

ION

by

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For D

Still out in the garden, somewhere.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Tall, dark buildings -- no power. Some ON FIRE, CRUMBLING. PEOPLE scatter in panic, DEBRIS spins up in a HOWLING WIND, BODIES lie in the wet gutter, lined with winter slush.

A Man stands, eyes searching the chaos -- he is sharp and soulful, but anxious. He looks up -- swirling, celestial lights FLICKER behind the low clouds. This is ION (30).

WE TRACK around as he turns -- A WOMAN is standing next to him, also gazing around in awe. We do not see her face. Ion stares at her strangely, her hair whipping in the wind.

Suddenly Ion notices a MAN -- AZRAYL (30) -- only a shadowed silhouette in the gloomy street. He raises a GUN at them...

Ion's eyes fill with ABSOLUTE FEAR as he glances at the Woman next to him. Ion raises his hand like a feeble shield...BLAM!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST WORLD - NIGHT

Ion hits the floor, PUNCHED in the face. Here his hair is LONG AND BRAIDED -- subtle tattoos cover his bare arms and torso; tiny dots form lines of GEOMETRIC PATTERNS that SPIRAL over his skin.

He blinks from his vision -- but there's NO TIME, something is wrong. Ion gets up as we see AZRAYL, together with other MEN robed in black. Azrayl is pulling away a STRUGGLING WOMAN who SCREAMS. She is timelessly beautiful, dark hair: ALICE.

All around them is a lush, peaceful wood. Redwoods tower in the moonlight above boulders, pine needles and abundant LIFE.

Ion frantically PUSHES past the men -- but it's too late. Azrayl coldly shoves her down and...SPEARS HER in the chest.

ION

NO!

Azrayl doesn't try to stop him, merely steps aside as Ion drops next to her, distraught, taking her in his arms. Her deep eyes look at him, not afraid anymore. She smiles.

ALICE

Find me. Find me again.

And she dies. In silent tears, Ion closes his eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

Eyes snap open. They scan around, taking in the room as if for the first time. Ion seems the same age, but now his hair is LONG AND FILTHY with a YEARS-OLD BEARD. He sits on a DUSTY STONE FLOOR in a SIMPLE TEMPLE, thin shafts of sunlight breaching the dark, small birds FLUTTER in the rafters.

OTHER MONKS of all ages meditate or quietly shuffle past.

Ion's gaze lands on a nearby candle. He stares long and deeply at its dancing flame, and HE SMILES. But after a moment, something across the hall breaks his attention...

The ABBOT (50) enters with a man in a suit -- some kind of GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (30). Ion watches through his dirty hair.

ABBOT

(accented English)

...he is here longer than any of us. Longer than anyone remembers. Always here, always now. But there is a great toll.

The Official looks at the Abbot, a flicker of concern.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

A toll?

ABBOT

(whisper)

He has seen too much. Attacks his memory...it is difficult to hold on to his truth. History haunts him, like nightmares returning.

He points towards Ion, seated against the wall. The Official walks forward to Ion and stops, reverent before him.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

We've...been looking for you for a long time. It is finished, built. You could help us now.

Ion slowly stands up -- he has an intense gaze and presence, like a man who has stoically endured unimaginable hardship.

A little nervous, the Official pulls a SMALL LEATHER PENDANT on a string from his pocket and hands it to Ion.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

It was all in there as you said. We followed it exactly. And, I also have this...

He reaches in his pocket again, and gives Ion a PHOTOGRAPH. It is of a woman -- Alice? Hard to tell: it's a night scene; she stands half-turned in shadow; her eyes gleaming, smiling.

It hits Ion hard. Sadness and a deep longing in his eyes.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Ion? It doesn't have to be you. We could send someone else.

Ion stares at the photo for another moment, then he looks up.

ION

No. I must go.

CUT TO BLACK:

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (V.O.)

Thank you. We're lucky to have you.

ION (V.O.)

No. I am what I am.

TITLE EMERGES OVER BLACK: ION

EXT. SPACE - BLACK

SILENCE. A LONELY SHIP melts between stars, catching a sun's light. Spherical sections connect like a model atom -- it seems fragile, more a satellite than a shuttle.

ION (V.O.)

(to a character, in scene)
I'll tell you, though I feel that I've told this story countless times. You think I'm different from you because I tell you what I see, because I walk on Earths you cannot imagine. But you will too, one day.

INT. ION'S SPACESHIP - CONTINUOUS

Ion is asleep on a bed, the PHOTO beside him. He's clean-shaven, his hair cropped short. Stars shine behind and all around him -- as if his bed is floating through space...

But a DIALOGUE BOX appears among the stars... It is actually a ROUND ROOM whose walls mimic the exact view outside.

The box reads: *Earth located. Calibrating orbital trajectory...done. Observation system...online. Time to orbit...* A pie-chart timer appears, slowly COUNTING DOWN.

ION (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We don't grow old, on my Earth,
parallel to this. You know that. I
don't know why it is your bodies
decay, but it's all that I know
that I am alive. Cut me and I bleed
-- we are the same. You just
haven't woken up; it's a sickness
of ideology. You all wait, faithful
that it, and everything, will be
granted in your future, after life.
But the future is an illusion,
unattainable. Immortality is Now.

EXT. SOLAR SYSTEM - SAME TIME

The Ship is a TINY SPECK in front of JUPITER -- stunning.

INT. ION'S SPACESHIP - LATER

Ion slowly wakes up in the bed. He turns over and sees the dialogue box and the timer...it's ALMOST COMPLETE!

Ion LEAPS OUT OF BED, agitated, and rushes forwards as A DOOR OPENS in the wall. He doubles back, grabs the PHOTO from the bed and stuffs it in his pocket as HE SPRINTS OUT...

INT. CONTROL CENTER, ION'S SPACESHIP - MOMENTS LATER

Ion FURIOUSLY RIPS WIRES out from under a clean console -- there are no buttons anywhere, as if EVERYTHING IS AUTOMATED.

He YANKS live-wires and dangerously touches them together -- SPARKS FLY and the power SURGES.

A screen changes: *Orbit trajectory...FAILED. CRASH EXPECTED.*

Next is a high-tech, 6" square glass-cased box -- call it THE SIGNAL. Ion KICKS it free from the console -- tiny white chipsets and glass canisters SMASH across the floor:

Alarm lights FLASH. Ion looks up at another screen anxiously. It reads: *Signal initiation...FAILED.* He nods, satisfied.

EXT. SPACE - SAME TIME

The Ship glides towards our vast BLUE EARTH -- ripples as it enters the OUTER-ATMOSPHERE, beginning to HEAT UP...

ION (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But all of you are afraid to accept it. You're afraid of *everything*. Of each other, of yourselves, of not having enough or not being good enough. All of it comes down to a fear of death. Which is futile.

INT. ION'S SPACESHIP - MOMENTS LATER

Ion climbs inside a clear PROTECTIVE POD, slightly larger than a coffin. He straps in and it closes over him.

A GEL-LIQUID immediately starts SPURTING into the pod, filling it -- Ion stares at the photo in his shaking hand.

EXT. EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE - CONTINUOUS

The Ship PLUMMETS FAST -- whole sections break off, engulfed in FRICTION FLAMES...the Ship is DISINTEGRATING on entry!

INT. ION'S SPACESHIP - CONTINUOUS

Protective liquid rises above his head, filling the pod. EYES WIDEN in fear as he BREATHES IN THE LIQUID into his lungs.

But he can breathe THIS -- slowly he calms, takes a last glance at the photo in his hand. Then he CLOSES HIS EYES...

ION (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I am sent to lead them here. But I sabotaged their plan. They cannot know. They *must not* find me here...

EXT. EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE - DAY

WE FREE-FALL with the LAST INTACT PART of the Ship -- the ground getting LARGER -- flames BLOW OUT, DROPPING FAST and --

BAM! The Ship SLAMS into a desert landscape -- SPLINTERING and CRUMBLING as it CRUNCHES in a sickening impact...

TITLE: Roswell, New Mexico. July 8, 1947

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - MODERN DAY

Ion's eyes open as if from only a blink. He's in the driver's seat of a parked SUV. Shaved face, cropped hair. But there are cuts on his face and a red gash across his shirt. He looks down -- in his hand he holds THE PHOTO.

The windows are fogged up from the cold outside and sunlight glows through them. A figure approaches. The passenger door opens and AMARA MUNRO (30) gets in, carrying a plastic bag.

She is dark and pretty but with a sense of deep sadness -- she too is scraped and bruised, ash and dust on her clothes.

Ion hides the photo in his pocket, but she notices.

ION
Was everything okay?

She ignores him, taking a sip of a soda from the bag.

ION (CONT'D)
We have to be careful.

AMARA
Okay.

ION
They could be anywhere.

AMARA
Yeah okay. I got it.

ION
Okay.

He puts the car in gear and we notice that it's been HOT-WIRED. Then he drives out of the gas station and gets onto a freeway. Outside looks like our modern American north-east.

AMARA
How do you know where you're going?

ION
I don't know...

She rolls her eyes -- *of course*.

ION (CONT'D)
...maybe I've been here before. I don't remember, I just know.

Amara toys with a HOSPITAL BRACELET on her arm -- and we notice an OLD DISTINCTIVE SCAR across the veins on her wrist.

She takes another sip and peers sideways at him curiously.

AMARA

What's with the necklace?

He instinctively touches the leather pendant hanging close to his neck. It fits in with the pattern of his subtle tattoos.

ION

What's with it?

AMARA

Yea, what is it? Did she give it to you, the woman you're looking for?

(he's surprised by this)

...the doctor told me about it.

He glances at her. Amara has strangely SIMILAR FEATURES to Alice, almost as if they could have been sisters.

ION

No.

AMARA

Are you going to talk at all? I think I at least deserve that.

ION

I'm sorry, I didn't mean for this to happen.

AMARA

Yeah well, neither did I. But here we are, bleeding in a car.

ION

(concerned)

Are you okay?

Amara turns away and stares out the window. There's snow on the side of the freeway. For A FEW MOMENTS they are SILENT.

AMARA

The doctor said you'd live forever. That you've solved aging.

ION

I haven't solved anything.

Amara looks at him, studying his face. Intrigued, cautious.

AMARA

How did they find you? Tell me.
Where did you come from?

Ion touches the LEATHER PENDANT -- ready to talk. But sad.

ION

It always begins in the same way,
because it has to. With falling.
And then I crash...

INT. SECRET MILITARY HOSPITAL - 1947

Gel-liquid SPLASHES down to a sterile tile floor...

Ion's protective pod is on a table, cut open -- Ion lies unconscious inside. WHITE, HAZARD-SUITED DOCTORS swarm around the table. One picks out the PHOTO, puts it in an evidence bag. Another takes the LEATHER PENDANT from Ion's neck.

An early defibrillator: they ZAP Ion -- he BURSTS AWAKE, COUGHING and SPEWING gel-liquid from his mouth. Terrified, he STRUGGLES WILDLY against the alien hands around him --

But one INJECTS a SEDATIVE into him. The world goes dark...

EXT. FOREST WORLD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

"NATIVE ION" (braided hair, handmade earthy clothes) and ALICE are crouched in the HOLLOW OF A TREE, soaking wet.

PEOPLE APPROACH, searching. Lights appear and shine in their faces. Weapons CLINK in their hands.

MAN (SUBTITLE)

(strange, alien language)

Come out of there, now.

Ion and Alice slowly walk forward under their lights. The Man approaches and lowers his light -- it is AZRAYL. He inspects Ion's torso, looking at his tattoos. Ion is terrified.

AZRAYL (SUBTITLE)

How long have you been here? Our people are coming.

ION (SUBTITLE)

No.

AZRAYL (SUBTITLE)

I'm sorry. She must pass on now.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
What!? Ion!

Ion glances at her with terrified anxiety. Azrayl suddenly GRABS HER, she STRUGGLES. Ion LAUNCHES to attack, but one of the other men STRIKES HIM HARD in the face. ION FALLS...

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM #1 - 1947

Water splashes into "Present Ion's" SWOLLEN, BEATEN FACE.

INTERROGATOR
 Wake up, Commie bastard. You're here with us, the Americans. We wanna know about this spy plane of yours, remember?

Ion's handcuffs CLINK behind his chair, sat in the middle of a dank, dim room. The INTERROGATOR (40) stands over him with a cigarette oozing from his lips. AN OFFICER sits, watching.

ION
 (weak)
 Where is my necklace?

BAM! The interrogator HITS Ion, blood spatters from his lips.

INTERROGATOR
 I ask the questions, got it?
 (Beat)
 So, let's start over. Which agency are you with, what was your mission, and where did you come from?

Ion hangs his head in exhaustion.

INT. VARIOUS MILITARY INSTITUTIONS - MONTAGE

Ion is hooked up to lie detector machines -- EEG sensors attached and removed -- he's blindfolded and moved to different facilities -- the guards outside his cell grow older with time, then are replaced by younger models -- he watches TV news showing world events -- scientists tinker with technology from his ship -- syringes take his blood -- tests are run -- questions asked -- he's beaten again, electrocuted...

Ion is connected to lie detector machines, EEG sensors...etc

THIS CYCLE REPEATS itself, moving FORWARD THROUGH TIME from 1947 ONWARDS as we hear more snippets of questioning over it:

ION (V.O.)

The universes are infinite, one for every permutation or possibility, ever. All shimmering here...just a *hair's breadth* away, in parallel. Earths past and future, your dreams and worlds unimaginable exist right *now*, if only you could see, you could reach out and touch them.

(Beat, jump to:)

I don't know...I can't remember. It's hard, I can't hold on to it all. I don't know where I started anymore... I leave one Earth and the ship travels between them through something called a "Greys Schism", or at least those are the words that appear onscreen. Eventually we -- the ship and I -- come to another version of Earth.

(Beat)

No I can't tell you more about it, I don't know how it works. I'm just the Scout -- I don't build the ship. Use whatever you need from it, any of it... except that. *That* box, the signal, is forbidden. It's too dangerous. Do you understand? I crashed on purpose. To stop it. Leave it alone or you *will* die...

(jump again, serious)

The Signal is supposed to go on, and then they come. But I didn't let it; I don't do that. I can't let that happen, and...and so I crashed.

(anxious, cover the truth)

I--I'm trying to help you. See? If they come here, you will die. That's the mission, my mission. They are people, but they too will never age. And no one Earth can support an ever-expanding race of men. They have to find new Earths -- other planets are too risky; Earth is our home, and there are infinite versions in parallel...

INT. ION'S CELL - NIGHT

An iron door SLAMS. Ion is alone in a concrete room with a bed and a toilet. Tired and thin, Ion sits down in the lotus position, and closes his eyes.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - MODERN DAY

Amara listens to Ion, still driving on the freeway.

AMARA

They had you for over sixty years.

ION

Yes. I've endured far worse. And, this got better...

INT. ION'S CELL - DAY, 1978

Ion is meditating again. But now he seems healthier, better treated. His cell is full of books. Writing covers the walls - - scribblings, quotes, drawings -- many languages, some seem alien. A mixture of ART and SCIENCE.

DR. CHRIS RIVERS (30) comes in -- slightly gangly, smart. A military scientist. He doesn't disturb Ion who seems to be in a trance. Rivers looks around:

On the wall is a quote: "HISTORY IS A NIGHTMARE FROM WHICH I AM TRYING TO AWAKE. - J.J." (*James Joyce*). Rivers picks up a book from a pile -- *The Myth of Sisyphus*, by ALBERT CAMUS...

ION (O.S.)

Hello Dr. Rivers.

Rivers looks up, still holding the book.

DR. RIVERS

I didn't want to disturb you.

(Beat)

I was told you went through these Camus books in two days? That good?

ION

He was a good friend of mine.

DR. RIVERS

(knowing, like he's had similar talks before)

Camus?

(MORE)

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

Ion I think he died like twenty years ago, probably in France. You didn't know him.

ION

(confused)

I did. On another Earth, after his life here maybe. He helped me.

DR. RIVERS

Right... Well listen, I've got something for you today.

(looks around for a seat)

And you know our offer for nicer quarters still stands -- something a little less prison-like?

ION

What would I do with more space? Thanks, but this is fine for me.

Rivers pulls up a chair. He carefully takes something from his jacket and hands it to Ion -- it is the LEATHER PENDANT.

DR. RIVERS

They told me it's not of much interest to them anymore. So it's finally yours again, for good.

Shocked, Ion carefully pulls apart the leather knot to reveal a DIAMOND, hidden like a seed inside. Rivers smiles.

ION

(moved)

Thank you Chris. Really.

DR. RIVERS

It's not real. Did you know that?

(Beat)

They had it analyzed. It's not a geological diamond -- they can tell these things somehow. It was manufactured.

Ion doesn't say anything -- just puts the pendant around his neck. But the cryptic look on his face hints, *I know*.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

...and then, I also have this.

Rivers hands Ion a plastic evidence bag -- THE PHOTO inside. Ion gazes at it, stunned. Emotion wells up, gaining momentum:

A strange shift in behavior, SLIGHTLY MANIC even. Hand shaking, a dam breaks; unknown years of endurance pour out.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

ION

(manic, anxious)

...she, she's all I have, all I can hold on to. Everything else fades away. I've seen too much. I can't remember it, only some, only her. It'll be okay, it'll all be okay when I find her. Everything will be good then...

DR. RIVERS

Ion? Who is she?

ION (CONT'D)

(still staring at photo)

...I'm looking, looking so carefully for her here...

DR. RIVERS

What do you mean, you're looking for her here? On this base?

ION

On this Earth.

(whisper, a secret)

She could be here. I have to find her again. Nothing ever dies. Every possibility exists somewhere.

Dr. Rivers stares at Ion, shocked. A big revelation.

DR. RIVERS

Ion, you're locked down here with us. *How* are you looking for someone?

Ion looks up at him, worried -- he didn't mean to give this away. He's scared, but then he does trust Dr. Rivers...

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY, 1984

Dr. Rivers and a GENERAL (50) look through a window at Ion, meditative inside a room with EEG sensors on his head.

DR. RIVERS
 (re: EEG readouts)
 See this pattern, he's producing
 really strong Theta waves. You see
 them in dreams, ESP, out-of-body
 experience. He's going somewhere...

The General is skeptical and not impressed as we:

PUSH IN ON ION'S FACE -- his eyes and head twitch slightly.

EXT. BEACH - DAY, 1984

An empty beach on a cold, cloudy day. A little girl, YOUNG AMARA (6), runs happily in the sand ahead of her MOTHER.

MOTHER
 Amara, don't go too far ahead!

Suddenly her Mother WINCES IN PAIN -- something's very wrong inside. Quivering, she lights a cigarette, walking further.

Young Amara runs along then STOPS -- glances over at a LINE OF DILAPIDATED OLD HUTS along the edge of the beach:

THERE -- in the shadows of one hut, SOMETHING moves. Something about the size of a person, but not. WATCHING HER.

BEHIND, Amara's Mother FREEZES IN PAIN -- a STROKE takes her. She collapses silently into the sand, waves LAPPING nearby.

Amara WATCHES THE SHAPE move in shadow between the huts. Then Amara suddenly notices her Mother. She runs to her, scared.

YOUNG AMARA
 (shaking her)
 Mommy? Get up. Please, get up...

Out of the shadows by the huts emerges A DEER -- tall and striking. It looks at her with an almost human intelligence.

Helpless and alone, Amara looks up, meeting its gaze.

AMARA
 Help?!

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY, 1984

DR. RIVERS
 It seems like he can project his
 consciousness almost anywhere.
 (MORE)

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)
 Yesterday he described a market in
 Bombay *exactly* -- confirmed by us.
 That's why he's meditating so much,
 it's like he's not even locked up.
 General I think this guy's psychic,
 ESP skillset is off the chart, so
 to speak.

The General turns away from Dr. Rivers and walks out.

GENERAL
 Fine Rivers, set him up with ESP
 handlers for Delta. But I want
 tactical info from him that I can
 actually use.

Dr. Rivers nods and turns back to see Ion awake -- he's
 sweating and wide-eyed. Rivers presses the intercom:

DR. RIVERS (V.O.)
 Everything okay? Did you find
 something?

Ion is out of breath. Looks like he's seen a ghost.

ION
 It's her.

DR. RIVERS (V.O.)
 What? You sure? How do you know?

Ion looks up at Dr. Rivers through the window.

ION
 I just know. She is what she is.

TEACHER (V.O.) (PRE-LAP)
 Amara Munro, you listen to me...

INT. ORPHANAGE CLASSROOM - 1990

AMARA (11) sits at a desk, scared, as OTHER GIRLS snicker
 around her. The NUN TEACHER is glaring at her from the front.

TEACHER
 ...Stop these lies! There is NOT a
 deer in this classroom. You have
 got to end this childishness!

INT. ORPHANAGE - 1993

AMARA (14) is pushed around and HIT by some other girls --

They steal a pack of cigarettes from her pocket, laughing.
Amara licks her cut lip -- THE DEER in the shadows nearby.

INT. ORPHANAGE BATHROOM - 1995

AMARA (17) lies in a bathtub in a small, dingy bathroom. She is pale and looking at her wrists, CUT OPEN AND BLEEDING.

MATRON (V.O.)
(banging on the door)
Amara! Open the door! Amara!

Amara ignores her. SLOWLY WE PAN AROUND -- suddenly revealing the startling sight of THE DEER, standing close in the bathroom, staring at her -- its BREATH DEEP and RHYTHMICAL.

AMARA
(feeble)
Who are you?

BOOM! The door breaks. The Catholic MATRON enters, sees her.

MATRON
Oh no...Someone! Call an ambulance!

The Deer has disappeared. Amara glances down at her wrists.

INT. ION'S CELL - DAY, 1995

RIVERS is now 50. He enters to find Ion -- still the same age. But he seems to be having another of his panic attacks.

ION
(anxious, manic)
She's suicidal. She doesn't understand -- she doesn't remember! It happens that way usually, they don't remember previous lives, it's like waking from a dream...

DR. RIVERS
Who? What are you talking about?

ION
Her! The girl! The one I've been watching. I don't know what to do, what if she tries again?

DR. RIVERS

--Calm down okay? Remember what we talked about with this? Breathe.

(Ion nods, calming)

Tell me who she is, we could help.

Ion looks at him, a flicker of suspicion.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - MODERN DAY

Amara glares at Ion from the passenger seat.

AMARA

You told them about me?

ION

No! I never--

AMARA

--Who are you? What gives you the right to spy on people's lives? On my life?!

Ion is quiet, humbled by her outburst. She almost feels bad.

AMARA (CONT'D)

My whole life I thought I was insane -- like my life didn't fit me. And the deer was everywhere! Watching me, it was you!

(Beat, in thought)

You think I'm someone else...

ION

No, I know you. You're the one who thinks she's someone else.

INT. RUNDOWN PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTION - DAY, 2009

Amara (30) sits in a day room with other PATIENTS around her. She idly stares at a PERPETUAL MOTION office toy.

Suddenly she looks up -- THE DEER CLOPS EERILY through the room towards her, staring at her. All around it, patients amble around; they do not see it at all.

Tentatively, Amara puts her hand out -- the Deer stays still.

ANGLE ON: HER HAND -- ALMOST TOUCHING ITS SNOUT...

NURSE (O.S.)

Amara?

Amara blinks; the Deer is gone. TWO AGENTS stand with the Nurse, staring at her.

NURSE (CONT'D)

These men would like to talk with you. You're going to go on a little trip with them, okay?

INT. DR. RIVERS' LAB - DAY, 2009

Dr. Rivers (now 60) enters to find Ion waiting, guarded by TWO SOLDIERS -- and he's angry.

ION

What are you doing with her?!

DR. RIVERS

What?

ION

I was there when they took her, Chris. I was there.

DR. RIVERS

Ion, I'm sorry. It was Colonel Boden's decision, not mine.

ION

(dark)

Stop it! Take responsibility. I trusted you with what I can do. I tell you *everything*!

(Beat)

You all think you're keeping me here; that I'm some kind of lab rat. You don't think I haven't been in a situation like this a thousand times before?! I stay here because I want to help you, remember that!

DR. RIVERS

Look, the girl is--

ION

--Amara.

DR. RIVERS

Excuse me?

ION

Her name is Amara Munro. You should know that now, you found her.

(Beat)

How did you do it? A psychic?

Rivers sighs, as if there's no point lying to Ion.

DR. RIVERS

He said he could find you when you...travelled.

Ion nods and sits down, with his head in his hands.

ION

She's nothing to do with you, or your research on me.

DR. RIVERS

We just want to ask her some questions.

(Pause, exasperated)

Look at me Ion, I'm an old man now. But look at you... You're the most important scientific discovery in history, and no-one even knows you exist. You've changed the world. Parts from your ship are still fueling the tech boom, we're finally starting to understand most of that. But we've tested you for *sixty years* and found nothing, no physical differences between you or anyone to explain why you don't age! I want to understand you; you're obsessed with her. So...

Rivers sits down, a little upset.

ION

You're searching for something that cannot be discovered.

(Beat)

Are you going to tell her about me?

DR. RIVERS

Do you want me to? We could even arrange a meeting.

Ion taps his foot nervously, a little mania returning.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)
 Think about it, okay? We don't have
 a session today. You're meeting
 with Colonel Boden now, he wants to
 ask you about something.

Ion's face darkens, sensing something ominous.

INT. COLONEL BODEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ion sits in an office -- that of base commander COLONEL BODEN
 (40s). He's young for his position, a smart man, brave.

Outside the windows is A MILITARY BASE, walled in and hidden
 by thick evergreen forest. You'd never know it was there.

TITLE: Loring Air Force Base, North-East Maine, USA

COLONEL BODEN
 I gotta tell you Ion, your 'vision'
 work is quite something. You saved
 that D-team, you know that right?
 They wouldn't have made it out
 without your intel, and there's
 sure as hell no way that we
 could've known the cave layout.

ION
 I was glad to help you.

COLONEL BODEN
 Not me -- them. Those boys are on
 their way back to Brunswick for
 training leave, a couple requested
 to meet and thank you personally.
 'Course that can't happen, but I'm
 told rumor's spreading about you
 through all SOF outfits. The ghost-
 scout, that's what they call you.

(Beat, Ion is blank)
 Listen, we didn't understand you,
 in the beginning. But I feel like
 we're getting somewhere. I want
 more about the 'how' of your...

(flipping through a file)
 ..."spirit-walking". Rivers told me
 you think it's innate, everyone has
 this ability? I also want more ESP
 tests done. And I want to hear more
 about what you've seen on these
 other Earths, the past ones and
 especially the future ones.

ION

They're only future or past
relative to you. It all exists
right now, together. In parallel.
And my memory's a little scattered.

COLONEL BODEN

Right. Well we've also rebooted the
tech lab, going over your ship's
wreckage again--

ION

--The lab in New York City?

COLONEL BODEN

(surprised that he knows)
The, yeah. That lab. We got in an
expert technician from Tokyo, deals
with experimental super-conductors.
He took the old data and shook up
the old theories; he's claiming he
can rebuild this device, that he
can fix it. Make it actually work.

Ion becomes STRANGELY ANXIOUS, unusual. The mania again.

ION

Which...what does it look like?

COLONEL BODEN

They said it's in a kind of glass
box, about six inches square. Any
idea what we're talking about here?

FLASHBACK: Ion RIPS The Signal from his spaceship console.

COLONEL BODEN (CONT'D)

(reading notes)
I can barely understand this. Dr.
Ito thinks it's a, uh, "modulator,
acting within the zero point
field". I quote, like "a quantum
transmission mechanism capable of
instantaneous communication across
space-time." So, it's a signal...

FLASHBACK: Ion quickly seals himself in his protective pod.

COLONEL BODEN (CONT'D)

Ion? Are you okay?

Ion suddenly JUMPS out of his chair. Boden flinches, alarmed -
-TWO MINDERS at the back of the room start to attention.

Ion breathes fast, eyes flicking like he's trapped in memory.

ION

I broke it for a reason. I told you people already! I told the others before you! They will come if you turn it on.

COLONEL BODEN

Ion it's a signal, right?
Communication with a parallel Earth could be beneficial...

ION

I need more time. She's here...

COLONEL BODEN

Who? Amara?

ION

--Don't turn it on!

MINDER #1 touches Ion on the shoulder...

MINDER #1

Ion, calm dow--

In a FLASH Ion SNAPS Minder #1's arm around, flattening him into the floor with EXPERT SKILL.

Colonel Boden jumps up in shock -- no idea Ion could do this.

GUARD #2

Hey!

Minder #2 GRABS Ion -- CRACK! Ion skillfully kicks out his knee, turns and SHOVES HIM into the window, SMASHING it. Boden pushes a SECRET BUTTON on his desk...

ION

(vicious, commanding)
I told your predecessors -- you can try all the parts, but not that one. They will come here!

SOLDIERS rush into the office -- Ion instinctively beats off the first two without looking -- then he suddenly stops, stands there staring at Colonel Boden, no resistance.

ION (CONT'D)

Don't.

ZAP! They tazer Ion to the ground, unconscious.

COLONEL BODEN
 (shocked)
 You ever seen him do anything like
 that before?

GUARD #1
 Never sir, never.

Colonel Boden shakes his head in disbelief, troubled. He looks at Ion as they pick him up -- HIS EYES TWITCHING...

EXT. WATERFALL POOL, FOREST WORLD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

NATIVE ION and Alice BURST up above the surface of a deep waterfall pool in the forest. They're scared, glancing around. Quickly they swim to the bank.

Ion leads her into the forest -- he STOPS. HEARS something. Quickly they crouch down and hide in the HOLLOW OF A TREE.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - PRESENT DAY

Ion looks over at Amara in the passenger seat -- she has fallen asleep, head resting against the door, clothes sooty and torn. He watches her gently breathing for a few seconds.

CLOSE UP: HER EYES TWITCH -- DREAMING, REMEMBERING...

EXT. LORING MILITARY BASE, MAINE - SUNSET

Loring Base has one small runway, hangars, admin buildings, gas silos, an array of military vehicles and high walls. All completely hidden by dense, wild Maine forest.

A dark civilian HELICOPTER arrives and touches down. Agents lift a HOODED AMARA down, leading her into one building.

INT. MEDICAL EXAM ROOM, MAINE BASE - NIGHT

Amara's hood is removed -- she squints in the bright lights, seated in the middle of a large medical room.

AMARA
 What is this?

Opposite her sits Dr. Rivers, holding a file. Behind him are TWO YOUNGER, LABCOATED ASSISTANTS, a guy and a girl.

DR. RIVERS

Ms. Munro, I'm Dr. Christopher Rivers. We'd like to ask you a few questions, maybe run some small tests.

AMARA

Tests? Why? I wasn't admitted here.

DR. RIVERS

No, you weren't.

Amara stares at him in growing apprehension. Helpless.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

We're a special research division of the US Military. We'd just like to ask you a few questions.

AMARA

No! Why should I have to--

PAVLE MIHALIC (O.S.)

--How often do you see the Deer?

SILENCE. Stunned, Amara turns to see that the PSYCHIC -- PAVLE MIHALIC (50) had been beside her the whole time. He's bald with sharp, intelligent eyes. Wears a cardigan.

AMARA

(afraid)

What did you say?

PAVLE MIHALIC

(E.European accent)

You're visited by a Deer. It looks real of course, to those alert enough to notice. Most wouldn't see it -- people these days have a disease called the mind, clogging their perception with worry, wanting and fear.

(Beat, rubs his head)

But *someone* has visited you in that form. Shamanic journeys, spirit-walks, astral-travel -- these are all related to this process. It is a manifestation of a person's Presence outside of their body. Unbound by physical limitations, one can be carried wherever, or to whoever one intends.

(MORE)

PAVLE MIHALIC (CONT'D)

It takes years of practice, but your visitor is clearly very gifted. We know you see a Deer. More importantly, we believe you. So the question is, how often does he visit you?

Amara is in shock.

DR. RIVERS

Miss Munro, this is Mr. Pavle Mihalic. He's a...consultant.

AMARA

This isn't a joke?

DR. RIVERS

No. This is not a joke.

AMARA

He said...it's real, and that it's a person?

DR. RIVERS

Yes ma'am. He's here in this facility.

AMARA

...what?

DR. RIVERS

Let me tell you what this is really about. If you cooperate with us, you might get to meet him.

INT. ION'S CELL - SAME TIME

Ion crawls back from under his cot with a paper packet. He opens it anxiously, taking out THE PHOTO and looking at it.

MOMENTS LATER:

He sits on his bed, still. He closes his eyes, BREATHES IN, EXHALES...breath DEEPENING, sounding like an animal.

EXT. NEW YORK - NIGHT (SPIRIT-WALK)

WE GLIDE over Manhattan, DROPPING SHARPLY towards an OFFICE BUILDING -- tall, modern. Then move in past two OBLIVIOUS DOORMEN with CONCEALED WEAPONS and EARPIECES into:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS (SPIRIT-WALK)

A marble FOYER. We LOOK UP -- gliding up through floors of offices, people working late -- continuing up into ==>

INT. MILITARY LAB, NYC - SAME TIME (SPIRIT-WALK)

A whole secret floor of the building. Few windows. Some SCIENTISTS at desks, checking computer monitors.

In the center -- THE SIGNAL box from Ion's ship. DR. ITO (50s), together with TWO ASSISTANTS, is working carefully on it -- cables and complex equipment everywhere.

Dr. Ito checks it over, finishing up a few connections. CLOSER IN -- there's a tiny WHITE LIGHT inside, PULSING.

INT. COLONEL BODEN'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Colonel Boden sits at his desk, troubled. Flipping through PAGES of reports on Ion. We see snippets of articles:

"...DNA sequencing normal. No obvious differences...",
 "...symptoms of schizophrenia...altered perception of time"

And finally --

"...never any sign of hostility..."

Boden thinks for a moment. Then he picks up the phone...

INT. MILITARY LAB, NYC - CONTINUOUS (SPIRIT-WALK)

A phone starts RINGING. Dr. Ito looks but his hands are full -
 - on the screen behind him: "TEST SEQUENCE INITIATED..."

THE PHONE -- still RINGS...an ASSISTANT moves to answer it.

DR. ITO -- watches a POWER DIAGRAM on-screen rise to FULL.

THE ASSISTANT -- answers the phone, listens intently,
 CONCERNED -- *Uh-oh*. He glances anxiously at Dr. Ito.

ASSISTANT

Dr. Ito! Wait--

DR. ITO -- pushes EXECUTE on his keyboard. Immediately the whole Signal box ILLUMINATES, the air around it bristling, warping, stronger and stronger to a MAXIMUM POINT ==>

BANG! All POWER SHUTS OFF except for a DIM GLOW in the box.

INT. ION'S CELL - NIGHT

Ion's eyes SNAP OPEN with a GASP in his NOW-DARK cell. TINK!
Dim EMERGENCY LIGHTS come on. Ion is shaking.

ION

Wake up Ion. Find her. Find her
again...time to run once again.

Ion suddenly THROWS UP onto the floor. He clenches his eyes
SHUT, BLINKING HARD -- weird, manic:

EXT. FOREST WORLD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

NATIVE ION leads Alice urgently by the hand. They SPRINT
through the beautiful moonlit forest. Running FROM SOMEONE.

Suddenly the foliage disappears and they leap out over a
100FT CLIFF, falling to a DEEP WATERFALL POOL BELOW...

INT. COLONEL BODEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Boden CLICKS on a flashlight in his office as EM-lights come
on in the hallway outside. His assistant, WALTERS, comes in.

COLONEL BODEN

What the hell is going on?

WALTERS

Phone lines are down too, sir.
We're only on generators.

Boden has a very bad feeling about this.

COLONEL BODEN

Get Dr. Rivers, tell him to meet me
at The Subject's cell. And get me a
radio.

INT. MEDICAL EXAM ROOM, MAINE BASE - NIGHT

This room is DARK too -- Dr. Rivers' assistants find a
flashlight. Amara sits still on the chair.

AMARA

This isn't part of your plan?

DR. RIVERS
No this is not.

The DOOR OPENS. SGT ABERNATHY (30) comes in.

SGT ABERNATHY
(to Rivers)
Sir, Colonel Boden needs you with
The Subject right away...

DR. RIVERS
(to Amara)
I'm sorry. We'll continue later.

SGT ABERNATHY
I'll take her back to holding.
(to Amara)
Ma'am, can you come with me please?

Dr. Rivers leaves. Amara notices Pavle Mihalic -- sitting silently and staring weirdly at the floor, like he's sick.

AMARA
Is he okay?

Sgt Abernathy looks over, bends down to Pavle to check him.

PAVLE MIHALIC
"...a nightmare...trying to
awake.." Something very bad is
going to happen...

Amara and Sgt Abernathy watch as Pavle, now in a COLD SWEAT and VERY PALE, also suddenly VOMITS onto the floor!

AMARA
Holy shit...

SGT ABERNATHY
Okay, Ma'am, come with me. We're
leaving.
(to Rivers' Assistant)
Get this guy to a medic will you?

INT. ION'S CELL - NIGHT

Dr. Rivers comes into the dark cell - Ion GRABS HIM hard!

ION
(growls)
You're letting me out, now. No more
time-wasting. Where is she?

DR. RIVERS

It's just a blackout, what's wrong with you?

ION

You're wrong. This is it -- I have to go. They're coming and this isn't about you anymore.

DR. RIVERS

Okay calm down. Who? Who is coming?

The door opens again -- Col. Boden enters with FOUR ARMED SOLDIERS outside. Ion glares at him, accusatory.

COLONEL BODEN

(apologetic)

I tried to stop them. It was just a small diagnostics test...

ION

(getting more anxious)

It's too late. The signal isn't like anything you have, they receive it as if before it's even sent. It's on and they're coming for me right now. They'll find me here. And you all now have a serious problem.

DR. RIVERS

What is going on? What is he talking about?

COLONEL BODEN

The 'signal' from his ship. The blackout is nationwide, practically the whole continent is down.

DR. RIVERS

What? Why would you do that? He told us not to touch it!

ION

(quivering on edge)

We don't have time for this!
Colonel put this base on alert NOW!
Where is Amara?!

COLONEL BODEN

Ion, who is--

--Ion GRABS Col. Boden and SLAMS him into the wall.

ION
--WHERE IS THE GIRL?

The Soldiers cock their weapons at Ion.

ARMED SOLDIER 1
STOP! Step away from him!

ION
(intense)
Listen to me. First comes a small group, they're faster than the others. They're not like us, I mean they are us, but they're unconscious and violent. They're radicals.

COLONEL BODEN
Radicals? Ion, you're losing it...

ION
I don't know who they are! But they keep chasing and they're not afraid to die. They follow my signals, they're trying to stop me because I...because they know I'm crashing down on purpose.
(changing subject)
I have to go. And if they find her they'll kill her too, because...
(glances at Dr. Rivers)
...she's connected to me.

Dr. Rivers opens his mouth to ask something but is cut off--

ALARMS SOUND! RED LIGHTS start STROBING in the hallways. Ion releases Col. Boden. ARMED SOLDIER 1 touches his earpiece...

ARMED SOLDIER 1
Unknowns breaching our airspace.

COLONEL BODEN
That's it, everybody topside.

Ion has backed away into the far corner of the room -- staring at something in the dark hallway. Rivers notices:

DR. RIVERS
Ion? Are you okay?

POV ION: WALKING SLOWLY THROUGH THE RED FLASHING LIGHTS -- A **LARGE WOLF** EMERGES, MELTING FROM SHADOWS, LOOKING AT ION.

It looks real. The others don't see it -- a SPIRIT-WALKER.

ION

They're already here.

BOOM! A LARGE IMPACT above ground. The Wolf looks at Ion -- and with almost human irony, it slowly cocks its head at him.

DR. RIVERS

(scared, re: impact)

What the hell was that?

COLONEL BODEN

Let's go, now!

(turning to Ion)

Ion?! You're the only one who knows what's happening here. Talk to me.

Ion looks back at the doorway but the Wolf is gone. Ion's eyes flash...a new side of him. Dark. Ready for war.

ION

I have to find Amara.

INT. UNDERGROUND HALLWAYS - MOMENTS LATER

Double swing-doors BURST OPEN -- Col. Boden, Dr. Rivers and Ion rush into the DARK HALLWAYS, led by the FOUR ARMED SOLDIERS in the eerie flashing.

Boden carries a PISTOL in one hand and a RADIO in the other. The radio CHATTERS constantly, but strangely staticky -- sounds like a war zone: "...taking fire!/I can't see them!/. . .gas reserves are blown in hangar 2/. . .shooting?!"

Above and outside we hear MACHINE-GUN FIRE and the OCCASIONAL SMALL EXPLOSION. Col. Boden YELLS into his crackling radio.

COLONEL BODEN

This is Colonel Boden! Christ someone answer me!

They reach an ELEVATOR but the POWER'S OFF:

ARMED SOLDIER 1

Stairs are this way...

ARMED SOLDIER 2

What the hell's happening up there?

COLONEL BODEN
 (into radio)
 Paxton? Hicks? Does anyone read me?
 (radio chatter cont'd)
 Ion, what is attacking us?

ION
 --STOP! Everyone!

Ion halts Dr. Rivers. Ahead is a FIRE DOOR to the stairs.
 There's a small window in the door, but DARK BEHIND.

BURST OF GUNFIRE in the stairwell above. Then a SCREAM, THUD
 and a BODY FALLING. The Soldiers aim their guns at the door.

ION (CONT'D)
 (quiet)
 We need to find another way
 up...right now.

For a second nobody moves. EM-lights flicker ==> DARK...

BOOM! The Fire Door FLIES OFF ITS HINGES -- hits Soldier 3,
 HIS GUN GOES OFF -- A SCREAM from Soldier 2 as SOMETHING
 slides out through the shadows, CUTTING HIM -- BLOOD FLIES--

ION (CONT'D)
 RUUUN!

Ion pulls Rivers and starts SPRINTING AWAY -- Col. Boden
 turns after them -- Soldier 4's assault rifle BARKING behind.

ION (CONT'D)
 This way!

Ion knows the base as well as anyone -- turns sharply into:

INT. MILITARY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ion is AGILE, leaps over a desk -- Dr. Rivers TRIPS on a
 chair but Col. Boden picks him up from behind --

SCREEEAM! Soldier 1's body FLIES past the doorway behind, his
 GUNFIRE briefly illuminating the dark -- then NOTHING.

DR. RIVERS
 (terrified)
 Oh my god, oh my god...

Boden glances ahead where Ion reaches a CLOSED DOOR on the
 other side of the room, PAUSES strangely, and then:

--KICKS the door open -- HITTING SOMETHING on the other side!

ION

(quick, to Boden)

GO! Left then left -- closet door!

I'll meet you in--

The door EXPLODES in against Ion, coming off its hinges and knocking him down -- SOMETHING YANKS him OUT AROUND into the hallway to the RIGHT. Boden and Rivers pause, then RUN out through the door TO THE LEFT --

INT. UNDERGROUND HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Rivers glances back -- sees TWO SHADOWS fighting in the gloom -- SICKENING THUDS, SERIOUS STRENGTH AND ABILITY.

Boden and Rivers turn into another hallway, RUNNING FAST.

SGT ABERNATHY (V.O.) (RADIO)

(crackling, distorted)

Colonel Boden... I have Am-ra,
Building 2-...

COLONEL BODEN

(into radio)

Repeat! Building number!

SGT ABERNATHY (V.O.) (RADIO)

--ilding 23. Hur-- up! It's all--

They turn another corner -- Rivers grabs Boden --

DR. RIVERS

Wait! Work closet door -- Ion said.

He tries the handle on a MAINTENANCE CLOSET DOOR. LOCKED.

MOVEMENT behind them! Boden swings around with his pistol -- SNAP! He's disarmed instantly and skillfully!

ION

It's me.

In the strobing lights, Ion's face BLEEDS, his shirt SLASHED badly across the chest. He doesn't even seem to notice.

DR. RIVERS

(looking at him, shocked)

My god...

COLONEL BODEN

She's in building 23. I don't know
how we get up if there are more of--

BOOM! Ion KICKS in the maintenance door, pulls them inside.

INT. MAINTENANCE CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Buckets, brooms, cleaning equipment. In the back against the far wall -- A LADDER, leading up to a HATCH above.

ION

This way.

Col. Boden glances at Rivers -- *How does he know all this?*

EXT. MILITARY BASE, MAINE - MOMENTS LATER

Boden and Rivers hurry to keep up - Ion rushes over the base.

BODIES lie everywhere, some buildings on fire, jeeps burning. It's QUIET, the base's small personnel seem dead or fleeing.

They pass a CAR-SIZED, SLEEK BLACK POD, like Ion's emergency crash pod but bigger, stuck in the earth like a meteor crash.

EXT. BUILDING 23 - MOMENTS LATER

Ion leads them inside BUILDING 23, a small barracks on the edge of the woods -- a hall lined with cots and lockers.

CLICK! A gun COCKS in the shadows at the far end. Moving closer -- they find Sgt. Abernathy propped in a corner, BLEEDING BADLY. With him are six SOLDIERS, all spooked.

COLONEL BODEN

What happened?

SGT ABERNATHY

Bullets did nothing. I think there were two, but they moved together--

ION

(anxious, worried)

--Where is she? Where's Amara?

Abernathy looks up deliriously. Losing blood.

SGT ABERNATHY

It's you. They're looking for you.

Ion grabs him by the shoulders and drags him away slightly.

ION

Thank you for hiding her.

SGT ABERNATHY

We thought they were coming in here...

The soldiers watch in surprise at Ion's apparent sixth sense:

Underneath, Ion feels the floorboards, lifts up a HIDDEN TRAP DOOR. Inside, under the floor, Amara lies in a tiny space amongst WEED, BOOZE and PORN -- soldiers' contraband stash.

She looks up, IN SHOCK, someone's blood on her. But there's something reassuring about Ion, like she's known him forever.

She takes Ion's hand and he pulls her out. The others watch as he stares at her weirdly, as if calming her with his eyes.

ION

My name is Ion.

She holds his gaze, tears in her eyes. Speechless, she nods.

THUD-THUD-THUD...helicopters approaching fast outside.

SGT ABERNATHY

Brunswick. We managed to call them. They're sending the D-boys.

ION

We have to get out of here. Evacuate the base, they're still here and they'll kill anyone they find.

COLONEL BODEN

What are *they*? Ion, what could possibly do this to us?

ION

...People. They're just people.

Out the window -- TWO BLACK HAWKS touch down, ELITE DELTA TROOPS jump out, LASER-SIGHTS slicing the darkness.

EXT. MILITARY BASE, MAINE - NIGHT

Ion leads Amara quickly by the hand, the others behind.

The Deltas see them and rush over: the squad leader is CORPORAL ADAMS (30s). SNOW FALLS gently, their BREATH STEAMS in the cold.

ADAMS

Come on! We'll set up a perimeter.

Colonel Boden --

(quieter)

Who's Ion and where do we find him?

Nearby Ion and Amara stare -- THE WOLF is back, moving calmly between the oblivious troops. Its eyes follow them spookily.

ION

They know -- they're coming! GO!

Ion pushes past, pulling Amara inside the Black Hawk. Deltas scan the darkness as Rivers and Abernathy are loaded in.

INT. BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

ION

(frantic)

We have to leave RIGHT NOW!

ANGLE ON: AMARA --

She's scared, while in the b.g. we see a DARK SILHOUETTE rush past the other Black Hawk and THROW SOMETHING into it--

BOOM! The other chopper EXPLODES! Flames lick the turning propellers and the pilot struggles, on fire.

Ion watches in horror as the Deltas scramble to help their dying comrades -- FIRING at something in the dark. Col. Boden steps back off their helicopter, also SHOOTING. It's chaos.

Ion seems to realize what needs to be done...

ION (CONT'D)

(to Amara)

Let's go.

AMARA

What?! No!

But he grabs her arm and starts to pull her out of the helicopter. Dr. Rivers stops him--

DR. RIVERS

Ion!? What are you doing?

ION
 (shaking off his grip)
 This won't work -- we have to go!
 (heartfelt)
 Goodbye Chris, I'll see you again.

As flames and guns CRACK around them, Ion tows Amara away, sprinting unseen into the darkness.

EXT. PARKING LOT, LORING BASE - NIGHT

Ion leads her, terrified, past slashed bodies into a small parking lot, hurrying between cars as snow begins to fall.

They find a BLUE FORD EXPLORER. Ion pauses at the NUMBER KEYPAD on the driver's door, closes his eyes...then opens them and types in the correct code. The door UNLOCKS.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER, LORING BASE - MOMENTS LATER

Amara sits in the passenger seat, in shock. Scared, she watches him break open the ignition and hot-wire the car. He DRIVES AWAY to the base gates with the lights off.

Amara slowly turns and glances back. In the distance flames and tiny figures are still visible around the Black Hawks, when suddenly the burning one's fuel finally -- EXPLODES!

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY (PRESENT)

Amara STARTS AWAKE with a GASP --

Still driving on the highway, Ion looks over at her.

ION
 Did you have a nightmare?

AMARA
 ...yeah.

The RADIO is on in the background, playing commercials.

AMARA (CONT'D)
 Where are we?

ION
 New Hampshire, I think.

She looks at the car's clock in surprise.

AMARA

Jesus I was out for hours.

ION

You were in shock. You needed to rest.

The radio commercials end and a VOICE comes on.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...This is the BBC World Service on satellite radio. The top story tonight; a massive power outage has hit the North American continent, now in its eleventh hour without electricity while snow and freezing temperatures continue over most of the eastern United States...

Amara looks out her window at snow banked by the freeway.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...officials are baffled as to the cause of the blackout, and for hours there has been no further comment from power companies or the White House. In Eastern cities freezing weather without heating has already led to several deaths, while in a snow-filled New York, crowds are gathering in protest and large bonfires have been lit in the streets. Our correspondent Jane Little has the report:

Ion glances at Amara. She seems sad, staring out the window.

JANE LITTLE (V.O.)

Anger and frustration are rife here in Mid-Town Manhattan, with rumors also spreading of a possible demonstration against the lack of aid and information. Nevertheless it seems that hard times have also brought out the best of the New York spirit, with a general air of camaraderie and even--

Amara CLICKS off the radio and looks at Ion.

AMARA

Where are we going?

ION
New York City. To find The Signal.

AMARA
(frustrated, angry)
New York? The Signal? I mean, what
the hell are you talking about?

Ion is almost scared to anger her. He's anxious, uncertain.

ION
I'm sorry, please. The Signal
is...the scientists turned it on,
because it's from my ship. And they
didn't know. I need to get to it
because they're coming, the ones
who sent me...I think.

AMARA
You think? You don't know?!

ION
No, yes--it's likely. I only *know*
two things, that I am alive right
now and, and that I...
(stops, looks at her)
They don't want me to be here. I'm
not supposed to leave orbit above
any Earth I find -- the ship is
automated and I'm just a failsafe.
(confused)
I--didn't I tell you this already?
I'm supposed to scan the planet; if
it's suitable the Signal goes on,
and they come. Except I stopped it,
and crashed.

AMARA
Suitable? For what, to take it?

ION
It's their Earth too. They just
come from a different version.

Amara rubs her head -- this is too much.

AMARA
That's them? The men who attacked
the base?

FLASHBACK IMAGE: *Azrayl coldly shoves Alice down in the forest. Ion pushes towards her -- but Azrayl SPEARS her.*

Anxious, Ion blinks the vision away and touches the pendant at his neck.

AMARA (CONT'D)

--Ion?

ION

There are usually about seven...

EXT. NEW YORK - NIGHT

The whole iconic city, now strangely dark. The TALL OFFICE BUILDING, hiding the lab within.

A WHISTLING sound -- quiet at first, building LOUDER.

Above -- a SLEEK BLACK CRASH POD burns fast of the sky ==> SMASH! Straight in the side of the building, near the top.

ION (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's a small group so they're less easily tracked. Some kind of early response faction of the people who sent me. They're here to kill me.

INT. MILITARY LAB, NYC - NIGHT

Dr. Ito sits in a chair, now alone in the lab. The Signal's pulsing glow in front of him, disconnected from the wires.

BOOM. The building shakes from the IMPACT above. Dr. Ito looks up slowly, his face grave.

MINUTES LATER:

Movement in the darkness. Ito shuffles away from The Signal, afraid, edging backwards carefully, QUIETLY.

There -- in the pulsing light, a FIGURE shimmers towards him, dark, menacing -- coming closer, straight towards Ito.

DR. ITO

Who are you?

The Figure bends towards him -- the oscillating glow hitting his face. We've seen this outline before. This is AZRAYL.

Sharp features, strong. A warrior. He wears black, hooded fatigues of a strange material.

His head is shaved and the same geometric tattoos that cover Ion's torso crawl up his neck. In his hand is a STRANGE METAL TOOL -- cylindrical, 12" long, etched with the same patterns. Call it a SWYTHE.

Azrayl crouches down as his gaze bores into Dr. Ito's soul.

AZRAYL (SUBTITLE)
(perfect Japanese)
You are afraid.

DR. ITO (SUBTITLE)
...Yes.

AZRAYL (SUBTITLE)
Of what? Death?

Dr. Ito doesn't say anything, practically trembling.

AZRAYL (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
That is why we must help you.
(Beat)
The Scout is not here.

DR. ITO (SUBTITLE)
Who?

Azrayl ignores him, stands up. SNAP! The metal inside the Swythe quickly SHOOTs outward from the handle's cylinder like liquid or sand -- hardening into a KATANA BLADE.

AZRAYL (SUBTITLE)
Do not be afraid, it is only death.
Do it yourself if you'd prefer, it
will help you accept it.

Dr. Ito takes the sword in his hands, terrified. Azrayl turns and walks across the room slowly -- THINKING, FEELING...

He turns around then sits down cross-legged on the floor where he stood. Closes his eyes, takes a deep breath...

But then he realizes something isn't right -- opens his eyes: Dr. Ito is still holding the sword. Suddenly the blade melts back into the hilt, then pops out the other end, straight into Dr. Ito's heart, killing him.

Satisfied, Azrayl closes his eyes again, takes a deep breath, exhales -- the spirit-walk trance...

...and a WOLF pads across in front of him, into the shadows.

EXT. LORING MILITARY BASE, MAINE - EARLY DAWN

A military Humvee RUMBLES out of the parking lot, gentle snow falling as FLAMES FLICKER from the burning buildings behind.

ION (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They won't hesitate to kill anyone in their way. They think they're helping. That if you die you could be reborn into eternity. Into one of their immortal Earths...

The Humvee door opens and another "RADICAL" (30) gets out. He wears the same outfit as Azrayl -- this is CETUS (30). He steps forward and stares into the quiet parking lot...

PSYCHIC VISION: *Ion and Amara leaving in the stolen Blue SUV.*

Cetus doesn't react as another one, FORNAX, emerges out of the darkness behind him and loads weapons into the Humvee.

Cetus and Fornax get into the Humvee and drive off, heading the same way that Ion did.

BACK TO:

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

ION (CONT'D)

...death is nothing. Just waking from the dream of a previous life.

Amara looks around -- suddenly claustrophobic and scared, as if realizing the absurdity of her situation.

AMARA

This isn't real. Why *me!*? This is *nothing* to do with me!

Ion glances at her, distressed by her anger.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Stop the car! Let me out!

ION

No, Amara...

AMARA

--You're not real, the Deer isn't real!

(MORE)

AMARA (CONT'D)
 I'm crazy, I live in a goddamn
 mental home -- LET ME OUT! I don't
 care, I'll fucking jump!

She OPENS THE DOOR, wind ROARING. Struggling to drive at the
 same time, Ion GRABS HER.

ION
 No! Don't!

AMARA
 Let go of me!

ION
 They'll kill you! They think you're
 the reason I keep crashing down on
 purpose! The reason I betray them.

Amara looks at him, her eyes blazing at him. Shuts the door.

AMARA
 I--don't--know--you.

ION
 Yes you do. You just don't
 remember.

Ion looks over at her but suddenly HIS VIEW IS DIFFERENT--

EXT. FOREST WORLD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Instead he sees Alice, standing beside him, smiling. She is
 dressed in finer clothes, flowers in her hair.

She turns slowly, looking lovingly at him. Like a bride.

AMARA (V.O.)
 Ion, LOOK OUT!

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

Ion snaps to attention -- SOMETHING is in the road, they're
 going to hit it! But nothing happens...like nothing there.

ION
 What was it? What did you see?

AMARA
 (confused)
 I thought I saw a dog, or a
 wolf...right in front of us.

Ion looks at her. He knows what that means. He turns and glances behind -- nothing yet.

ION
Buckle up. Do exactly as I say.

AMARA
(getting scared)
It's them, isn't it?

ION
They can also 'travel', like me.
And if one knows where we are, they
all know.

INT. HUMVEE - SAME TIME

EYES POP OPEN with a GASP -- Fornax is sitting in the passenger seat while Cetus drives on the freeway.

Fornax blinks back to reality and looks at Cetus.

FORNAX
Just up ahead.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

Ion sees it in the mirror -- the dark Humvee, coming up fast, weaving through traffic. Amara turns and sees it too.

AMARA
Oh my god...

Determined, Ion looks at her -- catching her gaze.

ION
No matter what; keep your eyes
open. Listen to me, if something
happens...I will find you again.

She looks at him, as if not sure if she's dreaming...

BAM! A car SLAMS INTO THEM from the next lane over -- Amara SCREAMS -- Ion GRAPPLES WITH THE WHEEL, glancing ==>

A THIRD Radical, called AQUILA (30), drives a SILVER SEDAN, its driver window is smashed -- another stolen vehicle.

Ion regains control and pushes back with the heavier SUV -- METAL GRINDS SICKENINGLY and glass SHATTERS.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Humvee ROARS UP -- gaining on them.

Ion and the Sedan wrestle -- Ion splits apart just in time -- SLIDING around a truck and GUNNING THE ACCELERATOR.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

Cetus has the pedal to the metal, swerving the heavy Humvee around civilian traffic -- HONKING HORNS and SCREECHING TIRES

In the back -- Fornax has an ENTIRE ARSENAL OF STOLEN WEAPONS from the base. He picks up an M4 Rifle with a GRENADE-LAUNCH ATTACHMENT, and stands up to the open-roof firing position.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

Ion drives like a god -- SCREECHES across four lanes, flying in front of Aquila to SQUEEEZE between TWO 18-WHEELERS...

--BOOM! The truck to Ion's left is hit by a GRENADE! FIRE EXPLODES across the windshield and the LEFT-SIDE WINDOWS FRACTURE. Amara SHRIEKS and Ion ducks -- PUSHING FORWARD --

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The SUV clears past the BURNING 18-WHEELER which grinds and SLIDES to a halt -- other cars SLAM INTO IT.

Cetus' Humvee swerves -- HITS one of the stopped cars, flying upwards...the Humvee PUNCHES STRAIGHT THROUGH the truck's sideways trailer, LANDING HARD on the other side.

Fornax emerges at the Humvee's turret again, reloading the M4's GRENADE LAUNCHER again...POOM!

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

The GRENADE SAILS PAST Ion's windshield, hitting a car in front of them -- he SCREAMS past it with inches to spare --

AMARA

Shit! Are they completely insane!?

AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE from behind and the rear window explodes --

ION

Get down!

He glances in his mirror -- Aquila's Sedan pulls up from behind on the left, the Humvee further back on the right -- Fornax now BLASTING out of a window with the M4 rifle.

Ion guns the engine, cutting across the front of the Humvee so they're out of the rifle's line of fire.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

SIRENS now -- two cop cars ROAR UP from an on-ramp alongside them. Fornax aims his grenade launcher...the round hits underneath one cop, BLOWING THE CAR UP INTO THE AIR -- it lands on the hood of the other one, SCREECHING to a halt.

Inside, the cop is almost crushed, calling for backup.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

BOOM! BOOM! Ion races ahead, weaving between exploding vehicles as Fornax shoots from the Humvee behind them.

Ion glances at Amara, she's terrified -- they're in SERIOUS TROUBLE, they're not going to make it through this. But then they hear ANOTHER SOUND, GROWING LOUDER...

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD...

Ion glances behind, HOPE glimmering in his eyes, to see:

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

BURSTING through the thick wreckage SMOKE -- a BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER roars in LOW AND FAST over the cars on the freeway like a GIANT SHARK HUNTING MINNOWS...

The Deltas are back.

INT. BLACK HAWK - SAME TIME

The same squad that came to the rescue at the Maine base:

ADAMS (30s) is the leader. VAUGHN (28) -- bit of a joker, wears a red bandana-headband and his lucky Aviators hooked into his tactical vest, and DUTCH (34) is a silent badass. With them are FIVE OTHERS, All GEARED UP, packing elite, customized weapons, Oakley eyewear.

Carnage and burning cars blur past the open doors below.

PILOT (V.O.) (RADIO)
 Have visual on the package -- blue
 SUV. Then we got bogies in the
 Humvee and the silver sedan.
 Prepare to engage.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - CONTINUOUS

Ion quickly maneuvers himself between the Sedan and the
 Humvee as the Black Hawk ROARS up next to them...

AMARA
 They're here to help us, right?!

ION
 Hold on! This isn't over!

He checks his rear-view mirror, clear behind, and SLAMS ON
 THE BRAKES --

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Sedan and Humvee FLY PAST Ion's rapidly-slowng SUV --
 but the Black Hawk stays with them. Aquila looks up from his
 car at the Deltas in the helicopter next to him -- *oh shit*.

ADAMS (V.O.)
 Waste that motherfucker.

A Delta on the Blawk Hawk's MINIGUN fires -- TEARS IT APART.

INT. AQUILA'S SEDAN - SAME TIME

--But Aquila PULLS HIS HOOD OVER HIS HEAD, wrapping his hands
 inside his clothes and suddenly the black fabric HARDENS INTO
 A KIND OF PROTECTIVE SHELL, just in time as--

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The destroyed Sedan careens into the central divider at speed
 -- Aquila flies through the windshield INTO ONCOMING TRAFFIC--

--he's hit by a car which SMASHES against his PROTECTIVE
 SHELL, sending him flying again.

As the shell slows on the shoulder, the material suddenly
 softens again and Aquila rolls out ONTO HIS FEET, unhurt.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

Ion's SUV stops in the middle of the freeway with cars backing up behind as Ion checks Amara.

ION
Are you okay?

AMARA
No. Where'd you learn to drive like that?

ION
I don't remember, it just comes to me. I've been to a lot of Earths.

Amara sees Aquila jump the central divider ahead and start sprinting back towards them, the Swythe handle in his hand.

AMARA
Ion!

Ion throws the car into drive -- steps on it. But Aquila SNAPS his SWYTHE, liquid metal melts out, instantly forming into a HOOK which he smashes through Ion's rear-left window -- dragging him with the SUV as it GAINS SPEED.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Up ahead, Cetus throws the Humvee into a SCREECHING hand-brake turn through the slush to head back towards Ion -- forcing the pursuing Black Hawk into a RADICAL BANKED TURN...

INT. BLACK HAWK - CONTINUOUS

The Deltas stop FIRING, forced to hold on tight as the chopper banks and the world outside the doors BLURS PAST.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Humvee ROARS at speed, dodging oncoming traffic as ==>

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - CONTINUOUS

Ion speeds towards it, distracted by Aquila HEAVING HIMSELF in through the window into the backseat. Amara watches in horror -- Ion CLICKS ON THE CRUISE-CONTROL --

ION
Take the wheel! Take it!

She grabs it from her seat as Ion jumps into the BACKSEAT -- BAM! He hits Aquila HARD -- they grapple VIOLENTLY -- Ion gets an upper hand for a second...

ION (CONT'D)
(to Amara)
Drive! Don't stop no matter what!

AMARA
What are you doing?! No! Don't--

Then Ion YANKS the hood over Aquila's face, closes his eyes -- Aquila's clothing HARDENS AGAIN into the shell, and without hesitation...Ion SHOVES THEM BOTH OUT THE DOOR!

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ion falls out onto Aquila's HARD CLOTHING SHELL at 80mph -- dragging in the doorway a second to stabilize, then SLIDING away on the tarmac as OTHER CARS SWERVE to avoid them.

The shell softens into clothing again -- and Aquila is on his feet -- ANGRY. HITTING at Ion with ELBOWS and KNEES -- both fighting with the skill of battle-hardened warriors.

INT. BLUE FORD EXPLORER - DAY

FRANTIC, Amara climbs over into the driver's seat. She looks up -- the Humvee is RACING STRAIGHT AT HER suicidally. No time -- she PULLS HER SEATBELT ON and SWERVES --

INT. BLACK HAWK - SAME TIME

Adams watches from above as Amara JUST MISSES the Humvee, but HITS another WRECKED VEHICLE -- launching the SUV UP INTO THE AIR, spinning and CRASHING onto its ROOF.

ADAMS
PUT US DOWN THERE! NOW!

PILOT (V.O.)
Sir the package was clear of the vehicle--

ADAMS
Put us down!

EXT. SUV CRASH, HIGHWAY - DAY

The Black Hawk HOVERS above Amara's crash -- Adams, Vaughn, Dutch and THREE OTHERS LEAP DOWN as the MINIGUN RIPS INTO the Humvee -- which ROLLS OVER and SMASHES into other cars.

Adams gets to the overturned SUV, sees Amara strapped inside.

ADAMS

Hey! Miss!

She turns her head groggily -- ALIVE. He crawls in through the window to reach her.

EXT. HUMVEE - DAY

Cetus falls from the wreck, taking cover as Deltas' bullets DEAFENINGLY CRACK into the Humvee's armored body. Nearby Fornax reloads a rifle and hands it to Cetus.

CETUS

(totally calm)

Get rid of that helicopter.

Fornax grabs a BAZOOKA as Cetus RETURNS FIRE at the Deltas.

EXT. FORD EXPLORER CRASH, HIGHWAY - DAY

Adams pulls Amara free of the wreck -- bullets PING and SNAP all around them. The other Deltas take cover behind the SUV.

ADAMS

(into radio)

Get us out of here, we need EVAC!

The Black Hawk starts to circle back when --

DUTCH

R-P-G!!

They dive for cover as an RPG trails through the air over their heads ==> BOOM! Hits the TAIL of the Black Hawk...

The helicopter SPEWS BLACK SMOKE, SPINS low over their heads and CRASHES into the opposite side of the freeway where a MAC TRUCK SLAMS into it -- and it BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

LEGS SPRINTING -- Fornax rushes on foot, unseen, from the Humvee to the SUV CRASH during the confusion.

He LEAPS into the MIDDLE OF THE DELTAS -- BLOWING AWAY Delta 4 point-blank with his rifle, trying to hit Amara --

VAUGHN

Holy shit!

They turn and SHOOT -- but Fornax has already pulled his hood over his face, activating his robes to become the SHELL. Bullets RICOCHET off it and one HITS DELTA 5 in the leg.

DELTA 5

(falling)

Mother-fuck! Cease fire!

But as they do, Fornax spins out of his shell like a ninja, a KATANA SWORD SNAPPING out of his Swythe handle and SLASHING DELTA 6's neck, he kicks Adams away -- and pins Amara to the ground, his eyes COMPLETELY COLD, UNEMOTIONAL.

The Swythe SNAPS again and the long sword becomes a shorter KNIFE -- and as Fornax stabs down...BAM! Vaughn SMACKS him in the head with his rifle, sending Fornax reeling and fumbling.

Vaughn and Dutch SHOOT Fornax's chest before his robes can harden, KILLING HIM.

Adams picks Amara up when --

DELTA 5 (CONT'D)

GRENADE!!

ANGLE ON: A grenade rolls out of Fornax's lifeless hand into the middle of them -- there's not enough time!

DELTA 5, leg wounded, throws himself on top of it...BOOM!

EARS RINGING, SHOCKED -- Adams, Vaughn, Dutch and Amara pick themselves up, dripping with soot and slush. Vaughn stares at Delta 5's remains. Dutch checks Delta 6's body, his neck cut.

DUTCH

He's gone too.

Adams glances across the highway at the Humvee wreck -- there's no-one there. Cetus is gone.

BOOM! The CRUSHED Black Hawk on the other side of the highway EXPLODES -- no-one would survive it.

VAUGHN

(freaking out)

Are you kidding? Are you fucking kidding man!? What just happened?

ADAMS

Come on, we're getting out of here.
We can't get slowed down by the
cops. Vaughn!?

Vaughn turns to him, visibly upset.

VAUGHN

That's it? Three of us? The whole
fucking team's gone! How the fuck
did that happen--

ADAMS

(stern)

--Save it! We've got to go. Get a
car, quickly!

Dutch pulls Vaughn and together they run towards a stopped
Porsche Cayenne, an ARROGANT BUSINESSMAN inside, staring.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

(to Amara)

Are you hurt?

She shakes her head in shock. Her face bruised, shirt ripped.

AMARA

Where is Ion?

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Further down the highway -- Aquila SLAMS Ion into the tarmac.
Traffic is backed up down the highway, amazed onlookers.

AQUILA

What are you doing here with them?
Why don't you do what you're told?

Ion struggles underneath him, kicks Aquila's legs out and
gets to his feet as Aquila's swythe SNAPS into a thin metal
blade. Aquila spins it with skill -- SLICING ION'S SIDE.

Ion ducks under a blow and gets in close -- kicking out
Aquila's leg with a SNAP and TACKLING HIM onto the hood of a
car. TWO GUYS (20s) get out to try and break up the fight.

CAR GUY 1

Hey, c'mon guys break it up--

Aquila's Swythe-staff CRACKS HIM in the face -- Ion fights to
restrain Aquila, protecting the civilians.

ION
 (shouts at other guy)
 Get away from here!

Ion gets the upper hand as Aquila fights to get away -- Ion catches him and SLAMS his head through a car window. He chokes-holds Aquila.

AQUILA
 ..she's not the one Ion. She's not
 your wife, none of them are. You're
 lost out here. Come in with us.

Ion wrestles him to his knees, tightening his grip.

AQUILA (CONT'D)
 (choking)
 Can you do this forever?
 We'll...keep coming for you Ion.

Ion ignores him -- his face ashen, almost evil. Aquila flails, accidentally grabbing hold of Ion's LEATHER PENDANT and ripping it from his neck.

Aquila almost double-takes, glancing at the pendant in his hand with SHOCK. Ion notices...and has to act quickly:

ION
 Until next time then.

SNAP! Ion breaks his neck. He quickly opens Aquila's hand, retrieves the pendant, and picks up the SWYTHE HANDLE. As he stands up he sees a terrified family inside the nearest car.

BEEP! BEEP! Ion turns to see the Porsche Cayenne speeding back down the highway towards him, honking the horn.

INT. CAYENNE - DAY

Adams is driving, Vaughn in the passenger seat, his assault rifle aimed out the window. Ion climbs into the back seat next to Dutch and Amara. The Deltas' wet combat gear squeezes in awkwardly with the luxury leather interior.

In the distance, a SWARM of country cops are pushing slowly through the grid-locked traffic, SIRENS WAILING.

VAUGHN
 (somber)
 Okay man, drive. Get us the hell
 out of here.

ADAMS

Yeah...

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

IN THE FOREST off the side of the highway -- Cetus watches as they speed off a nearby exit. Moments later, the cops arrive.

INT. CAYENNE - DAY

The clouds start to thin as the sun dips lower in the sky. Adams drives down rural back-roads, Dutch ever-watchful for any cops. All of them are SILENT.

Amara glances at the Deltas apprehensively. Then she turns to Ion -- he looks at her, his face pale and cut up. The Swythe handle in his hand.

ION

Are you okay?

She nods, noticing his labored breathing. Suddenly she looks down -- blood is seeping into her jeans, coming from Ion.

AMARA

Oh my god.

The others look back as Ion reels, his eyes glazing over.

VAUGHN

What's wrong?

Amara peels back Ion's shirt -- a gash across his left side.

AMARA

He's bleeding, he's cut bad!

DUTCH

Let me see it...

AMARA

We have to get him to a hospital--

ADAMS

--How bad is it?

DUTCH

Ion? Ion look at me.

But Ion is fading fast, losing consciousness.

DUTCH (CONT'D)

(to Adams)

Find us a place to pull off the road, I can't help him in the car.

(to Amara)

Here, put your hands there and pinch it. Hard! Keep pressure on it.

Amara pushes her hands into Ion's side. His blood seeps between her fingers. She looks up at him as his eyes close...

EXT. FOREST WORLD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Redwoods tower against a sky full of brilliant stars. NATIVE ION sits pensively, back to a massive, ancient tree trunk.

INT. LARGE TEPEE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Alice lies awake on a bed of furs inside a skin-covered tent. 6-7 OTHER TRAVELLERS are asleep around her. Alice stares absentmindedly at a FAT WOMAN, SNORING beside her.

Suddenly she hears a noise outside, and CLOSES HER EYES.

The door flap opens and a familiar silhouette appears. Ion creeps in, searching in the dark for Alice. He carefully steps near the Fat Woman when SHE SUDDENLY SNORTS and rolls over onto his foot -- Ion panics, loses balance and falls...

He just manages to stop from slamming into the floor; landing comically contorted, face to face with Alice -- who, eyes closed in mock-sleep, can't stop herself GIGGLING.

He grins, takes her hand and SILENTLY helps her up out of the bed. Together they creep out of the tent.

EXT. FOREST WORLD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

They hurry deep into the forest's tall trees, happy.

EXT. HILLTOP, FOREST WORLD - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Ion and Alice stand side-by-side at the top of a high cliff above the forest. They both stare out at something...

The forest stretches far away under the moonlight and starlight. But in the distance, some stars are FALLING. Not stars, they're like meteors...seven of them.

They FLAME out of the sky and crash into the forest.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
 (in their language)
What are they Ion?

Ion is scared, frustrated -- his anxiety coming in. She takes his hand, and he looks at her. She smiles and kisses him.

ION
 (in English)
 I love you.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
What? What did you just say?

She's stunned, not understanding. But he seems equally confused by his use of English...

ION (SUBTITLE)
...I, I don't know.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
Are you alright?

He glances out where the pods crashed, then shakes his head -- becoming upset.

ION (SUBTITLE)
*No...it's them. Something terrible
 is going to happen here.*

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
What are you talking about?

He looks at her, full of apprehension.

ION (SUBTITLE)
*They are coming for us, now. We
 must run again.*

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
*Again? Who is coming? Ion you're
 scaring me...*

ION (SUBTITLE)
I have always loved you. Trust me.

He takes her hand and starts to lead her away into the forest, hurrying...then faster...then RUNNING.

INT. BARN - EVENING

The barn is more like an extra garage than an agricultural store. It's filled with junk -- chairs, tables, bags, boxes, rusty bicycles, and shelves filled with THOUSANDS OF BOOKS.

Ion lies asleep on a table while Dutch stitches up his wound. Amara sits on the floor against some boxes, watching.

AMARA

So what is this? A rescue mission?

DUTCH

More of a recovery mission.

AMARA

Who are you supposed to be? Navy
SEALS or something?

Dutch doesn't look at her, just aims his Maglite to keep working on Ion.

DUTCH

Or something.

Amara waits, but realizes he's not going to talk much more.

AMARA

What's next? Ion says we have to go
to New York and find this Signal.

DUTCH

Adams is in charge.

AMARA

Adams. Which one are you?

DUTCH

Dutch.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME TIME

Adams peers inside the windows of the house that's near the barn, it's all quiet. Vaughn comes from around another corner.

ADAMS

Anything?

VAUGHN

There's no car. Nobody's home.

They start back along the house towards the barn.

VAUGHN (CONT'D)

What are we doing here? This whole mission is fucked, not to mention completely illegal.

ADAMS

Everything we do is illegal, it's just not done on American soil.

VAUGHN

Yeah well the others are dead on a freeway, probably live on CNN. You don't get that other places. And for what -- some whackjob the bosses want alive?!

Adams stops him and lowers his voice, stern.

ADAMS

We follow orders, that's our job right? Those bald bastards fell out of the sky and destroyed Loring base. They're like goddamn aliens or something -- I don't know about you but right now I wanna know how many there are...and I'm gonna kill them. As for that 'whackjob' in there, we all might've died on the Sarkani Op if it wasn't for him and his intel.

VAUGHN

(stunned, guilty)

That was him? He's the ghost?

ADAMS

That was him.

INT. BARN - EVENING

Amara gets to her feet and walks to the table, looking at Ion. She gingerly pokes his leg, then taps his pants pocket.

DUTCH

What are you doing?

Amara ignores him and reaches into Ion's pocket, pulling out the folded PHOTOGRAPH. Slowly she opens it and looks at the woman in the picture. Curious, Dutch pauses and peeks at it.

DUTCH (CONT'D)

Is that you?

Amara stares -- it does have a strong resemblance to her.

AMARA

No. That would be impossible.

She abruptly folds it again and puts it in her own pocket.

AMARA (CONT'D)

So what do you know about him?

DUTCH

(cont. stitching)

It's classified.

AMARA

Classified? You know who I am?

DUTCH

You're Amara Munro, you're a psychiatric patient. You were with him.

AMARA

(irritated by this)

I'm not 'with him'.

Then the door CREAKS and Adams enters the barn from outside, unhitching his assault rifle from his shoulders.

ADAMS

We're clear out there, Vaughn's gonna keep watch. How's he doing?

DUTCH

The wound wasn't too deep. It's weird that he's still out though, he can't have lost that much blood.

Adams walks up next to Amara, looks at her softly.

ADAMS

You okay? You should rest a little.

AMARA

Why? Because I'm the girl?

He looks at her, surprised and attracted by her tenacity as she matches his eyes.

AMARA (CONT'D)

What are we doing here? Why don't you guys call for backup or something? What if they come here?

Adams glances at Dutch, who shrugs slightly -- *tell her.*

ADAMS

This is a Black Op. You need congressional clearance for a military incursion on US soil, but with the timing, and the fact that Ion is an asset classified top secret, they couldn't afford to ask for it. Only a handful of people know we're here. Radio silence from here on. Unregistered weapons, no IDs if we get caught.

AMARA

So, what, this is illegal?

ADAMS

We're not getting any help.

AMARA

What?! What about the helicopter that blew up on the freeway?

ADAMS

Probably be called a training exercise malfunction.

AMARA

That's insane. Or...I'm insane, I don't know anymore.

Amara goes quiet, folding her arms in the cold. She's shivering. Adams starts unhooking all his gear...

AMARA (CONT'D)

Don't. I'm fine.

He ignores her, finally getting down to his jacket and giving it to her. She puts it on -- it's big on her. Sleeves dangle.

AMARA (CONT'D)

I wasn't part of your mission, was I?

Dutch and Adams glance at each other. Amara catches it, knowing the truth -- she's not meant to be there.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

She smiles slightly at Adams. He nods back. A connection.

Dropping the subject, Adams turns to Ion. He pulls down Ion's shirt-collar a little, looking at the intricate designs.

ADAMS

Weird tattoos.

Adams reaches to touch the leather-pendant when Ion's eyes suddenly OPEN WIDE. He glances wildly at them, then SHOUTS and LEAPS off the table, backing away from them.

ION

(forest world language, no subtitles here)

WHO ARE YOU? What are you doing to me?

ADAMS

Whoah! Ion, calm down!

ION

Where am I?

Adams tries to calm Ion down but he instantly swipes Adams' legs out in a slick move, knocking him down and backing away.

ION (CONT'D)

Don't touch me! Who are you!

Vaughn bursts in from outside, hearing the commotion.

VAUGHN

What the fuck is going on?

AMARA

What's wrong with him? What is he saying?

Only then Ion seems to notice Amara. Like someone just waking from a dream, he stares at her with vague recognition.

ION

Speak again.

(in perfect LATIN)

Talk. What language do you speak?

DUTCH

What language is that?

ION
 (he's got it)
 English... American? The United
 States of America?

VAUGHN
 Yeah duh. What the hell's wrong
 with him?

ION
 Baalic? Christian? Tao?

Ion is wary, backing away, watching them. Slightly manic.

VAUGHN
 --Jewish. He's Christian. She's
 crazy.

Amara shoots him an look to say - *shut up, inappropriate.*

ION
 How long have I been here?

ADAMS
 (getting up)
 About twenty minutes. We rescued
 you, remember?

ION
 No, how long on this Earth?

VAUGHN
 He's fucking lost it man.

AMARA
 Sixty years, roughly. You don't
 remember us?

VAUGHN
 Sixty? What? She's crazy too, he
 can't be older than--

ADAMS
 --Shut up! Give him a second.

Ion is staring at Amara -- trying to bring it back.

ION
 I found you. In the forest.

AMARA
 No...you found me on a beach.

ION
 (starting to get it)
 On a beach.

FLASH: Young Amara (6) at her mother's body. The Deer nearby.

Ion suddenly checks the leather pendant at his neck, then his pockets -- looking for the photo. Getting worried.

ION (CONT'D)
 I don't have...did I have a...
 (searching for the word)
 picture? A chemograph?

Dutch glances at Amara...but she doesn't move.

Ion lifts the side of his shirt to see the stitched wound.

ION (CONT'D)
 I'm bleeding.

Ion stands still, staring at it for a few long moments. The others glance at each other -- *what is happening?*

ADAMS
 Ion?

ION
 It's okay. I remember.

He quickly looks up at Amara, worried she too might be hurt.

ION (CONT'D)
 Amara. Are you--

He steps forward -- but she backs away instinctively, moving slightly behind Adams. Ion stops, ashamed.

ION (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry...I've been doing this a
 very long time. Lots of memories.
 Sometimes I get lost.
 (to Adams)
 Sorry I hit you.

Adams shrugs it off.

ION (CONT'D)
 How far is it to New York?

DUTCH
 A couple hours.

VAUGHN

New York? Hey Adams, is this an extraction or what? What's New York got to do with anything?

ION

The Signal is there.

Ion talks but his gaze keeps coming back to Amara.

ADAMS

(sorry he lied to them)
It's not an extraction. We're supposed to help him do--whatever it is he's gotta do. I've got the secondary briefing...

DUTCH

What do you mean, whatever he needs to do? What does he need to do?

Adams doesn't have an answer, they all look at Ion.

ADAMS

Well, what do we need to do?

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

We GLIDE above the iconic city, now seemingly dark. As we go lower, candles flicker in apartment windows. The streets are full -- people milling around with flashlights...

EXT. LOOTED HARDWARE STORE, NYC - NIGHT

A Radical, ORION (30), steps out through a smashed window carrying a FULL DUFFEL BAG. The city is unusually QUIET.

He walks quickly down the powerless, snowy streets past KIDS throwing snowballs at each other, climbing on cars.

I/E. UPPER WEST SIDE APT - NIGHT

CLICK. Orion's Swythe spits out a LOCKPICK -- he opens a door and walks into a plush apartment. The OWNER and his GIRLFRIEND sit inside bundled up. Candles -- romantic.

APARTMENT OWNER

Hey! Who the hell are you?

Orion's Swythe melts into a HATCHET -- he KILLS THEM BOTH. He opens the duffel: cleaning chemicals, car battery, tools and a digital alarm clock. Ingredients for a HOMEMADE BOMB.

10 MINUTES LATER:

Orion packs up the tools and walks out, leaving the bomb.

ORION

That's my last one, set.

EXT. GAS STATION, LOWER EAST SIDE - SAME TIME

Another Radical, CORVUS (30) uses his Swythe as a CROWBAR to lever up the gas reserve cover and drops a BACKPACK inside.

He walks away quickly. Nearby a GROUP OF CIVILIANS are complaining to NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS about the conditions.

Small BANG. Then a HUGE EXPLOSION -- the gas station IGNITES! People SCREAM as debris flies everywhere.

The Nat. Guard troops stare in amazement -- but then suddenly ANOTHER EXPLOSION goes off at a COFFEE SHOP down the street!

INT. MILITARY LAB, NYC - NIGHT

DEAD SWAT TEAM BODIES lie about, bullet-holes and flashbang burns. Maglites on MP5s -- scattered beams in the darkness.

NYPD CHIEF (V.O.) (RADIO)

Come in Blue Team. Do you read me?
Is anyone alive up there?

Someone is alive -- AZRAYL, spattered with blood, walks past the bodies. His sleek LANDING POD sits in a nest of sparking cables, shattered glass and steel -- it crashed right through the side of the building. He picks up the GLOWING SIGNAL and walks to a window.

EXPLOSIONS RUMBLE -- Azrayl watches as BOMBS FLASH off all across the darkened expanse of Manhattan below him.

Then Azrayl senses something, and slowly turns around. There, among the bodies in the darkness of the lab, stands Ion's DEER. Its large, dark eyes watch him with uncanny stillness.

INT. CAYENNE - NIGHT

Ion's eyes POP OPEN with a GASP -- he's in the car with the others, racing fast on a dark road. Vaughn glances around.

VAUGHN

He's back. This is too weird man...

ION

We need to hurry up.

AMARA

What did you see?

Ion is troubled, but grips the Swythe handle in his hand. The radio news BABBLES SOFTLY in the b.g.

ION

They're bombing the city.

ADAMS

What!?

DUTCH

New York city?

ION (CONT'D)

The Immortals arrive soon, they decide what happens. And the rampant fear will not help you.

AMARA

The Immortals?

ION

The people who sent me.

VAUGHN

Great, the more the merrier. What time do they join the party?

ION

I don't know. Soon. They follow the Signal too.

Ion glances at Amara next to him, longingly. No reaction.

Adams watches them in the rearview mirror.

DUTCH

(to Adams)

Drive faster.

VAUGHN

Who're the Immortals, what happens when they get here?

ION

They call themselves the People Immortal, the Kingdom of the Heavens. They are you. Your descendants from a parallel Earth where there is no longer disease, or aging, no death without violence. They are ever-expanding across the multiverse. When they get here, they will judge you uncivilized...this is conquest.

There's a few moments of SILENCE, then Adams suddenly turns off into a large, empty STRIPMALL -- a WALMART at the end.

ION (CONT'D)

(suddenly anxious)

What are you doing?!

ADAMS

Cops and National Guard are all over the city. We need to look like civilians if we're gonna get anywhere. We *all* need new clothes.

The Deltas start unbuckling their gear. Ion looks down at his ripped, filthy clothes.

INT. WALMART - MOMENTS LATER

A LOCK BREAKS. The five of them sneak in from the back. It's dark, eerie. The Deltas CLICK on flashlights, hand them out.

ION

Back out in ten.

ADAMS

We'll be quick.

The Deltas move off together, leaving Ion and Amara alone.

MOMENTS LATER: Ion holds the light while Amara picks out a new t-shirt. It's awkward between them.

AMARA

(gestures)

Could you turn around?

He turns away while she changes out of her ripped shirt into a new one. Then she grabs a warm hoodie and a jacket in hand.

Ion turns back to face her. She seems exhausted.

ION
...are you okay?

She wheels on him, upset. Close to tears. Glaring at him.

AMARA
They tried to kill me! Me specifically. Why? Why would they do that Ion?
(Beat)
I've spent most of my life wishing I was dead. I hate this place, this world. I feel like I don't belong here, I have nothing here. But today I was afraid to die, and that sickens me.

Ion turns away, he doesn't know how to explain.

ION
I'm sorry that you can't remember.

They start walking towards some men's clothes.

AMARA
Remember what? Ion?

ION
I've been looking for you for an eternity. It's all I do, find you, and lose you again.

Ion starts searching a rack, picks up a new top. Amara shakes her head in disbelief, and takes the PHOTO from her pocket as he carefully peels his shirt up from his wound.

AMARA
You're wrong. You've got the wrong girl Ion. I'm just Amara.
(waving the photo)
This -- is not me!

She stops, stares in amazement at his lithe torso -- entirely covered in a SUBTLE, INTRICATE TATTOOED DESIGN. A maze of ancient and newer scars crisscross over the top of his skin.

He steps in to her. She grips the photo, breath quivering --

ION

(re: photo, and her)

That is not this body. But it is
your soul, which determines a lot.

She is nervous with him so close, but still she does not move as -- he slowly, gently, pulls her top down a little...

A round birthmark sits above her left breast. Seeing it seems to confirm it finally to Ion, who shuts his eyes, letting go.

FLASHBACK: *In the forest, Ion fights forward as Azrayl pushes Alice down -- spears her...in the same place as Amara's mark.*

Amara stands still, hand shaking slightly as Ion turns away from her, upset.

ION (CONT'D)

Native marks are caused by texture
or wounds on a previous body.

(Beat)

I can still-- I see you dying.

Amara stares at him as he drops to his knees. She crouches close beside him to see his face -- eyes CLENCHED SHUT.

ION (CONT'D)

(whisper, alien language)

I love you.

Amara is confused, not understanding. His eyes twitch.

EXT. VILLAGE, FOREST WORLD - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Teepees and animal skin tents in a clearing deep within the lush, wild forest. This world is startlingly beautiful.

EXT. COUNCIL FIRE, FOREST WORLD - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

NATIVE ION sits with many other PEOPLE. Some are dressed like Ion; they live here. But others are TRAVELERS from another culture. Among them is ALICE, sitting across from Ion.

Everyone is listening to a Shaman, HOWAHKAN (50s). He is a thin man with bright eyes and a mischievous humor. He's midway through a story in their language, a tale well told...

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE)

*...but his punishment was not
death. No no, death is nothing.*

(MORE)

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

*Death is easy. For Shee'fus the
spirits had something else in mind.*

The people smile. Ion glances at his friend CHUA (30s) sitting next to him. Chua lounges on his back, smiling.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

*He was condemned forever to heave a
boulder up the Great Mountain,
whose slopes are the same, but
different, each time you look at
them. And when he reached the top,
exhausted from his struggle, the
boulder would slip and tumble down
the mountainside away from him. And
poor Shee'fus would start over, in
an eternity of futile struggle.*

Alice looks over at Ion and smiles at him, but Ion is more serious now, listening to Howahkan.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

*The spirits thought their torture
would be crushing. But Shee'fus was
no ordinary man, and he defied the
spirits once again. For he accepted
his fate, he did not hope or want
for anything more than he had. Thus
as he reached the bottom of the
mountain again, and glanced back at
the enormous task ahead of him,
Shee'fus was aware of himself...and
you know what he did? He smiled.*

And Howahkan grins widely -- everyone smiles. Everyone except Ion, who is deep in thought, staring at the flames.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

*So! If any of you should meet Death
soon and fear her, remember
Shee'fus, and count yourself lucky
that she allows you to forget your
struggles now and again... And
that's the tale. Thank you for
listening, and welcome again to you
all -- our guests.*

The tale over, people begin to stand up, chatting or leaving. Alice comes over to Ion, takes his hand -- flirty.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)

He's a good storyteller.

(Ion nods, smiling)

(MORE)

ALICE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
*I hope you're still coming tonight,
to tell me a story...*

Ion looks her in the eye, and winks at her.

ION (SUBTITLE)
*Of course.
(looks over at Howahkan
leaving)
I'll see you in a while.*

INT. HOWAHKAN'S TENT, FOREST WORLD - NIGHTFALL (FLASHBACK)

Ion catches up with Howahkan as he enters his hut.

ION (SUBTITLE)
An old classic, huh?

Howahkan sits, happy to see Ion -- shrugs off his comment.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE)
*They say it's been two hundred
years since you came to us Ion. I
don't know if that's true, but I do
know you have been my friend my
entire life. I still remember when
you told that story to me, when I
was just a boy, and you were still
as you are now.*

Ion comes inside and sits down next to him.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
*How can you be sure it is her, that
she is really the one?*

ION (SUBTITLE)
*She loves me. She doesn't remember
it yet, but I cannot forget her.
Didn't I teach you there's more to
see of people than flesh and blood?
It is her.*

Howahkan looks at his old friend earnestly.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE)
*I wish you happiness, however
fleeting she may be to your eyes.*

Ion looks at Howahkan, smiling, and pats him on the shoulder
as if to say -- thank you.

INT. WALMART - NIGHT

Ion opens his eyes in the darkened store to find Amara crouched next to him, her hand on him, shaking him awake.

She's peering down an aisle anxiously. EERIE SILENCE.

ION
(whisper)
Amara...

She turns to him suddenly to silence him -- she SCARED. SOMETHING'S WRONG. They WHISPER QUIETLY.

ION (CONT'D)
What is it?

AMARA
--Shhh! Can you stop blacking out on me please! Something's in here.

ION
Where are the others?

AMARA
I don't know...

Carefully Ion rocks onto his feet, staying low. Together they start to slowly move away down the aisle.

A PITTER-PATTER of feet in the darkness. A SHADOW FLITS past another aisle. Ion spins in the dark, seeing nothing.

Suddenly they stop, peering around a corner.

POV ION: A LARGE WOLF sits on its haunches in the middle of a walkway in the dark -- PANTING -- peering around.

Ion pulls them a different way -- but ANOTHER WOLF jogs past, searching the store. They're closing in on all sides.

Ion looks -- he can see the backdoor where they came in. Then they hear DIFFERENT FOOTSTEPS in the store, a man's...

The radical, CETUS, walks the aisles slowly as the spirit-wolves run around him. His hood is drawn, face in shadow.

ION
(whisper)
We have to run...are you ready?

Amara shakes her head, *no*. But suddenly Ion pulls her up and they start SPRINTING FOR THE DOOR.

EXT. WALMART/SUV - MOMENTS LATER

The three Deltas are in the car already, dressed in civilian clothes and long coats, also carrying newly-stolen shotguns.

Ion and Amara come flying across the parking lot --

ION
START THE CAR! We've gotta go!

They jump in quickly as -- Cetus comes BOLTING across the tarmac towards them.

INT. CAYENNE - CONTINUOUS

AMARA
HURRY! He's coming!

VAUGHN
Oh shit he's coming fast--

ADAMS
--Dutch you got a shot?

Adams starts the car -- Cetus is almost on them! The car PEELS OUT, gaining speed as Cetus' Swythe SNAPS into a LONG JAVELIN which he THROWS HARD ==>

BAM! The javelin PUNCHES straight through the backseat door, sticking into the front divider -- inches from Amara's body.

EXT. PARKING LOT, WALMART - CONTINUOUS

BLAM! BLAM! Dutch fires from the window as the car pulls away -- Cetus deflects with his SHELL, watches them disappear as he stands still in the empty parking lot.

Then Cetus walks over to a nearby car -- SMASHES the window, opens the door and gets in, starts hot-wiring the car.

WE TRACK AROUND -- four Wolves sit outside the car.

CETUS
(to wolf)
He's coming straight to you.

EXT. NEW YORK - VARIOUS

AZRAYL opens his eyes from the spirit-walk trance, still in the wrecked military lab. The Signal glows beside him.

AZRAYL

The host are almost here. Go now,
we cannot fail.

-- ORION wakes from his trance, huddled next to a dumpster.

-- CORVUS walks out of a subway station into a street where emergency crews battle a fire in a bombed apt. building.

-- NUBIS starts jogging down a snowy, blacked out avenue filled with worried New Yorkers, talking, helping each other.

-- TRACKING DOWN the avenue, ALL THREE are RUNNING now, in parallel.

INT. CAYENNE, DRIVING - NIGHT

They're all stunned, breathing fast as the car speeds away. Ion looks back -- no-one seems to be chasing.

Amara is staring in shock at the Swythe-spear, inches away, part of it still sticking out of the car. Ion takes the handle in his hand and the spear-ends SNAP back into it.

ADAMS

Everyone okay?

VAUGHN

He came right to us. How can they
do that? Who are those guys!?

Ion glances at Amara next to him, Dutch stares at the Swythe:

DUTCH

What is that thing?

ION

I think they call it a Swythe, it's all they land with. They don't risk bringing more advanced tech in case it's taken or used against the Immortals. It can form a large, but limited number of tools or short-range weapons.

At this, all three Deltas glance back at it, interested -- *boys and their toys*. Ion picks up the second one from the floor. Hands one to Dutch.

ION (CONT'D)

You can have one.

DUTCH

How do you work it?

ION

Clear your mind, then *feel* what you want it to form.

Dutch concentrates, the Swythe suddenly SNAPS out a metal BASEBALL BAT-shape -- startling Amara -- it hits the roof.

VAUGHN

Not in the car, dipshit. Lemme see that...

DUTCH

Hang on.

Vaughn reaches back for it from the passenger seat, as Dutch keeps it away from him.

Amara looks at Ion, then takes the PHOTO from her pocket and tries to give it back to him.

AMARA

Here...

ION

It's yours. Maybe it'll help you remember.

Amara studies Ion's face for a moment as he looks outside. Then she peers down at the photo in her hands, thinking.

ADAMS (O.S.)

New York City, coming up.

(Beat)

This is it. I hope you know what you're doing Ion...

A tense SILENCE as they pass under a large highway sign. Ion turns his Swythe handle over in his hands -- determined.

ION

Just keep driving.

EXT. MANHATTAN, NYC - NIGHT

The city is in a mess. Entirely without electricity, the slushy streets are filled with people grouping to help each other, lighting trash can fires, handing out food. All over, buildings are on fire from the homemade bombs -- sirens wail, people are screaming. National Guard troops patrol Fifth Ave, trucks and ambulances try to push through roads gridlocked with abandoned cars.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE, NYC - NIGHT

A helicopter ZOOMS overhead. Panicky crowds CHATTER about the explosions. A NATIONAL GUARD SQUAD patrols on foot.

Hooded silhouettes MELT out of the darkness. THREE of them. In perfect unison, they run at the rear Guards in the patrol:

BAM! Swythe blades SLASH throats, rifles are taken in a flash, and the Radicals DISAPPEAR like shadows in the night.

EXT. QUEENS MIDTOWN TUNNEL, NYC - NIGHT

A dozen RIOT COPS have set up a CHECKPOINT at the Manhattan exit where high walls create a brick canyon down to the mouth of the tunnel. Pedestrians stream out, traffic jammed inside.

RIOT COP #1
 (shining light, checking
 faces)
 Folks form an orderly line please!
 Keep moving up. Thank you.

Out of the dark tunnel emerge the three Deltas -- side by side in hoodies and long overcoats concealing their weapons. They glance at each other. This is it.

Behind them come Ion and Amara. Ion takes her hand, a show of determination more than love.

AMARA
 They're looking for someone. Ion,
 who are they looking for?

They amble forward with the crowd. The Deltas get through, the Guards do not look twice at them.

RIOT COP #1
 Hold up a second miss.
 (mutters to other cop)
 (MORE)

RIOT COP #1 (CONT'D)
 Get the printout will you?
 (back to Amara)
 Can I see your ID please?

Ion watches, ready. In the b.g. Adams and Vaughn silently position themselves around behind the cops.

AMARA
 I don't have any.

RIOT COP #1
 Excuse me?

AMARA
 I lost my wallet.

RIOT COP #1
 Can you step aside here.

RIOT COP #2 hands Riot Cop #1 a printout of AMARA'S FACE.

Riot Cop #1 realizes this is them. He goes for his gun --

ADAMS (O.S.)
 Drop the weapons, NOW!

The cops swing round to see Adams, Vaughn and Dutch covering them all -- coats open, M4s and shotguns in each hand.

A STAND-OFF -- there are more cops, but the Deltas have better positions. EVERYONE YELLS, pointing their guns--

VAUGHN
 Drop your gun! No, put it down
 moron cop -- you don't know who we
 are! I will end you!

Ion is anxious -- readies the Swythe handle. A cop's K-9 starts BARKING furiously at something, Amara looks over to see A WOLF, sitting in the road near them...

AMARA
 (pulls him down)
 Ion! Get down!

MUZZLE FLASHES from the top of the walls above ==> a cop's head SHATTERS, civilians all around are hit, Dutch is caught in the arm, BULLETS CRACKING and BLOOD SPATTERING! It's THEM.

The gunfire is REAL AND DEAFENING -- ECHOING around as Cops, Deltas and Radicals exchange fire in the confined area.

Ion grabs a dead cop's BALLISTIC SHIELD -- he and Amara crawl to the RIOT VAN and get in, start it up as SHOTS pummel it.

AMARA (CONT'D)

ADAMS!

Adams glances back as Ion puts the van into REVERSE -- guns it backwards up the slope away from the tunnel -- and the Deltas use it for cover from the Radicals' fire.

SIRENS -- two cop cars pull up behind. In reverse, Ion RAMS them, kicking the van up onto the cars. He pulls Amara out --

ION

Stay low -- come on!

The three Deltas are PRO MODERN WARRIORS -- circling and covering each other and reloading, keeping the Radicals back and putting cops down only in their TACTICAL VESTS.

ADAMS

GO! We'll cover you, get her out of here!

The Deltas' rifles BARK at the distant flashes. Ion and Amara STAY LOW and RUSH away car to car as TRACER BULLETS fly over.

Suddenly the Radicals stop firing. Adams glances at Dutch as if to say -- *Shit. What now?*

==> Corvus LEAPS from nowhere -- Adams blocks the Swythesword blow with his rifle, falling back HARD.

VAUGHN

No you don't, motherfucker!

Vaughn leaps at Corvus, pulling him off Adams and SLAMMING him down -- as soon as they hit the floor the DISTANT FIRING restarts! The Radicals know when their own is in the way.

Vaughn and Corvus FIGHT --

ADAMS

Vaughn! Move!

Vaughn rolls out of the way -- Adams SHOOTS. But Corvus SHELL-SPINS, bullets RICOCHET off -- and he's back at them! But Vaughn pulls out the Swythe Ion gave them, SNAPS out a sword and SLICES Corvus. He drops, a fatal blow. Vaughn keeps at it--

VAUGHN

Bald piece of shit, I'm gonna fuckin' pretzel you!

But suddenly -- more fire from behind them -- National Guard troops a block or so away. Vaughn is SHOT IN THE CHEST...

ADAMS

NO!

Vaughn slumps over next to Corvus' body, dying fast.

VAUGHN

(mutters, re: Nat Guard)
I'm on your side, assholes...

ADAMS

Vaughn!

But it's too late. Vaughn's eyes turn to his friend as the life drains out of them. Dutch grabs Adams, pulling him up.

DUTCH

He's gone! Come on!

They SPRINT away into the dark, running for their lives.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Ion and Amara rush down a dark, empty street.

Ion pulls Amara into an apartment building doorway, gets the Swythe -- CLICKS out a LOCK-PICK... They go inside.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Orion and Nubis pursue, leaving chaos and sirens behind them.

ELSEWHERE -- Cetus also arrives in the city.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Ion and Amara reach the eighth and top floor landing. Amara glances around, she's exhausted -- he's still holding her.

AMARA

(pushes away)
Let go of me...

Ion isn't listening -- his eyes are closed. Then they open again. He unlocks an apt door and YANKS her inside.

BELOW: The front door bursts in, the Radicals are coming up!

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Adams and Dutch rush down another street and duck behind a parked truck -- Nat. Guard troops run by, missing them.

DUTCH
(breathing hard)
What now?

ADAMS
I have to find her.

DUTCH
Her?

ADAMS
Them.

DUTCH
They could've gone anywhere.
(Adams reaches in his
pocket)
What're you doing?

Adams pulls out a SAT-PHONE, turns it on.

ADAMS
I'm making the call.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Ion shuts the door, then knocks over the REFRIGERATOR and HEAVES it against the door to block it.

He goes into the BEDROOM -- Amara finds a camping-lamp out and turns it on -- Ion checks the BEDROOM WINDOW. Then he's back in the LIVING-ROOM, looks out the FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS -- below is an alley on the building's back side.

Next he checks the couch -- a cushy SOFA-BED. He GRABS it and SHOVES IT -- SMASHING it through the windows and PULLING THE BED OPEN as he does...CRASH! The bed lands far below.

AMARA
What the hell are you doing?

Ion disappears into the bedroom again -- reappears with the sheets off the king bed. BOOM! Someone hits the door outside.

INT. TOP FLOOR LANDING, APT BUILDING - SAME TIME

Orion KICKS the penthouse door again. With him is Nubis. His Swythe SNAPS into a crowbar and he starts wrenching the door.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ion spreads the sheets out, standing by the broken window.

ION

Give me your hands. Hold this.

He wraps the sheet fast around her wrists and into her hands.

ION (CONT'D)

Tight.

AMARA

Why? What are you--

BOOM! The door is about to give way. Ion shuts his eyes:

PSYCHIC FLASH: *Adams and Dutch coming into the ALLEY BELOW...*

ION

I have to talk to the Immortals when they come. It's the only chance of stopping all this.

AMARA

(not understanding)

What are you saying?

ION

I'm going for the Signal alone. If I fail, you will die. But I will find you again, I promise.

Suddenly Ion steps in and KISSES HER passionately. She's stunned -- but she doesn't fight it. Not at all.

ION (CONT'D)

(quiet)

I have loved you on a thousand Earths, and I always will. Try to remember.

Then he SHOVES HER BACKWARDS OUT THE WINDOW! She SCREAMS, holding onto the sheet -- at the other end he immediately guides the sheet out the window after her...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

AMARA FALLS -- the sheet catches, opening into a PRIMITIVE PARACHUTE, slowing her a little but still DROPPING FAST until -- THUD! She hits the SOFA BED in the alley below.

ADAMS (O.S.)
Holy shit -- Amara!?

Adams and Dutch rush up to her, lying still covered in sheets. Adams frantically pulls the sheets away -- she's in shock, but okay. She smiles nervously. Dutch looks up--

ION (O.S.)
(echoing in the alley)
GO! Get out of here!

ADAMS
(helping her up)
Come on.

AMARA
No, Ion's up there! We have to--

BULLETS THWACK around them -- Nat. Guard troops shoot from the end of the alley. Adams PULLS Amara away as they sprint for cover around the corner.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

CRASH! The door BUSTS OFF ITS HINGES. Orion and Nubis climb in -- Ion stands in the middle of the room, jacket off, snow falling past the smashed window behind...

SNAP! Ion's Swythe pops into a long KATANA SWORD. Ice cold.

ORION
I'm having a little deja vu, Ion.

ION
Then stop chasing me. Leave me alone.

ORION
Ion; legend of the Ageless People,
the rogue Scout, Infinite Traveler,
Hope Deliverer, Finder of New
Earths. That is your burden and
this, this is ours.
(MORE)

ORION (CONT'D)

You've forgotten so much, what our people have achieved. We bring peace and light to these uncivilized savages.

ION

I need more time here.

NUBIS

We honor you, Ion. But you hate us, you betray us. Our people will live forever, but you are not really living anymore. It's ridiculous.

A flicker of unease behind Ion's eyes. He's afraid. Nubis and Orion speak as though they are the same entity carrying out simultaneous conversations.

ORION

We will have this Earth. There's infinite others of course, but you led us to this one.

NUBIS

You're like them now. You crave her, you're addicted to the idea that your life will be 'better' if you can just find your love again. Can't you see it, what is happening to you?

ION

This Earth is close. I can show them the way, with more time...

NUBIS

Past and future are illusions of your mind Ion. There's only this.

ORION

It's much easier to kill them. These people are us after all, as we used to be, barbarian and foul. Killing them is no different from trimming your own cracked fingernails. Is that murder?

ION

Stop it. Spreading terror to influence the Immortals' decision is wrong.

Orion smiles and glances at Nubis. Ion stares at them, uncertain -- like he's left out of a huge in-joke.

ORION

You really don't see it, do you? I suppose it doesn't matter. We pity you Ion. We pity your anguish.

SNAP! His Swythe melts into a curved scimitar -- Nubis also SNAPS out a blade. They start towards Ion immediately --

Ion FIGHTS like a hurricane against them -- their Swythes WARPING and CHANGING FORMS mid-swing, becoming AXES, SWORDS, STAFFS, MACES, CHAINS --

They SLAM each other into the walls, BLADES SLICING through furniture, HITTING with ELBOWS, HANDS and FEET -- Ion is an amazing warrior, but the Radicals seem more...professional.

Ion loses balance and Orion KICKS HIM out the door onto the top floor landing. An OLD MAN (80) comes out of another apartment, sees Ion on the floor, STRUGGLING TO BREATHE.

OLD MAN

Hey what's going on out here?

ION

Get away...

But Orion approaches and GRABS Ion in a PAINFUL HEADLOCK, DRAGGING him toward the Old Man and his apartment.

OLD MAN

Stop that! Let him go! This is my apartment!

Ion watches helplessly as Nubis walks past them and STABS THE OLD MAN IN THE CHEST. He falls to the floor and Orion PINS ION DOWN next to his dying body.

ORION

Look at him. LOOK AT HIM! What do you think he's feeling? His whole being is realizing, right now, that it was all absurd. Everything he bought, collected, owned, wanted and worried about all this time was meaningless. But is he sad? No! He's feeling Life now. Seeing the Truth, and it's so beautiful...

Ion STRUGGLES WILDLY but Orion holds on, choking him.

ORION (CONT'D)

Stop it! STOP IT ION! It's pathetic! What are you afraid of?
(MORE)

ORION (CONT'D)

(Ion slows)

That I'll kill you? So what! Have you really been doing this so long you've forgotten how to die? No more running. Accept it. Accept *this moment...*

Ion's face is red, losing consciousness...but before he does, he submits. Goes limp, accepts it. His eyes close:

EXT. VILLAGE, FOREST WORLD - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Alice STIFLES A LAUGH as NATIVE ION pinches her, flirting.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)

(smiling)

--*Stop it!*

She whirls on him, grinning, and pulls him behind one of the teepees. Like love-stricken teenagers they glance around as a few other people wander past. She kisses him.

ALICE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

I feel like I've known you forever.

ION (SUBTITLE)

Come on, his story already started.

He pulls her around and they break apart as they approach the COUNCIL FIRE separately -- Hawahkan is already speaking.

HOWAHKAN (SUBTITLE)

...Shee'fus was clever. He tricked Death into a cave, where he rolled a stone across the entrance, trapping her inside, so that none might die. But Death, being popular, had many friends. And when Shee'fus removed the stone to check on her...she was gone.

Ion glances across the fire pit -- Alice is smiling at him.

BACK TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

GASP! Ion sucks in air and clutches his neck -- still alive. Orion stands over him. Nubis is already gone.

ORION

You see? Let go of your irrational fear, see how it feels to be alive now? We're not going to kill you, Ion. Kill the Scout Immortal? No. But I'm sorry, *she* will have to pass on. We're taking you home -- or I suppose, home is coming here. They'll be here soon.

Then Ion sees that Orion is now holding his LEATHER-PENDANT, looking at it with curiosity.

ORION (CONT'D)

Strange trinket to carry...

Ion suddenly attacks, RAMMING him into a wall.

ION

Where's your friend gone?

ORION

(smiling, calm)

Let her go. She will die.

Ion grabs the LEATHER PENDANT from Orion -- but Orion suddenly counter-attacks, catching Ion off balance and THROWING HIM straight out of the windows!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

In a HAIL OF GLASS Ion falls -- BANGS into a FIRE-ESCAPE, SCRAPES his Swythe pick-axe down the wall, DROPPING and...

BAM! Lands in a dumpster below.

INT. OLD MAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Orion peers out of the windows, then turns and leaves.

ORION

He is coming for the Signal...

INT. MILITARY LAB, NYC - SAME TIME

Azrayl sits cross-legged on the floor in a dark office, eyes closed. The Signal pulses gently on front of him.

Azrayl's eyelids twitch:

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

From a distance we see Adams, Dutch and Amara hide from a police patrol and then break into a department store.

As they disappear inside, a WOLF pads forward, watching them.

INT. ION'S TENT, FOREST WORLD - AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK)

Native Ion and Alice lie naked on his bed of furs, entwined in each other's arms. The skins of his tent are covered in writing -- scribblings, quotes, drawings -- many languages, some alien. A mixture of ART and SCIENCE.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
What does it all mean?

ION (SUBTITLE)
I like to listen to people, to learn from them while I wait.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
(propping up on her elbow)
Wait for what?

ION (SUBTITLE)
To find you.

Alice is confused, she doesn't know as much about him.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
Your people said that you fell from the sky long ago, before any of them remember. They say you taught the world many things, you brought fire and healing and writing. And that one day, you will go back to the stars.

Ion does not smile, he looks away.

ALICE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
Is it true?

ION (SUBTITLE)
No. I'm not going anywhere, not now. I'll stay here, with you.

She smiles, looking at him. Intrigued.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
You are descended from the gods...

ION (SUBTITLE)
No.
 (Beat, quiet)
They're just people.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Ion pulls himself out of the dumpster, aching but alive. He puts the LEATHER PENDANT on his neck, and starts jogging.

INT. CLOSED DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Adams and Dutch hurry in through the dark department store with Amara in tow. They start climbing the still escalators.

It's EERILY SILENT inside, the echoing space is creepy, as clothes racks and mannequins create shadows in the dark.

AMARA
 What are we doing here? We're not being followed -- we have to go back and help him!

ADAMS
 We're going to the roof, help is coming.

AMARA
 What? No --

She halts, breaking away from them; frustrated, glaring.

AMARA (CONT'D)
 Who's coming? The whole damn army seems to be in the city right now, who else is coming that can possibly help?

Dutch watches quietly, but he seems to feel for Amara's case.

ADAMS
 We called in backup, they'll pick us up and--

AMARA
 I'm not leaving him, not now.

Adams looks at her, then trying to comfort her, he takes her arm in his hand. But she snaps it away--

AMARA (CONT'D)

Don't. You don't know me, okay?

Adams is discouraged and embarrassed, but holds it together.

ADAMS

Look. They know where he's going,
to the Signal and--

CRASH! The sound of a window SMASHING echoes up from the floor below. Someone breaking in. They quickly fall silent.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

(whisper, frustrated)

Come on, give us a fucking break...

AMARA

(whisper)

Give me a gun.

Adams and Dutch glance at her -- she's serious. Adams pulls a pistol from the back of his pants and hands it to her.

The three of them quietly back away into the store.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ion arrives outside the high-rise office building with the Lab hidden inside. NYPD and FBI have cordoned off the whole block, LIGHTS FLASHING. Ion glances up -- sees the HOLE left by Azryal's crash-pod in the side of the building...

Glimpses of SNIPERS in windows of buildings opposite. Ion takes a DEEP BREATH, shivering in the cold without his jacket. He MOVES FAST, VAULTING from a van OVER the cordon, DUCKING and ROLLING between cop cars, timing his movements with near-impossible perfection as cops all around him turn or glance the other way for a second, just missing him.

At an open trunk, Ion grabs a DUFFEL BAG, A PISTOL and A LIGHT. In moments Ion reaches an entrance and slips inside.

INT. TOP FLOOR, DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

QUIET FOOTSTEPS coming up the still escalator. Orion stops at the top, a shadow in the gloom, looking, listening.

Adams taps Amara to say -- *this way*. The three of them SLOWLY creep backwards among racks of long coats and pants.

Orion seems like he has a sixth sense, moving towards them.

Suddenly Amara FREEZES and holds them still between a dense thicket of clothes racks. NUBIS, also hooded, walks RIGHT PAST them from the other direction -- he was behind them the whole time, but miraculously missed them.

Nubis pauses only six feet away, looks around. As he turns away, they make a move -- keeping low between the racks.

INT. STAIRWELL, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ion moves quietly up the metal-grating fire stairwell. Suddenly he HALTS -- CLICKS off his light. At the floor above, the door opens. A SIX-MAN SWAT TEAM exits into the stairwell, moving up to the next floor...searching. They don't see him below as he peers up between the metal steps.

SWAT 1 LEADER (O.S.)

(whisper)

This is One, nothing on 53. Two has
54? Copy, moving to sweep 55.

SWAT 1 move up two more floors then exit the stairwell. Ion starts CLIMBING again, up and up -- to the top.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Amara moves toward a escalator down -- Adams grabs her.

ADAMS

(whisper)

Help is coming to the roof.

AMARA

(shakes her head, whisper)

I'm not leaving.

She moves off but QUICKLY DROPS DOWN AGAIN. On the other side of the floor is a THIRD HOODED FIGURE -- it is CETUS. Adams pulls Dutch down but his gun CLINKS on the floor...

ORION -- instantly turns towards the sound. They FREEZE. Amara can see Orion in between the clothes racks...he's just STANDING STILL, why?

NUBIS -- comes quickly around a corner. Orion watches as he turns to where the sound was...but there's NOTHING THERE.

Nubis glances across at Orion, Cetus joins them from across the floor. They're suspicious -- they know she's there somewhere. All three move, synchronized, as if one entity...

INT. TOP FLOOR, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ion grips the Swythe tight, walking through the dark office space, dimly lit by SWAT spotlights outside, far below.

He turns a corner and sees AZRAYL dead still in the middle of an office, the glowing Signal at his feet. Only his eyes move -- tracking with Ion. Azrayl is menacingly calm.

ION
(recognizing him)
It's you...

AZRAYL
It is. I never know if you'll remember me or not, what with your...problems. How long since you crashed on this Earth? Ten years? A thousand?

ION
I need to talk to them when they come. I need more time here.

AZRAYL
You're probably one of the single oldest bodies in all of the Immortal Earths, did you know that? The last thing you need is more time.

ION
Why are you doing this to me?

AZRAYL
Because it is my duty -- something you've forgotten. Yours is to be the Scout.

ION
I won't, I don't do it anymore.

A wry smile creeps across Azrayl's face.

AZRAYL
You don't have any choice Ion.

Ion is growing more and more anxious again, confused.

ION

Give me the Signal.

AZRAYL

Do you remember the last time you saw me?

ION

You killed her. In the forest.

AZRAYL

The forest?

(Beat, thinks about it)

Your memory really is random isn't it? I remember the forest. But that wasn't the last time. We've met plenty of times in between that version of Earth.

ION

What does it matter? I remember what I need to.

AZRAYL

Do you ever remember a time when you did your mission the way you're supposed to? Did you ever actually stay in orbit, and send the signal for us?

Ion stares at Azrayl, trying to guess his meaning.

ION

Stop it.

AZRAYL

(aggressive)

Stop what? What do you want, Ion? You will not grow old, it's not how we do it. But she will die, one way or another. And what then?

ION

Give me The Signal. I will kill you if I have to.

AZRAYL

There are four assault teams converging on our position. My men have almost found the girl and the entire host is arriving any minute. It's too late to change anything.

Just then they both turn, HEARING a FAINT SOUND:

FLASH VISION: A SWAT team forms up outside the doors to the office, night-vision on. Waiting for the go-command.

INT. TOP FLOOR, DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Amara, Adams and Dutch hide in the middle of an oval-shaped FRAGRANCE BOOTH. Orion is drawing near, right on top of them!

But he stops and glances back for a second...

Amara picks up a PERFUME BOTTLE and throws it -- it SMASHES in the shadows. The Immortals turn to look -- and AMARA GETS UP AND SPRINTS for the escalator down!

Orion sees her and starts to chase -- BAM! Dutch TACKLES HIM, sending the Swythe sliding across the floor. Adams covers Amara with SHOTS at Cetus and Nubis who SHELL-SPIN, their clothes deflecting the bullets.

INT. TOP FLOOR, OFFICE BUILDING - SAME TIME

SNAP! Ion's Swythe melts out into a sword, and he raises the PISTOL at Azrayl.

ION
(quiet)
Give me The Signal.

Azrayl smiles and kicks The Signal forwards a little...

AZRAYL
Let go, Ion.

Suddenly FLASHBANG GRENADES explode in a WAVE OF INTENSE LIGHT -- a HAIL OF BULLETS IGNITES around them. TWO SWAT TEAMS start shooting from the far ends of the office.

Azrayl drops backwards, Ion dives behind a desk, grabs The Signal and zips it inside his duffel. He glances across at Azrayl who stares at him serenely, completely calm. Ion HEARS HIS VOICE IN HIS HEAD.

AZRAYL (V.O.)
Without fear of death, you can attempt anything.

Just then the windows SHATTER and ANOTHER SWAT TEAM ropes in from above, landing RIGHT NEXT TO THEM.

Azrayl SNAPS out a LARGE CURVED BLADE and slices two SWATs, then DIVES OUT THE WINDOW -- grabs a rappel rope and starts CLIMBING IT FAST.

Ion SHOOTs two SWATs next to him in their vests, putting them down momentarily -- hooks the bag over his back and LEAPS OUT INTO THE AIR -- grasping for a rope, HIGH ABOVE THE CITY!

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - SAME TIME

Amara runs for her life down the escalator stairs.

Above, Orion overpowers Dutch as Adams USES UP HIS RIFLE AMMO keeping Cetus and Nubis at a distance.

Dutch falls next to Orion's Swythe handle, GRABS IT -- SNAPS out a baseball bat and SMACKS ORION in the face!

DUTCH
 (to Adams)
 GO! Help Amara!
 (Adams hesitates)
 FUCKING GO!

Adams sprints away downstairs with Nubis and Cetus fast on his tail. Dutch turns back to Orion who touches the BLOOD running down his face, ANGRY. Dutch stares him in the eyes.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
 My name is Francis Dutch. I was
 born in this city. And I'm gonna
 fuckin' kill you.

Orion FLIES at Dutch, flattening him to the floor, getting control of the Swythe which SNAPS into a MACHETE -- and he RAMS it into Dutch's chest...

SNICKT! But Dutch pulls his own COMMANDO KNIFE from his belt and THRUSTS IT INTO ORION'S NECK. They glance at each other, both knowing they're dead. Neither particularly caring.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
 This ain't over between you and me.

Orion SMILES euphorically as his life drains away.

EXT. ROOF, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ion climbs fast up the swinging rope to the roof above as high-calibre sniper rounds PUNCH into the walls around him. In the b.g. -- MUZZLE FLASHES from SWAT SNIPERS.

Ion rolls onto the roof, taking cover behind the edge -- Azrayl is there, two officers dead beside him. Azrayl quickly grabs a wound-up length of rope, looks at Ion, then up...

AZRAYL

There's always a way out, you just have to be unafraid to die for it!

Ion LUNGES AT HIM hatefully, pinning him down but -- ZOOM! A SWAT chopper ROARS over them, SHOOTING. They roll away as the concrete SPLINTERS UP beneath them. They're in trouble...

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Adams races down the escalator to the first floor when -- THWACK! A Swythe-javelin flies into his back. He GROANS, falling hard into the linoleum floor.

Nubis and Cetus reach him when suddenly Amara bursts out from HIDING NEARBY and starts SHOOTING FAST--

AMARA

(furious, screams)
JUST. DIE!

--she hits Nubis in the head and he falls -- but Cetus SHELL-SPINS and Amara immediately grabs Adams, dragging him backwards across the floor while he weakly takes pot shots at Cetus with his pistol -- keeping him 'in his shell'.

Amara pulls the spear out of Adams and helps him limp to an exit door:

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - CONTINUOUS

They hobble out quickly and collapse together arm in arm, aiming their weapons at the door...breathing hard. Exhausted.

Amara glances up at the sky -- dark clouds have rolled in. Lightning FLICKERS BRILLIANTLY, WEIRDLY, inside them.

Weak and bleeding, Adams takes out the Sat-phone.

EXT. ROOF, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: ION'S SWYTHE -- ONE END FORMS A CARABINER, THE OTHER MELTS OUT INTO A GRAPPLING HOOK, THEN RETRACTS AGAIN.

Ion ties an end of rope through the carabiner end -- TIGHT. He's pinned down between AC UNITS and large pipes. The chopper ROARS overhead, taking POTSHOTS at Azrayl nearby.

Ion wraps the other end of the rope around his torso, tying it off and looping the slack over his shoulders.

AZRAYL (O.S.)

(shouts)

Ion!

Ion glances quickly across -- we see Azrayl has done the same thing with his Swythe and rope. Azrayl nods to the strange sky.

AZRAYL (CONT'D)

--they're here.

Ion rushes him -- grabs Azrayl as the SWAT teams emerge from the fire-doors to the roof. Bullets SMACK all around them as they grapple right at the edge -- dizzingly high above NYC.

Azrayl smiles, and PULLS THEM BOTH OVER THE EDGE!

We FREE-FALL FAST with Ion as the two split, COLD WIND WHISTLING, GLASS WINDOWS RUSHING PAST INCHES AWAY --

Ion presses the end of his Swythe to the glass and...SNAP! The GRAPPLING HOOK punches out through the windows -- HOOKING FAST as Ion falls and BANG! He jarringly SLAMS TO A HALT, hanging on the end of the rope, still 40 stories up.

Further down, AZRAYL has done the same. Ion GROANS IN PAIN.

THWACK! THWACK! Sniper bullets smack into the windows near him -- *oh shit*. He looks up to the Swythe, concentrates:

ANGLE ON: THE SWYTHER -- ITS GRAPPLE HOOK RETRACTS AGAIN ==>

Ion drops into another VERTIGO-INDUCING FALL -- this time he has to QUICKLY PULL IN THE ROPE to grab the Swythe handle.

The ground's coming up fast. He deploys the grapple hook again -- ANOTHER PAINFUL, JARRING HALT -- this time only just above the ground, not far from all the Police.

Azrayl drops CATLIKE from his rope to the ground, sprinting away into the city. Ion concentrates, the Swythe-hook retracts and he drops to the ground.

Ion picks up the Swythe-handle and starts to get up when...BAM! SWAT Officers SLAM him into the ground from behind -- dozens more COPS racing over with guns drawn.

He is caught.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - NIGHT

Adams sits collapsed in Amara's lap. He drops the Sat-phone.

ADAMS

(feeble)

Help's coming. Any second.

Amara glances down at him while she still aims at the exit door. Amara nudges Adams, but his head lolls...

AMARA

Adams? Come on, please don't -- you don't have to do this for me. Adams!?

But he's gone. Tears in her eyes, Amara stands up, glancing down at the body of the soldier who died for her. The wind blows cold. Dark buildings rise beside her. She is ALONE.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ion is handcuffed behind his back, being dragged between the cop cars towards an NYPD MOBILE HOLDING TRUCK ahead. He is DISTRAUGHT, struggling in frustration.

ION

NO! You don't understand! You have to let me go! They're going to kill her! I have to go, they will be here any minute! LET. ME. G--

A SWAT OFFICER hits him HARD.

SWAT OFFICER

Shut up!

ION

I have to talk to them for you! You're all going to die if you don't let me go!

They open the doors to the TRUCK and pull him inside:

INT. MOBILE HOLDING TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

They throw Ion inside one of the holding cells.

Ion falls to his knees inside, almost hysterical with anxiety. As the officers step outside again, Ion tries to calm himself. His breathing slows. He closes his eyes...

EXT. FOREST WORLD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Alice is setting up tents with the rest of her traveler people. She laughs with an old woman about something.

Native Ion stares at her from a slight distance. He looks down -- in his hand is a FADED, TORN VERSION of the PHOTO.

He looks up at her again -- she is looking at him curiously. She smiles at him nervously, but with an obvious flicker of attraction.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - NIGHT

Amara glances up and down the quiet street in the dark city, helpless.

Suddenly she turns around to see THE DEER.

It stands quietly in the middle of the road, looking at her with its deep, calm eyes as SOUNDLESS LIGHTNING flickers in the clouds above.

The sight of it again, a presence consistent throughout her life, almost makes her break down completely --

AMARA
(emotional)
...Ion.

She walks to it but it steps backwards, waiting. She's supposed to follow -- she starts jogging after it as--

BAM! Now the door flies open and Cetus RUNS at her fast down the street with his swythe-sword ready--

BLAM! BLAM! Amara shoots back at him, but the bullets go wide -- she turns and RUNS FOR IT.

EXT. POLICE CORDON, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

TWO LARGE MILITARY HELICOPTERS ROAR overhead, flying low in between the buildings. They're flanked by SPECIAL FORCES "LITTLE BIRD" CHOPPERS -- ELITE SOLDIERS standing out on the side-rails. As some circle, one of the large helicopters lands in the middle of the street...

The FBI COMMANDER and NYPD turn in amazement as the doors open and SOLDIERS jump out, armed to the teeth.

Then comes COLONEL LAUER (40) in fatigues, a serious, no-bullshit operator. And finally...DR. RIVERS climbs out carefully, his arm in a sling and face bandaged.

FBI COMMANDER
What is this? What's going on?

COLONEL LAUER
I'm Colonel Lauer. You have someone in custody?

FBI COMMANDER
This is an FBI operation, we believe terrorist cells could--

COLONEL LAUER
--We're authorized under Order 3-14, we're in charge.
(hands him a document)
Where is he?

NYPD OFFICER
(dumbstruck)
He's in the truck...

Colonel Lauer immediately strides away towards the truck flanked by his men -- Dr. Rivers limping behind. Lauer's ASSISTANT, stays with the FBI.

LAUER'S ASSISTANT
We want the building emptied and everyone involved in your operation assembled for a debrief. Now. No exceptions.

The FBI Commander turns to his agents, flabbergasted.

I/E. MOBILE HOLDING TRUCK - NIGHT

Ion's eyes snap open and he GASPS -- he looks up to see Colonel Lauer and Dr. Rivers standing in front of him with the cell door open.

ION
Chris...

DR. RIVERS
(smiles)
Hi Ion.

Ion stands up and hugs him, but pulls away anxiously, runs past them out of the truck--

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)
Ion wait!

ION
--Amara's in trouble!

COLONEL LAUER
Just tell us where!

EXT. POLICE CORDON, OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

But Ion doesn't have time -- he sprints past soldiers and cops, searching -- there. He jumps onto a parked POLICE MOTORCYCLE. Starts it up -- ROARS OFF.

NEAR THE TRUCK -- Colonel Lauer barks into his radio.

COLONEL LAUER
Two birds, stay on that bike!

A couple Little Bird choppers zoom after Ion.

Dr. Rivers glances up at the sky. Weird black clouds, lightning flickering...

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Amara SPRINTS away from Cetus -- fighting past New Yorkers in the streets. She looks for the Deer, but he's gone.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - SAME TIME

Ion guns the motorcycle fast, shifting between the parked cars and snowbanks and people.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - CONTINUOUS

Amara is tiring, slowing down. She glances back as Cetus SNAPS his Swythe into a spear, prepares to throw it--

BAM! A BLUR OF METAL slides across the tarmac, CUTTING his legs out --

Ion dropped the bike at speed, rolling away as it SLAMMED into Cetus. Ion doesn't hesitate -- runs to his body where Cetus' legs are CRACKED and BROKEN. Ion looks at him.

CETUS

Do you remember it? Death is --
it's like falling, falling from a
great height, and when you reach
the bottom...you wake up.

Ion picks up the Swythe-spear as civilians and Amara watch--

ION

See you in your next life. Not
mine.

Ion kills him. He turns back to Amara, on her knees in the
street, breathing hard, exhausted. He crouches next to her...

POV AMARA: SHE LOOKS UP, BUT **HER** VIEW IS DIFFERENT--

EXT. FOREST WORLD - DAY (AMARA FLASHBACK)

Native Ion helps Alice up over a boulder, behind them are her
whole group of travelers. Ahead of Ion is his friend Chua.
They are leading the travelers through the forest.

ION (SUBTITLE)

(smiling)
Come on. We're almost there.

BACK TO SCENE:

Amara stares at Ion IN A NEW LIGHT. She knows. She remembers.

A Little Bird chopper touches down behind them...

EXT. POLICE CORDON, OFFICE BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

The helicopter lands outside the Lab-building where the army
have now CORDONED off the entire block. They've set up
FLOODLIGHTS on mobile generators. Some military scientists
are also setting up other equipment.

A TRIO of FIGHTER JETS ZOOM overhead, arching around the
city.

Ion and Amara disembark, staying close to each other.

Colonel Lauer and Dr. Rivers rush over to them and Ion walks
and talks with them --

ION

Have you got the Signal?

DR. RIVERS

It's right over here.

COLONEL LAUER

Whoever they are, they're right on our doorstep now. NASA's got a *massive* number of unknown objects just outside our orbit. Ion you've got to help us now -- what can they do? What can we hit them with?

ION

They won't come within your range. You will never see their faces.

Lightning cracks across the swirling sky, illuminating thick black clouds overhead.

COLONEL LAUER

(suddenly scared)

What? I thought this was an invasion?

ION

First they are coming to talk.

DR. RIVERS

Talk?

ION

Yes. And to judge you.

COLONEL LAUER

Who are they? Who are these people?

ION

People. Only people, like you or me. There is nothing else.

(Beat)

But they will open your eyes.

As if on cue, noiseless LIGHTNING STREAKS again across the sky, and the floodlights and flashlights CUT OUT. DARKNESS.

The only light seems to come from The Signal, sitting on the ground in the middle of the street - its glow pulsing bright.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Azrayl jogs through the streets, hurrying past people who have all stopped, peering up at the sky.

He stops at a trash dumpster and fishes out a duffel bag, looks inside. It is one LAST HOMEMADE BOMB. He hurries off towards the cordoned area...

EXT. POLICE CORDON, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ion looks at Amara -- she is still holding his hand.

ION
Are you okay?

AMARA
(smiles)
Stop asking me that.

He nods, smiling but a little sad. He's worried. He walks forward to The Signal and kneels in front of it.

DR. RIVERS (O.S.)
You knew about the helicopter, back on the base. You took her out because you knew what would happen.

Ion glances up at his old friend, who seems even older still.

ION
I don't know how, I just know.
(Beat)
I'm glad you're here.

DR. RIVERS
--I know.

Ion looks back at The Signal and closes his eyes.

EXT. FOREST WORLD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Imagine a highway town abandoned for millennia, that dense forest has completely consumed. Giant sequoias grow up where roads once ran. Trees and foliage and earth grow beautifully out of empty shells of buildings.

Native Ion and Chua walk through this scene, leading the travelers behind them. BIRDS CALL, the forest alive with sound.

Alice walks up next to Ion. She speaks cheerfully, flirting.

ALICE (SUBTITLE)
It's lucky you found us, isn't it?

He stares back -- falling headlong for this girl. She stumbles, and he doubles back, CROUCHING DOWN TO HELP HER UP.

BACK TO:

EXT. POLICE CORDON, OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

BOOM! A HUGE THUNDERCLAP RUMBLES LONG OVERHEAD. The clouds seem to swirl with flickering lights, lightning inside them illuminating a shifting spectrum.

Everyone is SILENCED. Everyone looks up from the dark city.

Something falls from the clouds, fluttering like a feather high above -- only a speck. It is small and white -- as it gets lower they can see that it is a bird. A WHITE DOVE.

It flaps quietly downwards. And as it reaches the level of the tall buildings -- suddenly the lights inside SURGE WHITE-HOT. Electronic billboards FLARE WHITE -- every light source burns and fades as the Dove moves downwards past them.

The Dove floats down and lands on top of The Signal box which FLARES BRIGHT, casting a stary light-effect across the road.

The Dove flaps its wings and looks around, again with a kind of HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. Everyone stares at it -- in confusion, in awe. Some soldiers cross themselves. Amara is amazed.

AMARA

Is it...
 (to Dr. Rivers)
 Can you...

DR. RIVERS

Yes. I can see it.

The Dove faces Ion, eyeing him alone as he kneels in front of it. A long moment of SILENCE, then:

Ion SPEAKS QUIETLY -- but it is in the FOREST WORLD LANGUAGE. The others do not understand -- Colonel Lauer steps closer, listening intently but in utter confusion. Ion continues...

COLONEL LAUER

What language is that? What is he saying?

DR. RIVERS

I don't know...

But Amara is fixed on Ion, slowly she kneels down near The Signal too. Can she somehow understand what he is saying?

Ion finishes talking. A moment's pause, and then he stands up and turns to Colonel Lauer, The Dove watches them.

ION

He says that--

COLONEL LAUER

--He? It's a bird.

Ion glances at Amara quickly. Then back to Lauer.

ION

I've visited with many people on many Earths, and I've seen societies like yours many times. You have always claimed to know many things, but you are ignorant even of the capabilities of your own mind and spirit. The People Immortal would not risk a physical encounter with such an obviously fearful and violent civilization. It is a form of travel or etheric projection -- Dr. Rivers might have told you about my own journeys while I've been a guest here.

(Beat)

He says the rest of their people will come now, in a similar fashion. They ask you to warn your troops -- do not be alarmed.

COLONEL LAUER

What is this? Are we being invaded or not? Can we do anything?

ION

I will talk to them.

Ion looks up at the sky -- and then they see it. Silhouetted by the flickering lightning high above; INUMBERABLE BIRDS.

They are STARLINGS -- flocking, as they do in reality, in a vast swarm -- circling and grouping in a MESMERIZING, STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL movement; turns, undulations and ripples flow through the multitude of birds not unlike in a school of fish below the ocean.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - SAME TIME

Soldiers and civilians across the city stare at the sky -- completely awestruck by one of the most arresting sights in nature, here amplified to a truly biblical scale.

EXT. SKY ABOVE NEW YORK - SAME TIME

HIGH AND WIDE: we see the massive size of the flock that seems to melt down from the dark, flickering clouds that hang up above the city. The starlings circle and spin as the FAINTEST GLOW of dawn begins to brighten the sky.

Some of them descend into the actual city --

EXT. POLICE CORDON, OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Rivers and the others stare as the 'ribbons' flow off of the main flock -- the birds arching and zooming down between Manhattan's skyscrapers.

DR. RIVERS
(to himself)
They're starlings...

A soldier next to Rivers glances at him, then back up in awe:

While the main swarm continues its hypnotic movement above, still thousands of birds alight on every window sill, rooftop and lamppost. Peering down at every person.

Ion once again kneels before The Signal -- the Dove glancing at him, and peering at Amara too.

ION (SUBTITLE)
(quiet)
I am Ion. I am your Scout...

The Immortals' voice is heard in his head, a sound of many voices at once, whispering together.

THE IMMORTALS (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)
You sabotage your mission, Scout.

ION (SUBTITLE)
Yes. But I will not apologize.

THE IMMORTALS (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)
Your cause is self-serving.

ION (SUBTITLE)

She was taken from me!

THE IMMORTALS (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)

She is her own person. She does not belong to you -- what happened, happened.

ION (SUBTITLE)

(angry)

No -- don't cheapen it, don't pretend that it doesn't exist! I love her.

THE IMMORTALS (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)

Are you sure?

Ion looks at Amara, beat up, clothes filthy, still beautiful.

ION (SUBTITLE)

She is all I have.

The Dove's beady eyes seems to inspect Amara, as she stares at it in amazement.

THE IMMORTALS (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)

This is not about you Ion. Look around, this world is stricken with fear and destruction. We are spreading enlightenment and eternal life to the infinite Earths and you are the crucial part. We honor you--

ION (SUBTITLE)

--Do not lecture me about enlightenment!

Suddenly Ion stands up, anxious and furious -- SPEAKING LOUDLY to all of them at once.

ION (CONT'D)

(in English)

You! You people would have me single out those Earths that do not have our technology or knowledge -- you come down here, anonymous and godlike to massage your own egos! That is self-serving! You sow fear and awe and smirk behind your backs at their perceived barbarism while you would murder and steal from them, all in the name of enlightenment. I. AM. HERE!

(MORE)

ION (CONT'D)

I have tasted their air, I have bled and learned and laughed with the people of every Earth that I have landed on. You peer down at them with pretentious curiosity, ready to wipe them out in a heartbeat for their young Earth.

(Beat, sneering)

I am the Scout for you, the "Kingdom of the Heavens". In all the superverse, there is only one Ion. That is why I am what I am, why I must do this task. And I say that it is you who are corrupt. For all time I have travelled for you, but you would send killers ahead of you to snuff out any glimmer of my own happiness.

At this the birds seem uneasy, shifting on their perches while above -- the swarm turns faster, more dynamic.

ION (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

Leave this Earth! You cannot impose your divinity from without, these people deserve to live and find it for themselves.

(Beat)

Please, give me one mortal lifetime. Let me live one lifetime here with her, and I will Scout again. I will find you new Earths for another eternity. I promise.

One by one, gradually so that it is barely perceptible -- the starlings begin disappearing, fading into the clouds above and the shadows below.

ION (CONT'D)

(shouts)

What say you?!

(subtitle)

What is your decision?

Ion spins around, glaring at them with mad anxiety as they disappear. Finally he wheels on The Dove -- furious.

ION (CONT'D)

Speak to me!

But the Dove flaps its wings and takes off -- the light in The Signal dies. SWIRLING, CELESTIAL LIGHTNING FLICKERS in the clouds above.

Everyone looks up as the WHITE DOVE flies upwards...

Colonel Lauer turns in expectation -- Ion cannot believe it.

ION (CONT'D)
(shocked, relieved)
I think they're leaving...

A hand on his shoulder -- it is Amara. She takes his hand -- he stands up and looks at her.

AMARA
They spoke to me, in my head.

ION
What? What did they say?

She seems sad, but she also looks at him like she finally understands it all.

AMARA
I do remember. I don't know how,
just flashes, like a fading dream,
but I remember you.

Ion looks at her, hardly believing it -- and SHE KISSES HIM.

AMARA (CONT'D)
(whisper, close to him)
They told me what's going to
happen...

BOOM! A large bomb EXPLOSION ROCKS one of the buildings next to them from a few stories up -- GLASS AND DEBRIS AND ASH BURST everywhere. Some soldiers are blown away. Others start running to help. SCREAMS, people fleeing everywhere in a panic! Colonel Lauer goes into war-mode, SCREAMING orders into his radio, thinking they are attacked.

Ion sees everything as if in slow-motion. Fear grips him.

ION
No...please...

But he cannot stop what is coming, as we realize we have seen this scene before...

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tall, dark buildings -- no power. One ON FIRE, CRUMBLING. PEOPLE scatter in panic, TRASH spins up in a HOWLING WIND, BODIES lie in the wet gutter, lined with winter slush.

A Man stands, eyes searching the chaos -- he is sharp, soulful, but anxious. He looks up -- swirling, celestial lights FLICKER behind the low clouds. This is ION (30).

WE TRACK around as he turns -- A WOMAN is standing next to him, also gazing around in awe. This is Amara. Ion stares at her strangely, her hair whipping in the wind.

Suddenly Ion notices a MAN -- AZRAYL (30) -- only a shadowed silhouette in the gloomy street. He raises a GUN at them...

Ion's eyes fill with ABSOLUTE FEAR as he glances at the Woman next to him. Ion raises his hand like a feeble shield...BLAM!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. WATERFALL POOL, FOREST WORLD - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Native Ion and Chua BURST above the surface of the waterfall pool, GASPING for air, out of breath. Ion is grinning.

Chua splashes Ion with mock disappointment, but then they both sense something, turning around to see --

A LARGE BAND OF TRAVELERS, staring at them. People stand and sit on the bank with their belongings. WOMEN AND CHILDREN were bathing in the shallow water, now watching in SILENCE.

Ion and Chua swim towards them until they can stand. Suspicious but not hostile, Chua calls out:

CHUA (SUBTITLE)

Who are you?

A female voice ANSWERS in the same language (not translated). It is ALICE. She stands waist-deep, naked and covering her breasts, but unashamed.

Ion sees her -- staring like he has seen a ghost. It is her. He has finally found her. And he is instantly smitten again.

She SPEAKS, gesturing towards her group. Chua nods and REPLIES -- okay. She nods back. For an awkward moment they are all SILENT, the WATERFALL FALLING. Then Alice gestures, asking them to turn around so that she can dress.

Ion, still entranced by her, turns and closes his eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Ion's eyes open, he's lying on his back in the road. He winces -- a deep slice in his arm. He looks over to his left--

Amara is lying next to him, breath shallow, eyes staring. The wind howls, people run in panic. FLAMING DEBRIS BURNS nearby.

Ion pulls himself over to her, anxious, manic, to see -- she is shot in the chest -- the same spot, above her left breast. Tears run down his cheeks as he holds her in his arms.

ION

No no...Amara, not again.

She looks at him, struggling to breathe.

AMARA

Was it worth it? To see me?

ION

Always.

He kisses her on the lips, pulls back. She smiles.

AMARA

Find me. Find me again.

And like that, she is gone. He stares at her empty body in shock, knowing that he has lost her again.

FOOTSTEPS NEARBY -- Azrayl walks over to Ion.

AZRAYL

You are the Scout, that they will believe forever. But you have offended them, and they will not forgive forever. This Earth is now yours, they will not touch it. But your lesson must be to forget her.

Ion looks up at him, but there is nothing he can say now.

AZRAYL (CONT'D)

You're in love with a mortal soul. She is your curse. This is your punishment. My work here is done.

Azrayl raises the gun again -- but puts it to his own head.

AZRAYL (CONT'D)

See you in another life Ion.

BLAM! Azrayl shoots himself.

Ion sits in shock. Suddenly he notices the PHOTO in Amara's hand as the wind catches it and it tumbles into the flaming debris nearby -- BURNING UP.

Ion's soul is crushed. He barely registers the frenzied activity of the army and people around him fire-fighting.

Dr. Rivers approaches, kneels down beside Ion and simply wraps his arms around him, hugging him. The normal power suddenly comes back on, slowly lighting up the city.

The sky is clearing too, as the sun's first light shows.

CLOSE ON: ION AND DR. RIVERS, KNEELED TOGETHER IN CHAOS

DR. RIVERS

Go.

(shaking him gently)

Ion? Go, get out of here now before they take you into custody again.

Just get away. You have to.

Ion looks at him, his old and only friend. Ion comes back to life slightly, but then takes the LEATHER-DIAMOND PENDANT from his neck.

ION

No. They don't know what I can do.

Here, do me one favor.

(gives it to him)

Take this.

(Rivers is confused)

You were right, it's not decoration. It's manufactured -- data storage.

DR. RIVERS

I don't understand...

ION

(exhausted, upset)

Binary code, it works off simple binary. The diamond, it's a crystal of Carbon-12 and Carbon-13 atoms, they used 12 for the zero and 13 for the one, in binary. It's my backup, in case they left me. I had it made it once, on another Earth -- I don't remember when. They don't know I have it.

(MORE)

ION (CONT'D)

That diamond stores more data than every computer on your Earth -- it has the instructions to rebuild my ship. It has everything. Please take it. Follow it exactly. Then find me.

Dr. Rivers takes the pendant, hardly believing it.

ION (CONT'D)

This Earth will prosper with the knowledge. It will take a long time. I will wait.

Dr. Rivers looks at his broken friend with pity.

DR. RIVERS

I once heard a saying: one must pay dearly for immortality; one has to die several times while one is still alive. I do not envy you.

Dr. Rivers glances back at Colonel Lauer, BARKING ORDERS. He picks Ion up.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

You told me, that nothing ever dies. Somewhere Ion, she is alive.

Ion nods, trying to pull himself together.

ION

Thank you for being my friend.

DR. RIVERS

Maybe I'll see you again.

Ion smiles grimly. Then he starts to jog away.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

Wait!

Ion glances back.

DR. RIVERS (CONT'D)

When the ship is done -- how will they find you?

ION

Look everywhere, and keep looking.

Ion turns and runs as army helicopters ROAR overhead and fire trucks HOSE DOWN the bombed building.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - CONTINUOUS

Ion runs FASTER AND FASTER through the streets of New York -- his BREATHING BECOMING STRONGER AND STRONGER until we:

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST WORLD - DAWN

Bare feet running -- a BLUR OF MOVEMENT as Native Ion and a friend, Chua, SPRINT through the undergrowth -- a FOOT RACE. Though physically the same age, Ion seems YOUNGER IN SPIRIT, carefree, almost childlike.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)
 (voice is fatherly,
 telling it to Young
 Howahkan)
*...but his punishment was not
 death. No no, death is nothing.
 Death is easy. For Shee'fus the
 spirits had something else in mind.*

They fly through the LUSH, BEAUTIFUL FOREST dangerously fast, fearlessly leaping over sharp boulders and logs.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
*He was condemned forever, and his
 punishment was to heave a rock all
 the way up the Great Mountain,
 whose slopes are the same, but
 different, each time you look at
 them.*

Chua laughs and SHOVES Ion in mid-air -- unfazed and grinning, Ion gracefully kicks off a tree, correcting himself and landing on his feet.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
*And whenever he reached the top,
 the boulder would slip from his
 grasp, and it would fall, tumbling
 away from him, all the way down.*

Ion gains an advantage pushing faster when suddenly the foliage disappears and they LEAP STRAIGHT OUT OVER A CLIFF--

Ion spins in the air, gloating at Chua just behind as HE FALLS 100 FEET down to a DEEP WATERFALL POOL below, winning.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

Eyes snap open. They scan around, taking in the room as if for the first time. Ion seems the same age, but now his hair is LONG AND FILTHY with a YEARS-OLD BEARD.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE)
*The spirits thought that their
torture of him would be crushing.
But Shee'fus was no ordinary man,
and he defied the spirits once
again.*

He sits on a DUSTY STONE FLOOR in a SIMPLE TEMPLE, thin shafts of sunlight breaching the dark, small birds FLUTTER in the rafters.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
*For he accepted his fate, he did
not hope or want for anything more
than he had.*

OTHER MONKS of all ages meditate or quietly shuffle past.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
*So as Shee'fus reached the bottom
of the mountain again, and glanced
back up at the enormous task ahead
of him, Shee'fus was aware of
himself...and you know what he did?*

Ion's gaze lands on a nearby candle. He stares long and deeply at its dancing flame, and he SMILES.

ION (V.O.) (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
He smiled.

CUT TO BLACK.