds. The Runners
blur, one on the wall, one across the ceiling beam like
gravity is a rumor. Alan pivots, misses the ceiling one by
inches.

Cici lifts the remote, thumb hovering.

The ceiling Runner drops at her; she raises the mouthguard
and bites down, throws a lamp at his face. It explodes UV,
scorches his eyes. He shrieks, thrashing. Alan plants a dart
in his thigh. He goes slack, breathing.

The second Runner tackles Alan into a bookcase, claws for his
neck with polite madness. Alan headbutts, hears bone give,
rams the man's wrist into a shelf edge until the hand opens.
He plants a dart under the jaw. The Runner spasms, hissing
like an animal cooling.

A LASER DOT appears on Cici's chest.

ALAN
Night!

She slaps the right toggle. House power dies. The UV battery
detonates the porch into winter sun. Outside, screams.
Inside, dark and smoke and the afterimage of daylight burned
on their eyes.

Cici pants, laughing half-crazy with adrenaline. The HUM... dips.

ALAN (CONT'D)
 Name!
 CICI
 Cecilia!
 ALAN
 Place!
 CICI
 Cabin!
 ALAN
 Who are you besides a mouth?
 CICI
 A person who chooses boring
 miracles!

The smoke thins. The porch is empty but for a scorch pattern and dropped guns. The yard beyond moves with shadows withdrawing.

A single slow clap from the trees.

MURNAU (O.S.)
 Brava. You learned no. Now learn
 please. Come out and say please.

Cici's head tips, an involuntary lean, like something tugged her by a ribbon. She clamps her jaw, fights to center.

CICI
 Stop.

MURNAU (O.S.)
 I will outfit you in a better
 honesty. You will love it because
 it will be yours.

Alan lays a hand on her shoulder, firm, present. Her lean stops.

ALAN
 Drink water.
 CICI
 I hate water.
 ALAN
 Drink it anyway.

She does. The ordinary act is a talisman.

Outside, tires on gravel. The EVENT LIGHTING truck rolls nearer. Its sides hiss open. Inside: racks of UV GEL PANELS, foggers, cable. Men in black move like stagehands.

CICI

They're going to throw our sun back
at us.

ALAN

We'll wear sunglasses.

He pops the lid of a plastic crate: welding visors retrofitted with anti-UV filters. Hands one to Cici.

CICI

I'll look ridiculous.

ALAN

You'll look alive.

She straps it on.

EXT. CABIN - LATER NIGHT

The truck's crew erects a lighting truss in the trees, aiming UV GEL PANELS toward the cabin in a ring. A generator coughs to life. The clearing becomes an arena.

Murnau stands in a circle of his Flock like a conductor. Barefoot, immaculate.

MURNAU

Gently. We want her unbroken.

He turns, as if hearing a whisper in the soil, and looks directly into a camera Cici doesn't know she's on.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Alan spies through the peephole camera. Cici watches on the tablet.

CICI

He's filming us. Of course he is.

ALAN
Markets like stories.

CICI
What's ours?

ALAN
Two people who didn't do what the
market said.

She nods. Puts the mouthguard back in. Lifts the remote.

CICI
Pull or night?

ALAN
Both. On count.

He sets a timer on his watch: 10 seconds.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Ten... nine... eight...

Outside, a FOG rolls from the event truck— theatrical and
chemical— carrying a heady, iron-sweet scent.

Cici sways. Holds the table.

ALAN (CONT'D)
...three... two... one. Pull. Night.

She slams both toggles. The house goes dark; the porch
detonates in UV; simultaneously, the truss panels ignite— a
ring of white blasting inward.

The clearing becomes a noon-noon duel — light vs. light —
shadows a strobe. Flock scream in the crossfire, skittering
like insects under two suns.

Alan moves in the flicker, a silhouette between bolts of day.
He rips a flare to smoke the yard, then fires a grapnel line
from a compact launcher into the truss, the hook biting.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Keep talking to me!

CICI
Cecilia! Cabin! A person who
chooses boring miracles!

She laughs through tears; the repetition becomes a weapon.

Alan yanks the grapnel line, drops the nearest UV panel. It crashes onto Flock, popping like glass rain. He fires another, drops a second panel.

A cartel shooter flanks right— Alan catches the movement, snaps a shot, takes him off his feet.

A Flock Runner hits the porch and is instantly cooked by the UV floor— he rolls, hissing, falling back.

MURNAU (O.S.)

Enough.

Murnau steps into the ring. The UV light kisses him; his skin smokes and then calms. He adjusts. He is almost smiling at the experiment.

MURNAU (CONT'D)

You built a church of a kind. Let's pray.

He leaps— so fast it's indecent— lands on the porch in the sun, skin crisping and healing in the same second. He is beautiful in the way a storm is.

Alan fires point-blank— Murnau catches the barrel, pushes it aside gently like correcting a child's posture, backhands Alan across the room. Alan skids, breath knocked.

CICI

Alan!

Murnau turns to her. The HUM slams like a verdict.

MURNAU

Say please.

She clamps her teeth on the mouthguard; her jaw muscles pop like cords. She pulls down the line— the discord they practiced — the HUM detunes. Murnau's eyes flicker, surprised. He tilts his head, admiring.

MURNAU (CONT'D)

You learned a bad word.

Alan explodes off the floor, drives a V-TOX injector into Murnau's flank. It hisses. Murnau snarls — finally a sound like a beast — and hurls Alan into the kitchen island. Wood cracks. Alan rolls, teeth red.

Murnau grabs Cici's wrist. She twists like a dancer, gets inside his arm the way Alan taught her, rakes a hidden glass ampule across his cheek. Clear mist bursts — V-TOX micro.

His face blisters, heals, blisters again, a loop that steals time.

MURNAU (CONT'D)
Interesting.

His other hand encircles her throat—

Alan hits a wall switch. A ceiling UV grid snaps alive overhead — a cheat, a last reserve. Murnau releases, skin smoking hard now.

He moves backward into the doorway, eyes black with delight, not anger.

MURNAU (CONT'D)
We will finish where the light
can't cheat.

He steps out. The ring of panels powers down in sequence; the truck crew pulls cables, efficient. The Flock retreat with the calm of a tide.

Silence. Smoke, the smell of cooked varnish.

Cici tears the visor off, collapses onto the floor. Hands shake uncontrollably.

Alan slumps against the island, breath ragged, sweat in his eyes.

CICI
We... won?

ALAN
We paid to play again.

CICI
He could have taken me.

ALAN
He likes an audience. He's making
the gala the last act.

She knows he's right.

CICI
Then we change the ending.

He nods, a promise signed in blood and bone.

INT. CABIN - LATER NIGHT

Alan disinfects a gash on his shoulder. Cici threads a butterfly bandage with shaking hands.

ALAN
You don't have to.

CICI
I want to. Hold still.

She presses the adhesive; he sucks air between teeth but doesn't flinch.

CICI (CONT'D)
You're all scars.

ALAN
I'm mostly the spaces between them.

She tapes the last one. He looks at her, a real look.

ALAN (CONT'D)
You did well.

It lands like sunlight.

CICI
Say it again when I don't need it.

ALAN
Deal.

He unrolls a small tactical case: compact UV flashes shaped like camera strobes, diffusers that are V-TOX foggers, a bracelet with one clear ampoule.

ALAN (CONT'D)
We can't defend here again. He'll bring a choir next time. We go to him. Your family's gala— he'll pivot REN into "wellness." That's a stage. We can break the sound system.

CICI
I'm not going back to being a product.

ALAN
You go back as a person with a sabotage kit.

She looks at the ampoule, the single clear vial.

CICI
What's that one?

ALAN
Kill switch. Drops the line to zero
for a minute. It'll knock you flat.
Might hurt him longer.

CICI
Might?

ALAN
He's old. I don't get to be sure.

CICI
I'm tired of sure being a lie.

She snaps the bracelet on. It looks like jewelry.

ALAN
Sleep three hours. We move before
press call.

He rises, groans at a pulled muscle.

CICI
Alan—

He looks back.

CICI (CONT'D)
Thank you for stealing me.

He nods like a man ducking thanks that might stick.

EXT. ADIRONDACK ROAD - PRE-DAWN

The SUV rolls. The cabin recedes into trees, lights dead, a
ghost of a place that simply didn't happen.

INT. SUV - MOVING - PRE-DAWN

Cici in a hoodie, hair tucked under a cap. Alan drives, eyes
scanning mirrors.

CICI
You ever think about quitting?

ALAN
Every job.

CICI
This one?

ALAN
It quits me first.

A sign flashes: NORTHWAY SOUTH - NEW YORK CITY.

CICI
When we win, what happens to him?

ALAN
He stops being everyone's excuse.

CICI
And me?

ALAN
You get a day one. Then day two.

She stares at her hands. Flexes them. Human.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - VANESSA'S OFFICE - DAWN

Vanessa at the window, city pale with morning. Julian asleep on a chaise, jacket as blanket. Vanessa's phone buzzes:
UNKNOWN: "Sundown didn't close. They're coming."

She reads, then deletes, face a perfect lie.

She opens the safe, stares at the ledger's missing page, the wound in history. Closes it. Pours coffee she won't drink.

VANESSA (to the window)
We forgive appetite. We don't forgive weakness.

Her reflection doesn't answer.

EXT. MUSEUM PLAZA - MORNING

Crew builds a stage under a glass canopy. A massive LED wall tests colors: reds blooming like cells. Banners unfurl: THE NEW BLOOD INITIATIVE.

EVENT MANAGER barks orders. CATERERS wheel carts. PRESS RISERS go up.

A separate AV VAN idles. Inside, a tidy array of routers. A tech glances at a second screen – a feed from a hidden camera pointed somewhere in the Ormond townhouse hallway: a little illegal comfort for a client.

INT. SAFEHOUSE TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Not the Ormond tower – a modest, secure Upper East Side brownstone Vanessa keeps for optics. Shades drawn. A kettle whistles.

ALAN (V.O.)
Doors and windows are sensors. No posting on anything. And we walk in through staff, not the carpet.

CICI (V.O.)
I know carpets. They eat people.

Cici emerges from a small bedroom in a conservative black dress and flats – camouflage, not glam. She catches herself in a mirror. Pauses.

CICI (to self)
Day one.

Alan enters, wearing a technician's black – comfortable among the unseen.

ALAN
Ready?

CICI
No. Yes.

He hands her a lanyard: PRODUCTION – AV. Hers says SOCIAL OPS.

ALAN
You go visible when I say. Not one second before.

CICI
Copy.

They share a look— partners now.

EXT. MUSEUM PLAZA - MIDDAY

Crowds gather. Influencers in curated "understated chic."
Donor whales in black ties. Cameras everywhere.

The LED wall cycles to a countdown. 4:00 to Launch.

REPORTER

Today the Ormond Foundation unveils
"New Blood," a wellness initiative
rumored to include a novel
anxiolytic—

CUTAWAY: MURNAU, in tux, greeting board members like a prince
at court. He glides. He owns air.

INT. STAGE BACK-OF-HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alan moves through cables and crates. He opens a Pelican case
— UV flashes disguised as camera strobes nestled in foam. He
palms one, swaps it into a stack destined for stage
photographers.

He tucks a V-TOX diffuser into a floral scent tower by the
VIP rope.

His radio crackles: EVENT CHIEF calling positions. He blends
like a shadow that pays taxes.

EXT. MUSEUM PLAZA - VIP CORRAL - CONTINUOUS

Cici slips among staffers, head down, lanyard flashing. No
one looks at staff.

She stops by an ivy wall hiding HVAC intakes. She magnets a
diffuser puck to the grate. Thumb on the safety. Doesn't arm
it yet.

Her phone vibrates. A text from VANESSA: "No red carpet. I'll
meet you backstage. Proud of you."

Cici watches three dots pulse. No second message. She pockets
the phone.

CICI (under breath)
Day one.

She walks.

INT. MUSEUM - AV BAY - CONTINUOUS

Alan eases into the cramped bay with two AV TECHS. He sets down a coil of cables, unspools. He sneaks a UV trigger into the DMX chain. One tech glances, shrugs — pros trust pros until they don't.

AV TECH #1

You see the wellness guy? Charisma like a virus.

ALAN

He'll have a good death.

The tech chuckles, doesn't get it.

EXT. MUSEUM PLAZA - STAGE - MINUTES LATER

Countdown at :30. Murnau steps to the wing. The crowd hushes, an instinct older than microphones.

Alan checks sightlines. Cici checks exits. The diffuser in the ivy waits like a held breath.

ALAN (COMMS)

On my count, you move to stage lip.
Do not look at him. Look at the crowd.

CICI (COMMS)

Copy.

ALAN (COMMS)

Three... two... one—

STAGE MANAGER

We're live in five— four— three—

The LED wall blooms with cellular animations, gorgeous, soothing.

Murnau steps to the mic. The HUM arrives like the tide coming in under everyone's shoes.

MURNAU

We punish appetite until it punishes us.

(MORE)

MURNAU (CONT'D)
 Today, we stop pretending the
 body's voice is a sin.

Applause like a wave breaks and bows.

Cici's breath spikes; the HUM hooks behind her eyes. She
 blinks hard, puts the mouthguard in— bites.

ALAN (COMMS)
 Breathe. Name.

CICI (COMMS)
 Cecilia.

ALAN (COMMS)
 Place.

CICI (COMMS)
 Plaza.

ALAN (COMMS)
 Who are you besides a mouth?

CICI (COMMS)
 A person who chooses boring
 miracles.

She steps to the lip of the stage, unseen by most until the
 LED wall behind Murnau flips to a montage: Cici's feeds, club
 clips, childhood charity photo ops — a curated life.

Gasps. Phones lift.

Murnau turns toward the movement. His smile is a soft blade.

MURNAU
 Welcome home, little star.

The HUM tightens, begging. People sway. Some cry like
 epiphanies.

Alan punches the UV trigger— WHITE drowns the LED wall, the
 plaza bleached to a surgical noon.

Screams. Startle. Murnau flinches, recomposes, smoke
 threading off his collar like perfume.

Cici armors in the ordinary: she thumbs the diffuser safety
 in her palm and arms it. The ivy hides a gentle puff of
 invisible V-TOX into the HVAC intake.

ALAN (COMMS)
 Now.

Cici raises the scent tower beside the VIP rope, twists its faux-dial – diffuser goes live. A cluster of Flock-adjacent donors' pupils stutter; they blink, step back, whatever worship is sobering into self.

Murnau feels it. His eyes go from crowd to Cici to the AV bay with elegant fury.

MURNAU
You brought a doctor.

ALAN (under breath, to himself)
Wrong kind.

Security – some bought, some not – begin to drift. The plaza skews.

Murnau steps away from the mic. Toward Cici. The HUM lowers to a private pitch, just for her.

MURNAU (soft)
Say please.

Her jaw flexes on the guard. She pulls down the line-discord. The HUM wobbles. People sway as if a sermon stuttered.

ALAN (COMMS)
Now, Cici. The ampoule if you have to.

Cici's hand finds her bracelet; fingers on glass. Her eyes lock to Murnau's – and do not drown.

CICI
No.

She stomps the bracelet ampoule. V-TOX breaks in a clear plume. The HUM falls out of the world like a cable yanked from a wall.

The Flock collapse to knees, sobbing awake. Donors gasp. Photographers fire their strobes – which are really UV flashes – the light becoming a crucible.

Murnau reels – not undone, but human for a heartbeat. He sees Cici in sharp relief, outside his choir.

He smiles, terrible and admiring.

MURNAU
Now you are interesting.

He leaps.

Alan is already moving from the AV bay, closing like a decision. He catches Murnau mid-surge at the stairs to the stage — the two collide in a violence that's small and absolute.

ALAN

Run!

Cici runs — up a side ladder to the catwalk, flats slapping metal. She moves sure, the memory of falling up turned into balance, not flight.

Murnau throws Alan into a truss upright. Metal bends. Alan snarls, drives a V-TOX injector into Murnau's ribs. It hisses. Murnau wavers — then ignores it, furious at being made to feel anything.

He bounds up the ladder after Cici, easy as breath.

Alan follows, bleeding, relentless.

INT. MUSEUM ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

The night wind. The heli-pad lines a faded cross. The city yawns wide.

Cici turns, jaw set. The city in her eyes for the first time as something not to perform for.

Murnau rises from the hatch like a secret arriving.

MURNAU

Everything that wants to be taken
is mine.

She tears the line again with will alone. The HUM stutters, hurts him. He shows teeth, not a smile.

Alan slaps magnetic UV bricks around the pad's rim, cables to a marine battery.

ALAN

Showtime.

He hits the switch. DAYLIGHT erupts.

Murnau smolders, then forces calm. Ancient tolerance.

He blurs. Alan meets him. Close-quarters ruin. Elbows, bone, leverage. A UV brick shatters, strobing. Cici darts to replace it, hands sure.

ALAN (to Cici)
Hold the line!

She plants her feet. She pushes down the silent radio until her vision sparks — a migraine that becomes a weapon. Below, distant, the Flock wail and then quiet.

Murnau falters. Smoke peels. The real dawn teases the horizon.

MURNAU (soft)
Unforgivable.

He reaches for Cici as if it were a kiss. Alan drives him backward into the UV wall. Flesh crumbles; for a strobe we glimpse the old face beneath the youth, the hungers layered like geological time.

He looks at Cici as he ashes.

MURNAU
I will find you in the dark.

He blows apart, a shape that fails the sun.

The HUM vanishes. The world is only wind and sirens and the early birds of a city that never stops.

Cici is shaking, laughing once, real.

CICI
Day one.

Alan sags. He nods, breath hitching.

ALAN
Day one.

They stand in the UV dawn as the real dawn breaks, two people who held.

FADE IN:

EXT. MUSEUM PLAZA - CONTINUOUS (DAWN BLEEDING INTO MORNING)

Police tape flutters. EMTs triage dazed attendees. Flock-adjacent donors sob like the ends of bad dreams. Reporters call out half-formed narratives.

REPORTER #1
 —unconfirmed casualties—

REPORTER #2
 —mysterious light blast—

A SWAT LT. shouts orders. UV bricks still glow faintly on the roofline above like a new constellation.

A single point of calm: MURNAU'S TUX JACKET, ash-dusted, draped over a seatback. No owner.

EXT. MUSEUM ROOFTOP - SAME

ALAN and CICI catch their breath in the hard morning. They're alive and look like it hurts.

A HATCH clanks. Two ARMED SECURITY guards emerge, startled at the wreckage of light.

GUARD #1
 Down, hands where we can see—

Alan raises his hands. Calm.

ALAN
 We're the reason there aren't more
 bodies.

GUARD #2 (into shoulder mic)
 We've got two— one injured—

Cici steps forward, steady, voice clear.

CICI
 I'm Cecilia Ormond. This is my
 intervention specialist. Call my
 mother. Tell her "day one."

The guards falter at the name. They lower weapons a hair.

ALAN (to Cici, low)
 Breathe.

CICI (under breath)
 Name— Cecilia. Place— rooftop. Who am I— a person who keeps
 making today happen.

She smiles to herself. It works.

INT. MUSEUM - BACK CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

Alan and Cici are hustled past medics by ORION (40s), head of Ormond private security— crisp, discreet, lethal.

ORION

We need you invisible. Sirens are hungry.

CICI

We're not hiding the truth.

ORION

We're hiding you from all the wrong truths.

Alan scans Orion's eyes— pros recognizing pros.

ALAN

Two exits. Your call.

ORION

Service stair. Van in the loading bay. No press sightlines.

They move.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - BOARDROOM - DAWN

VANESSA at the head of the table like a general. PR LEAD, LEGAL, SECURITY CHIEF. Screens show cable news: chaotic clips, headlines like a panic attack.

LEGAL

If we even suggest knowledge of REN, liability goes nuclear.

PR LEAD

We pivot to courage under pressure, survivor narrative—

VANESSA

No. We pivot to day one. Sobriety, accountability, funding for treatment. New Blood becomes real.

SECURITY CHIEF

There's chatter the "wellness molecule" was a cover for REN. Someone was going to roll it out.

Vanessa's face doesn't move.

VANESSA
We honor the truth without feeding
wolves. Find me language that does
that.

ASSISTANT (rushing in)
Ma'am, Ms. Ormond is inbound with Mr. Linderman.

A breath Vanessa didn't know she held leaves her, then
vanishes. She stands.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Clear the room.

The room empties in seconds.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Elevator doors open. Cici steps out, flanked by Alan and
Orion. Her dress is scuffed, hair wild, eyes bright.

Vanessa steps forward— stops just short. Looks at her
daughter, not the brand.

VANESSA
You look like yourself.

CICI
I'm trying to.

They hold each other without collapsing.

VANESSA (to Alan)
Thank you.

ALAN
She did the work.

VANESSA
You stole my child to give her
back. I won't forget it.

ALAN
Please do. Forget me and remember
the parts that hurt.

A flicker of a laugh from Cici. Vanessa's mouth almost
smiles.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - STUDY - MINUTES LATER

Privacy. Heavy curtains. The city a muted jewel beyond glass.

On the desk: the 1849 LEDGER PHOTOCOPY beneath a crystal paperweight like a bug in amber.

CICI (seeing it)
What's that?

Vanessa hesitates, then slides it out.

VANESSA
A debt. Older than both of us.

Cici reads, jaw tightening.

CICI
We invited him a long time ago.

VANESSA
Our name did. We didn't know.

ALAN
You know now.

Vanessa looks at both of them. Decision. She picks up the paperweight, sets it aside. The page is free.

VANESSA
We tell the truth we can prove. And
we repair what a ledger bought.

A beat. Cici nods— not absolution, but agreement to work.

VANESSA (to Alan)
Stay. Help us set terms with the press. Then vanish like smoke.

ALAN
I'll write you three sentences. You
say only those. No adjectives.

VANESSA
I love adjectives.

ALAN
They love you back until they
don't.

Cici smirks despite everything.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - GUEST BATH - LATER

Alan washes blood from his hands. It swirls pink, goes clear. He studies himself a second. Tired eyes. Then back to work.

INT. ORMOND PENTHOUSE - STUDY - LATER

Alan types on a laptop, Cici nearby on the couch, sipping tea like a new ritual. Vanessa reads over Alan's shoulder.

On screen- three sentences:

1. "My daughter survived a violent exploitation of a street drug called REN."
2. "We are funding treatment and investigation, and we're cooperating with law enforcement."
3. "Today is day one."

Vanessa blinks, surprised at the weight of so little.

VANESSA
Simple is terrifying.

ALAN
So is truth.

CICI
Say it. Then do it.

Vanessa nods, commits.

EXT. PRESS CONFERENCE PODIUM - MIDDAY

A quick pop-up podium in the Ormond plaza. Banks of cameras. Microphones like flowers.

Vanessa steps up. No glam, only steel.

VANESSA
My daughter survived a violent
exploitation of a street drug
called REN.
(MORE)

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 We are funding treatment and
 investigation, and we're
 cooperating with law enforcement.
 Today is day one.

Questions explode. She steps away. No extras. The three
 sentences hang like a bell that keeps ringing.

Across the street, an UNDERCOVER man films on a phone, then
 texts: "She's on message. Shift product to Ω."

INT. SAFEHOUSE TOWNHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Cici sits at a small kitchen table in a simpler space— a
 recovery townhouse the size of a thought. A corkboard: Day 1
 pinned. A mug: UGLY > PERFECT.

Alan sets down a paper bag: groceries. Bananas, rice, tea.

ALAN
 You'll hate cooking for yourself.
 That's good.

CICI
 I can microwave accountability.

She smiles. He almost does.

CICI (CONT'D)
 What do I do when it gets loud?

ALAN
 You talk out loud to no one. People
 will stare. Let them.
 Name. Place. Who you are besides a
 mouth. And call me before you call
 anyone else.

He slides a simple flip phone across.

ALAN (CONT'D)
 No apps. It only dials five
 numbers, one of them mine.

CICI
 What if I throw it in a fountain to
 be dramatic?

ALAN
 You'll get wet and buy another one.

She tucks it into a drawer. A ritual: choosing boring miracles.

CICI
Stay? Just for tea.

ALAN
Ten minutes. Then I become a bad habit.

They sit. Steam rises. Ordinary magic.

EXT. RIVER PIER - SUNSET

Alan leans on a bollard, coffee in hand. The river moves like a heavy thought.

SETH approaches, thinner, eyes honest in a way that hurts.

SETH
You got rid of him?

ALAN
I got rid of a face he wore.

Seth offers a REN pen in a zip bag.

SETH
For evidence. I can't hold things anymore.

Alan takes it with gloves, pockets it. Hands Seth a crumpled clinic card.

ALAN
Show up. Say my name. They'll make lying to yourself expensive.

Seth nods, crying without theater.

SETH
Is she... okay?

ALAN
She's working.

Seth nods like a vow.

INT. NYPD - NARCOTICS BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

A whiteboard: REN / FLOCK / MURNAU (?) scribbles. DETECTIVE KEEGAN (50s) runs point.

Alan stands at the back, invited, uneasy. Vanessa's legal team sits too, stone-faced.

Keegan points to seized vials.

KEEGAN

Street says Murnau's dead. I don't
buy fairy dust. But product slowed.
Then— new chatter. REN-Ω.
We hit labs in Queens, Red Hook,
Jersey. Someone's pivoting fast.

A rookie raises a hand.

ROOKIE

If he's dead, who's driving?

KEEGAN

Cut a head off a hydra— you still
have snakes.

Alan's gaze goes to photos of event trucks, lighting rigs.

ALAN

He built a distribution religion.
Someone will wear his robes.

Keegan eyes Alan like he's a useful problem.

KEEGAN

You want a seat at the table?

ALAN

No. I'll stand. Easier to leave
when you start lying to yourselves.

Keegan almost smiles.

INT. SAFEHOUSE TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Cici sits on the floor, back to a couch, watching nothing.
The HUM is gone but memory hums.

Her phone buzzes— the flip phone, not the old one. She
ignores it. Picks it up. Opens, closes. Breathes.

She pins Day 2 on the corkboard. Stares at Day 1 next to it.
A small miracle: two.

She writes on a sticky: Name. Place. Who I am. Sticks it to
the fridge.

A knock. She checks the peephole: VANESSA. Cici opens.

Vanessa holds Tupperware like a peace offering.

VANESSA
Soup. I made it. Personally.
(then)
One of the staff chopped the
onions.

CICI
Liar.

They both laugh— the first easy one in years. Vanessa steps
inside, sees the corkboard. Tears threaten, don't fall.

VANESSA
I'm proud of you.

CICI
Be proud tomorrow. That'll be the
trick.

They sit. Mother and daughter. Soup and silence. Working.

INT. ALAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sparse. Clean. A plant that's not dead. A small shelf of
books: field manuals, poetry, a cookbook with flour
fingerprints.

Alan sets down the REN pen in an evidence bag beside a neat
row of others. Labels: dates, locations. He writes: MUSEUM /
GALA / Ω SUSPECTED.

A POLAROID on the fridge: a boy (17) in a team jacket,
smiling. The corners are worn from being touched. Alan
touches it once. Lights out.

INT. UNKNOWN LAB - NIGHT (STINGER SETUP)

Stainless steel. Cold air.

A technician in sterile whites (we'll call them LAB TECH) opens a crate. Inside: REN-Ω vials nestled like pearls. Labels: Redirected: Ormond Wellness R&D.

Phone buzzes: TEXT: "He's gone. You're up."

LAB TECH smiles thinly. Slots a vial into a pen labeled V-TOX — the brand stolen.

LAB TECH
Forgive appetite.

They depress the plunger into a bioreactor. Scarlet smoke blooms through tubing.

A LOGO on the far wall lights: NOVA THERAPEUTICS (a shell, a pivot, a hydra head). Machines hum a brand-new hum— colder, more anonymous.

EXT. COMMUNITY CLINIC - DAY (WEEKS LATER)

A line of people outside a modest brick clinic. A banner: NEW BLOOD - TREATMENT ACCESS NOW OPEN.

Cici arrives with a clipboard and a volunteer badge. Jeans, hoodie, ponytail. Incognito only if you don't look at her eyes.

She hands out numbers, smiles, means it.

A teenage girl with a REN scar under her tongue tries to make a joke of it, fails. Cici gets it.

CICI
Name?

TEEN
Jada.

CICI
Place?

TEEN
Here.

CICI
Who are you besides a mouth?

The girl blinks, then grins, surprised at her own answer.

JADA

A person who... actually showed up.

CICI

That's the hardest one.

They fist-bump. Cici is working.

Across the street, paparazzi hover at a distance, uncertain. A few raise cameras, then lower them. The story isn't a circus today.

EXT. RIVER WALK - EVENING

Alan walks with a paper bag- groceries for himself for once. He stops, feeling watched.

Across the path, a WOMAN (30s) with eyes too still watches him. Not Flock- something else. She smiles, polite, unnerving, then blends into commuter traffic.

Alan exhales. The world moved. He's not surprised.

INT. SAFEHOUSE TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Cici pins Day 17 on the corkboard. Next to it, the ledger page photocopy. She's been staring at both- future and past- every night.

A simple dinner on the stove. A book open: something not about her.

Knock. She checks the peephole. ALAN.

She opens. He's clean, present. A new scar at his shoulder, healing well.

ALAN

You tried to jump today?

CICI

Into water. Metaphorically.

ALAN

Good metaphor.

He sets down another paper bag. She lifts a banana out theatrically.

CICI
Gourmet.

They sit at the tiny table.

CICI (CONT'D)
I keep thinking about all the girls
in rooms like the one I was in. The
ones who don't have you.

ALAN
They have you if you keep showing
up.

She nods— letting the weight land without crushing her.

CICI
Stay for tea?

ALAN
Ten minutes.

They sit. Steam rises. The ordinary remains a miracle.

INT. UNKNOWN LAB - NIGHT (FINAL STINGER)

REN-Ω vials marching down a conveyor. A HAND (tattoo: a stylized thorne circle) stamps each box with V-TOX packaging— glossy, liar's white.

A WALL OF SCREENS shows markets: sentiment, virality, influencer grids. A cursor moves: "Launch Beta: Invite-Only."

In the reflection of a monitor, for a breath, a familiar face almost resolves— a bone structure we've seen on fire— and then it is only the lab tech again, smiling.

LAB TECH
We forgive appetite. We never
forgive margins.

They cap the last box. The machines hum a new song— not a choir, a corporate jingle.

A single vial remains on a tray, different— black stopper, etched omega and a crown. REN-Ω PRIME.

The tech pockets it.

Lights dim to sterile twilight. A red EXIT sign glows like a hunger you can sell.

EXT. CITY ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Cici stands alone on a low-rise roof, looking at the skyline.
No cameras. No crowd. Just wind.

She steps to the ledge. Looks down. Looks up. No urge to fall
up. She lets out a breath and steps back.

Her phone buzzes. The flip. She answers.

CICI

Name: Cecilia. Place: roof. Who am
I besides a mouth: a person who
keeps making tomorrow happen.

ALAN (V.O.)

Copy. Get some sleep.

CICI

You too.

She hangs up. The city hums the old human hum- traffic,
voices, a music you earn.

She smiles. Tiny, real.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: DAY ONE

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END