

BLANK CANVAS

The White Room isn't magic. It's a tether.

Written by

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BLACK — PRE-TITLE SFX: TICK. TICK.

ON SCREEN — HUD (CENTER):

STABILITY INDEX — PROJECTIONS TRACE A: NO CURE → ▲ +12

TRACE B: CURE RELEASED → ▼ -31

EVE (V.O., FLAT)
Scenario A: stability pays.
Scenario B: stability falls.

ON SCREEN — HUD (LOWER RIGHT):

WORK ORDER — ROAR KEY — PENDING

Flash-frames (1-2s total), no dialogue:

- Hospital corridor; wall board: Operating Margin +3.2%.
- Pharmacy window; taped BACKORDER NOTICE.
- Dashboard shard: CITYNET — FUNDING / COMPLIANCE.

SFX: a ghost of the TONE... then cut.

BLACK.

SOUNDS COLLIDE: Wind. Water. A gunshot. A subway rush.

Then silence.

SAM (V.O.)
The White Room isn't magic. It's a
tether. I paint a door; Karl finds
a lens.
Every pull costs blood—and time.

ON SCREEN — HUD (LOWER RIGHT): DOOR — PRIMER

Square + Coin + Live Lens → Door

Cost ≈ blood + ~90s smear

Recall ≠ Hop

KARL (V.O., FLAT)
Cost applies.

INT. WHITE ROOM - TIMELESS

A room so white it erases edges.

"Windows" painted on in a shinier white, pretending at light.

A jar of brushes waits. Labels: HEARTBEAT. ORIGIN. WATER. DISCOVERY.

A gray metal folding chair faces a brown easel. A blank canvas waits.

There is a white bucket with fat, artist brushes, and paint cans in white with black labels.

The camera spans the room to show the endless white.

SFX. Keys jangle, loud in the quiet, then turn in the lock.

The door cracks—primary color floods in, then dies when it shuts.

Footsteps.

SAM (45) enters. Jet-black hair, 5 o'clock shadow, broad shoulders in a T-shirt, utility pants, boots. One eye ice-blue, the other coal-black.

BRISTLE, his mutt, trots in and hops on the chair.

Sam shakes his head. Bristle sighs, hops down.

Sam shuts the door. The colors vanish.

His boots echo as he sits. POV: the blank canvas. His hand twitches.

Bristle's emerald eyes stare back.

Sam pulls a brush labeled HEARTBEAT.

SAM
(calm)
Let's begin.

Tap. Black and red dots spread. Sam frowns. He digs deeper — pulls a brush labeled EMOTION.

Tap. An off-key B-flat. Bristle perks up.

SAM (CONT'D)
(soothing)
Sshhh.

Left hand: HEARTBEAT. Right: EMOTION.

Two quick strokes. Bristle howls.

He grabs WATER, plunges his hand, glowing blues and greens ooze between his fingers.

He hurls the can at the canvas.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

SUPER: CHICAGO - PRESENT

Rain needles asphalt. SAM SLAMS into the pavement - hard.

A thin thread of blood slips from his nostril. His right hand trembles once.

He wipes the blood with his sleeve, clamps his hand into a fist. Keeps moving.

RICARDO (36) - ebony, lethal - crouches. CLINT (30) - Italian muscle - flanks him.

RICARDO
Why are you following me?

Ricardo BANGS Sam's head against wet concrete.

KARL (V.O.)
Pulse spiking. BP up twelve.

Sam grits through it, eyes locked.

SAM
(to Ricardo)
Don't take the call.

Clint flips him - but Sam SURGES, a clean sucker punch.

He comes up fast. The tremor's gone. The pain isn't.

Ricardo freezes. Then swings. Sam locks him in a headlock.

Clint rips him free. Sirens wail. Ricardo boots Sam in the gut.

RICARDO
(low)
That bullet in you? Your warning.

Police shout. Gunfire. Ricardo and Clint vanish.

Sam coughs blood, fingers tapping the pavement like a dying heartbeat.

SAM
(far-off)
Stay off the train.

SFX. Someone watches; smoke curls from a cigarette. A pair of eyes.

A pale woman steps from the rain: GINNY (32). Blonde, raincoat, soaked sneakers. Sam's blood stains them ruby.

GINNY
(with caution)
Hey... are you okay?

Sam locks eyes.

SAM
Give me your hand.

Crowd murmurs. She hesitates. Then grips firm. The crowd unsettled.

GINNY
Do I know you?

SAM
(smiling)
Always. See you soon.

INT. WHITE ROOM

Sam is in the chair, drenched in the colors of the rain.

Bristle licks his hand. Blood from his side drips on the white floor.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

GINNY
(looking around)
Sam? Sam? Where did you go?

The rain falls heavily.

INT. WHITE ROOM

A hum builds. A glow washes over Sam; the wound knits shut.

KARL, AI ASSISTANT, British voice like James Bond.

KARL
Shot stress high. Ricardo clocked
you. Dominic clocked Ginny.

SAM
We'll correct it.

KARL
Objective set: protect Ginny;
secure Kathleen; stop Ricardo.

Sam winces. The humming and healing glow continue.

Sam stands, his back to the camera. He peels off his clothes.
On his back a numbered stamp: 04101962.

SFX. The canvas bleeds all the colors to the floor and the
canvas goes white.

Bristle, laps at the pool of colors.

KARL (CONT'D)
Replay Chicago.

Sam turns around. The chair blocks the waist down. His
chiseled chest is visible. He watches the replay. He sees
Dominic.

SAM
We have to correct that.

KARL
Ginny is now in danger. 68% chance
of elimination.

SAM
I fucked up.

KARL
You let emotion cloud your mission.

SAM
Ok, so what is our plan?

KARL
Processing.

SAM
I want two options, please.

KARL
Certainly. First, let's get you
dressed.

RECALL ECHO — PARIS, 1944 (ARCHIVAL)

SUPER: Paris, France, September 1944. The liberation of
Paris by US Forces is over.

KARL V.O.
Archival recall. Not a hop-an
imprint.

A sunny street in Paris. Café. US armed forces about the
street. Local Parisians. The air is light. The mood is
Paris. Love in the air. Sam walks up to a café. Sam is a
US Army Captain. Shined up. Polished up. Flawless in his
Khaki Army Captain dress. He walks by a table, a man reading
and sipping a coffee. (BREADCRUMB this is DOMINIC). Sam
does not notice.

Sam looks down to his chest, a Name plate: Rivers.

EXT. CAFÉ

As Sam opens the door, A man in a dark suit runs into Sam.
Sam falls backwards. The man doesn't stop. (BREADCRUMB this
is Ricardo).

SAM
(shouts out)
Hey! You!

The man is gone. Sam gets up and dusts himself off. Regains
his Paris in love mood and heads inside.

INT. Paris Café.

Sam enters and sees Ginny, a young Army Nurse. She smiles
and waves. Sam smiles broadly and heads to the pastry
counter.

Ginny has a young woman, her age, in a smart Parisian look.
Kathleen, 26.

Sam orders 3 croissants and a coffee. Sam heads to the table
to meet Ginny and her friend Kathleen.

Sam kisses Ginny Paris-style on each cheek.

GINNY

Sam this is my friend, Kathleen. A
chemist.

Kathleen's journal and formulas are visible.

SAM

Bonjour, Madame. Kathleen,
enchanté.
(Good morning, Madame. Kathleen,
nice to meet you.)

Sam's eyes drift to Kathleen's open journal – pages covered
in scribbled chemical formulas. Purple and Black stitching
K.H.

SAM (CONT'D)

(switching to English,
low)

May I see? ...What is this?

Sam studies it – he knows. This is what he's been sent to
obtain.

SAM (CONT'D)

(urgent, in English)

How about a trip to the top of the
Eiffel Tower?

The WAITER sets down the tray. Sam forces a smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

(to waiter, French,
brusque):)

On peut l'emporter ?

(Can we take that to go?)

He returns with a bag. Sam tosses the three croissants inside
and knocks back his coffee in one gulp.

SAM (CONT'D)

(snapping back into
action)

Ladies, Paris awaits.

GINNY

Well, let us go freshen up. A girl
wants to be ready for a date.

The women exit toward the restroom. Sam strides outside.

EXT. PARIS CAFÉ

Sam steps out, lights a cigarette.

ANGLE — UNDER A TABLE

A canvas SACHEL is cinched to the underside with twine and gray putty. A thin WIRE trails up a table leg.

The MAN who sat there rises, drops coins, disappears into the crush — leaving the satchel behind.

Across the street, RICARDO watches. From his coat sleeve he slides a tiny RADIO TRANSMITTER: a flip-up safety, a stubby antenna, a single red lamp.

KARL (V.O.)
RF spike. Source: café, under-
table.

Sam clocks the wire. The satchel. The crowd packed tight.

He moves — fast — yanks a WOMAN out of her chair—

Ricardo's thumb depresses the toggle. The red lamp goes
STEADY.

A beat of perfect silence.

— FLASH. A pressure wave bowls the café. Glass erupts. Flags
lift in a hot wind.

Sam shields the woman as the world goes white.

INT. WHITE ROOM

Sam is wiping tears from his eyes.

KARL (V.O.)
BP up twelve.

SAM
Noted.

Sam pulls on a black tee and ops pants; laces his boots. Sam
sighs. Grunts.

SAM (LOW) (CONT'D)
Secure Kathleen's backups. Box out
Ricardo.

KARL
Sam in Paris, you are missing the
details.

Sam looks puzzled.

SAM
Karl show me the video.

The video replays on the white wall.

KARL
The man at the table. Dominic.

Sam, shakes his head. The video moves to Ricardo knocking
over Sam.

KARL (CONT'D)
That is Ricardo.

SAM
Copy that.

KARL
Shall we look at a recovery plan?
You still need to save Dr. Kathleen
Harris?

Sam now in full Military black-ops, Navy SEAL, look. He
looks dangerous. He feels dangerous.

Sam sits down at the easel. He picks up a brush.

Bristle barks in praise of his move.

Sam picks up a brush, "ORIGIN" and he brushes the canvas.
The Eiffel Tower resolves from paint.

Sam picks up a paint can labeled "DISCOVERY" and he dredges
his hand in, and a purple-black liquid oozes. Sam spreads it
on his face like war paint. He picks up the can.

SAM
(shouts)
Ready?

He splashes the liquid on the canvas.

INT. BOSTON CHEMICAL LAB

SUPER: Boston Research – Discovery Wing, January 6, 2019.

Sam, in a white lab coat, over his black ops attire.
Clipboard in hand.

SAM
(to himself)
Secure Dr. Harris' backups. Box out
Ricardo.

Sam's left hand twitches.

KARL (V.O.)
Sam you must focus. Your BP
140/90.

He looks at his name badge: "Col. Samuel Rivers"

He looks over and sees Kathleen working and a man talking
sweetly (Ricardo). A name plate on the door: Dr. Kathleen
Harris.

A woman enters with documents (Ginny). She hands them to
Ricardo. He brushes her off, intent on his conversation with
Kathleen.

Ricardo's phone buzzes. Display: DOMINIC

Ricardo steps aside to take the call.

RICARDO
(formal)
Yes sir?

DOMINIC
(low and lethal)
Stay focused. Stay on track. We
need the formulas.

RICARDO
Yes Dominic.

Click. Ricardo sighs. Laser focus on the plan.

Sam walks over. On the desk, a lab notebook: corner embossed
K.H. in gold. Inside: notes in purple-black ink.

SAM
(abrupt, to Ricardo)
Thompson, why are you here? Zone
3's your post.

RICARDO
(cool)
Colonel. Dropping off these files
for Dr, Harris.

SAM

Bullshit. I saw Miss Bradshaw bring them in herself.
Next time I find you unauthorized, you're janitorial.

RICARDO

Kathleen – O'Malley's, Back Bay.
Seven sharp?

SAM

She's working late, Romeo. Move along.

Ricardo and Sam lock eyes. Ricardo breaks the stare, heading out.

RICARDO

(muttering)
Pretentious hard-ass.

SAM

I heard that. Cowards mumble.

Ricardo exits. Sam gives Ginny a nod – she heads out.

GINNY

Need anything, Dr. Harris?

KATHLEEN

Evidence.

GINNY

I'll label the mystery boxes.
Purple?

KATHLEEN

Always.

SAM

Miss Harris.

KATHLEEN

Col. Rivers – call me Kathleen.

SAM

Alright then, Kathleen. You can call me Sam.

KATHLEEN

(studying)
Have we met?

SAM

People say I have one of those faces.

KATHLEEN

Déjà vu. But I don't believe in it.
I'm a woman of science –
If I can prove it, it exists.

SAM

Right. What've you uncovered? The CDC wants a readout.

KATHLEEN

(excited)

I ran five protocols–

She continues – fast, layered, thrilled. Sam tunes out – an echo of Paris, 1944, the café – the explosion.

His mind returns.

SAM

(firm)

Kathleen. Sum it up.

KATHLEEN

(thinks)

AIDS-level deadly, but faster. Like it knows shortcuts.

SAM

Status on the AIDS elimination project?

KATHLEEN

(frustrated)

Gone. Whole block of research – deleted this morning.
Hacked. Locked down. Someone broke my security.

SAM

(low)

What?

KATHLEEN

Files are gone. But I take after my French grandmother.

SAM

And?

KATHLEEN
She died in a Paris café. September
9, 1944. Bomb took her.

SAM
And the files?

KATHLEEN
(soft smile)
Like her, I have backups.

She pats a file stack. Sam nods.

SAM
Other copies?

KATHLEEN
Of course.

SAM
And?

KATHLEEN
And I'm not going anywhere.

Her phone buzzes. Sam glances at the message:

RICARDO (TEXT)
"When you're done with the gorilla,
meet me for coffee.
Tell him you have a headache."

Sam narrows his eyes. Takes the phone. Presses CALL.

SPLIT SCREEN — LAB / HALLWAY — NIGHT

RICARDO
(sexy voice)
Damn, that was fast. You ditch the
old man already?

SAM
(stern)
This gorilla's on to you.

Ricardo freezes. Sam hangs up.

END SPLIT.

INT. HALLWAY — NIGHT

Ricardo paces. Fires off a text:

RICARDO:
"Old man's a problem."

DOMINIC (REPLY):
"Then eliminate the problem."

MONTAGE — MEDIA SWIRL / SPREADING THREAT

— HEADLINES spin:

COVID-19 Locks Down World

— KATHLEEN, peering into a microscope. — RICARDO, arriving at O'Hare. — Folder scan: "AIDS ELIMINATION." — GINNY, flipping through a photo album: two girls in Paris.

KARL (V.O.)
(dry British)
Sam, three hops left. 91% Ginny
dies. Kathleen's odds: 17%.

ON HUD (LOWER RIGHT): WINDOW: 3 HOPS REMAINING

SFX: surgical TICK

INT. OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Live feeds flood the screen:

— Paris café explosion loop — Boston lab badge logs —
Chicago: Ginny alone — Street cams. Train platforms. Airport
scans

DOMINIC stands over four operators:

MICHAEL (OPS)

GABRIEL (COMMS)

RAPHAEL (MED)

URIEL (INTEL)

EVE (A.I.)
Subject SAM continues to disrupt.
Mission probability down 12%.

DOMINIC
Omission: Ginny. Now.

INTERCUT – CHICAGO STREET / OPS SUITE – NIGHT

Ginny clocks her reflection. Pace quickens.

A FIGURE (Michael) falls in behind – pace for pace.

EVE (V.O.)
Window: 3 hops remaining.

INT. WHITE ROOM – TIMELESS

Sam eyes the jar of brushes. Hesitates on ORIGIN – chooses HEARTBEAT.

SAM
Karl – Ginny. Now.

KARL (V.O.)
Vector locked. Cost will rise.

Brush hits canvas.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET – NIGHT

SAM SLAMS into wet pavement behind MICHAEL. The world tilts. A thin nosebleed slips. His right hand trembles.

KARL (V.O.)
BP up nineteen. Tremor still present.

MICHAEL's elbow hits Sam's LEFT FOREARM – an odd, dense THUNK – not bone.

MICHAEL'S eyes flick, just once. Sam doesn't give it oxygen.

KARL (V.O.)
Left radius stable.

MICHAEL pivots – blade flashing. SAM yanks GINNY sideways – steel misses by inches.

A brutal, silent dance:

— MICHAEL elbows sharp — — SAM traps, turns — — A hip throw; asphalt kisses — — The knife skitters under a car.

SAM (LOW)
Eyes on me. Move when I move.

MICHAEL lunges. SAM absorbs it — two body shots, a choke, a clean DROP. Non-lethal. Controlled.

GABRIEL (V.O., FILTERED)
Asset Michael down. Street cams —
thirty seconds left.

DOMINIC (V.O., FILTERED)
Escalate. Shift to Boston. Box the
lab.

Sam tugs Ginny into a lit doorway.

SAM (LOW)
You're alive. Stay that way.

He presses a burner into her palm.

SAM (CONT'D)
If this rings and I say "mint tea",
you answer. Otherwise — silence.

A beat. He calculates.

SAM (COMMS, LOW) (CONT'D)
Ricardo next. We box him out of the
lab.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Boston feeds bloom: badge readers, service doors, elevator logs.

URIEL
Affirmative ID on Ricardo. O'Hare
arrival logged — inbound to campus.

RAPHAEL
Fire drill spoof can clear two
floors in forty seconds. Your call.

DOMINIC
Do it. Push him in. Close the door.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET — NIGHT

SAM angles GINNY into the rideshare queue — then slips backward into shadow. He's already leaving.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Blood drips from Sam's lip. The HUD ticks in the corner.

ON SCREEN — HUD:

WINDOW: 2 HOPS REMAINING

TICK. TICK.

KARL (V.O.)
BP stabilizing. Tremor still
active.

SAM grabs the brush marked DISCOVERY.

SAM
Boston. Ricardo's access. Give me
the door.

KARL (V.O.)
Vector plotted. Expect
interference.

Brush hits canvas — the LAB CORRIDOR forms in paint.

INT. BOSTON RESEARCH CAMPUS — SERVICE CORRIDOR — NIGHT

Badges CHIRP beyond the next door. Alarms WHOOP — a full evacuation drill.

KARL (V.O.)
Fire drill spoof engaged. Ricardo
inbound — ninety seconds.

SAM breathes in. Out. His hand steadies — barely.

SAM (LOW)
Box him out. Secure the cure. Karl
— get us to Boston. Now.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR — MOMENTS LATER

Evac alarms WHOOP. Red strobes blur the cinderblock.

Sam slips into the stream of exiting lab techs. Calm.
Invisible.

KARL (V.O.)
Evacuation: ninety percent
effective. Two holdouts in B-Wing.
Ricardo inbound in sixty.

SAM palms a master keycard — not stolen, generated. He taps a
wall pad — it BLIPS green, then locks amber.

Sam breathes in. Out. Hand steadies — barely.

KARL (V.O.)
Advisory: avoid direct trauma to
the LEFT FOREARM. Adjunct threshold
near.

SAM (LOW)
Box him out. Kill guest credentials
— on my mark.

KARL (V.O.)
Ready.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Boston feeds stack fast: badge readers, elevators,
stairwells.

URIEL
Ricardo at the south entrance. Evac
flow takes him to B-Wing in under a
minute.

RAPHAEL
Drill spoof holding. Security reads
it live.

DOMINIC
Good. Give him a door — then shut
it on the old man.

INT. B-WING CORRIDOR — NIGHT

Ginny rounds a corner; almost collides with Kathleen.

GINNY
You okay?

KATHLEEN
Define "okay."

GINNY

On a scale of one to peer-reviewed.

KATHLEEN

...abstract submitted.

INT. LAB LOBBY – NIGHT

RICARDO strides in – jacket neat, umbrella dripless. TEMP CONTRACTOR badge flashes.

The GUARD, distracted, watches the evac panels pulse.

GUARD

Stay with the evac, sir. This way.

RICARDO

Command sent me to pull Dr.
Harris's backup. Two minutes.

On his screen – a glowing fake work order.

GABRIEL (V.O., FILTERED)

Lobby cams looped. Mics muted.
Ninety seconds.

DOMINIC (V.O., FILTERED)

Readers locked to guests. Take
staff.

RICARDO steps closer – angling the guard into a blind alcove.

SIREN WHOOPS.

SNAP.

The guard drops – quiet, final.

RICARDO

(low, clipped)
Guard 12, silenced.

DOMINIC (V.O.)

Copy. Keep moving.

Fast hands: badge stripped, radio wiped, body tucked. He clips the guard's mic back into the cradle – feeds room tone.

GABRIEL (V.O.)

Ledge cam blind. You're in it.

Swipe. UNLOCK. Ricardo moves upstream – wrong way.

INT. LAB CORRIDOR — CONTINUOUS

RICARDO walks against evac flow. Calm. Cold.

GABRIEL (V.O., FILTERED)
Loop expires in sixty.

DOMINIC (V.O.)
B-Wing. Records. Keep moving.

Ricardo turns down a dim service hall.

INT. B-WING — RECORDS VAULT ANTEROOM — NIGHT

SAM badges a secondary reader. Red light.

He leans close to the mic.

SAM (LOW)
On my mark.

Palms the reader again. It flickers.

SAM (CONT'D)
Mark.

SYSTEM: Guest credentials go NULL.

KARL (V.O.)
Guest access revoked.

INT. SERVICE HALL — CONTINUOUS

Ricardo hits the door — DENIED.

RICARDO
(flat)
Never easy.

He pivots. Heads for the stairwell.

INT. B-WING — ARCHIVE ROOM — NIGHT

Silent servers hum. One tape robot glides in its track.

SAM moves fast, opens a Faraday pouch, unspools a cold backup tape from a locked drawer.

KARL (V.O.)
Harris's offsite rotation. You're touching it.

SAM

Then it's leaving with me.

He seals it in the pouch. Mini-win.

His right hand trembles. He pins it to the rack.

KARL (V.O.)

BP stable. Tremor present.

INT. LAB LOBBY — SECURITY DESK — SAME

RICARDO charms the next GUARD.

RICARDO

Fire panels show a B-Wing fault. If the archive doors cycle, we lose chain of custody.

The guard buys it. Picks up the desk phone.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

I'll stand by the vault. Keep the panel honest. Two minutes.

The BUZZER clicks. The service stairs open.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

URIEL

He's in the service stair. Blind run up to B-Wing.

DOMINIC

Give him a tool.

PUSH NOTIFICATION hits Ricardo's phone:

ARCHIVE PANEL BYPASS — APPROVED.

GABRIEL

Handled.

INT. B-WING — RECORDS VAULT ANTEROOM — NIGHT

SAM clocks a mirror dome. A shadow crosses the stairwell.

SAM (LOW)

He's on the landing. Give me a door to nowhere.

KARL (V.O.)
Freight elevator. Ghost ping. Drops
to Sub-2, locks in maintenance.

SAM
Ping it.

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR — CONTINUOUS

RICARDO steps in. Doors seal. The car drops. The indicator
freezes, then shudders.

He grins. Not his first box.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

URIEL
He's boxed. Sub-2.

DOMINIC
Clear the hold. Let him snake up.

GABRIEL (V.O.)
Bypass sent. Lobby loop expires in
forty-five.

RAPHAEL
Route: Sub-2 → compressor room →
service chase → B-Wing.

DOMINIC
Send him the map.

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR — CONTINUOUS

CLICK. The panel relays engage. The car lurches.

His phone BUZZES:

MAINTENANCE BYPASS AUTHORIZED + redlined campus map.

Doors part. Ricardo smiles. Pops a panel with a Specter key.
Steps out.

INT. B-WING — ARCHIVE ROOM — SAME

SAM types fast at a terminal, CLEAN USB in.

KARL (V.O.)
Live dataset online.

SAM
Then we get, then we lock.

He kills network mounts – screens drop like runway lights.

ON SCREEN – TRANSFER: 73%... 74%...

He scans. Under the robot – a second cable.

SAM (LOW)
Talk to me.

KARL (V.O.)
Unregistered dongle. Side channel.

SAM slides to the back. A tiny nano-transceiver pulses red.

SAM
Of course.

He yanks it. TRANSFER jumps: 84%... then freezes.

KARL (V.O.)
Exfil halted.

SAM
Mini-win.

He seals the transceiver + tape into the Faraday pouch.

His right hand twitches. He pins it to the rack.

KARL (V.O.)
Window: two hops remaining.

SAM (LOW)
Noted.

INT. SUB-LEVEL CORRIDOR – SAME

The FREIGHT ELEVATOR opens into a concrete void. Compressor hum.

RICARDO steps out. Smiles.

Pops a panel. Map in hand. Red route: STAIR ACCESS → SERVER CHASE → B-WING.

RICARDO

Cute.

He starts walking.

INT. B-WING — ARCHIVE ROOM — SAME

SAM pulls the USB, turns to leave — stops.

Terminal reads:

/tmp/.ghost — 17%

SAM (LOW)

Second mouth.

KARL (V.O.)

Local process. Spawned two minutes ago. Origin unknown.

SAM

Kill it.

KARL (V.O.)

Denied. No admin rights.

Sam types faster. No dice.

He kills the terminal power. The screen dies. The ghost vanishes.

KARL (V.O.)

Process halted.

SAM

Mini-loss deferred.

He heads for the exit — pauses.

Below — a CLANK. Metal on metal.

SAM (LOW) (CONT'D)

He's coming up the hard way.

KARL (V.O.)

ETA: four minutes, if he finds the chase.

SAM

Then we're gone in three.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

URIEL

Shadow copy failed at seventeen.
Side channel's dead.

DOMINIC

He pulled the transceiver. Of
course.

RAPHAEL

Freight car's stationary. He's off.

DOMINIC

Box the exits. Force a convergence.

EVE (V.O.)

Advisory: Subject SAM now holds one
cold tape and one unregistered
device.

Probability of further disruption: rising.

DOMINIC

Then lower it.

INT. B-WING — SERVICE STAIR — NIGHT

SAM blends with evac techs, descending. He presses the
Faraday pouch against his ribs.

KARL (V.O.)

You have what you came for.

SAM

Not yet. He's still breathing.

He exits through a side door.

EXT. CAMPUS SERVICE COURT — NIGHT

Rain again. Lights spin. Sirens doppler past.

SAM tucks into shadow. Eyes scanning. HUD tick returns.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 2 HOPS REMAINING

SFX: TICK. TICK.

SAM (LOW)
Give me his next door.

KARL (V.O.)
If he follows the chase, he
surfaces at north utilities.
Two minutes, thirty.

SAM
Then we wait.

INT. SUB-2 COMPRESSOR ROOM – NIGHT

Slab concrete. Fan chop. Humid air.

RICARDO steps out. Pops a maintenance panel with his pry key.

His phone buzzes:

Route to NORTH UTILITIES.

He fogs a ceiling lens with a milky canister – cam dies.

Then drops into the service chase – echoing, tight.

INT. SERVICE CHASE – CONTINUOUS

Ricardo climbs. A grate above. Two bolts. He eases it aside.
Wet hiss.

EXT. NORTH UTILITIES COURT – NIGHT

Rain needles. Steam ghosts from generators. Sodium lights
flicker.

Ricardo emerges – replaces the grate like he was never there.

Twenty yards away, SAM is already waiting. A shadow in
shadows.

KARL (V.O.)
North utilities. You're on him.

SAM (LOW)
Eyes on the hands.

Ricardo moves toward the alley. He pauses – a flicker in the
steam. A shape.

He turns. Calm.

RICARDO
You warn strangers. Why not
yourself?

SAM
Working on it.

Ricardo smiles – quicksilver. Closes.

FAST EXCHANGE:

– Ricardo feints high, goes low – – Sam traps, blade skitters
– – Shin-kick, elbow, headbutt – – Both absorb. Both stay
standing.

Sam, close – slips something coin-small onto Ricardo's phone
spine.

KARL (V.O.)
Admin token cloned. Ghost seed
neutralized.

SAM (LOW)
Thank you.

Ricardo, sensing the move, slashes Sam's forearm – a bright
red arc.

Sam doesn't give it oxygen. He shoves Ricardo into the fence
– ZZZT – a live hum.

KARL (V.O.)
BP up twenty-four. Bleeding
moderate.

Sirens bend. Lights strobe.

DOMINIC (V.O., FILTERED)
Converge north. Keep him boxed.

Ricardo hears it. The stolen radio on his belt crackles.

He keys it. Voice perfect.

RICARDO (INTO RADIO)
Copy. North utilities contained.

He palms a flash beacon – FLASH – a white pop, blinding.

When the retina burn fades – Ricardo's gone into the alley.

Sam blinks. Starts to follow—stops. Looks at his bleeding arm.

He makes the call.

He doesn't chase blind.

He pockets the receiver — the twin to the parasite coin —
Into the Faraday pouch, with the cold tape.

SAM (LOW)
We got what we came for.

KARL (V.O.)
And he's still breathing.

SAM
So am I.

A patrol cart turns the corner —

Too close.

Sam melts into the steam. Gone.

EXT. ALLEY / CAMPUS PERIMETER — CONTINUOUS

Ricardo hits the alley at a runner's clip, then—gone into rain and red taillights.

EXT. NORTH UTILITIES COURT — MOMENTS LATER

Two PATROL OFFICERS cut their engines, sweep lights. Nothing but steam, a humming fence, and a popped flash beacon cooling to dark.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

Uriel's map updates: two vectors diverge — SAM on campus, RICARDO to street.

URIEL
Admin token burned. Side channel dead.

RAPHAEL
Utilities cam fogged. Lobby loop ending now.

EVE (V.O.)
 Subject SAM in possession of cold
 tape and unregistered device.
 Probability of further disruption:
 rising.

DOMINIC
 Then lower it. Eyes on Ginny's
 route. If he doubled back—

URIEL
 Rideshare ID found. She's moving.

DOMINIC
 So are we.

EXT. CAMPUS SERVICE COURT — NIGHT

Sam presses his forearm; blood beads, steady. The HUD ticks
 in his periphery.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 2 HOPS REMAINING

SFX: TICK. TICK.

KARL (V.O.)
 BP stable. You should close that
 wound.

SAM (LOW)
 After.

He breathes in. Out. Rain erases footprints.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Give me his next door. And put a
 mile between Ginny and anyone with
 a badge.

KARL (V.O.)
 Routing. One minute, forty to
 Ricardo's probable reentry on
 Milwaukee. Ginny redirected — ten
 minutes to Lakeview.

SAM
 Good. Then we make this expensive.

He slips into the dark.

EXT. CHICAGO — MILWAUKEE AVE — NIGHT

Traffic hisses in rain. A rideshare glides past — GINNY inside, tense.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Live feeds: Milwaukee Ave, campus, street cams. Two icons crawl: SAM (campus), RICARDO (north).

DOMINIC

Route Sam to the Bean. Get Ricardo to Ginny — she's got Kathleen's backup on her laptop.

URIEL

Overriding a jump hasn't been done.

DOMINIC

I don't want excuses. I want results.

EVE (V.O.)

Warning: vector interference may disrupt Subject SAM's guidance.

DOMINIC

Do it.

Uriel's fingers fly; an interface flips from OBSERVE to INJECT.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Sam at the easel, breath steady. Brushes wait. HUD ticks at the edge of vision.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 2 HOPS REMAINING

SFX: TICK. TICK.

SAM

Milwaukee route — guide me analog.

KARL (V.O.)

Vector guidance engaged. Warning: interference may de—

KARL (V.O.)

— vec— in— —

His voice shreds to static. Then nothing.

ON SCREEN — HUD: COMMS LINK — LOST

EXT. MILLENNIUM PARK — “THE BEAN” — NIGHT

ON SCREEN — HUD: 1 HOP REMAINING — COMMS LINK: LOST

Sam staggers onto slick concrete, reflections bending him to infinity.

No Karl. No feed. Only rain and the drum of his pulse.

He looks up — skyline, distant sirens. He moves.

INTERCUT — AS
NEEDED:

INT. GINNY’S APARTMENT — HALLWAY — NIGHT

A KNOCK. GINNY freezes, half to the kitchen.

RICARDO (O.S.)
Pizza delivery.

GINNY
I didn’t—

The chain slides. Door opens an inch—

Ricardo drives it, shoulder—first. Chain snaps. He’s in, calm.

INT. MILLENNIUM / WABASH / RANDOLPH — NIGHT

Sam runs. Cuts corners. Uses glass for sightlines. Alone.

INT. GINNY’S APARTMENT — LATER

TIME LAPSE IN MOTION — rain flicker, clock hand jerk, sink drip repeats.

— GINNY bound to a chair, tape at wrists.

— RICARDO at her laptop, a USB in; progress bar climbs.

— His other hand scrolls phone photos — Sam at the campus fence.

RICARDO
Backups are for optimists.

Bar hits 100%. He ejects. Pulls a second, stubby USB with a faint logo.

Inserts. The laptop FREEZES; FAN ROARS.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
And pessimists.

Keys begin to SIZZLE; a chemical whiff. Screen dies.

He sets the laptop against the curtain hem. A soft ORANGE BLOOM licks up.

Ricardo plucks a third blank from pocket, taps it against his knuckle – a habit – pockets it. He tastes the air. Satisfied.

INT. CTA PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL / STATE – NIGHT

Sam pounds through the tunnel, two steps at a time, breath fogging.

Sirens arc left. He goes right.

EXT. GINNY'S BUILDING – NIGHT

Ricardo emerges into rain, jacket neat. No look back.

He blends. Gone.

INT. GINNY'S APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Fire crawls the curtain. The LAPTOP pops; sparks spit. Smoke fattens.

Ginny coughs, eyes burning. She rocks the chair. Nothing.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Sam hits the block. Sees flame ghosting in a third-floor window.

He sprints.

INT. GINNY'S BUILDING – STAIRWELL – NIGHT

Three steps at a time. Smoke at the landing.

Shirt over mouth—he slams GINNY’S DOOR. Wood SPLINTERS.

INT. GINNY’S APARTMENT — CONTINUOUS

Heat punches. Curtain a tongue of fire. Laptop a blackened mouth.

Ginny, bound, choking.

A RESCUE HOOK flicks from Sam’s keyring — one swipe, tape gone.

He yanks her up, drags her low under smoke.

SAM (LOW)
Breathe. Stay with me.

He boots the burning laptop into the sink — steam howls.

Curtain still chews upward.

A drenched towel — PRESS — flame gutters, fights, dies slow.

SAM (CONT’D)
Move.

They duck through heat, toward the hall.

EXT. GINNY’S BUILDING — NIGHT

They spill onto wet concrete, coughing. Sam steers Ginny into rain, away from the door.

Distant sirens bend toward the block.

GINNY (RAGGED)
He said... “pessimists.”

SAM
He’s wrong.

He scans the street — no Karl, no comms, just rain and the city.

ON SCREEN — HUD (TINY): 1 HOP REMAINING — COMMS: LOST

GINNY (SOFT, SHAKEN)
Why didn’t you run?

SAM
I already did.
(beat)

SAM (LOW) (CONT'D)
We finish this analog.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

The canvas waits. HUD ticks in the periphery.

ON SCREEN — HUD: 1 HOP REMAINING

A FARADAY POUCH sits on the chair: cold tape; nano-transceiver.

KARL (V.O.)
Comms restored. Partial. Vector
interference persists.

SAM
We have Boston. Cold tape plus his
side channel. He thinks he won.

KARL (V.O.)
He'll move to weaponize. Advisory:
ROAR activity spiking around
Kathleen.

Sam studies the brush labels. Doesn't touch them.

SAM (LOW)
Off-grid, then. I seed him doubt;
you keep eyes on her.

KARL (V.O.)
You're choosing analog.

SAM
He taught me.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Live feeds split: GINNY in a rideshare, KATHLEEN leaving the
lab with a tote.

DOMINIC
Alignment on Kathleen. Quiet grab.

EVE (V.O.)
Collateral probability: six
percent. Proceed.

URIEL
Hazmat drill staged. Van en route.

INT. CHICAGO — CORNER BAR (MILWAUKEE) — NIGHT

Narrow. Neon hum. Low talk. Cash only.

Sam at the bar, dry. He sets a COIN on wood — twin to the
parasite he planted.

Lets it spin. It sings. Stops. He pockets it.

RICARDO steps in from rain. Jacket neat. No umbrella tonight.

No handshake. Two nods. The bartender sets two pours.

They clink. No toast.

A beat. Nothing but breath.

Sam tips his glass toward the BACK EXIT.

INT. BAR BACK HALL / EXIT — CONTINUOUS

Short corridor. Mop sink. Red EXIT glow.

Sam raises both hands, quick—precise—SIGN LANGUAGE:

COMMS OFF. NO DEVICES.

Ricardo's jaw tics. He answers the same:

OFF. CLEAN.

Batteries out. Sam wraps his in foil.

A longer beat. The weight of history.

EXT. BAR — REAR ALLEY — CONTINUOUS

Rain threads brick. One security light flickers.

They face each other. No quips. No preamble.

They collide — mouth, breath, jaw, the memory of it.

Hands find zippers; a shoulder hits brick. Urgent, quiet — years in seconds. Pants hit ankles. Sharp breaths. Bodies connect.

Then — stillness. Faces close. Breathing slow. Sam lights a cigarette. Takes drag. Hands it to Ricardo. He does the same.

SAM (LOW)
They're using you.

Ricardo's eyes don't move. He reaches, buckles without hurry.

RICARDO (LOW)
You just did.

Ricardo tosses the cigarette.

SAM
Do you miss this?

A small, involuntary breath. He kills it.

RICARDO
This is logistics. I have needs.
You just filled it. We're opposite
sides.

SAM
That's the lie.

A look: he's heard worse. Or better.

SAM (CONT'D)
Boston's cold. Your transceiver.
Your admin token. Burned.
Dominic needed you dirty. It's
easier to cut off a dirty hand.

It lands. He doesn't show it.

RICARDO
You think I don't know the job?

SAM
I think you know the job. I'm
asking if you know the end of it.

A beat. Rain ticks. A far siren.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

On Uriel's screen: **KATHLEEN** exits a campus side door.

A **HAZMAT VAN** rolls slow to the curb.

URIEL
Contact in thirty seconds.

EVE (V.O.)
Proceed.

EXT. BAR — REAR ALLEY — SAME

Sam watches Ricardo, the calculus behind his eyes.

SAM (LOW)
Walk away from her tonight.

RICARDO
Which her.

SAM
Either. Both.

Ricardo's mouth twitches — not a smile.

RICARDO
You still warn strangers.

SAM
Trying not to.

A long, quiet look. History breathes between them.

Ricardo steps back. Composure re-clipped.

RICARDO
Don't chase me.

SAM
Don't run.

Ricardo take a step back, he looks. He goes. Not fast. Not slow. He rounds the corner and is gone.

Sam's breath frosts. He slides his phone battery back in.

KARL (V.O.)
You were dark for six minutes.
Alignment on Kathleen is live.

SAM
Location.

KARL (V.O.)
South side service lane. Hazmat
van. Window narrowing.

Sam moves.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS — INTERCUT

The brushes wait. Sam reaches — ****HEARTBEAT**** this time — then stops, flexes his cut forearm, breathes through the tremor.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 1 HOP REMAINING

KARL (V.O.)
You can still make it analog.

SAM (LOW)
Not tonight.

Brush hits canvas—

EXT. CAMPUS — SOUTH SIDE SERVICE LANE — NIGHT

A white HAZMAT VAN idles at the curb. Two TECHS in Tyvek. KATHLEEN hesitates with a tote.

Sam steps out of nothing behind the van — a half-stumble, then still. A thin NOSEBLEED.

RIGHT HAND TREMBLES once.

KARL (V.O.)
BP up twenty-seven. Residual
tremor.

SAM (LOW)
I know.

The nearer TECH lifts a clipboard.

TECH #1 (MUFFLED)
Dr. Harris? We've got a containment
alert in B-Wing— need you to verify
a sample offsite.

KATHLEEN
I wasn't paged.

TECH #2
Paging's down in the drill. Quick
ride.

Sam moves, slow and casual, toward the rear doors.

He spots it: a ****THIRD OPERATIVE**** in the driver's seat, visor down.

SAM (LOW)
Karl-plates?

KARL (V.O.)
Masked. Rental pool spoofed.

Sam reaches the van's back handle. He pops it-gently-the doors ****SHIFT**** an inch.

Inside: a ****SOFT CASE**** with tie-downs. A zip restraint coil. Not hazmat.

SAM (LOW)
Not a drill.

He shuts the doors quiet. Steps around the rear bumper-

SAM (TO TECHS; EASY) (CONT'D)
Which facility?

The Techs clock him at the same time. A beat. Then they move.

- TECH #1 grabs for Kathleen's tote-

- TECH #2 side-steps, reaching for a ****WANDER BAG**** (restraints)-

Sam intercepts. Fast, efficient:

- He heel-hooks Tech #2; the man folds to concrete.

- He palms Tech #1's wrist, turns it, the tote stays with Kathleen.

- He drives an elbow into a Tyvek diaphragm: ****whuff****-air gone.

The DRIVER bails, coming around the hood with a ****STUN WAND****.

Sam meets him - the wand crackles past; Sam jams the arm, strips the wand, snaps it on the asphalt - dead. A knee to hip; the driver staggers.

KARL (V.O.)
Patrol ETA ninety seconds.

A CAMPUS PATROL CART turns onto the lane. Lights rolling.

DRIVER (TO TECHS)
Go-go-go-

Tech #1 lunges for Kathleen again. Sam shoves him off, pulls Kathleen behind him.

SAM (LOW, TO KATHLEEN)
Eyes on me. Move when I move.

He pops the van's rear doors wide—BLOCKS the lane—then sweeps the **SOFT CASE** out, kicks it under the van. No abduction today.

The Driver makes the choice: grabs Kathleen's **TOTE** instead and runs. Tech #2 limps after him.

Tech #1 staggers to the driver seat and punches the van into gear— Sam yanks Kathleen sideways as the van jerks, grinds, then lurches around the soft case and peels off.

The patrol cart skids in, two GUARDS hop out, confused by Tyvek, by smoke, by sirens.

GUARD #1
Hey-HEY-!

SAM
They're not ours. North egress—now!

The Guards sprint after the fleeing pair.

Kathleen shakes, breath ripping.

KATHLEEN
Who—?

SAM
With me.

He steers her into the shadows beside a service door. The **HUD** flickers in his periphery.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 1 HOP REMAINING

KARL (V.O.)
Window shows one hop remaining.

SAM (LOW)
We'll spend it well.

KATHLEEN
They took my tote—

SAM
Inventory?

KATHLEEN
Notes. ID. One backup drive.

SAM
Not the cold tape. Not the lab
copy. We can live with that.

Patrol sirens doppler closer. Radios squawk contradictory
orders.

KARL (V.O.)
ROAR signal density rising. Dominic
is pivoting.

SAM (LOW)
Then so do we.

He checks Kathleen's pupils; steady. He looks at his
trembling hand; it steadies.

SAM (CONT'D)
Can you walk?

KATHLEEN
I can run.

SAM
Good.

He angles her toward a side exit.

KARL (V.O.)
Ricardo's vector trending
east-toward Milwaukee. He has the
tote. He does not have the cure.

SAM
He has enough to think he does.

A beat of calculus behind Sam's eyes.

SAM (CONT'D; LOW) (CONT'D)
We make him doubt. Then we make him
trade.

He glances back to the lane-Tyvek scattered, van gone, guards
in pursuit- then forward, already moving.

SAM (CONT'D)
White Room in thirty. Prep me two
doors: his and mine.

KARL (V.O.)
Understood. Expect interference.

They slip into the dark.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

Uriel's map shows vectors diverging: **RICARDO** with the tote; **SAM/KATHLEEN** off-grid.

URIEL
Tote secured. Subject SAM not in frame.

EVE (V.O.)
Probability of recovery remains acceptable.

DOMINIC
Send him the next door. And make sure it's the wrong one.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

The FARADAY POUCH (cold tape + nano-transceiver + admin-token receiver) sits on the chair.

The HUD ticks in Sam's periphery.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 1 HOP REMAINING

KARL (V.O.)
Message received: "YOUR TAPE FOR GINNY. 20 MIN. NAVY PIER." Spoof probability high. Ricardo origin: twelve percent.

SAM
Dominic. He expects me to choose wrong.

He pulls a slim **DECOY DRIVE** from a drawer — unlabeled — holds it in one hand,

the pouch in the other.

SAM (LOW) (CONT'D)
We keep the cure. We move the man.

KARL (V.O.)
Doubt vector?

SAM

Three tells and a truth. 1) His admin token was burned. 2) His side channel exfil pointed at ROAR. 3) His "work order" signed with a key only ops has. Truth: dirty hands get cut off.

He pockets the FARADAY POUCH. The DECOY stays in his other hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

Give me the Pier. If they jam you, stay dark.

KARL (V.O.)

Expect interference.

Brush hits canvas.

EXT. NAVY PIER — NIGHT

Wind knives off the lake. Tourist lights smear in wet air. Sparse foot traffic.

Sam staggers out near the rail. A thin NOSEBLEED. RIGHT HAND TREMBLES once.

ON SCREEN — HUD: COMMS LINK — DEGRADED → LOST

No Karl now. Just wind.

Ricardo appears at distance, alone, hands empty but for a small **MESSENGER BAG**.

They close to ten feet. No cover. Lake on one side, glass on the other.

RICARDO

You came.

SAM

Not to trade.

Ricardo's eyes flick to the pouch in Sam's coat. Back up.

RICARDO

Then to die?

SAM

To think.

They stand in rain. A beat. The city breathes.

SAM (CONT'D)
Three tells: Your admin token?
Burned. Your side channel? Mine
now. Your work order? Signed with a
ROAR key.

He flips a coin-thin **RECEIVER** from the pouch – the twin
to what he planted.

Tosses it to Ricardo. Ricardo catches on instinct.

SAM (CONT'D)
Check the hash on your last push.
It matches what's on that coin. Not
your signature. Dominic's.

Ricardo doesn't glance down. He pockets it. Controlled.

RICARDO
You expect me to take your word.

SAM
I expect you to verify it later.
And to ask why he needed your hands
dirty.

A gust. Flags snap. They don't move.

RICARDO
The girl?

SAM
Alive. For leverage.

RICARDO
The cure?

Sam taps the pouch – once – then shows the **DECOY DRIVE** in
his other hand.

SAM
A proof. Enough to make him flinch.
Not enough to use. Walk away from
her and I'll put the rest where you
can find it.

Ricardo breathes—just slightly deeper. That lands.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Live feed: a grainy PIER CAMERA. Two silhouettes. Wind telemetry. No audio.

URIEL

Subject SAM on-site. Comms degraded.

RAPHAEL

Crosswind twelve. Sniper window narrow.

DOMINIC

No shot. Jam tighter. Sweep the pier. Push CPD at ninety seconds.

EVE (V.O.)

Advisory: subject RICARDO telemetry inconsistent. Variance rising.

DOMINIC

He does the job. Then he's done.

EXT. NAVY PIER — NIGHT

Ricardo's stare holds. Then—he opens his **MESSENGER BAG** an inch. Inside: **ZIP RESTRAINTS**.

He closes it.

RICARDO

You brought a proof. He'll want the rest.

SAM

He'll want your head first.

RICARDO

Maybe.

A SECURITY GUARD rounds a corner, bored, scanning. Keeps moving.

Wind howls. The city edges closer.

SAM (LOW)

Test him. Call your handler. Ask for a safe door. Count how long before a lens blinks above you. If it blinks, you're boxed.

Ricardo files it. Eyes never leave Sam.

RICARDO
The girl walks if I agree?

SAM
The girl walks when you decide
you're not disposable.

They stand in it. Then— A subtle **FREQUENCY WHINE** kisses the air. Lights along the rail **F L I C K E R**, just slightly out of sync. Jamming tightens. A ripple in puddles.

Sam's HUD blips and dies completely.

ON SCREEN — HUD: SIGNAL LOST. WINDOW: —

[then it dies]

Around the far corner, two shadowy FIGURES start toward them, deliberate.

SAM (LOW)
Your call.

Ricardo's hand goes to his side as if for a weapon—comes back empty. He watches the approaching figures. He looks at Sam.

RICARDO
Twenty minutes.

SAM
You've got ten.

Ricardo turns away—doesn't run—walks into rain and light, vanishing into foot traffic.

The two approaching figures adjust course toward Sam now. Not tourists.

Sam doesn't wait. He steps to the rail, swings over, drops to the lower maintenance catwalk.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Pier feed stutters; Sam drops out of frame.

URIEL
Visual lost. CPD en route.

EVE (V.O.)
Probability of subject RICARDO
deviation increased to thirty-
seven.

DOMINIC
Lower it. Find the girl. Move her.

EXT. NAVY PIER — LOWER MAINTENANCE CATWALK — NIGHT

Spray kicks off the lake. Sam crouches under the lip of the pier, wind-shielded.

He fishes the COIN-RECEIVER from his pocket, presses it flat to a rusted SERVICE PANEL.

With his bleeding forearm he draws a crude SQUARE on the metal — blood + grease,

high-contrast. He angles it toward a DOT CAMERA under the rail.

SAM (LOW)
Karl, if you can see this—pull me.

Nothing. Just wind.

He pockets the coin, keeps his palm on the square. Waits. One breath. Two.

A faint, threadbare TONE ekes from the panel — more felt than heard.

KARL (V.O., SHREDDED, RETURNING)
...—call path found. Municipal cam
handshake. Warning: recall is not a
hop.

Cost: transient auditory occlusion, short-term latency,
possible memory smear.

SAM
Take it.

The WORLD WARPS — sound collapses to a needle's hiss. White sears the edges—

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Sam hits the concrete on one knee. A thin NOSEBLEED. Ears ring; his RIGHT HAND trembles.

He blinks hard, resetting.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 0 HOPS REMAINING — COMMS: RESTORED
(PARTIAL)

KARL (V.O.)
Recall complete. You lost
approximately ninety seconds of
short-term buffer.
Name check: your brother?

Sam opens his mouth—nothing comes. He swallows; it returns.

SAM
Adam.

KARL (V.O.)
Restored.

Sam exhales. Looks at the FARADAY POUCH: safe. The DECOY
DRIVE: pocketed.

A CONSOLE MONITOR flickers alive with a grid of city
feeds—then one window ****blinks****:

RICARDO in a glass vestibule somewhere, phone to ear. A LENS
above him ticks once.

KARL (V.O.)
Ricardo tested his "safe door."
Lens blinked. He cut the call.

Sam wasn't expecting that. A beat. It lands.

SAM (LOW)
I wasn't expecting that.

KARL (V.O.)
Doubt vector rising. ROAR is moving
Kathleen again—"wellness check"
pretext.

Sam wipes his nose, steadies his hand. He steps to the easel
out of habit—

then stops, clocking the HUD at ****zero****.

SAM
We finish analog.

He crosses to a METAL CASE, pops it: burner radios, cash, a
city map, a roll of reflective tape, a fountain pen, a field
suture kit.

SAM (CONT'D)

Build me a route that keeps me off
every camera you can't blind.
And flag any cam that can serve
recall if this goes sideways.

KARL (V.O.)

Routing. Note: Ricardo kept the
coin you tossed him.

SAM

Good. Let him verify it. Let
Dominic blink at him again.
The moment he flinches, we take the
hand that moves the lens.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Dashboards glow: STABILITY curves, FUNDING bands, COMPLIANCE
scores. "No Cure" keeps the lines high.

Dominic stands; a glass wall goes opaque. A side door opens.

An operator enters: late 30s, calm, coat too simple to
notice. Callsign on the tablet: ANGEL.

DOMINIC

Old man. Chemist. The girl.
Pressure, pickup, move.

EVE (V.O.)

Advisory: Subject RICARDO variance
rising.

DOMINIC

Note it.
If he crosses forty, remove him
after the meet.

ANGEL

Pattern?

DOMINIC

Yours.

Angel nods once. No flourish. He exits.

URIEL

Health Department front is staged
for Kathleen.

Ginny moves in twenty.

DOMINIC
Keep Sam in glass. Jam him where it
matters.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

A metal case open: burner radios, a city map, reflective
tape, fountain pen, suture kit.

Sam tapes a ****square glyph**** (pen + tape) to a paper
printout, tears it clean.

KARL (V.O.)
Your analog route: Humboldt → Damen
→ Armitage.

I can blind six cams. Angel pattern is compressing the grid.
Sam pockets the FRAYED MAP and four taped glyph squares.

SAM
He came out to play.

He flexes his cut forearm; the tremor ripples, then settles.

KARL (V.O.)
Residual tremor present.

SAM
We'll use it.

EXT. CHICAGO — ALLEY GRID / VARIOUS — NIGHT

A quiet urban ballet.

— Sam angles under an EL track, slaps a ****GLYPH**** on a
utility box beneath a dome cam.

— Crosses an alley, tapes a second ****GLYPH**** under a service
light.

— Checks reflections in a dark window instead of turning his
head.

KARL (V.O.)
Angel pattern just changed — he's
rolling a wedge from east.

SAM
Then we go west.

He slips into shadow.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S BUILDING – NIGHT

A tidy walk-up. Rain freckles concrete.

Two "PUBLIC HEALTH" AGENTS (polite, wrong shoes) at the buzzer.

INT. KATHLEEN'S STAIRWELL – NIGHT

Footfalls. Kathleen appears on the landing with a tote and a stubborn jaw.

AGENT #1
Dr. Harris? City wellness check –
brief interview, then an escort.

KATHLEEN
At midnight?

AGENT #2
Out of band. After-action
accountability.

A shadow at the foot of the stairs. Sam.

SAM (LOW)
That's enough.

They turn. #2 reaches for a badge; #1 for the tote.

Sam moves fast, close.

– He traps #1's wrist, leaves the tote in Kathleen's hands.

– He rides #2's elbow into a wall, takes air, takes balance.

– Knee to thigh. A hand to stair rail. Bodies lowered, not
thrown.

AGENT #2 (AIRLESS)
We have authority–

SAM
Not tonight.

He cuffs #2 with his own zip. Tucks #1 under a step – neat,
non-lethal.

He looks to Kathleen; checks her pupils, steady.

KATHLEEN
They just... materialize now?

SAM
When you're valuable.

Agent #1's dropped scanner chirps, still on. Sam flicks it open with a pen cap.

KARL (V.O.)
Badge clone initiated.

They got your ID in the contact.

SAM
How much?

KARL (V.O.)
Enough to try again.

SAM (TO KATHLEEN)
We move you analog. Now.

EXT. COPY SHOP ALCOVE — NIGHT

Lights hum. Self-serve kiosks glow. A stack of "SAME DAY BANNERS" tilts.

Ricardo stands at a kiosk, hood up. The **RECEIVER COIN** from the Pier sits on the glass.

Onscreen: a HASH window. He drags a log file — the checksum matches the coin's key.

He stares up at a corner camera. Calls a number from muscle memory.

Nothing. Then — a tiny **lens blink**.

He ends the call. Pockets the coin. Types on the receipt printer:

"DON'T BRING LENSES. ST. BRIGID'S. CONFESSIONAL. 30 MIN."

He folds the slip, palming it for a dead drop.

EXT. ST. BRIGID'S — NIGHT

A brick church, lights low. A wooden confessional. A sign: NO PHOTOS DURING MASS.

Sam steps into the vestibule. He **tapes a square glyph** behind a radiator grate — a recall node.

KARL (V.O.)
No municipal cams inside. Two
across the street I can fog.

SAM
Do it when he arrives.

A parishioner coughs in a pew. A match flickers and dies.

EXT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — NIGHT

Uriel's screen shows a map with three icons: SAM → St. Brigid's. RICARDO → converging. KATHLEEN → moving west.

URIEL
Subject RICARDO dead-dropped a
meet. St. Brigid's.

RAPHAEL
Parish has three exits, no internal
eyes.

DOMINIC
Angel?

A text pops on Angel's tablet. He types nothing; leaves.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)
Stage removal after he talks.
Move the girl now.

A feed shows **Ginny** in a cube — breathing, eyes open. A gloved hand covers the lens. Feed dies.

INT. DINER — BOOTH — NIGHT

Chrome edges, coffee ring halos. A server ignores the hour.

Kathleen scribbles in a **paper notebook**: process steps, not formulae. Sam watches street glass for reflections, not the door.

KATHLEEN
If I go to ground, the work goes
with me.
If I share it, they weaponize it.

SAM

So you write the skeleton and burn
the skin.

She caps her pen. Steadier now.

KATHLEEN

That's a terrible metaphor.

SAM

It works.

He slides her a **recall coin** and a **glyph page**.

SAM (CONT'D)

If a camera ever sees that square
next to this coin, Karl can pull
you.

It hurts. You'll lose a minute. But you'll live.

She weighs the coin like it matters (it does). Nods.

KATHLEEN

And you?

SAM

Confessional.

She huffs the ghost of a laugh.

KATHLEEN

Of course.

He scans her face once more, files it.

SAM

Ten minutes. Go out the alley. No
lenses.

She leaves with a look that isn't goodbye. Not yet.

INT. ST. BRIGID'S — NAVE — NIGHT

Angel stands just inside the door, hat in hand. A tourist
would miss him.

His eyes map exits, pew gaps, sightlines.

Across the street, two pigeons lift at once. Sam clocks it
from the vestibule shadow.

He slides into the CONFESSIONAL. The wood inhales his breath.

INT. CONFESSIONAL — CONTINUOUS

A lattice of old wood between them. Sam on one side. Silence on the other.

Then the faintest shift of weight.

RICARDO (O.S.)
Bless me, Father—

SAM
Don't.

A breath. Then nothing.

SAM (CONT'D; LOW) (CONT'D)
Three tells. You verified one.

RICARDO (O.S.)
The blink.

SAM
Your safe door isn't yours.

Paper slides under the lattice. A folded **receipt**.

RICARDO (O.S.)
Address. Damen. Unit C. Forty
minutes. She moves again after.

Sam doesn't touch the paper yet.

SAM
Proof.

A beat. Then a soft **clack**: a charm drops to the sill between them —

a cheap **BEACH KEYCHAIN** with GINNY's name in souvenir font.

RICARDO (O.S.)
Took it at intake. She cried for
it, so I know it's hers.

Sam looks at it. Doesn't move.

SAM
You want out.

RICARDO (O.S.)
I want air. You make Dominic
flinch; I walk.

SAM
He won't blink for you. He'll blink
at you.

RICARDO (O.S.)
Twenty minutes.

Sam finally pockets the keychain. Then he draws out the
DECOY DRIVE and slides it back
under the lattice.

SAM
A proof, not the cure. Enough for
him to tighten the box.

Make him show you the lens again. When it blinks, you move.

RICARDO (O.S.)
And if it doesn't?

SAM
Then I was wrong. But I'm not.

A deeper silence. Then the whisper of a coat.

RICARDO (O.S.)
I wasn't expecting you to... *not*
trade.

SAM
Get used to it.

Ricardo's side empties – the booth breathes. He goes.

INT. NAVE / AISLE – CONTINUOUS

Ricardo walks the center aisle like a parishioner. Angel
watches him pass.

Two men nod – strangers with nothing in common.

Ricardo exits into rain. Angel's eyes flick once to the
confessional. Then away.

INT. VESTIBULE – SAME

Sam steps out. Touches the taped glyph behind the radiator
grate – insurance.

Looks up through warped glass – a municipal cam across the
street stares back.

Two plain□clothes "tourists" enter, slow. Angel turns his hat in his hands, moves deeper.

Sam reads the wind. Chooses.

He pushes the door with his foot – opens it wide – the taped GLYPH now clearly visible to the street cam.

SAM (LOW)
Karl, if you have me – pull.

INT. WHITE ROOM – TIMELESS

The recall TONE needles the air. Sam hits concrete on one knee.

Nosebleed. Ear ring. Hand tremor. He breathes through it.

ON SCREEN – HUD: WINDOW: 0 HOPS REMAINING – COMMS: RESTORED (PARTIAL)

KARL (V.O.)
Recall complete. Ninety seconds lost.

SAM
Then we're on schedule.

He wipes his nose, looks at the BEACH KEYCHAIN in his hand – tiny "GINNY" smiling.

SAM (CONT'D)
Damen. Unit C. Forty minus the ninety you stole.

KARL (V.O.)
Route built. Angel pattern compressing east to west.

SAM
We go under.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT – BEDROOM – NIGHT

Kathleen pulls a plain duffel from under the bed. Paper notebook goes in.

She tapes Sam's GLYPH to the inside flap. Pockets the RECALL COIN.

A knock. Gentle. Too gentle.

VOICE (O.S.)
Dr. Harris? A neighbor. You left
your mail—

She freezes. Breathes once. Heads to the fire escape instead.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE / ALLEY — CONTINUOUS

She climbs into mist. A figure stands at the alley mouth —
agent shoes.

Kathleen backs into shadow. The figure smokes. Doesn't enter.

She waits him out like a scientist with a stopwatch.

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

Board shows three icons — RICARDO moving toward Damen;
KATHLEEN drifting west;

SAM reappearing on an analog path.

URIEL
Subject SAM recalled. He's off-grid
again.

RAPHAEL
Wellness check stalled. Agent at
her alley.

DOMINIC
Move the girl from Unit C now.
Bring her before he gets the door.

EVE (V.O.)
Advisory: Subject RICARDO variance
at thirty-four.

DOMINIC
Note it.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL STRIP — DAMEN & 16TH — NIGHT

Rain slicks potholes. Sodium buzz. Anonymous bays: A, B, C,
D...

A panel van idles by C. A ballcap smokes under the overhang.

Across the street, a bus shelter cam watches no one.

Sam enters at a long angle. He never looks straight at the bay — only at glass: a puddle, the shelter, a dark window.

He slides behind the map board and tapes a GLYPH low, barely visible.

KARL (V.O.)
Bus cam compliant. Recall possible
from here.

SAM (LOW)
Keep it quiet.

Bay C rattles up. Two "movers" wheel a crate. Ballcap signs a clipboard.

Stencil: MEDICAL WASTE. Too clean. Too smooth.

In the van, a tiny mirror lens blinks once.

SAM (LOW) (CONT'D)
Blink.

He crosses the street, calm, passes behind the van, glances into the bay — a soundproof cube like in the feed. Empty now. A glove on the floor.

He keeps walking — never hitches — turns the corner into shadow.

INT. PANEL VAN — CONTINUOUS

Ballcap checks his mirror. Lens blinks again — mechanical twitch.

BALLCAP (INTO MIC)
Visual anomaly. Confirm?

Silence. Then the line fuzzes — Gabriel's handiwork. No answer.

EXT. SIDE STREET — CONTINUOUS

Sam ducks into a loading door recess. Palms the BEACH KEYCHAIN.

Cheap charm. Relic. Message: alive.

Hand trembles. He pins it to brick until it stops.

KARL (V.O.)
 She's already moved. North route
 probable - riverside.

SAM
 Ricardo gave us the door late to
 save himself. Good.

He's useful living.

KARL (V.O.)
 Or bait.

SAM
 Both.

EXT. COPY SHOP ALCOVE - SAME

Ricardo drops the DECOY DRIVE into a padded envelope,
 addresses it to a ROAR P.O. Box.

No cameras see it - he fogged them with a spritz.

He slides it into a night drop. Walks.

Phone buzz: CALLSIGN TEXT - "MEET B-C : 00:20".

He looks at a corner lens. It blinks. Decision made.

Power down. Battery out. He keeps walking.

INT. DINER - BOOTH - LATER

Chrome edges. Coffee ring halos. No one cares.

Kathleen with coffee; duffel at her feet.

Sam slides in opposite. Sets the BEACH KEYCHAIN on laminate.

KATHLEEN
 She keeps everything.

SAM
 We'll keep her.

He slides a burner radio.

SAM (CONT'D)
 If I say "mint tea," you answer. If
 not, you don't.

She nods. Scientist face over fear.

KATHLEEN

I wasn't expecting you to choose me
over her.

SAM

I didn't. I chose the cure.

Choosing you is a side effect.

She snorts a laugh she didn't expect. It helps.

KARL (V.O.)

Angel pattern has shifted to a
spiral. He's closing circles.

SAM (LOW)

Then we cut a line.

He stands.

SAM (CONT'D)

Alley. No lenses. Two blocks north.
Recall coin if you have to.

She pockets the coin. Goes, no goodbye.

EXT. ST. BRIGID'S — REAR ALLEY — NIGHT

Angel steps from a recessed door as if he'd been there all
night.

He eyes the GLYPH behind the vestibule grate.

Pulls a disposable camera. SNAP. Flash whites the glass.

He rewinds with a whir. Cold smile.

A utility knife scrapes the glyph away. Tape curls like dead
skin.

ANGEL (INTO THROAT MIC)

He's marking doors. Kill the marks.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS — SAME

A city grid of tiny GLYPH ICONS on Karl's board — they begin
to disappear.

KARL (V.O.)

He's erasing your nodes.

SAM
Of course he is.

KARL (V.O.)
Damen Unit C now empty. North route
shows three probable transfer
sites.

SAM
Pick one he wouldn't expect.

KARL (V.O.)
The one with a camera you can live
with.

SAM
Exactly.

EXT. RIVER WALK — INDUSTRIAL SPAN — NIGHT

Water claps pilings. A barge horn moans. Overhead: a bridge
cam no one ever looks at.

Sam tapes a GLYPH under the lip of a control box — just
inside the camera's fringe.

Steps back. Rain needles. Breath steadies.

KARL (V.O.)
You're burning daylight we don't
have.

SAM
Night, Karl.

A white van glides across the far bridge and turns north.

KARL (V.O.)
That's them.

SAM
Then let's be there first.

EXT. ST. BRIGID'S — NIGHT

Rain thins to mist. A taxi idles. A man with an umbrella
reads nothing.

Sam steps into the vestibule's shadow. A folded receipt slip
is wedged in the jamb — the meet he expected. Pockets it.

Glances up. Across the street, two pigeons on a wire lift at once.

SAM (LOW)
Angel pattern.

He paces the vestibule, slow. The confessional looms – wood, quiet, blind.

Touches the taped glyph behind the radiator grate – insurance.

A shape crosses the doorway glass – a coat too simple to notice.

Angel steps inside the nave, hat in hand, as if to pray.

INT. PARKING GARAGE – NIGHT

An ambulance noses into a shadowed bay. Two PARAMEDICS hop out fast – wrong shoes again.

KATHLEEN appears at the stairwell, duffel tight.

One medic peels off, calm smile – reaches for a pulse oximeter; the other lowers the gurney.

SAM (O.S., LOW)
Not tonight.

He lifts the rails; the gurney tips, pins the second medic's shins.

The first draws a syringe – Sam turns the wrist; fluid hisses onto concrete.

A quick carotid hold. Both men fold. Clean. Quiet.

KARL (V.O.)
CPD vector in two minutes. Angel
pattern spiraling down to you.

SAM
Move.

KARL (V.O.)
Sam, I am concerned about your
nodes.

EXT. SERVICE ALLEY OFF DAMEN — NIGHT

RICARDO waits under a dead sign. Clean. Small messenger bag. No umbrella.

A figure passes the alley mouth, then returns — ANGEL.

ANGEL

Walk.

They walk. Two men in rain. No weapons drawn.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

You chose variance.

RICARDO

I chose air.

ANGEL

You'll get some.

A flash of metal. The blade is surgical, the angle perfect.

Ricardo sits down without meaning to. Rain does the rest.

He fumbles a locker tag toward Angel — reflex. Angel lets it fall.

From the shadows: Sam moves. Two seconds late.

Angel clocks him, measures him, smiles — steps back into rain, vanishes.

Sam kneels. Ricardo's eyes lock.

RICARDO (THIN)

B—C... 09:10...

He's gone. Sam pockets the locker tag.

EXT. SIDE STREET / LOCAL NEWS LIVE TRUCK — NIGHT

A van idles, mast half-raised. A REPORTER argues on the phone about "budget... nothing at Navy Pier."

Sam steps into the headlight spill, chalks a square on wet asphalt. Big. Bold. Door.

He holds the coin at chest height so the mast cam sees both.

SAM (LOW)

Karl — if you can ride their
uplink—

KARL (V.O., FAINT)
Handshakes found. Recall available.

SAM
Then we cut ourselves a door.

He scuffs the square once more. Breathes. The TONE needles the night—

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Sam hits concrete on one knee. Nosebleed. Ears ring. RIGHT HAND trembles.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 0 HOPS REMAINING — COMMS: RESTORED (PARTIAL)

KARL (V.O.)
Recall complete. Cost: ~90 seconds
short-term smear.

SAM
Name check — my brother?

A beat. He swallows.

SAM (CONT'D)
Adam.

KARL (V.O.)
Restored.

He wipes his nose. Grabs the metal case: burner radios, cash, map, duct tape, chalk, rescue hook.

The FARADAY POUCH (cold tape + transceiver + receiver) stays on him.

The DECOY DRIVE — separate pocket.

The BEACH KEYCHAIN in his fist like a rosary.

City feeds bloom: UNION STATION concourse, mezzanines, B-concourse.

KARL (V.O.)
Ginny transfer scheduled "B-C
09:10." Likely code: B-Concourse
locker 0910.

Angel pattern compressing into the Loop.

SAM

Union.

He zips the case. Goes.

INT. UNION STATION — GREAT HALL / CONCOURSE — NIGHT

Echoes. Marble. A few travelers. Floor wax gleams like a river.

Sam clocks reflections — kiosk glass, ticket windows, camera domes, rails.

He paints another tiny square on the outside of a locked kiosk window, fingertip + chalk.

He doesn't look up.

KARL (V.O.)

Angel detected two marks. Sweepers will scrub.

SAM

Let them take the decoy.

He moves.

INT. UNION STATION — B-CONCOURSE — NIGHT

Fluorescents hum. Vending blinks. LOCKERS grid.

Custodian with a mop. A dome cam ticks minutely.

Sam finds 0910. Slides in the LOCKER TAG he took off Ricardo.

The lock rolls open.

Inside: a MAG-KEY (industrial), a folded TRANSFER MAP, a UTILITY HALL lanyard.

SAM (LOW)

Thank you, Ricardo.

KARL (V.O.)

Utility corridor under Track 12.
Two-man crew inbound in five.
Angel's on upper concourse. He has your face.

SAM

He can keep it.

He pockets mag-key + map. Leaves the locker slightly ajar.

INT. SERVICE STAIR / UNDER TRACK 12 – NIGHT

Concrete throat. Steam hiss. A low door with a MAG-LOCK.

Sam holds the mag-key up – CLACK. Lock drops. He cracks the door, listens.

Inside: whisper of wheels. Nylon on nylon.

INT. UTILITY HALL – CONTINUOUS

Pipes at shoulder height. A SOUNDPROOF CUBE on a dolly. A TECH at each end.

Frosted window – silhouette: GINNY.

Sam moves like a shadow:

– Rescue hook slides free.

– Rear tech: clean carotid; lowered silent.

– Front tech turns on squeal of the dolly brake – wrist trap, wall, down. Quiet.

He flips the cube latch; frost breathes her name.

SAM (LOW)

Ginny.

The window clears an inch – her eyes. Alive. Scared. A sob she kills.

He pops the main latch – snags on nylon – cut.

SAM (CONT'D)

Eyes on me. Move when I move.

She nods. Wrists show tape marks, not rope burns.

KARL (V.O.)

Patrol sweep on Track 12. Angel descending east stairs.

SAM

North stair. Mezz recall if we burn out.

He hands Ginny a recall coin.

SAM (CONT'D)
 If you see a square and hear a
 tone, don't fight it.

They roll the empty cube forward to mask exit; he kicks a
 wheel sideways, jamming the hall.

EXT. UNION STATION — GREAT HALL (UPPER) — SAME

Angel watches a "tourist" scrape a chalk square off a pillar
 with a hotel keycard.

Angel doesn't look at him. He looks at the kiosk glass — sees
 a square in reflection.

Adjusts course. Calm.

INT. B¹CONCOURSE — NORTH STAIRS — NIGHT

Sam leads Ginny up. Quiet speed.

A plain-clothes man appears at the landing, "lost." Angel's
 circle.

Sam doesn't break stride — lifts a hand to the rail and palms
 the man's gun out of the holster.

Keeps walking. The man blinks at his empty belt. Too late.

KARL (V.O.)
 Angel above in fifteen. Two
 sweepers left, three right.

SAM
 Left, then right.

They turn left into—

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR — CONTINUOUS

Dead end. Janitor sink. Convex mirror. Tiny camera above it.

Sam chalks a square on the mirror frame and holds the coin so
 the tiny cam sees both.

SAM (LOW)
 Karl—door.

A whisper of TONE. Air flexes—

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Sam and Ginny stagger in together. Sam on one knee. Ears ring. Nosebleed fresh.

Ginny blinks at the white — not heaven. Silence tells her.

ON SCREEN — HUD: WINDOW: 0 HOPS — COMMS: RESTORED (PARTIAL)

KARL (V.O.)
Recall complete. Both. Cost: ~90
seconds smear. She'll be
disoriented.

Ginny touches wall. Breath returns.

GINNY
Where—?

SAM
Between. Safe for a minute.

KARL (V.O.)
Angel erased two marks; the kiosk
square remains. He's adjusted for
reflections.

Sam reloads pockets. Hands Ginny water. The BEACH KEYCHAIN sits on the console.

She sees it — one silent sob — pockets it.

SAM (TO KARL)
Route Kathleen to Union — Great
Hall — west exit.

Keep her eyes on people, not glass.

KARL (V.O.)
Copy. Dominic pushing CPD. Ten-
minute sweep.

SAM
Then we're done in nine.

He looks at Ginny.

SAM (CONT'D)
Ready?

She nods — scared, steady.

He takes the coin back; gives her a second coin.

SAM (CONT'D)
If we split — same rules. Square +
coin. Let it take you.

They step center, shoulder to shoulder. He palms the receiver
in pocket.

SAM (CONT'D)
Back to the kiosk. Lower lip — west
side.

Eyes closed. No brush. No hop.

SAM (CONT'D)
Karl — ride whatever lens you can
steal.

KARL (V.O.)
Handshake ready. On your mark.

Sam lifts the coin. The room leans—

INT. UNION STATION — WEST EXIT WELL — SAME

KATHLEEN
Eyes on me.

GINNY
Why didn't you run?

KATHLEEN
He asked me not to.

(They keep walking. Don't run.)

INT. UNION STATION — KIOSK ROW — NIGHT

They drop in behind the locked kiosk, tucked between glass
and pillar.

Sam swallows pain. Ginny wobbles; he steadies her.

Across the row, ANGEL turns the corner. Not surprised. He
never is.

He sees Sam. Sees Ginny. Measures outcomes.

ANGEL
Old man.

He comes. Calm. Surgical.

KARL (V.O.)
 CPD two minutes. Sweepers thirty
 seconds.

You have one door left – the pillar square they didn't see.

Sam slides the rescue hook up his sleeve. To Ginny:

SAM (LOW)
 Walk. West exit. Don't run. Look at
 people.

She goes. She does not run.

Angel keeps coming. No weapon drawn.

Sam steps into him.

– Angel knifes short and low – a kiss of steel to Sam's side
 – Sam takes it, forearm up, turns the blade

– Angel smiles anyway – left hand already catching Sam's
 wrist

– balance war.

KARL (V.O.)
 Bleeding moderate. Ten seconds to
 stay smart.

Headbutt. Angel absorbs like winter.

Hands. Elbows. Quiet violence in marble echo.

Behind Angel, the cleaner scrapes the kiosk square – Sam lets
 it happen.

Angel's eye flicks – one frame – enough.

Sam shifts them a yard, puts Angel's back to the pillar with
 the first, low square.

He raises the coin – pillar cam sees SQUARE + COIN together.

SAM (LOW)
 Door.

The TONE threads the air. Angel hears it. Understands – too
 late.

White rims the world.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Sam alone hits the floor. Ears ring. Blood at side and lip.

KARL (V.O.)
Recall complete. ~90 seconds lost.
He will have moved.

SAM
So will she.

Monitor: Ginny slips into Great Hall crowd. Sweepers turn the wrong way.

Sam stands. Pain says hello; he doesn't answer.

He grabs the TRANSFER MAP + MAGKEY. Slides a USB into the console — EVE dashboards + blink logs queue to publish.

SAM (LOW) (CONT'D)
Find a lens that hits every screen
in the room.

KARL (V.O.)
News uplink still hot; station
boards mirrored. Push now, Dominic
can't unring it.

SAM
Ring it.

Monitors fill with graphs — "No Cure" lines rising; "Cure Released" falling.

ROAR key signatures beside "work order" logs. The blink reel loops, ugly and clear.

EXT. UNION STATION — GREAT HALL — NIGHT

Screens flip from arrivals to DATA: stability/funding dashboards; "WORK ORDER — ROAR KEY" watermark; blink GIFs.

Murmurs rise. Phones lift. A REPORTER's jaw drops.

In the crowd, ANGEL pauses. Looks up. He doesn't blink.

He turns back toward kiosk row — where Sam was. Empty.

KARL (V.O.)
Kathleen approaching west exit.
Ginny will make the turn.

SAM (V.O., LOW)
Keep their eyes on people.

INT. UNION STATION — KIOSK ROW — NIGHT

Angel closes. Ginny vanishes into the crowd.

Sam raises the coin — pillar cam sees SQUARE + COIN —

A threadbare TONE. The world rims white—

INT. WHITE ROOM — RECALL LOOP

—then doesn't land. The room smears. Sam hangs, halfway between frames.

The TONE warps to a trench whistle—

EXT. WWI TRENCH — NIGHT (RECALL ECHO)

Mud. Shells. A boy's soot-black face — RICARDO, nineteen, grinning at death he doesn't know yet.

YOUNG RICARDO
On me, Sam—
White flare—

INT. HALL OF MIRRORS — VERSAILLES — DAY (RECALL ECHO)

Mirrors. Breath. A crush of whispers.

COURTIER
My king, we must leave. They are coming.

A gloved hand squeezes Sam's arm — jewels bite — white—

INT. EGYPTIAN CRYPT — NIGHT (RECALL ECHO)

Sand. A sarcophagus yawns. DOMINIC, younger, pries a stamped brass plate: 04101962.

He pockets it like it always belonged to him.

Voices bleed wrong-right — RICARDO (Portuguese), KATHLEEN (Gaelic), GINNY (Spanish) — the White Room tilts—

INT. WHITE ROOM — SAME

Sam drops hard, sideways. Breath gone. TONE dies to a needle's hiss.

A wet nose shoves his cheek. BRISTLE — gray muzzle, bad breath, good soul.

SAM (RAW)

Hey—

Bristle wags. He doesn't understand time. He understands Sam.

KARL (V.O.)

Recall loop. You bounced through
three archival imprints.

Cost: ~120 seconds lost. I've never seen you dragged that long.

Sam pets Bristle, sits up. Nosebleed. Right hand tremor. He breathes through it.

Monitors ripple, settle. White is white again.

SAM

Why those images.

A console boots a file: ORIGIN / SUBJECT: RIVERS, SAMUEL — 04101962.

KARL (V.O.)

You asked what the stamp meant.
Told me not to tell you unless
survival required it.

Silent NICU footage: a baby too small, too early.

KARL (V.O.)

Born April 10, 1962. Six weeks
early. Flagged by a decommissioned
program: G.A.T. — Guardians of
Time.
Precursor to ROAR. Different
mandate.
They didn't travel time; they
trained memory to survive it.

Clips: a lab; a child drawing a square; a doctor tapping a coin on glass.

KARL (V.O.)

At three, you were tested for
vector tolerance.

(MORE)

KARL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 At twelve, your short-term buffer
 was partitioned.
 At twenty-two, after the Riga
 event, a skeletal adjunct
 reinforced your left radius/ulna.

Sam studies his left forearm like a stranger he's known
 forever.

SAM
 I would have noticed.

KARL (V.O.)
 Designed so you wouldn't.
 The sheath reports as native tissue
 until trauma exceeds threshold.

On screen: a still - 04101962 - bolted to an old drawer.

KARL (V.O.)
 Not a brand. An index - date of
 intake.
 The plate you saw Dominic pocket
 existed.
 GAT fed ROAR its bones.

Sam closes his eyes. Breath. Opens them. Bristle's head on
 his knee.

SAM (QUIET)
 I wasn't expecting that.

KARL (V.O.)
 Angel erased most nodes. Dominic's
 moving the girl.
 Kathleen en route to Union. CPD
 sweeps in ~12 minutes.

Sam stands. Pain says hello; he doesn't say it back.

He checks pockets: Faraday pouch (cold tape + transceiver +
 receiver), decoy drive, magkey, transfer map, rescue hook.

He palms the coin.

SAM
 We finish this analog.
 Keep my doors where they can't
 scrub fast enough.

KARL (V.O.)
 One note: if left-arm trauma
 exceeds threshold, your adjunct
 will reveal.

(MORE)

KARL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You'll lose fine motor until the
sheath resets.

SAM
Understood.

He crouches, noses Bristle.

SAM (CONT'D)
Guard the room.

The dog yawns. Loyalty is simple.

Sam lifts the coin to chest height. The canvas waits. He
doesn't paint.

SAM (CONT'D)
Ride me to Union. Wherever the lens
is loudest.

KARL (V.O.)
News uplink still hot. Station
boards mirrored.
On your mark.

Sam breathes.

White takes him.

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Station feeds bloom — UNION concourse, mezzanines, B-
Concourse.

KARL (V.O.)
Broadcast is live. One more option:
a reverse tether through a public
lens.
Not a hop. Same cost as recall: ear
ring, ~90 seconds smear.

Sam chalks a square on the floor. Holds the coin to the room
cam.

SAM
Ride the station boards. Put me
where the lens is loudest.

Sam breathes. The tone threads the white—

INT. UNION STATION — CONCOURSE / KIOSK ROW — NIGHT

Sam drops in tight to a pillar. Floor shivers under boots. Thin nosebleed. Ear ring.

Right hand trembles once; he breathes through it.

Screens around him flip from arrivals to DATA — stability/funding dashboards, ROAR KEY watermark, the blink reel.

A wave travels the hall — phones up, murmurs—

KARL (V.O.)
Kathleen two minutes from west
exit. Ginny fifty yards ahead.

Sam finds Ginny threading a cluster of gawkers. He moves.

A commuter coat drifts into him, perfect angle — zipper whisper — strap slack.

KARL (V.O.)
Contact right—pouch—

Too late. The COMMUTER palms the FARADAY POUCH, passes to a SECOND MAN.

Sam pivots — shoulder—checks #2 into a pillar; the pouch skitters.

A SWEEPER in a vest snatches it and bee—lines for the turnstiles.

SAM (LOW)
Don't—

INT. BLACK ROOM — OPS SUITE — SAME

Uriel flags the pouch; EVE tags it: TRANSCIEVER LIVE.

DOMINIC
Gate it. Kill the memory when it
crosses.

EVE (V.O.)
Magnetic purge armed.

EXT. UNION STATION — TURNSTILES — NIGHT

The sweeper hits the gate. A hidden coil hums. The pouch TWITCHES.

Soft sizzle inside. A curl of smoke kisses leather.

He yelps, drops it, keeps moving.

Sam reaches the pouch. Opens—

Inside: nano□transceiver charred. COLD TAPE with a blackened crescent.

Gone. He absorbs it in one breath.

KARL (V.O.)
Cold tape corrupted. Digital zero.
I'm sorry.

SAM (LOW)
Keep the screens up.

He snaps the pouch shut. Stands. Bleeding. Calm.

Across the concourse, ANGEL appears as if he'd been there all along. Coat too simple to notice.

He registers pouch, registers Sam, begins a straight line.

KARL (V.O.)
CPD in ninety. Two sweepers
closing. Ginny twenty yards —
right, blue jacket.

Sam sees her; she sees him; she keeps walking because he told her to.

Angel doesn't hurry. His hand is empty — for now.

Sam slides the rescue hook into his sleeve. Steps left, not back.

A sweeper grabs — Sam turns the wrist, walks him into a kiosk gate, leaves him there.

Angel closes. Short blade flickers.

A precise low cut to Sam's side; Sam forearms the shoulder, turns the wrist; steel kisses marble. Angel flows, unfazed.

KARL (V.O.)
Bleeding moderate. You have one
safe door — pillar square, shin
height, north cam.

Sam doesn't look at it. He lifts the coin where the north cam frames SQUARE + COIN.

SAM (LOW)

Door.

The tone needles the air. Angel hears it – smiles like he's learned something.

WHITE rims the frame–

INT. WHITE ROOM – TIMELESS

Sam hits one knee. Ear ring louder. Nosebleed fresh.

He sways, corrects.

KARL (V.O.)

Reverse-pull complete. Ninety
seconds lost. You won't remember
the last cut until you touch it.

Sam presses his side; pain supplies the memory.

Monitor: data still rolling; police gesturing at screens they can't kill.

Another window: DOMINIC on a mezz cam, moving with a small team toward an under-track control room.

KARL (V.O.)

Dominic heading below.
CPD two blocks out. Angel moving to
intercept Ginny at the west exit.

SAM

Route me under him. No glass.

He slings the now-useless pouch back on anyway.

Checks pockets: mag-key, transfer map, decoy drive, coin, receiver.

Chalks a fresh square. Lifts the coin to the room cam.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ride the service cam outside the
control-room door. If it blinks–

KARL (V.O.)

It's ours. Cost remains.

SAM

I'll pay it.

He breathes. The tone rises–

INT. UNION STATION – UNDER-TRACK SERVICE HALL – NIGHT

Sam drops in to sweating pipework and concrete. Floor wobbles; he steadies.

Touches his side – now remembers the cut. Checks the mag-key.

Ahead: steel door stenciled CONTROL – AUTHORIZED ONLY.
SERVICE CAM hums.

KARL (V.O.)
Door live. Dominic thirty seconds
behind it.

Angel thirty seconds from Ginny. Two clocks.

SAM (LOW)
Then we hold one and steal the
other.

He raises the mag-key

KARL (V.O.)
Left–

A sweeper ghosts from shadow with a baton. Impact glances Sam's left forearm – and something hard answers under skin. The sweeper's eyes pop; Sam's don't.

Two steps, a breath – baton taken, man lowered.

Sam checks his left arm – sleeve cut shallow; flesh mottled, odd.

KARL (V.O.)
Threshold near. Adjunct may reveal
with direct trauma.

He fists once. Knuckles read like his. Feel isn't.

Mag-key in – CLACK. Door swings.

INT. UNDER-TRACK CONTROL ROOM – NIGHT

Relays. A wall monitor running EVE dashboards in maintenance mode.

DOMINIC with two TECHS. Calm. Surgical.

DOMINIC
Old man.

Sam clocks the room: one live dome cam over breakers; another dead, lens taped.

SAM

Dominic.

DOMINIC

You like doors. Here's one:
"No Cure" keeps the lights on.
"Cure" turns them off.
People forget they like the dark.

He nods to a TECH. A purge bar crawls: CITYNET — GLYPH MATCH
SANITIZATION.

EVE (V.O.)

Sanitization live. Erasing
square+coin signatures.

All prior marks invalidated in ninety seconds.

KARL (V.O.)

Sam — your recall network is
collapsing. Doors closing.

Sam watches Dominic's hands, not screens.

SAM

You burned the tape. Burn this too:
Your keys signed the work order.
Your lens blinked at your own.

DOMINIC

Blame is cheap. Stability pays.

Closer. Low.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Guardians trained you to hold the
rope. We cut it shorter. Better
returns.

Blade appears like a thought. Short, fast.

Sam catches the wrist — they smash a relay — SPARKS.

A TECH lunges — Sam turns him into a rack, breathes him out.

Dominic presses. Short blade opens Sam's LEFT FOREARM —

FLESH SPLITS; the POLYMER SHEATH tears; the TITANIUM LATTICE
gleams, wrong and right.

Dominic smiles like a priest at a relic.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)
There you are.

Half-second of awe; Dominic steals it – elbow to ribs.

Sam takes it. Files the pain. Moves.

He rips duct tape, slaps a SMALL SQUARE onto the BREAKER PANEL under the live cam, holds the COIN up – camera frames SQUARE + COIN.

SAM (LOW)
Door.

KARL (V.O.)
Recall available. Cost unchanged.
Sanitization in sixty seconds.

WHITE rims the room–

INT. UNION STATION – WEST EXIT WELL – SAME

GINNY pushes through bodies, still walking. A plain□clothes drifts to cut her off–

KATHLEEN slips between like tide, takes Ginny's hand.

KATHLEEN (LOW)
Eyes on me.

KARL (V.O.)
CPD turning the corner. Two sweepers behind. West exit open thirty seconds.

They go. Together.

EXT. UNION STATION – WEST EXIT / CANAL – NIGHT

They spill into mist. Sirens bounce. A NEWS TRUCK mast still up.

Inside, screens keep playing curves + keys + blinks. Phones film everything.

INT. UNDER□TRACK SERVICE HALL – SAME

WHITE collapses. Sam lands into concrete. Ear ring roars. He fixes.

KARL (V.O.)
Recall complete. ~90 seconds lost.
Sanitization at thirty seconds.
Dominic still inside.

Sam presses his left forearm – lattice showing through torn sheath.

Wraps it with duct tape. Ugly. Works. Moves.

INT. UNDERTRACK CONTROL ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Door bangs. One TECH on the floor, breathing; the other gone.

Dominic alone, blade present, eyes on the purge bar: 99%.

EVE (V.O.)
Sanitization complete. All prior
doors closed.
Jumps locked.

KARL (V.O.)
No more recall from existing marks.
Only brand-new lenses with fresh
squares can pull you.

Sam glances at dead cam, then live one. No smile.

SAM
Then we finish analog.

Dominic steps again. Blade short. Movement shorter.

Sam meets forearm to forearm – steel under skin shocks the blade aside.

Dominic registers, adjusts. He's good.

Hands. Elbows. Relay cabinets ring.

Sam drives the rescue hook into Dominic's knife wrist – metal on metal – blade clatters.

Dominic lets it go without regret. Already stepping to the BACK DOOR – unmarked, no camera, darkness.

DOMINIC
People will look up from their
screens tomorrow.
Then they'll want someone to tell
them where to look next.

He pushes the door. Black beyond.

SAM
Walk into your own blind.

Dominic, almost amused:

DOMINIC
We made the dark, Mr.Rivers.

He goes. Gone.

Purge bar hits 100%. Tag: DOORS CLOSED.

Sam turns for the hall—

INT. GREAT HALL / MEZZANINE STAIRS — SAME

ANGEL takes the stairs down, never hurrying.

He finds what he needs: Ginny & Kathleen at the west doors.
Adjusts.

Sam comes up into his path. They meet mid-stair. Close. Quiet.

ANGEL
You keep making doors. I keep
locking rooms.

SAM
Then we don't use rooms.

Blade flicks. Sam doesn't flinch. Lattice takes the kiss and gives it back.

Short, efficient violence. Angel knives for organs; Sam keeps it on bone.

Sam leaks; Angel's lip splits; both breathe like winter.

KARL (V.O.)
Street unit in twenty seconds.
Media everywhere.
Only lens you can ride is the news
mast outside.

SAM (LOW)
Good.

He palms a chalk nub, marks a tiny square on the metal foot of a nearby tripod, angles his body so the mezz cam catches SQUARE + COIN in a kiosk reflection.

Angel clocks the chalk. Moves to break the shot—

SAM (CONT'D)

Door.

The tone threads the stairwell. WHITE bites—

INT. WHITE ROOM — TIMELESS

Sam hits alone. Ear ring. Blood. Plants a hand — won't fall further.

KARL (V.O.)

Recall complete. ~90 seconds lost.
You don't remember the last
exchange.

Sam looks at his left arm — tape, blood, lattice — knows without knowing.

Monitors: LIVE FEEDS — outside west exit: Kathleen + Ginny amid crowd; police pushing; news cams locked on the data Sam released.

Hashtags hatch.

KARL (V.O.)

Stability curves mirrored to seven
outlets.
Work-order signatures archived to
five public drives.
Bells unringable.

Sam exhales. Nods to nothing and everything.

SAM

Find me the dog.

Karl switches a feed: Bristle asleep, chin on paws.

Sam almost smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

Keep their eyes on people.

He chalks a SMALL SQUARE on the floor by the door.

Sets the COIN on it — leaves it — an open heart.

EXT. UNION STATION — WEST STEPS — NIGHT

KATHLEEN and GINNY move with the wave, not against it.

A CPD officer starts to stop them, then stares at the screens – graphs, keys, ROAR trending.

Ginny squeezes the BEACH KEYCHAIN like a tiny saint.

Kathleen touches the duffel where the paper notebook lives – skeleton, not skin.

They reach the curb. A BYSTANDER opens a rideshare door like a miracle. They get in.

KARL (V.O.)
They're clear.

INT. GREAT HALL – MEZZANINE STAIRS – SAME

Angel stands at the landing, breathing clean. Looks up at the data flood, then down at the chalk nub on the tripod foot.

He wipes it with his thumb. White dust. Flicks it away.

He blends into blue lights and phones and is gone.

EXT. CONTROL ROOM SERVICE EXIT – CONTINUOUS

A door with no camera. Darkness like a throat.

If Dominic is there, he's already not.

INT. WHITE ROOM – TIMELESS

Quiet now. Buzz of nowhere. Sam sits on the floor with BRISTLE.

The dog noses under Sam's taped forearm. Sam lets him.

KARL (V.O., SOFTER)
Doors are closed, for now. Jumps
locked.
If you want a pull, we chalk new
squares under new eyes.

SAM
Then we keep it small.

He takes a marker. On the wall, above the easel, small:

THE WHITE ROOM IS A TETHER.

He sets the marker down. Takes the HEARTBEAT brush. Doesn't paint.

Rests it across his knees like a tuning fork.

KARL (V.O.)

BP normal.

Sam closes his eyes. Breathes once. Twice.

The COIN on the floor glints in the room cam.

The chalk SQUARE scuffs under it.

A faint tone begins. Not a pull. A promise.

CUT TO WHITE.

CUT TO BLACK.