

CONTROL

by

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FADE IN:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Water DRIPS into a decrepit sink. The sound echoes through the empty space. DRIP... DRIP...

In the darkness the silhouetted figure of a woman, CHRIS, mid-thirties, head in her hands, struggling with a thought...

CHRIS

Water.

DRIP. She looks up.

CHRIS

It was all about the water.

She is looking at a man, SEAN, mid-fifties. Suit and tie.

SEAN

What on earth are you talking about?

Staccato images, a few frames each, just enough to register:

DRIP. A drug vial with no label.

DRIP. A syringe.

DRIP. A young girl in a hospital bed in evident pain.

CHRIS

God, it's so complicated. I don't even know where to start.

DRIP.

SEAN

Why don't you start at the beginning?

CHRIS

(as if that never would
have occurred to her)
The beginning...?

DRIP.

CHRIS

All right, the beginning...

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON, ENGLAND, - 1854, DAY

Filth. Lumpy brown water runs through an open sewer.

SUPER: Soho district, London

An EERIE QUIET punctuated by CRYING coming from behind shuttered windows.

SUPER: September 7, 1854

The streets are deserted but for some livestock and a lone figure bundled in a coat, DOCTOR JOHN SNOW. At 41 he is, by the standards of his day, an old man.

He walks hurriedly past a wooden sign attached to the side of a building: BROAD STREET.

He rounds the corner and almost collides with a pathetic wretch of a woman dressed in rags. Her eyes are bloodshot, tears streaming down her cheeks and onto the baby she is holding in trembling hands.

The baby is dead.

John Snow and the woman make eye contact for an instant, but there is nothing he can do. He sidesteps around her. He has urgent business to attend to.

WOMAN
Please, sir...

But he is gone.

A MOMENT LATER

John Snow arrives at his destination: a hand-operated water pump. He approaches, produces a glass vial, pumps to fill it, holds it up and peers with a puzzled scowl.

THE WATER is crystal-clear.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING ROOM, LONDON, - 1854, NIGHT

Candles light the wood-paneled meeting hall of the Board of Guardians of Saint James Parish. A dozen well dressed MEN gather around a table onto which John Snow unrolls a large map.

JOHN SNOW

I have charted the progression of the cholera on this map. As you can see, the cases are concentrated here.

He indicates the area around Broad Street.

JOHN SNOW

(continuing)

It is my conclusion, gentlemen, that the source of the morbid poison lies at the center of this area.

Snow's finger lands dead center on the map, pointing to the location of the water pump.

The men look at each other, then break into uproarious LAUGHTER.

MAN 1

Ridiculous!

MAN 2

Doctor Snow, surely you aren't suggesting that water causes cholera?

Snow rummages through his black doctor's bag, producing a microscope and the vial of water.

JOHN SNOW

That, gentlemen, is precisely what I am suggesting.

MAN 1

You've taken leave of your senses.

JOHN SNOW

(Displaying the vial)

This is water from the Broad Street pump.

He carefully deposits a drop of water onto the microscope stage and indicates for the men to look.

JOHN SNOW

Gentlemen...

Man 1 looks first.

MAN 1
I see nothing.

JOHN SNOW
You don't see the flocculent
particles?

Man 1 looks up as a second takes his place at the eyepiece.

MAN 1
Oh, is that what you mean? Just
bits of dirt. Surely such a
miniscule thing cannot cause
disease? Why, you can hardly see
them at all.

The second man looks up.

MAN 2
Quite so. Besides, cholera is
caused by miasma in the atmosphere.
Everyone knows that. Even I know
that.

The men all chime in with general agreement. During the
HUBBUB we move towards the microscope's eyepiece to have a
look for ourselves.

JOHN SNOW (O.S.)
(shouting to be heard
above the din)
Gentlemen! These "little bits of
dirt" as you call them, do you not
observe that they move?

Dead silence as we arrive at the eyepiece and see for
ourselves that they do indeed move.

JOHN SNOW (O.S.)
(quietly)
The dead now number four hundred
and sixty at my last count. Have
any of you a better proposal to
offer?

CUT TO:

EXT. BROAD STREET WATER PUMP - DAY

John Snow and the Board of Guardians watch a workman remove
the handle from the Broad Street water pump.

PETER OBERMEYER (V.O.)
(German accent)
... and of course none of them did,
so the board of guardians agreed to
have the handle of the water pump
removed. But they were never
convinced that the water was the
source of the epidemic.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - 1995, DAY

Professor PETER OBERMEYER, late forties, lectures before a blackboard which reads, "Biology 640 - Introduction to Epidemiology."

SUPER: Lincoln, Nebraska. December, 1995.

OBERMEYER
(continuing)
By the time it was all over three
days later, five hundred and thirty
five people had died.

In the audience sit MIKE TYLER and JASON KELLER, both in their early twenties. Mike is thin and awkward, the archtypical geek. Jason is handsome, self-assured and, in stark contrast to his fellow graduate students, well dressed. Mike is taking notes. Jason is nursing a travel mug presumably filled with coffee.

OBERMEYER
(continuing)
It was the worst cholera outbreak
in London's history. It would be
more than fifty years before public
sanitation was first taken
seriously. Everyone knew that
cholera couldn't possibly be caused
by water. And over the years tens
of thousands died because everyone
was wrong.

A bell RINGS. Students ERUPT from their chairs. Obermeyer SLAPS the lectern hard, the students freeze and grow QUIET.

OBERMEYER
Decorum please!

He pauses briefly and looks around to make sure everyone acknowledges that he is the alpha dog.

OBERMEYER
Chapters 3 and 4 for next time.
That is all.

CHAOS resumes. Students stream out as Obermeyer gathers his books. Mike sits motionless, lost in reverie. Jason, on his way out, notices that Mike isn't with him.

JASON
Yo, Mike!

Mike doesn't move. Now Obermeyer notices.

OBERMEYER
Did you have a question Mr. Tyler?

MIKE
What? Oh, no, I was just trying to
imagine what it must have felt
like. I mean, to discover
something that could save thousands
of lives, and not have anyone
believe you.

OBERMEYER
Ah, but it's not so simple. What
causes cholera?

Mike, nonplussed, hesitates just enough for Jason to jump in.

JASON
Bacteria. Vibrio Cholerae.

OBERMEYER
And how do you know that, Mr.
Keller?

JASON
Because you said so.

OBERMEYER
And why should you believe me?

Jason opens his mouth to respond but has no answer.

OBERMEYER
You see? Every age has its
prejudices. It is very hard even
to recognize them, let alone put
them aside.
(Beat.)
That is precisely why science is so
important.
(MORE)

OBERMEYER (cont'd)

(Beat.)

By the way, Mr. Tyler, where is
your lovely wife?

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW COVERED FOREST TRAIL - 1995 - EARLY MORNING

Heavy breathing. Cross country skis come into view, ski poles push off hard. Her breath is visible in the crisp clear air. CHRISTINE (CHRIS) TYLER, early twenties, is in her zone wearing a University of Nebraska scarf. Intense, focused.

Sharp shooter rifle, prone pad and camel pack are lashed to her back. She takes a drag on her hydrate tube, spits to the side.

MIKE (V.O.)

Uh, she's dealing with a medical
emergency.

She approaches a marked clearing. For a moment she stands and looks out at the horizon, pulsing in waves appearing closer, filtered and heightened by her amped-up physiology. She sees the targets.

All her movements are quick, deliberate and fluid.

OBERMEYER (V.O.)

Mental health issues, jah? Well,
when she surfaces please tell her I
expect her in class from now on.

Chris moves into prone position. "UNIVERSITY of NEBRASKA" is on the back of her shooting jacket. Her heart rate is over the top. She must slow it down to calmly focus on coin-sized targets from a distance of 50 meters. Her finger on the trigger. She peers through her scope. Releases her breath.

Fires. Misses.

CHRIS

Shit.

Reloads. Fires. Hits the target dead on. Reloads. And does it over and over again. Dead on.

The scene darkens until Chris's face is in silhouette and we see that she is...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

... the woman in the warehouse. Sean gazes at her, nonplussed.

CHRIS
I told you it was complicated.

SEAN
When I said go back to the beginning I didn't actually mean a history lesson.

CHRIS
All right, all right... do you remember patient zero?

SEAN
Cranston.

CHRIS
How do you do that?

SEAN
Years of practice.

CHRIS
Yeah, Leland Cranston. (Beat.)
Poor guy.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Newly minted intern DOCTOR ROBINDRA KITNER (Robi), 32, Indian, knocks on a closed door labelled "A. Landis, M.D., Ph.D."

SUPER: Massachusetts General Hospital.

ROBI
Dr. Landis?

LANDIS (O.S.)
Go away.

Robi opens the door hesitantly. DOCTOR ARMANDO LANDIS does not look up from his desk. He is as crusty and battle-hardened as Kitner is green.

LANDIS
What part of "go away" did you not understand?

ROBI
I'm very sorry to disturb you sir,
but I have a case that I really
need you to take a look at.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The patient is in bed, barely conscious, in evident pain.

ROBI
He presented with acute stomach
cramps two days ago. Tox screen is
negative. White count is up, but
he doesn't respond to antibiotics.

LANDIS
(impatiently)
So it's a virus.

ROBI
That's what I thought too, but I
ran the etiology through the Rand
database and the symptoms don't
match anything currently known.

He hands Landis a clipboard with "Cranston, L." in large
print at the top. Landis leafs through the papers. One page
gets his attention. He pauses, scowls, then backs up towards
a supply cabinet, fumbles with a drawer, extracts two
surgical masks, tosses one to Robi and puts the other one on
himself. Robi hurriedly dons his mask, chagrined that he had
not thought to take this basic precaution.

ROBI
I'm sorry, Dr. Landis.

LANDIS
Quarantine. Right now.

Landis pulls a pager out of his pocket and pushes a button.
A red light on the pager begins to flash. He starts to
rummage through drawers.

ROBI
Sir...

LANDIS
(Pointing to the door)
Now, damnit!

Robi runs to the door and locks it.

CUT TO:

INT - BIOLOGY LAB - DAY

A tangle of hoses, test tubes, beakers, complicated looking equipment, a sink, and row upon row of rabbit cages.

Chris enters, breathing hard, shedding layers. She talks to the rabbits.

CHRIS
Hey little guys.

She notices that some of the water bottles are nearly empty.

CHRIS
Poor things, must be thirsty.

She starts to fill them at the sink one by one.

Jason enters.

JASON
Ah, the elusive Miss Parker.

CHRIS
That's Mrs. Tyler to you, bub.

JASON
I'll never understand what you see in him.

CHRIS
You really want to know? He treats me like a human being instead of a toy.

JASON
Oh, come on, that's not fair. I never...

CHRIS
Jason, we're married. He won. You lost. Deal with it.

Jason storms out, fuming, collides with Mike who is just entering.

MIKE
What's eating him?

CHRIS
He's suffering from terminal
maleness.

They kiss.

MIKE
Wanna grab a bite?

CHRIS
We ought to finish up here first.

Mike sits on a stool and watches her fill water bottles.

CHRIS
You could help. They are your
rabbits.

MIKE
Suppose I could.

He hops off the stool.

MIKE
How many you got left?

Chris sweeps her arm around indicating most of them.

MIKE
Ah.

He fills water bottles unenthusiastically.

MIKE
You know, grad school really ought
to come with a warning label.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - LATER

Mike and Chris walk through a light dusting of snow towards a bus stop, breath hanging in the air.

Next to the bus stop a homeless black man, CHARLIE, plays a barely recognizable version of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" on an old beat-up saxophone. He seems competent, but it is far too cold to play and the net effect sounds awful.

MIKE

I wanted to be a scientist, not a
god damn zookeeper.

CHRIS

Gotta pay your dues.

At Charlie's feet is an old hat. Chris tosses in a dollar.

CHRIS

Charlie, I can not believe you're
out here today.

Charlie stops playing, his voice gruff with a Jamaican
accent.

CHARLIE

You gotta show up for life every
day, mon. Some day your big break
is gonna come. When dat happen you
gonna wanna be dere. And you gonna
wanna be ready.

CHRIS

Good luck, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Tanks, mon. Back atcha.

Charlie resumes playing. Mike and Chris walk to the bus stop
shelter.

CHRIS

Talk about paying some dues.

On the ground is a DISCARDED NEWSPAPER. Mike picks it up and
spreads it out over the bench so they can sit on it.

MIKE

We've been paying dues for three
years. Damn, it's cold! You know,
there's a reason I decided to
become a scientist and not a
musician.

CHRIS

You mean besides the fact that you
have no musical talent?

Mike punches Chris in the shoulder.

CHRIS

It never ends, Mike. You got your
quals and then you got your prelims
and then your defense and then your
tenure review and then...

A bus trundles into view.

MIKE

And then I win the Nobel Prize and
I get to relax.

CHRIS

Nope.

MIKE

Why not?

CHRIS

Because then you have to take care
of your daughter.

Beat.

MIKE

What?!

The bus arrives. Chris stands up, revealing a small headline
below the fold:

MYSTERY ILLNESS CLAIMS TENTH VICTIM

CHRIS (O.S.)

You're gonna be a daddy, big guy.

MIKE (O.S.)

Holy shit!

The bus pulls away with a ROAR and a cloud of black diesel
smoke.

MIKE (V.O.)

I don't know if I'm ready for this.

CHRIS (V.O.)

You seemed pretty ready six weeks
ago.

All is QUIET.

THE NEWSPAPER rustles in the breeze. An un-gloved white hand
picks it up.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Hey mon.

JASON (O.S.)

Hey mon yourself mon.

The sun glistens on an icicle clinging to the edge of the bus stop. A drop of water falls from it. DRIP! Then another.

DRIP!

DRIP!

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The newspaper lands on Peter Obermeyer's desk. Obermeyer looks up at Jason.

JASON

They call it Landis-Kitner syndrome, LKS. First you get a stomach cramp, then a fever. One month later, BAM!, you're dead. No one has a clue.

OBERMEYER

How many cases so far?

JASON

Ten.

OBERMEYER

All dead?

JASON

(a little too
enthusiastically)

Yeah.

OBERMEYER

Then there aren't enough subjects for a controlled study, are there?

Jason attempts to respond, can't come up with anything.

OBERMEYER

Look, I understand the appeal. New diseases don't come along every day. It's sexy. But you need to pick something that will let you finish before the next ice age.

JASON
I can do this.

OBERMEYER
How?

Beat.

JASON
I don't know. I'll come up with something.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT DINING ROOM - DAY

Simply furnished. Chris is feeding her one-year-old daughter AMANDA in a high chair. Mike is at the dining table poring over a stack of papers.

CHRIS
Amanda loves breakfast.
(Beat)
Mike.

MIKE
What? I know. Amanda loves cream of wheat. I hate cream of wheat.

CHRIS
This is her second helping. I want you to take over.

Chris blows on the spoon and kisses Amanda.

CHRIS
Mommy is going shooting and Daddy will finish giving you breakfast.

Chris grabs her aluminum rifle case from the closet.

CHRIS
Daddy's coming darling. Mike. Now. Please.

MIKE
I thought you were going tonight.

Chris puts the case down and gives Amanda another bite.

CHRIS
Daddy's coming darling.
(Beat)
I have to go to the lab tonight.

Mike drags himself away from his work. Chris hands him the spoon.

MIKE
Okay. Professor Daddy is here.

CHRIS
Make sure she gets a nap otherwise
she's way too cranky. Love you.
Mommy will be back soon. See
Daddy's here.

MIKE
She's daddy's girl now. You can go.
She'll be fine.

Chris gives Mike a kiss, then Amanda. Mike watches her leave, stands for a moment in a daze, then snaps out of it. He turns on a RADIO.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
... although it is not yet a major
concern, the CDC spokesman
expressed concern that LKS could
become a major epidemic if current
trends continue.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

Jason burns the midnight oil.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
So far this year one hundred and
seventy nine people have died.
This is NPR, National Public Radio.

Chris enters furtively. Jason looks up but doesn't seem pleased to see her.

CHRIS
Hey.

JASON
Hey.

An awkward silence.

CHRIS
You know it's after 2 AM.

JASON
Yeah, so?

CHRIS
I'm starting to worry about you.

JASON
As if you care.

CHRIS
I do care. That hasn't changed.

JASON
(annoyed)
Look, just...

Beat. He softens.

JASON
Don't worry about me, I'll be
alright.

CHRIS
How's the work coming?

JASON
Making progress.

CHRIS
(not unkindly)
Liar.

Jason raises his hands. What do you want me to say? Another awkward silence.

CHRIS
OK, I guess I'll just...
go...then...

JASON
Good idea. It's late, you know.

Jason turns, lowers his head so Chris can't see his face and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. OBERMEYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Jason, brimming with excitement, sits watching Obermeyer leaf through a stack of papers.

Obermeyer turns a page. Then another.

Jason fidgets impatiently.

Obermeyer turns the last page. He sets the stack down, regards Jason. He would make a formidable poker player.

JASON

Well?

Obermeyer ponders a moment before answering.

OBERMEYER

It's a very interesting preliminary result.

Jason explodes.

JASON

Preliminary result?! Are you shittin' me? The p-factor was ninety-seven! Ninety-seven! The correlation...

OBERMEYER

(interrupting, still cool)
Correlation does not imply causality.

JASON

Oh, geez, not that tired old platitude again.

Now Obermeyer is angry.

OBERMEYER

It is not a tired old platitude, it is the bedrock principle of science.

(beat)

Until you complete the confirmation protocol you cannot publish this.

Jason stands, snatches the stack of paper from Obermeyer's hand, fixes him with an icy stare.

JASON

Watch me.

CUT TO:

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Obermeyer is having a heated discussion with DONALD DEAN, the dean of the university. He is a an intensely insecure, dumpy little man. The situation is not helped by the fact that his name is practically begging to be parodied.

OBERMEYER

You can't be serious.

DEAN

Peter, a breakthrough like this, it could put us on the map.

OBERMEYER

And if it turns out to be wrong it could make us into a laughingstock.

DEAN

I dunno, Peter, it looks pretty solid to me. Ninety-seven...

OBERMEYER

In a unidirectional experiment. Without a control case. It's junk science!

DEAN

People publish that kind of thing all the time nowadays.

OBERMEYER

Ah. Everybody does it so that makes it OK to publish crap.

DEAN

I've scheduled a press conference. I expect...

OBERMEYER

You ever read Shakespeare?

DEAN

Of course, but what does that...

OBERMEYER

If the enemy is an ass, and a fool,
and a prating coxcomb, is it meet,
think you, that we should also,
look you, be an ass, and a fool,
and a prating coxcomb? In your own
conscience, now?

Beat.

DEAN

Get out.

OBERMEYER

You can't do this!

DEAN

Out!

CUT TO:

EXT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

REPORTERS fill the room. Cameras CLICK and FLASH. The Dean stands at the podium in front of a forest of microphones, Jason behind him. TV cameras are everywhere.

DEAN

... to announce today a major
advance in the treatment of Landis-
Kitner syndrome or LKS. The cause
of this disease, a new virus called
CT-9, has been identified. It is
now my pleasure to introduce to you
the discoverer of the CT-9 virus,
Dr. Jason Keller.

The cameras click and flash more urgently as Jason steps to the podium.

JASON

Uh, thank you.

Awkward silence as he arranges his notes.

JASON

(reading from notes)

Like many scientific discoveries,
this one came about somewhat by
chance.

A REPORTER interrupts.

REPORTER

Is it true that you haven't
published these results yet?

JASON

(taken aback)

Uh, yes, that's true. We've
submitted a paper to the Lancet,
but we thought this was too
important to...

REPORTER

Doesn't that violate scientific
protocol?

DEAN

(stepping up to the mikes)

Could we please hold all questions
until the end.

CUT TO:

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

It's the kind of place that has a play area for kids. Mike
and Chris are quiet and subdued as they eat. Chris waits for
the right moment to break bad news. Amanda, now four years
old, plays with a sippy cup, oblivious.

CHRIS

This came in the mail today.

She places a thin white envelope gingerly on the table. The
upper left hand corner bears a university logo.

Mike contemplates the envelope, then picks it up, tears it
open, removes the contents, reads...

He CRUMPLES the paper, HURLS it furiously across the room.
People stare.

CHRIS

Amanda, honey, why don't you go
play.

AMANDA

OK, mom.

She scurries off.

CHRIS

We'll find something.

MIKE

Fifty resumes and not even one goddamn interview! You'd think discovering a cure for Alzheimer's would get you noticed.

CHRIS

You did not discover a cure for Alzheimer's.

MIKE

It was a statistically significant result.

CHRIS

It was rabbits, Mike. We don't even know if it's reproducible. Then you've got primate studies, clinical trials, years of work.

(a beat)

Besides, a postdoc will look good on your resume.

Mike SLAMS his fist on the table. French fries fly everywhere.

CHRIS

Hey, lighten up, Doctor Tyler.

MIKE

Fat lot of good its doing me being Doctor Tyler. Another year of indentured servitude.

CHRIS

We're not on the street.

MIKE

May as well be, that rat trap we live in.

CHRIS

It's not a rat trap. It's nice.

MIKE

Jason's new place is nice. Up on the hill where you can look down on all the little people who haven't discovered a new virus and gotten their name in the paper. You know what?

(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)
You and I, we will never ever be
able to afford a place like that.
You do the math. There's just no
way.

Chris glowers at him. She's had enough.

CHRIS
Man, it must really suck to be you.

Suddenly there is a commotion in the play area. Amanda comes running.

AMANDA
Gross! Ew! Ick!

CHRIS
What's wrong honey?

AMANDA
Some kid sneezed on me!

CHRIS
Well, let's get you cleaned up.

She starts to swab Amanda with a paper napkin.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

SOCCER MOMS play with their KIDS amidst SHOUTING and LAUGHTER. Chris sits on a bench with her sister, MELISSA, late thirties.

CHRIS
Sometimes I wonder how things would
have turned out if I'd just gone to
work for Dad like he wanted.

MELISSA
Don't second guess yourself like
that, sis. Ever since you were six
and mom bought you that chemistry
set...

CHRIS
Yeah, but the reality is just so...
there's so much bullshit.

MELISSA
And you think there's less bullshit
wholesaling air conditioners?

A wave of quiet sweeps across the playground. At the epicenter is a child who has fallen and isn't getting up.

MELISSA

(continuing)

Let me tell you something. There are a lot of people who would give their right arm to be...

Chris has gotten up and is walking towards the throng of kids. The fallen child turns out to be Amanda. Chris stays calm. She's handled little crises like this before.

CHRIS

Amanda, what happened baby?

AMANDA

Hurts!

CHRIS

Where, honey? Where does it hurt.

Amanda clutches her stomach, in so much pain that she can't respond.

CHRIS

Can you stand up, honey?

She can't.

Melissa arrives as Chris wakes to the gravity of the situation.

MELISSA

What happened?

CHRIS

We need an ambulance. Now.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Amanda lies in the hospital bed, IV in her arm, in evident pain. It is the image from the opening scene.

Chris really wants to cry, but she won't allow herself to. Not yet.

Melissa hangs up her cell phone.

MELISSA

Mike's still not answering. If you want I'll go hunt for him.

Chris nods. Melissa hugs her and leaves.

Chris turns back to Amanda and strokes her hair.

The door opens. Chris turns and moves towards the person entering thinking it is Mike - but it isn't. It's Jason. A brief, awkward silence as Chris tries unsuccessfully to come up with something more diplomatic to say than, "What the hell are you doing here?"

JASON

I need to talk to you. Outside.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Chris follows Jason into the hallway.

CHRIS

How did you know I was here?

JASON

New cases of LKS don't come along that often. When they do I hear about them. I'm so sorry.

CHRIS

She's only twelve you know. They give her two weeks. Three if she's lucky. It's so fucking unfair!

Jason holds out his arms. Chris almost loses it, wanting desperately to cry, to be held. But not by him. Jason awkwardly lowers his arms, clears his throat.

JASON

Listen, I, uh, I think I can help.

CHRIS

I don't need your help.

JASON

Yes you do.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small glass vial. Chris regards it.

CHRIS
What is it?

JASON
It's called cyclosporazine. It's
the cure.

CHRIS
What?!

JASON
I've only tested it in vitro so far
but...

CHRIS
(aghast)
Oh, Jesus Christ, you have got to
be kidding me. Amanda is not
some... some goddamned lab rat for
you to play with!

Jason is angry. He's doing her a favor, and this is the
thanks he gets?

JASON
Better a live lab rat than a dead
child, don't you think?

Beat.

JASON
Listen, I don't know if this stuff
is going to work or not. All I
know is that it kills the CT-9
virus in a petri dish. And I also
know that by the time we go through
all the proper procedures for
testing this stuff, Amanda will be
dead.

Chris reluctantly takes the vial from his outstretched hand
and studies it.

JASON
Look, I know you're a stickler for
protocol, but...

CHRIS
It's not that. It's...

JASON
What?

CHRIS
Do you love me?

JASON
Of course I love you. I'll always
love you.

CHRIS
See, that's what worries me. I've
never known you to let anything
stand between you and what you
want.

I can't believe you just said that.

JASON
You don't need to worry about that.
I've met someone.
(Beat)
Her name is Carrie. You'd like
her. She's a lot like you.
Strong. Doesn't take shit from
anyone.

CHRIS
Including you?

JASON
Including me.

CHRIS
Can't imagine how you two manage to
get along then.

Jason chuckles, breaking the tension. Chris's attention
returns to the vial. She turns to re-enter the room. Jason
follows.

CHRIS
Let's do it.

JASON
You have no idea how much I've
wanted to hear you say that.

CHRIS
Pfff...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They walk over to Amanda's bed. Jason reaches into a pocket and extracts a syringe, fills it from the vial.

He looks at Chris. She nods.

He carefully injects Amanda.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS AND MIKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mike is throwing the mother of all temper tantrums.

MIKE

You let him do what?!

CHRIS

What was I supposed to do? Let her die?

MIKE

You could have waited for me to get there, let me weigh in before you...

CHRIS

You're right, I should have waited. I'm sorry. But what do you want to do now? You want to just let her die?

MIKE

I don't know. That's not the point.

CHRIS

What is the point?

Beat.

MIKE

God damn it, I don't know what the mother fucking point is any more.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL QUARANTINE UNIT - DAY

Two unconscious patients on respirators in plastic bubbles. Dr. Armando Landis, now famous as the co-discoverer of Landis-Kitner Syndrome, does the rounds with Jason Keller.

LANDIS

You're getting quite a bit of mileage out of this little virus of ours.

JASON

I do what I can given how rare the cases are. I thought you said there was only one?

LANDIS

Oh, this one doesn't have LKS. Interesting case, actually. Cameroon PL-991. You heard of it?

JASON

No.

LANDIS

Nasty little bug. 90% mortality. But we're still batting a thousand with CT-9.

Jason looks at the patient. Not quite a thousand. Not yet.

JASON

You have an interesting way of looking at the situation.

LANDIS

Gotta stay detached in this line of work, son. It's the only way to stay sane.

INT. CHRIS AND MIKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Furious pounding on the door.

MIKE (O.S.)

Little help here!

Chris runs to open the door. Mike staggers in, laboring under the weight of an enormous pile of papers. He tries to set them down on the coffee table, but they spill everywhere. Chris is aghast.

CHRIS
What...?

MIKE
Want to help me with the rest of
them?

CHRIS
There's more?

Mike goes to leave.

CHRIS
What the hell are you doing?

MIKE
I'm gonna beat that bastard. Gonna
find the cure before he does.

CHRIS
Are you crazy? Mike. Mike!

He stops.

CHRIS
You're changing your research?

Beat.

CHRIS
You're nuts. You've got seven
years invested in Alzheimer's.
Jason is the leading...

MIKE
(interrupting, angry)
Don't tell me about Jason! Goddamn
it, don't...
(struggling to find words)
Gotta... Amanda...

CHRIS
(on the verge of tears)
Oh Mike...

She reaches out to him. He turns and walks out, slamming the
door behind him, leaving her to stare.

The opening bars of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" are
heard.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

MOS. Music continues. Chris stands watch over Amanda's bedside. Mike enters. An awkward moment, then they embrace. Chris sobs.

MUSIC

Hello, is there anybody in there?
Just nod if you can hear me. Is
there anyone at home?

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

MOS. Music continues. Jason looks troubled. He pulls out a prescription bottle and downs a handful of pills

MUSIC

Come on down, I hear you're feeling
down. I can ease your pain, get
you on your feet again.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

MOS. Music continues. Mike and Chris stand beside a small coffin.

MUSIC

Relax, I need some information
first. Just the basic facts, can
you show me where it hurts?

Music fades.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Chris stands alone in front of Amanda's grave.

Jason walks up behind her, touches her on the shoulder. She starts.

JASON

Sorry, didn't mean to startle you.

CHRIS

That's OK.

JASON

I'm so sorry.

CHRIS
Don't be. She had six months.
That's more than we had any right
to hope for.

Beat.

JASON
Where's Mike?

CHRIS
Working.

They stand in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Outside the biology building a throng of PROTESTORS has gathered. The crowd is so thick that it appears to be a single amoebic entity studded with signs which say "More LKS Funding" and "CURE NOW". A PROTEST LEADER shouts into a bullhorn.

SUPER: Two years later.

PROTEST LEADER
(shouting)
... fifty thousand new infections
this year, seventy thousand next
year, a quarter of a million new
cases a year worldwide by 2010!
One hundred thousand dead worldwide
so far. How high does the body
count have to get before we get
some attention?

The crowd ROARS.

PROTEST LEADER
Is this acceptable?

PROTESTORS
(shouting)
NO!

PROTEST LEADER
What do we want?

PROTESTORS
(shouting)
A cure!

PROTEST LEADER
When do we want it?

PROTESTORS
Last year!

CUT TO:

INT. BIOLOGY BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jason Keller surveys the mob from the window of his office.

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY OFFICE - DAY

The sleek and modern office of a very high powered individual. Visible only from behind, he regards the large flat-panel display on the desk, and the image of Jason Keller looking out the window of his office at the protestors.

Keller walks to his desk, pulls out a bottle of pills and pops a handful.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON KELLER'S HOUSE - DAY

It's the kind of place that a young person who doesn't quite know how to handle sudden fortune and fame would buy: too big, too opulent, completely devoid of taste.

A newspaper on the coffee table screams, "LKS Death Toll Rises Dramatically."

Jason leafs through a stack of papers. Shakes his head. This can't be right.

His newly minted trophy wife CARRIE hands him a martini. On her hand is a ring with an enormous diamond.

Jason takes the drink from her without looking up.

CARRIE
Something wrong dear?

Silence.

CARRIE
Jason?

JASON
What? Oh, no, it's... nothing.

Carrie isn't buying it. Jason tries to appease her.

JASON
All right, Carrie, it's everything.
It's the TV interviews and the
pharmaceutical companies calling
all the time. It's just out of
control. And people are dying.

He isn't telling her the whole truth and she knows it, but
decides to play the game.

CARRIE
But you're helping them.

Beat.

JASON
(bleakly)
Yeah.

FADE TO BLACK.

A phone RINGS several times.

The SOUND of someone FUMBLING with the receiver.

JASON(VO)
Hello?

CLICK. A bedside lamp comes on.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jason is on the phone. Next to him Carrie rustles in her
sleep.

JASON
Speaking.

Jason listens, sinks back onto his pillow, his arm still
hanging in the air in position to work the light switch.

He is stunned at what he hears.

JASON
I... I... yes, thank you.
(pause)
No no, I'm fine. This is just a
little, uh, unexpected, that's all.
(pause)
Yes, I understand. Thank you.
Good bye.

He hangs up.

CARRIE
(still mostly asleep)
Who was it?

No answer. Carrie sits up.

CARRIE
Who was it, dear?

JASON
That was an emissary from the King
of Sweden. I've won the Nobel
prize.

Carrie is suddenly wide awake. She gives him a hug.

CARRIE
That's wonderful!

Jason does not respond, his eyes glazed. Carrie regards him.

CARRIE
What's wrong, honey?

Beat.

JASON
Nothing, dear. Go back to sleep.

He turns the light out. Silence.

An alarm clock illuminates the gloom. 3:07.

CARRIE (V.O.)
(sternly)
Go back to sleep? Are you kidding
me?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Breakfast at the Keller's. Jason is unaccountably glum.

CARRIE
I've just about had it with you.

A long pause.

JASON
I'm just not sure I deserve it.

CARRIE
Don't be ridiculous. Of course you
deserve it.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Nobel awards ceremony. Black tie and tails. An EMCEE
stands at the podium.

EMCEE
...received his doctorate from the
University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Today Dr. Keller is chair of the
biology department at the
California Institute of Technology.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS AND MIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mike studies a paper, puts it down and puts his head in his
hands, beaten.

EMCEE (VO)
We recognize him here tonight for
not one but two remarkable
achievements, either of which alone
would have been enough to merit the
Nobel. First, he identified the CT-
9 virus as the cause of Landis-
Kitner syndrome.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A cloudy day. Mike and Chris put flowers on Amanda's grave.

EMCEE (VO)
Second, and perhaps more
importantly, he developed
cyclosporazine, which is to date
still the most effective, indeed
the only known treatment for this
terrible disease.
(MORE)

EMCEE (VO) (cont'd)
And now, it is my honor and
privilege to introduce to you
Doctor Jason Keller, Nobel Laureate
in medicine for 2003.

Rain falls, its sound indistinguishable from sustained
applause.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Jason Keller rushes through a mob of black-tie-clad well-
wishers towards Carrie who ushers him past the shouted
congratulations.

JASON
What a zoo.

CARRIE
Enjoy it while it lasts, honey.

She escorts him out the back door...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

...through the alley towards a stretch limo. Jason is
surprised.

JASON
Nice ride you got for us.

CARRIE
Glad you like it. I have another
surprise for you.

She ushers him into the limo.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

In the rear-facing seat sits JESSIE CORMAN, 55. He oozes
power and money from every pore and stitch of clothing. The
limo pulls away.

JASON
Who the hell are you?

CARRIE
Honey, this is Jessie Corman of
Corman Pharmaceuticals.

Her voice is condescending, with a "you should have known that" undertone. And, of course, once he hears the name Jason knows exactly who Corman is. But he still doesn't know what he's doing in the limo. He regards Corman with a mixture of awe and skepticism.

JASON
Ah.

CARRIE
Mr. Corman is a friend of my
father's.

She seems to think that's important.

JASON
Pleased to meet you.

He obviously doesn't mean it. Carrie glares at him.

CORMAN
Congratulations on winning the
Nobel, Dr. Keller.

His voice is deep and rich with faint echoes of a southern twang.

JASON
Thank you. What can I do for you?

CORMAN
You can give me an exclusive
commercial licence for
cyclosporazine.

JASON
And why on earth would I do that?

CORMAN
Because it will make you rich.

JASON
I'm already rich.

Corman snorts derisively.

CORMAN

Listen son, being able to afford
the mortgage on that McMansion of
yours doesn't make you rich.

He offers Jason a file folder. Jason leafs through it. He looks up wide-eyed, a mix of someone who just won the lottery and a deer caught in the headlights.

Carrie beams.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - DAY

Large, outfitted with floor-to-ceiling cherry shelves neatly filled with books. A huge mahogany desk piled high with papers, and a high-back leather chair designed to make anyone sitting in front of it feel small.

Jason catches up on his reading.

He opens a desk drawer and pulls out a bottle of pills, pops a handful, washes them down with a pull from his coffee mug.

He picks up another paper. It is entitled, "Effects of various synthesized compounds on CT-9 virus in vitro, by Michael Tyler, Department of Biology, University of Nebraska."

JASON

Oh no.

He puts down the paper.

Puts his head in his hands. Picks up the paper again. Is it really as bad as all that?

Puts the paper back down again.

JASON

Shit!

He thrashes for a moment. What the hell am I going to do about this?

He picks up the phone. Dials a few digits, hesitates, hangs up.

Thinks some more. Will that work?

Aw hell. He picks up the phone again and dials.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Mike slouches at his desk in a tiny office overflowing with books and papers.

The phone RINGS. Mike answers.

MIKE
Mike Tyler.

JASON
(VO, filtered)
Mike, this is Jason Keller.

Mike sits up.

MIKE
(dripping sarcasm)
Jason! And here I was thinking
you'd forgotten all about the
little people.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jason is on the phone.

JASON
I could never forget you, old
buddy. I was just reading your
latest LKS paper. Sounds like you
may be on to something.

MIKE (V.O.)
(filtered throughout)
It was a negative result.

JASON
No, no, I think you may have
overlooked some things. Your
approach may be a lot more
promising than you think. Listen,
I'd like you to consider coming out
to Pasadena.

MIKE
To give a talk?

JASON
No, to move out here.

MIKE
Well, I'm flattered, but you can't just...

JASON
Listen, with the Nobel thing they made me department head.

MIKE
Yeah, I read about that.

JASON
So I can hire pretty much anyone I want.

CUT TO:

INT. MYSTERY LOCATION - DAY

A MYSTERY MAN listens to the conversation on a pair of headphones.

JASON (V.O.)
(filtered)
Mike?

MIKE (V.O.)
(filtered)
I don't know what to say.

JASON (V.O.)
(filtered)
Think about it. Get back to me.

The mystery man takes off the headphones, picks up a phone and dials.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS AND MIKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A photograph of Amanda, forever young, is on the mantle.

CHRIS
Just like that? No interview? No faculty review?

MIKE

What can I say? The man has clout now. I get three years of funding, my own lab...

CHRIS

And what am I supposed to do?

Silence. Mike realizes he should have thought of that before.

MIKE

(softly, unsure)

I'm sure they'll find something for you too.

CHRIS

Did you ask?

(beat)

I didn't think so. Jesus, Mike, you expect me to go back to being a postdoc again? Or do you really think Caltech is going to take me on as faculty?

(beat)

You can really be a self-centered bastard, you know that?

MIKE

Hey, back off. It was just a phone call. I haven't accepted the offer. Hell, they haven't even made me an offer yet.

Another awkward silence. Mike moves to embrace her but she turns away.

CHRIS

Have you told your students yet?

MIKE

Of course not.

Chris turns back to face him, her demeanor softened. She moves towards him, they embrace, but her heart isn't in it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALTECH CAMPUS - DAY

The sun shines brightly on the immaculately manicured grounds of the Caltech campus.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

A tiny 1920's California bungalow in desperate need of a makeover.

SUPER: Pasadena, California.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - DAY

Chris explores the empty house with trepidation. Hardwood floors. Her footsteps echo.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen look as if it has never been maintained. The faucet leaks. DRIP. DRIP.

There is PLYWOOD in one corner. Chris walks over to pick it up. It covers a hole in the floor.

A RAT scurries out. Chris SCREAMS, drops the plywood with a BANG.

Mike RUNS into the room.

MIKE

What?

CHRIS

(regaining her composure)

Nothing.

MIKE

You okay?

CHRIS

(sarcastically)

Peachy.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT OFFICE - DAY

The office door says "Department of Biology". Mike enters, Chris right behind him. PAULA, the department secretary, black, early 30's, energetic and boundlessly cheerful, looks up at him.

PAULA
Can I help you?

MIKE
We're looking for Paula?

PAULA
You found her.

MIKE
I'm Mike Tyler.

PAULA
(getting up to shake
Mike's hand)
Oh, hi! Professor Keller mentioned
you'd be coming.

MIKE
My wife Chris.

PAULA
Pleasure.

CHRIS
Nice to meet you too.

MIKE
Is Jason here?

PAULA
Jason, eh? He's in a meeting. He
asked me to show you around.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Paula leads Mike and Chris down. And down. And down.

PAULA
You find a place to stay yet?

CHRIS

We found a rental in bungalow
heaven for the time being. We've
had a little bit of sticker shock.

PAULA

Yeah, housing prices are always
crazy around here. But at least
you found a place. My sister moved
here from St. Louis. She was
looking for three months...

The sounds of her voice trails away as they vanish into the
bowels of the building.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY

Steam pipes line the ceiling. The walls are cinder block,
the floor unadorned cement. It's still day but there's no
way to tell down here.

Paula leads them to a heavy wooden door.

PAULA

Here we are.

She unlocks the door, opens it and offers the key to Mike.

PAULA

Its all yours.

MIKE

Oh no.

The room is tiny and completely bare, hardly more than a
large broom closet.

MIKE

(continuing)

There must be some mistake.

PAULA

Why do you say that?

MIKE

Well, it's, it's... not a lab.

PAULA

No, it's lab space. Turning it
into a lab is your job.

MIKE

There are no plumbing hookups, not even any electrical outlets...

PAULA

Oh no, you've got an outlet.

She indicates behind the door where there is a lone two-prong outlet. Mike is speechless. Paula shrugs.

PAULA

This is LA, honey. Space is tight.

CHRIS

We'll make it work.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - DAY

Paula shows Chris and Mike in.

PAULA

Make yourselves at home. Professor Keller will be with you in a few minutes. You need anything just holler.

She closes the door. Mike and Chris look around.

MIKE

Not too shabby.

CHRIS

Rank has its privileges.

Jason makes his entrance with the air of a Very Busy Man, moving non-stop to shake Mike and Chris's hands and seat himself behind the desk.

JASON

Mike, it's great to see you.
Chris, you too. Listen, Mike, I've decided I want you to take up the Alzheimer's research again.

Mike and Chris are both thunderstruck.

MIKE

What?!

JASON

It was good work and no one else has picked it up since, er, since you got distracted. It's important work, Mike. Someone needs to do it and you seem the obvious choice.

Awkward silence.

MIKE

I... I just assumed that you brought me here to work on LKS.

JASON

That was the original idea, but having thought about it some more I've decided that the department needs more breadth.

MIKE

I really think...

JASON

Mike, Mike, Mike...

He gets up and moves towards the door.

JASON

(continuing)

You're in the big leagues now, and here's lesson number one...

He gets to the door, stops, turns around.

JASON

It doesn't matter what you think.

He turns and leaves. Mike and Chris are stunned speechless.

MIKE AND CHRIS

That bastard!

They look at each other, surprised. It's the first time they've been in sync for a long time.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Chris peers in the door, smiling.

CHRIS
Got something to show you.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

Chris opens the door to the tiny lab. It is set up with amazing efficiency. Empty rabbit-size cages are stacked floor to ceiling. Somehow, a white board has been squeezed onto the wall, and a lab bench shoehorned into the center of the room. The bench is crammed with complicated equipment.

In the center of the bench is a sink, but no spigot.

Amongst the rabbit cages, five gallon jugs of water are stacked in racks and plumbed with plastic tubing to all the cages. Mike takes it all in open-mouthed.

MIKE
This is amazing.

CHRIS
Glad you like it.

Mike walks around the lab bench. A PVC drain pipe emerges from the back of the bench and disappears into a hole in the wall. The hole wasn't there before.

MIKE
(looking at the hole)
Where does...

Chris holds up her hand. Shakes her head.

CHRIS
Shhh...

CUT TO:

INT. MAIL ROOM - DAY

Mike removes a bundle of mail from his box, including a large manila envelope. He opens the envelope, pulls out the contents. He leafs through the pages with sudden horror.

MIKE
Oh no!

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LABORATORY

Mike meets with a group of GRADUATE STUDENTS. The cages are now filled with rabbits. Mike tries to hide his desperation with pedantry.

MIKE
(indicating the cages)
What do we have here?

The students look at each other trying to decide if this is a joke.

STUDENT 1
Rabbits?

Mike snaps his fingers and points at the student.

MIKE
That's right. Rabbits.

Mike moves to the white board. As he speaks he writes "RABBITS" on the top center of the board.

MIKE
(continuing)
Specifically, Cyclone corporation
TL-21 purebred single germ line
rabbits. Every one of them is
genetically identical to every
other one.

Beneath the word "RABBITS" he writes "RABBITS" again, taking care to make the two words appear as identical as possible.

To the left of the top "RABBITS" he writes "Lincoln, NE, 1997".

MIKE
(continuing)
Furthermore, they are all
genetically identical to another
group of rabbits living in similar
air conditioned comfort in Lincoln
Nebraska in the year of our lord
nineteen hundred and ninety seven.

Below "Lincoln, NE" he writes "Pasadena, CA, 2006".

The students look at each other. They already know all this. Has Mike gone off the deep end?

MIKE

Now, in 1997, in Lincoln Nebraska, administering cytosine antibodies to this particular strain of rabbits produced neural plaques in their brains strongly reminiscent to the plaques that form in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.

To the right of the top "RABBITS" he writes "+ antibodies = neural plaques".

MIKE

(continuing)

But in 2006 administering those very same antibodies to that very same strain of rabbits in Pasadena California produced no effect at all.

To the right of the lower "RABBITS" he writes, "+ antibodies = NO PLAQUES", and furiously underlines the last two words several times for emphasis. The board now reads:

Lincoln, NE, 1997 RABBITS + antibodies = neural plaques

Pasadena, CA, 2006 RABBITS + antibodies = NO PLAQUES

He turns to face the students again.

MIKE

The question before us, ladies and gentlemen, is... why?

A long pause.

STUDENT 2

(furtively)

Something... is different?

MIKE

Obviously. But what?

Silence.

Mike picks an enormous stack of lab notebooks up off the floor and puts them on the lab bench.

MIKE

We're going to go through these
until we figure it out. Otherwise
we'll all be looking for work.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Mike slouches on the couch. Chris stands over him looking at
the papers.

MIKE

I just don't get it. We were so
careful. Everything was exactly
the same.

CHRIS

Could have been a fluke.

MIKE

You're supposed to be on my side.

CHRIS

I meant this time.

MIKE

This is really bad. Without
reproducible results I can't
publish and if I don't publish...

CHRIS

It'll be OK.

MIKE

How? How is it going to be OK?

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - DAY

Chris is on the phone.

PETER OBERMEYER

(VO, filtered)

You have reached the office of
Professor Peter Obermeyer,
department of biology at the
University of Nebraska. Please
leave a message.

CHRIS
Peter? It's Chris. I need the
wisdom of your counsel...

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - DAY

Mike sits across from Jason, who is silently leafing through the report. He puts it down on his desk.

JASON
You're not off to a good start.

MIKE
I just need to try again.
Sometimes random shit just happens.

JASON
One man's random shit is another
man's sloppy procedure.

MIKE
I just need another year.

Jason's look makes it clear that he's not going to get another year.

MIKE
Six months. I can do it in six
months.

Jason thinks it over.

JASON
I'm going out on a limb for you,
you know.

MIKE
Thanks, Jason. You won't regret
it.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - DAY

Mike, looking haggard, enters to find Chris on the sofa reading. She casts him an inquisitive look.

MIKE
He gave me six months.

Mike rummages through a pile of mail. A large manila envelope catches his attention.

CHRIS
Better than nothing.

MIKE
I guess.

Chris gets up.

CHRIS
What do you want for dinner?

No answer. Mike is studying a sheaf of papers -- the contents of the envelope -- with undivided attention.

CHRIS
Hon?

Still no answer. Chris gets up off the sofa.

CHRIS
Mike?

MIKE
I gotta go.

CHRIS
Mike, what is going on?

He walks out the door, grimly determined.

CHRIS
Don't you dare walk away from me!

But he is gone.

CHRIS
You bastard!

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - LATE AFTERNOON

Chris dials the phone. Waits.

She slams down the receiver, picks it up again, dials...

Again no answer. She hangs up, grabs her keys, and runs out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Chris opens the door to Mike's office. Empty.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT OFFICE - NIGHT

Chris enters. Empty too. The door to Jason's office is open, no one inside. Chris leaves, not sure whether to be annoyed or worried.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIL ROOM - NIGHT

Empty.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Chris descends the stairs as fast as she dares. Her footsteps echo in the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Chris rounds the corner and sees light spilling from the open door of the lab. She runs to it.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB - CONTINUOUS

The lab appears empty. Chris stops, winded, looks around. Where the hell could he be?

She stands in the doorway thinking, when she spies A HAND on the floor beyond the lab bench.

CHRIS

What the...

She moves towards it, rounds the corner..

Mike is on the floor propped up against the lab bench, unconscious.

CHRIS

Oh God, Mike, what happened?

Chris shakes Mike. He flops onto his side. She feels awkwardly for a pulse, utterly at a loss.

Then she is suddenly stopped cold by the sight of A SYRINGE stuck in a vein in Mike's right arm.

CHRIS

Oh shit! No, no, no!

Chris reaches for the syringe, hesitates, then carefully pulls it out, stares at it in disbelief.

She pulls out her cell phone. No signal down here.

She struggles to get up, stumbles, SLAMS the syringe onto the counter and RACES to the phone on the wall, frantically tries to dial 911, misses the buttons, hangs up and tries again.

CHRIS

God damn it!

She succeeds in calling 911. It RINGS.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

(filtered throughout)

Campus security.

CHRIS

I need an ambulance. Grafson hall room B13. Please hurry.

OPERATOR

Are you hurt?

CHRIS

No, it's my husband. He's been attacked or something, I don't really know.

OPERATOR

Is he injured?

CHRIS

No, I don't think so. He's just unconscious.

OPERATOR

Is he breathing?

CHRIS

Oh shit!

Chris drops the phone and runs back over to Mike. She kneels next to him, puts her hand in front of his mouth.

CHRIS

Oh thank God!

She picks up his head and cradles it in her lap. She puts a hand on his forehead.

CHRIS

Oh, baby, you're burning up.

Chris rocks Mike gently. In the distance she can hear the sound of the operator's voice on the dangling phone handset.

CHRIS

(shouting towards the
phone)

Just send a god damned ambulance!!

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Mike is wheeled through a set of double doors on a gurney by three EMTs. Chris follows and is intercepted by a NURSE.

NURSE

I'm afraid you'll have to wait
here, ma'am.

Chris watches Mike disappear into the bowels of the hospital. The nurse hands Chris a clipboard.

NURSE

Fill these out please.

The nurse turns and walks away. Chris regards the clipboard skeptically, then sits down to fill out the forms. Suddenly she drops the clipboard, pulls out a cell phone, dials.

CHRIS

Hello, I'd like to report a... a...
well, I'm not sure exactly what I
need to report. I think my
husband's been attacked.

(beat)

Actually, it's kind of a long
story.

(MORE)

CHRIS (cont'd)
Can you just send someone over to
Huntington Memorial Hospital
please?

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Chris sits in a chair fidgeting, waiting the interminable wait. A NURSE appears.

NURSE
(shouting)
Chris Tyler?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The steady sound of a respirator over the soft BEEP-BEEP of a heart monitor.

Clear liquid DRIPS silently into a burette, flows through a clear plastic tube into Mike's arm.

Mike lies in the hospital bed unconscious. Chris stands next to him holding his hand.

DOCTOR HANSEN comes in carrying a chart.

CHRIS
What's the good word, Doc?

HANSEN
I'm afraid we're a bit stumped.
The contents of the syringe didn't
test positive for any common drugs
or toxins. He's running a fever,
his white count is up, but bacteria
and viral cultures all came back
negative. It's very strange. None
of us here have ever seen anything
like it. We've sent out some
inquiries to other hospitals and
the CDC. We should know more in a
few hours. The good news is he
seems to be stable.

CHRIS
Why the respirator?

HANSEN

Just a precaution. He was breathing when he came in but barely. We thought it best to intubate him until we sort out what's what.

CHRIS

I hate seeing him like this.

HANSEN

We'll take good care of him.

CHRIS

Thanks.

HANSEN

Oh, one more thing. Did you call the police?

CHRIS

Yeah, I did.

HANSEN

(disapproving)

Hm. Well, they're waiting outside. You want me to send them in?

She nods. Hansen exits. A moment later, DETECTIVE SEAN NARRAMORE, late thirties, enters. He is calm and unflappable, wears a cheap but immaculate charcoal grey suit and a small gold cross on a chain around his neck.

SEAN

Chris Tyler?

It is the other voice from the warehouse.

CHRIS

That's me.

Sean pulls out a note pad and consults it.

SEAN

And this would be... Michael?

CHRIS

Mike.

SEAN

Detective Sean Narramore, Pasadena PD. What happened?

CHRIS
I'm not exactly sure. I found him
unconscious.

SEAN
Where was that?

CHRIS
In his lab.

SEAN
His lab?

CHRIS
He's a biology professor over at
Caltech.

SEAN
Do you work there too?

CHRIS
(shaking her head)
I'm a biologist too, but I'm, uh,
between jobs at the moment.

SEAN
You a Caltech grad?

CHRIS
University of Nebraska. Both of
us.

SEAN
No kidding? I'm a Cornhusker fan
from way back. Go big red.

CHRIS
Yeah, uh, we're not really football
fans.

SEAN
Too bad. They had a great season
last year.
(beat)
You say you found him unconscious?

CHRIS
With a needle in his arm.

SEAN
Needle, mm? Left arm or right arm?

CHRIS

I don't know. Right I guess. Why do you ask?

SEAN

Is he left handed?

CHRIS

He didn't do this to himself if that's what you're getting at.

SEAN

How can you be so sure?

CHRIS

I know Mike.

SEAN

So is he left handed?

Beat.

CHRIS

Yes.

SEAN

Hmmm... Does he have any enemies? Anyone who would want to hurt him?

CHRIS

No, not like this.

SEAN

What do you mean, "Not like this."

CHRIS

Well, you know what they say, academic politics are vicious because the stakes are so small. So the fighting is all done with words, not with...

She gestures towards Mike's arm.

SEAN

Had he been involved in any, uh, word fights lately?

CHRIS

There's been tension between him and the department head, but...

She shakes her head.

SEAN

But what?

CHRIS

We've all known each other since
grad school.

Sean scribbles in his notebook.

SEAN

The doc tells me that as far as he
can tell he's just come down with a
nasty case of the flu.

CHRIS

He was fine this morning. Someone
did this to him.

SEAN

Can you prove it?

CHRIS

No.

SEAN

Unless I have some actual evidence
of a crime I'm afraid there's not
much I can do. But here's my card.
If you think of anything else give
me a call, OK?

CUT TO:

INT. NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT

Chris walks up to the night duty NURSE.

CHRIS

Can you tell me where I might find
Dr. Hansen?

NURSE

(pointing across the room)
Right over there.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL COFFEE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris enters as Dr. Hansen puts sugar into a Styrofoam cup.

CHRIS
Dr. Hansen?

HANSEN
Yes?

CHRIS
I have a favor to ask. You said
that all the tests on the contents
of the syringe came back negative.

HANSEN
That's right.

CHRIS
Any chance I could get it back?

HANSEN
The syringe? Why?

CHRIS
I'm a biologist. My specialty is
organic chemistry. I might be able
to help you figure out what was in
there.

HANSEN
I'd gladly give it to you, but that
police detective took it.

CHRIS
Damn.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAWN

Chris walks out of the hospital's main entrance, rubs the
sleep out of her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

A beat-up old Honda Civic. Driving, she digs Sean's business
card out of her pocket and dials her cell phone.

CHRIS
Detective Narramore please.

A car HONKS as she almost runs it off the road.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

Sean Narramore enters, carrying the syringe in a Ziploc bag. Chris is waiting for him.

SEAN

You're lucky you caught me before I got back to the station. I'm sticking my neck out as it is.

CHRIS

I really appreciate it.

SEAN

So, what did you have in mind?

Chris produces a tiny plastic test tube.

CHRIS

I just need a drop.

Sean reaches into his pocket and extracts a pair of latex gloves. He puts them on, takes the syringe out of the bag, takes out the plunger.

He shakes a drop of clear liquid into the test tube.

DRIP!

CHRIS

Perfect.

Sean reassembles the syringe, puts it away as Chris inserts the test tube into one of the machines on the lab bench.

SEAN

So what's this thingamabobber?

CHRIS

This is called a mass spectrum analyzer.

SEAN

Sounds complicated.

CHRIS

It is. But all you really need to know is you put some stuff in and this tells you what it is.

SEAN

The hospital should get one of those.

Chris operates the machine as she talks.

CHRIS

They're expensive, and they don't really tell you what you've got. They just tell you the chemical structure.

SEAN

But from that you can figure out what it is, right?

CHRIS

Sometimes. Not always. Like, for example, not this time.

SEAN

I don't understand.

CHRIS

Just because you know the chemical structure doesn't mean you know what it is. There are too many different kinds of organic compounds. In fact, that's one of the things we - they - do in this lab, make new ones.

SEAN

I see.

CHRIS

So here's what we're dealing with.

She gestures at a screen which is now filled with incomprehensible gobbledygook.

CHRIS

(continuing)

This is the chemical structure of what was in the syringe. The computer also has a database of known organic compounds. This doesn't match any of them. So we know what it is, but we don't know. Follow?

SEAN

You said that they make new compounds here. So whatever it is might have been made here, right?

CHRIS
Might have.

SEAN
How can we find out?

CHRIS
That's tough.

SEAN
Why?

CHRIS
New compounds are made in this machine over here. It's called an organic synthesizer. Basically just a little oven with a really good thermostat. You mix different chemicals at the right temperatures and out come new organic molecules. All the synthesis runs are logged in this computer over here. The problem is that you don't know what you've got until you run the stuff through the analyzer.

SEAN
Like having a record of the recipe, but not what the recipe made.

CHRIS
Exactly.

SEAN
I would think that, with you guys being scientists and all, you'd keep track of what's what.

CHRIS
(testy)
We do, but it's a manual process. Whoever cooked this up probably didn't take the time to go through the proper procedures.

SEAN
Maybe that's a good thing.

CHRIS
Huh?

SEAN

Can you cross-reference the two databases to find any recipes that haven't been analyzed?

CHRIS

Maybe. I doubt it'll do any good. Once you're in the system there's no security on the database. Whoever did it could easily erase the record.

SEAN

Indulge me.

Chris shrugs, types.

CHRIS

Damn, you were right. There's one synthesis run that's not accounted for. It's time stamped yesterday at 6:42 PM. Whoever did this didn't bother to cover their tracks.

A momentary silence. Sean stares in space lost in thought.

CHRIS

(continuing)

What are you thinking?

Sean snaps out of his reverie.

SEAN

Huh?, Oh... I'm thinking we should sleep on it.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - DAY

Paula searches through a filing cabinet as Chris walks in. She hasn't slept or showered in thirty hours.

PAULA

Child, you look a sight.

CHRIS

Didn't get much sleep last night. Mike got sick and had to go to the hospital.

PAULA
Oh no! Is he OK?

CHRIS
He'll be fine, but you'll need to
find someone to cover his classes
for a few days.

PAULA
I'll take care of it. You go home
and get some sleep, honey.

CHRIS
Thanks, Paula. You're an angel.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Chris quietly enters Mike's room. Mike is unconscious. She
kisses him on the forehead, sits in the chair next to the
bed, puts her head in her hands.

BEGIN CHRIS'S FLASHBACK

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Stars sparkle in the warm, clear night. Mike is barbecuing a
cheap cut of steak. Amanda peers through the eyepiece of a
telescope while Chris looks on.

AMANDA
Cool!

CHRIS
You see those four bright stars
next to Jupiter? They're not
really stars, they're moons.
Jupiter has a whole pile of moons.
Those four bright ones are called
the Galilean moons.

AMANDA
That's a funny name.

CHRIS
They're named after the guy who
discovered them. Galileo.

AMANDA
That's a funny name too.

CHRIS

You can't see them except with a telescope. Until Galileo got the idea of looking at Jupiter through a telescope no one knew they were there.

AMANDA

He invented the telescope, right?

CHRIS

No, telescopes had been around for a while. But Galileo was the first one to think of using a telescope to look at planets.

AMANDA

But that's so obvious.

CHRIS

You'd be surprised how often people miss the obvious. Back then people mostly used telescopes to look at faraway things here on Earth. Ships sailing away. Mountains. The neighbor's window.

AMANDA

(laughing)

Stop making me laugh, mom. I can't hold still.

CHRIS

People didn't look at the planets because they didn't think there would be anything to see. They just thought they'd look like little dots, and so no one ever bothered to look.

AMANDA

Until Galileo.

CHRIS

That's right.

The stars twinkle softly in the night.

END CHRIS'S FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

Chris wakes up with a start. She looks at Mike and slaps herself lightly on the forehead.

CHRIS

Duh!

She pulls out her cell phone and dials.

CHRIS

Detective Narramore? Chris Tyler.

(pause)

I just remembered something.

(pause)

When Mike left the house yesterday
he took this envelope with him...

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY

Chris and Sean walk down the empty, echoing hallway to the lab.

SEAN

And where did he go after he left
your house?

CHRIS

Well, I presume he came here, but I
don't really know. One minute he's
looking at these papers, the next
he says he's gotta go and...poof!

SEAN

Shh!

He motions for Chris to stop. There are footsteps coming
down the stairs.

SEAN

Who would be here at this time of
night?

CHRIS

Grad students work at all hours.

But it's not a student, it's Jason Keller.

JASON

Chris, what are you doing here? I thought you'd gone home. Who's your friend?

CHRIS

Detective Sean Narramore, this is Mike's boss, Jason Keller.

JASON

Detective? What the hell? I thought he just came down with the flu.

SEAN

We're not sure what happened, sir. That's what we're trying to find out.

Jason looks Sean up and down as if to say, "Is that so?"

JASON

What makes you think it's not the flu?

SEAN

I'm afraid I can't discuss that, sir.

JASON

Chris, what the hell is going on?

Chris starts to respond but Sean cuts her off.

SEAN

She's not at liberty to say either. Sir, I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to excuse us.

Jason's muscles tense as for a split second he forgets himself and allows his fury to show. Then he is once again in complete control.

JASON

Chris, I'm very sorry about Mike. I hope he gets better soon.

CHRIS

Thanks, Jason.

Jason turns and walks away coolly.

CHRIS
Do you know who that was?

SEAN
Jason Keller. Mike's boss.

CHRIS
Nobel Laureate for medicine.
Discoverer of the LKS virus.

SEAN
(unimpressed)
No shit.

CHRIS
You shouldn't talk to a Nobel
Laureate that way.

SEAN
Why the hell not?

CHRIS
Would you talk to God that way,
detective? Gods, Nobel Laureates.
Pretty much the same thing around
here.

SEAN
Actually, God never won a Nobel
prize.

CHRIS
Jason did. That makes him better
than God as far as the
administration's concerned.
(A beat.)
Uh, why did you talk to him that
way? It seemed a little
unnecessary.

SEAN
Bad vibes.

CHRIS
Huh, he does that to everyone. You
don't think he had anything to do
with this?

SEAN
I never rule anyone out.

CHRIS
Mike and I have known him since
grad school. There's no way.

SEAN
Then why would he assume that I'm
here about Mike?

CHRIS
I don't know. He knew Mike went to
the hospital. How many different
traumatic events can happen to a
person in one day?

Sean looks at Chris but does not respond.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

In Mike's room the steady BEEP of the heart monitor suddenly
turns into one continuous BEEEEEEEEEEP.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

Chris and Sean search for the envelope.

CHRIS
I don't see it. Maybe we should
try his office again.

Sean shakes his head.

SEAN
What time did you say he left the
house?

CHRIS
About six.

SEAN
And then you found him at about,
what, 7:30?

CHRIS
I think so. I don't really
remember.

SEAN
(consulting his notebook)
You called 9-1-1 at 7:56.
(MORE)

SEAN (cont'd)

So we have about a two-hour window. But he was probably down here for a while before you found him, so I think we can safely assume he didn't leave the campus, and probably didn't leave the building.

CHRIS

Makes sense. But whoever attacked him might have taken the envelope.

SEAN

I don't think so.

CHRIS

Why?

SEAN

Because if they did then we're out of leads and I'm an optimist.

CHRIS

Oh, OK.

SEAN

There are only three possibilities. One, he was attacked here. Two, he was attacked somewhere else but didn't realize he was being attacked.

CHRIS

What?

SEAN

If he was attacked somewhere else and knew it, he'd either be unconscious or raise a ruckus. Either way, his attacker would have had a hard time getting him from there to here without attracting attention.

CHRIS

What's the third possibility?

SEAN

He wasn't attacked.

CHRIS

No.

SEAN

Maybe he just came down with the flu.

CHRIS

Pretty heavy-duty flu. And what about the syringe?

SEAN

You said it was in a vein, right?

CHRIS

Yeah.

SEAN

There's no way you can inject a conscious person intravenously unless they're sitting still for it. So either he was already unconscious, or he did it himself.

CHRIS

No way. I told you, there's no way Mike would hurt himself like that.

SEAN

Maybe he didn't think he was hurting himself. Maybe he was trying to help himself. Maybe he realized he was coming down with something and tried to give himself a vaccine. That's possible.

CHRIS

No, it's not.

SEAN

Why not?

CHRIS

They don't have any vaccines here.

SEAN

(pointing at the organic synthesizer)

He could have brewed one up in that whatchamacallit. I thought that's what it was for.

CHRIS

Yeah, that is what it's for, but you can only brew something up if you know exactly what it is you want. If he just started feeling sick he'd have no way of knowing what it was or what to cook up to help himself.

SEAN

Unless...

CHRIS

Unless what?

SEAN

Unless he did know.

CHRIS

How could he know?

SEAN

Let's just suppose that he's in the building somewhere and he starts to feel sick. Somehow he knows what's going on so he comes down here to cook up the antidote. By the time it's ready he's feeling pretty bad so she lies down...

Sean gets down on the floor.

SEAN

(continuing)

Is this where you found him?

CHRIS

More over that way. Yeah. He was sitting kind of propped up against the bench there.

SEAN

Like this?

CHRIS

Yeah.

SEAN

Hmmmm... then suddenly he realizes he's got to hide this envelope...

Sean looks around. From this new perspective he notices the drain pipe snaking into the wall.

SEAN

Hot damn!

He gets on his hands and knees, peers into the hole. Looks back up at Chris with a big grin. He pulls latex gloves from his pocket, puts them on, reaches in the hole and extracts the envelope.

It's grimed up. He puts it on the bench and turns to the sink, realizes there is no water there.

CHRIS

Oh, sorry, ... 'cross the hall.

SEAN

I'm OK.

Sean dusts the envelope off in the sink, opens the envelope, extracts the contents, and shows them to Chris.

CHRIS

Looks like some clinical trial results.

SEAN

What were they testing?

CHRIS

There's no way to know from this. These trials are double-blind. The only way to find out what they were testing is to cross-reference these code numbers with the experimental protocol.

SEAN

Where do we find that?

Chris's cell phone rings.

CHRIS

I don't know. I didn't even know he was doing any clinical trial work.

(into the phone)

Hello?

The color leaves her face.

CHRIS

I'll be right there.

She hangs up.

CHRIS
Trouble at the hospital. I've gotta go.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Chris enters Mike's room. It's empty.

CHRIS
Oh my god!

She pauses for an instant to let the situation sink in, then rushes out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dr. Hansen rounds the corner. Chris accosts him.

CHRIS
Where is he? What happened?

HANSEN
We had to move him into the ICU.

CHRIS
Can I see him?

HANSEN
In a minute. Why don't we sit down.

He motions Chris over to some chairs.

CHRIS
That doesn't sound good.

HANSEN
No, I'm afraid it's not. We heard back from the CDC. Your husband is infected by a rare virus called...
(he consults his clipboard)
Cameroon PL-991.

Chris stands up. Hansen follows suit.

CHRIS
Type 1 or type 2?

HANSEN
You know about this virus?

CHRIS
One of Mike's colleagues does
research on it. His office is
right down the hall.

HANSEN
Well, that could explain a lot.
They keep stocks of the virus on
campus then?

CHRIS
Yeah, but it's in a secure lab, and
there's no reason Mike would go
there. Was it type 1 or type 2?

Hansen consults the clipboard.

HANSEN
Uh, type 2.

CHRIS
Shit.

HANSEN
I'm sorry.

CHRIS
What's his prognosis?

HANSEN
You probably know more about it
than I do. I've never heard of
this before. All I know is from
the CDC report, and all the CDC
knows probably comes from your
friend down the hall.

CHRIS
We don't really talk much.

HANSEN
OK, well, what it says here... it's
very rare. The last natural
outbreak was, let's see, seven
years ago. Type 2 has an untreated
survival rate of
(pause)
ten percent.

CHRIS
Untreated?

HANSEN
There's a vaccine available, but
it's only effective if administered
before infection.

CHRIS
Can we get some?

HANSEN
Maybe, but it's too late.

CHRIS
Listen, the recommendations you
doctors get, they're all the
results of clinical trials done by
people like us. I know how these
things really work. Sometimes the
recommendations are wrong.

HANSEN
I realize that you're better
informed than the typical patient,
but I see people asking for all
kinds of desperate measures all the
time.

CHRIS
This isn't desperation talking.
(beat)
OK maybe it is, but listen, I know
what I'm talking about. Most
vaccines aren't effective unless
they're given before infection, but
a few are. Smallpox, for example.
But because most aren't it's hard
to get funding for a post-infection
clinical trial. They just assume it
won't work. It's possible that this
vaccine was never tested,
especially since Mike has the first
case of this in seven years.

HANSEN
Let me see what I can do.

CHRIS
I really appreciate this.

HANSEN
Don't thank me yet. I'll take you
to see him now.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - NIGHT

Mike is in a plastic bubble. Chris fights back tears.

Sean enters with a stack of papers.

SEAN
How's he doing?

CHRIS
Not so good.

Sean waits for a respectful interval, then offers Chris the papers.

SEAN
Got you a present.

CHRIS
Oh, thanks.

Chris leafs through them.

SEAN
Any ideas?

CHRIS
No, not without the protocol. Wait
a minute, this is odd.

SEAN
What is it?

CHRIS
Sweet Jesus!

SEAN
What?

CHRIS
I think Mike may have discovered a
cure for LKS.

SEAN
I thought you said you'd need to
see the protocol before you knew
what this meant.

CHRIS

Yeah, but this is different. Look, here are the results. It was a one-year trial, and they had twelve test subjects.

SEAN

(reading)

No incidence of ... what's this?

CHRIS

Dysphagia. It means difficulty in swallowing.

SEAN

(reading)

No incidence of this, no incidence of that. Blah blah blah, everyone looks perfectly healthy.

CHRIS

That's right.

SEAN

(leafing through the
pages)

But I don't see anywhere that it says that these people had LKS.

CHRIS

It doesn't.

SEAN

Then how do you know they had it? It looks like they just took twelve healthy people, and they stayed healthy. Big whup.

CHRIS

Look at the control case.

SEAN

The what?

CHRIS

The control case. Whenever you do a clinical trial you always have a control, a set of people who get a placebo instead of the real drug. That's the only way you can tell if any effect you see is real or just random.

SEAN
(leafing through the
pages)
I don't see any control case.

CHRIS
That's because there isn't one.

SEAN
I thought you just said...

CHRIS
I did. There are two exceptions.

SEAN
And one of them is LKS.

CHRIS
Give the man a kewpie doll.

SEAN
Why is LKS an exception?

CHRIS
Because it's 100% fatal. Like
AIDS, only a lot faster.

SEAN
AIDS is the other exception?

CHRIS
That's right. Because we know that
the disease will kill you if you
don't get treatment it would be
unethical to give someone a
placebo.

SEAN
But all these people survived.

CHRIS
Yeah, for a year, with no ill
effects.

Sean thinks.

SEAN
So if this is really what Mike
discovered that would be pretty
exciting, wouldn't it.

CHRIS
Fuckin'-A. Nobel Prize kind of
exciting.

SEAN
So... when he left the house, did
he look excited?

A long pause.

CHRIS
No. No, he didn't.

Chris looks defeated.

SEAN
Come on, I'll take you home.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Sean walks Chris to her front door.

CHRIS
Thanks.

SEAN
You take care now.

They share a moment. Then Chris goes inside and closes the
door. Sean turns, walks to his car, drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

Chris enters.

A hand reaches for her shoulder, touches it...

Chris turns and GASPS!

It is Jason Keller!

CHRIS
Jesus Christ, Jason, you scared
the... what are you doing here?!

JASON
Wanted to see if you're OK.

CHRIS

I was fine until you almost gave me
a coronary. How did you get in?

JASON

Unlocked door. Nobody answered. I
was worried.

CHRIS

I'm fine.

Beat.

JASON

What was that police detective
doing?

Beat.

JASON

Chris?

CHRIS

Why do you want to know?

JASON

Police start snooping around my
department I need to know what's
going on.

CHRIS

He's looking into Mike's...

JASON

Mike's what?

Beat.

CHRIS

I think Mike was attacked.

JASON

What makes you think that?

CHRIS

(losing her cool)
He had a goddamned needle in his
arm, OK?!

JASON

Calm down. I'm here to help.

CHRIS
You'd better go.

JASON
Chris...

CHRIS
Now!

Jason hesitates a moment, turns and walks out the door.

The door SLAMS shut behind him.

Chris stands and listens to the SOUND of his car starting and pulling away. She sinks onto the couch and sobs.

RAP MUSIC starts to play, softly at first, then louder. The SOUND of an UNMUFFLED CAR ENGINE accompanies the BOOM BOOM BOOM of the bass line. Then we hear SHOUTS from partiers in the car. Just as the sound starts to fade the whole cacophony is punctuated by the glassy CRASH of a beer bottle shattering on concrete.

Silence.

Chris stops crying, looks up, realizing..

She picks up the phone, dials.

CHRIS
Sean? Chris. Can you meet me at the lab? Now. I think we may have missed something.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S CAR - NIGHT

A BMW 745i. The sound of a phone RINGING over the car speakers. Jessie Corman answers.

CORMAN (V.O.)
(filtered throughout)
Yeah?

JASON
It's me. We have a problem.

CORMAN
What kind of problem?

JASON
The kind you don't talk about over
the phone.

Beat.

VOICE
You better come on over.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

Chris bursts into the lab, stops, looks around.

She walks to the drainpipe hole and gets down on hands and knees to peer inside.

She reaches inside with her hand, it won't quite fit.

CHRIS
Damn it!

She gets up and rummages through the drawers, comes up with a flashlight and a surgical clamp.

Back to the floor. Lying on her side she shines the light into the hole. She squirms this way and that, trying to line up the light and her line of sight so she can actually see something.

She reaches into the hole with the surgical clamp.

There is a soft glassy CLINK! Chris freezes.

She works the clamp to fish out whatever made the sound.

CUT TO:

INT. QUARANTINE ICU - NIGHT

Mike is still on the ventilator, still in the plastic bubble, still unconscious. The only sounds are the heart monitor, and the ventilator.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

Chris succeeds in extracting a small glass vial from the drain hole just as Sean enters.

CHRIS
Gotcha!

SEAN
What's up?

CHRIS
Look.

She holds up the vial. On the side is a small label.

SEAN
So?

CHRIS
It was in the hole.

SEAN
You think this might be the stuff?

Chris walks to the lab bench where she has left the clinical trial report.

CHRIS
One way to find out.

She leafs through the report, finds the right page, holds it and the bottle up side by side for Sean to see.

There is a long serial number on the bottle, same as the one in the report.

SEAN
Looks like we have a winner.

CHRIS
Yeah. Wow. This could be the cure for LKS.

SEAN
So what is this miracle drug?

CHRIS
Let's find out.

Chris opens the vial, pours a sample into a test tube, loads it into the mass spectrum analyzer. She punches some buttons and goes to the computer screen, frowns.

CHRIS
This can't be right.

She punches a few more buttons on the analyzer and the keyboard.

CHRIS
Shit. Shit shit shit! God damn
it!

SEAN
(getting annoyed)
What?

CHRIS
Take a look.

She indicates the computer screen, which is blank except for a single line of illegible text.

SEAN
I don't see anything.

CHRIS
Exactly.

SEAN
(losing his cool)
Goddamn it, Chris, if you don't
tell me what the hell is going on
I'm gonna...

CHRIS
Mike made a mistake. Somehow he
got a label mixed up or something.
This is nothing but water. Pure,
distilled water. Not a thing in
it, not even chlorine.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - DAY

Mike lies in the plastic bubble. Somewhere in the background a radio is tuned to a classic rock station playing "Comfortably Numb".

In the dim light, a HIT MAN enters the room. Efficiently and professionally he breaks the seal on the plastic bubble, walks inside, disconnects the ventilator tube. He takes out a small aerosol pump-spray bottle, sprays the inside of the ventilator hose, then reconnects it, exits.

The scene continues MOS with background music.

MUSIC

"There is no pain you are receding.
A distant ship-smoke on the
horizon"

The line on the heart monitor skips a beat, then two more,
then flat lines.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

MOS. Music continues. Chris's cell phone rings.

MUSIC

(continuing)

"You are only coming through in
waves. Your lips move but I can't
hear what you say."

Chris answers the phone. Listens.

MUSIC

(continuing)

"When I was a child I had a fever.
My hands felt just like two
balloons."

Chris bursts into silent tears. She collapses on the floor,
the phone still in her hands and rocks quietly back and forth
with her eyes closed and her mouth open wide. Sean tries to
comfort her.

MUSIC

(continuing)

"Now I've got that feeling once
again. I can't explain, you would
not understand. This is not how I
am. I have become comfortably
numb."

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

Music continues. Chris stands alone at the edge of a cliff,
her expressionless face gazing off into the distance. Wind
blows through the trees and clouds threaten rain.

She holds a plain dark gray plastic box with a hinged lid.
She opens the box.

Inside is a thick plastic bag filled with ashes. She takes out the bag, tears a hole in it, and awkwardly pours out the ashes, which the wind carries away.

She watches for a moment, then stuffs the plastic bag back inside the box, turns around, and walks away.

Music fades, replaced by the sound of the wind.

A raindrop falls.

DRIP.

The drip turns into a steady rain.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

A gray day. Rain pours down over the house.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - DAY

The doorbell RINGS. Chris opens the door just in time to see a brown delivery truck drive away.

She looks down. On the doormat is a small box.

She picks it up and takes it to...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris enters, opens the box.

Inside is a mason jar filled with what appears to be water, and a note which reads:

"Dear Chris. Sorry to hear about Mike's troubles. Here is something that might help. It is a sample of tap water from the Lincoln, Nebraska municipal water supply. Fondly, Peter Obermeyer."

Chris is nonplussed. She picks up the phone and dials.

PETER OBERMEYER
(VO, filtered)
You have reached the office of
Professor Peter Ob...

CLICK. She hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

All is quiet as Chris contemplates the mason jar.

THE RABBITS are in their cages.

She looks at one of the rabbits, who is drinking from a tube that leads to its cage. Her gaze wanders along the tube to the five gallon water bottle to which it is connected.

An epiphany.

CHRIS

Of course!

She grabs a test tube, opens the mason jar, fills the test tube, spilling water everywhere in her excitement.

She loads the test tube into the mass spectrum analyzer. Jabs at buttons.

Results pop up on the screen.

CHRIS

(softly)

Eureka.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - DAY

Chris bursts into Jason's office, excited.

CHRIS

Copper!

JASON

What on earth are you talking about?

CHRIS

Mike's rabbits! The reason they didn't develop Alzheimer's plaques. It's the copper in the water.

JASON

What water?

CHRIS

Back in Lincoln the rabbits got tap water. That tap water was loaded with copper. 15 parts per million! Probably from the copper pipes in the plumbing.

JASON

Are you sure?

CHRIS

I checked it myself. Then of course we get here and there's no plumbing so we give the rabbits bottled water. No copper. No plaques.

JASON

And Mike couldn't figure that out?

CHRIS

Obviously not.

JASON

Rookie mistake.

CHRIS

These things happen, Jason, and you know it.

JASON

You're right. I'm sorry.

CHRIS

Yeah... listen, Jason...

Jason holds up his hand and shakes his head.

JASON

You don't need to say it.

CHRIS

What did you think I was going to say?

JASON

Whatever it was you don't need to say it. Leave me my illusions.

Chris's cell phone rings.

CHRIS
Excuse me... Hello?
(beat)
Oh no. I am so sorry.
(beat)
Yeah, listen, I'm kind of in the
middle of something.
(beat)
Yeah, I'll call you back.

JASON
Something wrong?

CHRIS
You remember Erica?

JASON
Your niece?

CHRIS
She's been taken to the hospital.
Stomach cramps.

Jason blanches and stands up.

JASON
Oh my god. Oh Chris, I am so
sorry.

He seems genuinely distraught, much more than one would
expect.

CHRIS
I've gotta go.

JASON
Listen, Chris...

CHRIS
Yeah?

He is struggling mightily with some internal conflict. He
wants to tell her something, wants to reach out to her, but
he can't...

CHRIS
Good-bye, Jason.

She turns and leaves.

Jason sinks down into his chair and puts his head in his
hands.

He SLAMS his fist on the desk to try to keep himself from crying. A futile gesture.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

Chris's Honda Civic pulls up in front of the house.

The front door is OPEN!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nothing seems out of place. Chris pulls out her cell phone.

CHRIS
Sean? Chris. I think someone may
have broken into my house.

Beat.

CHRIS
No, I'm fine. But could you...?
Thanks, I really appreciate it.

She continues exploring, carefully.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The faucet is leaking. DRIP. DRIP.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed is unmade.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sean's car pulls up with a SCREECH. He runs up the drive.

SEAN
You OK?

Chris nods.

SEAN
So... what makes you think someone
broke in?

CHRIS
The door was open.

Sean inspects the door.

SEAN
No sign of forced entry. You sure
you locked it?

CHRIS
I'm not sure of anything any more.

Beat.

CHRIS
Shit!

SEAN
What?

CHRIS
The study results. They were on
the coffee table.

SEAN
You sure this time?

CHRIS
I left them right here!

SEAN
Who would know that you had them?

Sean shakes her head, still staring at the coffee table.

CHRIS
Something else doesn't add up.

SEAN
What's that?

CHRIS
This wasn't the original. It was
the copy you made for me. Why
would someone risk breaking into my
house just to steal a copy?

Beat.

CHRIS
(suspiciously)
Where is the original?

SEAN
It's safe. It's back at the
station.

CHRIS
Are you sure?

SEAN
Of course I'm sure. It's right on
my--

He pulls out his cell phone.

SEAN
(into the phone)
Greg, buddy, could you do me a
favor? Would you go over to my
desk and see if there's a document
with all kinds of scientific
looking gobbledygook on it? Yeah,
I'll wait.

Beat.

SEAN
You sure? Did you check the
drawers? OK, thanks.

He hangs up.

CHRIS
Now do you believe me?

SEAN
My desk is pretty messy. He could
have missed it.

Chris fumes but says nothing.

SEAN
Look, I'm going to go back and
check it out. I'm sure it's just
buried in a pile somewhere.

Beat.

SEAN
You gonna be OK?

CHRIS
I'll be fine.

He leaves.

Chris stares at the door, then the coffee table, trying to
puzzle it out.

Her eyes land on a half-full glass of water on the coffee table. She picks it up, take it to...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris is about to dump out the water when she notices that the faucet is still leaking. DRIP!

CHRIS

Dammit!

She places the glass on the counter and tightens both taps, but it doesn't help. DRIP!

She struggles with the faucet, then stops.

DRIP!

A revelation!

She picks up the water glass, holds it up to the light. The water is crystal clear.

She slams the glass onto the counter spilling water everywhere, and runs out of the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Chris screeches to a halt outside the hospital's emergency entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Chris runs breathlessly to the duty nurse.

CHRIS

Doctor Hansen. Where can I find
Doctor Hansen?

NURSE

I'm afraid I can't...

CHRIS

It's a matter of life and death.

Beat.

NURSE

Wait here.

The nurse scurries off. An OLD MAN in a wheelchair scoots slowly down the hall and around the corner.

The nurse reappears with Hansen in tow.

HANSEN

Dr. Tyler?

CHRIS

Thanks for seeing me.

HANSEN

What can I do for you?

CHRIS

Remember the vaccine we talked about?

HANSEN

For the Cameroon virus? What about it?

CHRIS

Do you still have it?

HANSEN

It's in storage. Your husband passed away before it arrived so we never had a chance to use it.

CHRIS

And you didn't send it back.

HANSEN

(shaking his head)
Too much paperwork.

CHRIS

Can I have it?

HANSEN

Do you think you've been infected?

CHRIS

I don't want to use it, I want to run a test on it.

HANSEN

What kind of test?

CHRIS

It's a long story, and I don't have time to explain right now. I'm going to have to ask you to trust me. Please.

HANSEN

How much do you need?

CHRIS

Just a few drops.

HANSEN

Let me see what I can do.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LAB

About a dozen of the rabbits are dead. Chris contemplates them for a moment.

CHRIS

I guess I was right. Sorry, little guys.

Chris takes a test tube out of her pocket, inserts the sample in the analyzer and punches buttons. The computer screen fills with gobbledygook.

CHRIS

I'll be damned.

She stares at the screen, barely able to believe what she sees.

On the screen are two identical patterns. We have seen this pattern before, when she tested the substance in the syringe. On screen, the word "MATCH" flashes prominently.

Through the open door we catch a glimpse of Jason Keller. He vanishes just as Chris looks over her shoulder. Did she see him? Hard to say.

She turns back and takes a sample out of the organic synthesizer, fills a syringe with the contents, and injects herself. She throws the syringe in a trash can marked "BIOHAZARD" as she walks to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - DAY

Chris enters to find Sean waiting for her.

SEAN
Where have you been? I was this
close to putting out an APB.

CHRIS
Following a hunch.

SEAN
And?

CHRIS
Didn't pan out.

SEAN
You were right. I couldn't find
it.

Beat.

SEAN
If you want I can post a squad car
out front.

CHRIS
I'll be fine.

SEAN
You sure?

She nods. Sean regards her skeptically.

CHRIS
Trust me.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Pitch dark and quiet. Then the CLICK-SCRABBLE of the front door lock being jimmied. The front door opens and the dark figure of the HIT MAN creeps in, careful but confident.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The hit man advances on a sleeping Chris. From the pocket of his jacket the hit man takes out a small spray bottle. He is wearing an industrial-strength respirator.

He creeps up on Chris.

HISS! He sprays Chris in the face! She stirs, but does not wake up.

The hit man puts the spray bottle back in his jacket pocket as he backs away slowly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The hit man creeps slowly into the living room. Off screen, Chris COUGHS. Then again and again.

As he approaches the door the coughing suddenly STOPS. The hit man freezes, puzzled.

CHRIS (O.S.)

Ahem.

The hit man WHIRLS around, stunned to see Chris standing there, perfectly healthy, brandishing a baseball bat!

WHAM! Chris hits the man in the ribs with the bat. The hit man doubles over in pain, and with the same motion reaches into his jacket and withdraws a Glock model 26 9mm pistol.

WHAM! Chris hits the man in the head. He crumples.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

The lights are on. The hit man is hog tied on the floor of the living room. A trickle of blood runs down his face. The respirator and the spray bottle are on the coffee table. Chris sits in a chair, holding the gun, watching him.

The hit man comes to. He sees Chris, realizes his predicament, but doesn't struggle. He's a pro. He maintains eye contact with Chris, works the ropes behind his back as Chris studies the gun.

CHRIS

Never used one of these. Never even held one before.

(beat)

Maybe you could give me some pointers?

HIT MAN

Fuck you.

Chris exhales sharply. She can't believe this man's cheek. After all, she's the one with the gun.

She gets up and advances on the hit man, the gun trained on his midsection.

CHRIS

Don't talk to me like that in my house.

She winds up to give him a kick But just as she lets fly the hit man works his hands free, expertly catches Chris's foot half an inch from his body, gives it a vicious twist.

Chris HOWLS in pain, falls to the floor. The gun SKITTERS across the hardwood. Chris scrambles towards it. The hit man, ankles still bound, flips himself up to a squatting position and launches himself across the room. He lands on his hands, does a somersault, grabs the gun while still in motion, somehow ends up on his feet with the gun pointed squarely at Chris.

Chris freezes next to the coffee table. The hit man bends down and works the ropes on his ankles with one hand.

Chris grabs the spray bottle.

HIT MAN

Put that down.

Chris slowly gets up.

HIT MAN

Don't come any closer. You are going to die, but it can be quick and painless...

He points the gun squarely at Chris's knee.

HIT MAN

(continuing)
... or not. Your choice.

Chris limps slowly forward.

CHRIS

Has it occurred to you that you already tried killing me once tonight?

HIT MAN

Last warning.

Chris continues to advance. The hit man's finger squeezes the trigger.

CLICK! No bullets! The hit man realizes that he is not dealing from the position of strength he had thought, but he doesn't miss a beat. In one motion he stands, ejects the empty clip and reaches for the spare on his belt... only it isn't there!

Chris smiles, continues to advance.

The hit man leaps at Chris and catches her midsection in a flying tackle. OOF! Chris has the wind knocked out of her as she flies backwards and the hit man falls on top of her. The hit man's hands close around her throat.

Chris is badly outclassed, but the hit man's ankles are still bound, giving Chris the edge. She manages to flip over on top of him. Her left hand pins the hit man's right hand to the floor. Her right hand still holds the spray bottle.

The hit man realizes he is in mortal danger as he releases his left hand from Chris's throat to grab Chris's right wrist. They struggle.

CHRIS
(breathing hard)
Do you know what's in here?

Chris is losing. The hit man slowly lever's Chris's hand further and further from his face.

CHRIS
Why don't we do a little
experiment.

HISS! Chris squeezes the spray bottle and the mist catches the hit man full in the face. The hit man immediately releases his grip on Chris's hand and moves it to cover his face. Too late.

HIT MAN
You stupid bitch!

He cuffs Chris brutally across the face. Chris releases her grip on the hit man's other hand, drops the spray bottle, and scrambles away. The hit man goes back to work on the ropes around his ankles and finishes untying them just as Chris scoots herself into a corner, breathing heavily.

The hit man stands and advances slowly and deliberately. He reaches Chris and starts to wail on her.

HIT MAN
You (WHAM!)... stupid (WHAM!)...

He never gets to "bitch." Instead he COUGHS!

A brief silence, then another COUGH! Then another. The hit man manages to hit her one last time before he is brought down by a paroxysm of coughing. He collapses in a heap and starts to come to grips with the fact that he is about to die a slow, horrible death.

Chris wipes a trickle of blood from her mouth.

CHRIS
Holy shit, that was fast.

HIT MAN
Why aren't you...?

He is coughing too hard to finish the question.

CHRIS
There's a vaccine.

HIT MAN
Vaccine? He didn't say anything about...

CHRIS
Of course he didn't.

HIT MAN
You've got to (cough!) Help me.

CHRIS
It's too late.

HIT MAN
I'll tell you who sent me.

CHRIS
I already know.

Chris gets up, walks across the room and picks up the gun, walks back to the hit man.

CHRIS
This is for Mike.

She KICKS the hit man in the face as hard as she can.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jason's BMW pulls in to a parking lot on the Caltech campus. He gets out, takes his briefcase out of the back seat, turns, drops the briefcase and recoils in horror at what he sees.

It's Chris. She is pointing the hit man's gun at him. Her face is a mess. Through the bruises and crusty blood she radiates cold, hard fury.

JASON

Oh my god, Chris, what the hell happened to you?

CHRIS

Get back in the car.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Across the lot, unnoticed by either Jason or Chris, the MYSTERY MAN watches from inside a nondescript sedan as Jason drives away with Chris in the passenger seat.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The door opens with a loud CREAK!

Jason enters followed by Chris, still holding him at gunpoint. She waves him to a chair.

CHRIS

Sit!

JASON

Chris, what the hell is going on?

CHRIS

Shut up! Sit down. Or I swear to god I will kill you.

He sits. Chris walks behind him and whispers in his ear.

CHRIS

I figured it out.

JASON

Figured what out? What on earth are you talking about?

CHRIS

Oh Jesus, Jason, do you think I'm stupid?

JASON

Chris, I swear to god I had nothing to do with whatever happened to you.

CHRIS

I'm not talking about that, you idiot!

JASON

Then what the fuck are you talking about?

CHRIS

I'm talking about cyclosporazine!

A beat. Suddenly Jason is very, very afraid.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Back at the opening scene.

SEAN

I still don't understand.

CHRIS

It was the water!

SEAN

(frustrated)
...keep saying that.

CHRIS

That cure that Mike discovered for LKS.

SEAN

Yeah, the stuff that turned out to be water.

CHRIS

No! It didn't turn out to be water. It was water.

SEAN

So water cures LKS?

CHRIS

No.

SEAN

What then?

CHRIS

There's no such thing as LKS.

SEAN

No such thing?

CHRIS

No, that's not quite right. There is such a thing, but it's very rare. Probably have been only a handful of real LKS cases since it was discovered.

SEAN

Then what about all those people?

CHRIS

They aren't being killed by LKS. They are being killed by cyclosporazine.

SEAN

Cyclo what?

CHRIS

Cyclosporazine. It's the drug they give you when you test positive for the CT-9 virus.

SEAN

The virus that causes LKS.

CHRIS

Except it doesn't. CT-9 is harmless.

SEAN

Harmless?!

CHRIS

OK, harmless is overstating it a bit. It gives you stomach cramps and a fever.

SEAN

The same symptoms as LKS.

CHRIS

That's right. But it's like a cold. If you just leave it alone you get better in a week or two. But of course no one leaves it alone because everyone thinks it's a death sentence. So as soon as you test positive for CT-9 they put you on cyclosporazine. And that kills you.

Beat.

SEAN

But that's impossible. Thousands, hundreds of thousands of doctors, scientists, they'd all have to be in on it.

CHRIS

No, they wouldn't. That's not how it works. The whole business of science is based on trust. You publish a peer-reviewed paper and everyone just assumes it's true. And 99 percent of the time it is.

SEAN

But surely someone else would have done an experiment that... oh...

CHRIS

(nodding)

That would be the control experiment. That's the experiment that Mike did.

SEAN

Accidentally?

CHRIS

We'll probably never know.

SEAN

But you said there were two exceptions. You can't mean...

CHRIS

I don't know. But about CT9 I am absolutely 100% sure. I did a confirmation experiment. Actually, I did two of them.

SEAN

What kind of experiment?

CHRIS

First, I found out what was in the syringe in Mike's arm. It was the vaccine for the virus that he was attacked with. Cameroon PL-991 type 2.

SEAN

Camer-who?

CHRIS

Doesn't matter. The point is it's an extremely rare virus. Deadly too. Kills you in matter of hours. But the fact that Mike was able to inject himself with the vaccine means that he knew what he was infected with.

SEAN

Maybe he was infected by accident.

CHRIS

Possible. Which is why I did the second experiment.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Back in the earlier scene. Jason regards Chris with raw terror. She is about to unravel his life.

CHRIS

You know the most ironic thing about this? When we first met what attracted me most was how you were always so cool, always in control. You were always the one pulling the strings. And now it turns out all this time the strings have been pulling you.

(Beat.)

There's only one thing I couldn't quite wrap my brain around.

(Another beat, then with great emotion)

Why?

Jason breaks down, sobbing uncontrollably.

CHRIS
(shouting)
God damn it, Jason, why?!

JASON
It was a mistake!

He isn't lying.

CHRIS
(furious)
A mistake?!

JASON
Yes! A mistake, god damn it! LKS
was such a new disease. No one
really knew the etiology. So when
the first clinical trials of
cyclosporazine came back it looked
like a breakthrough. I didn't
know!

CHRIS
You expect me to believe that?!

JASON
You believed it once. When you
thought Amanda only had two weeks
to live.

It is as if Chris has been hit with a freight train. She
sinks to the floor. Tears stream from her eyes, but she does
not cry.

JASON
(calmly)
I didn't figure it out until a year
later. And then at first I wasn't
sure. Then the next thing I know
they're handing me the mother
fucking Nobel Prize!

CHRIS
Oh Jason. Why didn't you just turn
it down?

Jason weeps.

JASON
Oh god, Chris, I wanted to. But...

A long sobbing pause.

KELLER

Carrie.

Chris is about to melt.

CHRIS

Your wife?

JASON

Yeah.

Chris ponders this, then hardens again. She stands and speaks with the voice of a woman who has lost her soul.

CHRIS

You mean to tell me that you would
have let Erica die because you
weren't man enough to stand up to
your wife?

The insult hardens Jason's resolve. He stands.

JASON

(to himself)

Not just Erica.

Chris raises the gun.

CHRIS

Sit down.

JASON

Come on, Chris, this is stupid.
Put the gun down.

CHRIS

I said sit down you mother fucker!

He keeps walking towards her exuding confidence.

JASON

You won't shoot me.

Chris slowly lowers the gun. Jason smiles and continues towards her.

BANG! Chris shoots Jason in the foot! He howls in pain and collapses.

JASON

You bitch! You fucking shot me!

CHRIS

And you always said I was wasting
my time with all that target
practice.

JASON

I can't believe you did that!

CHRIS

Then you'd better find yourself
some faith, Jason. You're gonna
need it.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Back to the opening scene one last time.

SEAN

And where is professor Keller now?

Chris gets up and motions for Sean to follow.

CHRIS

I've been taking good care of him.

Chris leads Sean to a side room. She opens the corrugated
metal sliding door.

INT. SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason Keller is secured to a table with duct tape. Another
strip of duct tape covers his mouth. His foot is a bloody
mess. An IV runs into his arm. When he sees the door open
he turns his head and struggles weakly.

JASON

Mmmmggmmg...

SEAN

Jesus, Chris!

CHRIS

He gets food and water
intravenously. Along with his
medicine.

She points to a small bottle attached to Jason's IV drip.

Cyclosporazine.

SEAN

Chris, this is not the way.

CHRIS

Why not? He's responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people! He killed my daughter! People are out there dying right now!

SEAN

Chris, I'm a cop. Don't make me arrest you for attempted murder.

CHRIS

Justifiable homicide.

SEAN

No, Chris, come on. You know this isn't right.

CHRIS

It's the only way. The scientific establishment doesn't turn on a dime. Everyone thinks cyclosporazine is a cure, and thousands of people are dying because everyone is wrong!

SEAN

There has to be another way to convince them.

CHRIS

Sure there is. We can do a proper scientific study with a control case and all the proper protocols. If we're really lucky we'll have results in two years. On the other hand, one dead Nobel-laureate makes a pretty fucking convincing data point, don't you think?

SEAN

I can think of a more convincing data point.

CHRIS

Yeah? What would that be?

SEAN

A live Nobel-laureate telling the world he made a mistake.

CHRIS
He'd rather die.

SEAN
I don't think do.

CHRIS
He chose to kill rather than admit his mistake.

SEAN
I have a suggestion. Instead of arguing about it, why don't we do an experiment?

CHRIS
What did you have in mind?

SEAN
Well, for starters, we could take the duct tape off his mouth.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

A police car pulls up with Jason in the back seat. Sean pulls up with Chris in his car right behind them.

There is a huge crowd of media and spectators gathered around.

A UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER helps Jason out of the car. His hands are cuffed behind his back and his right foot is ruined from where Chris shot him. Reporters swarm around, firing off questions.

A NEWS REPORTER dictates the details of what is going on.

NEWS REPORTER
...with this breaking news. Nobel prize winning biologist Jason Keller has been arrested on suspicion of murdering his colleague and friend Mike Tyler...

Chris gets out of Sean's car, stands at a distance observing everything as Sean walks forward to talk to the media.

She notices a Maybach sedan parked across the street. A car that fancy seems a little out of place here.

Chris scowls, trying to puzzle it out. She looks up. Sees something. Runs towards Sean.

CHRIS

Look out!!

Suddenly, blood bursts from a little explosion on Jason's chest. He looks down, surprised. Then another little bloody explosion right next to the first. He looks up and collapses.

A momentary lapse of reason engulfs the crowd with utter silence as Jason falls to the ground, blood everywhere. Deafening silence.

Pandemonium as everyone tries to wrap their brain around what has just happened. People shout and point to the roof of the building across the street. The police mobilize amidst shouts of "Sniper!" and "Down! Everyone down!"

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS, ACROSS THE STREET - NIGHT

The rear window of the Maybach is rolled down. The occupant of the rear seat leans forward to take in the scene across the street.

It is Jessie Corman.

The rear window rolls up, obscuring his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The mystery man emerges from a side entrance carrying an aluminum rifle case. He hops into a nondescript sedan parked in the alley and drives quietly away.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

The chaos continues. Chris watches the Maybach as it slips away into the night.

NOTE: Control is a work of fiction, but it is based on actual events. The opening scenes involving John Snow are historically accurate, as is Peter Obermeyer's description of the aftermath. You can see John Snow's map of the 1854 Soho Cholera outbreak at http://www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow/snowmap1_1854_lge.htm.

Peter Obermeyer is loosely based on Peter Duesberg, a biology professor at the University of California at Berkeley, who is on the vanguard of a dissident movement who believe that drug abuse and malnutrition, not the HIV virus, are the cause of AIDS. Since he has begun advancing this hypothesis he has been unable to obtain research grants.

There have been actual cases of "epidemics" that turned out to be caused by the treatments used to cure the underlying "disease". The medieval practice of bleeding is probably the best known, but there are modern examples as well. For example, from 1959-1973 in Japan over 11,000 people died from the drugs used to treat a virus called SMON that turned out to be harmless.

The sub-plot involving the rabbits and copper in the tap water is a true story.

And, finally, the announcement of the discovery of the HIV virus was in fact made at a press conference before the publication of any peer-reviewed paper.

All other characters and events are fictional.