

THE MONTE CARLO PROJECT

By Joe Dorsch

FADE IN:

INT. BLANK OFFICE ROOM - DAY

A bright-eyed job candidate, MACK (24), is talking directly to the camera.

MACK

Why do I want to work at Apex Labs? Oh boy...
(chuckles excitedly)
There's a theory that every sci-fi story is essentially the same basic premise.

CUT TO SLOW SHOTS OF A COIN FLIPPING, THEN DICE ROLLING.

MACK (VOICE ONLY)

The plot always boils down to: how will humans react when they discover something 'new'?

CUT TO A METAL BOX BEING UNLOCKED. INSIDE ARE DOZENS OF SMALL GLASS VIALS WITH BLUE LIQUID. SOMEBODY SLOWLY DROPS MORE VIALS INTO THE BOX AND SIFTS THROUGH THEM.

MACK (VOICE ONLY)

Will they use it for good, or evil? Will they panic, will they tell anyone, will they even REALIZE what they stumbled across?

CUT TO DOZENS OF CABLE TV CHANNELS, SWITCHING RAPIDLY FROM ONE TO THE NEXT. IT'S SO FAST YOU CAN BARELY SEE EACH ONE.

MACK (VOICE ONLY)

Will they share the proverbial fire with the rest of the world? Or keep it to themselves?

CUT TO VIBRANT SHOTS OF LIFE AND SCENERY FROM AROUND THE GLOBE IN A FAST-MOVING MONTAGE OF HUMANITY. THE VIDEOS ACCELERATE INTO A BLUR. CUT ABRUPTLY TO MACK.

MACK

And the idea that I could be... That I could help make those discoveries and, and SHARE them and basically write those stories... In real life... Really, it's my dream. Who wouldn't want that?

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: Allison

INT. APEX LABS HALLWAY - DAY

ALLISON (32) is walking through the pristine silver halls with a slip of paper, searching for her room.

ALLISON

214, 214...

(she finds the door for room 214)

214. Perfect.

She knocks at the door. No answer. She exhales and waits awkwardly against the wall.

Across from her is a motivational poster with an image of the company CEO: CLIFF CLIFFORD (59). He's smiling proudly and giving a big thumbs-up. The poster reads:

We couldn't reach the top without YOU! Thank you!

- Cliff Clifford, CEO of Apex Laboratories

Allison chuckles to herself. She knocks again on the door, still no answer. She relaxes a bit.

After a few seconds, a NURSE (40) walks over nonchalantly and waits next to her.

ALLISON

I don't think anyone's there yet.

(the nurse nods)

You probably have a lot of people doing tests.

NURSE

Mm-hmm.

ALLISON

I figured. This is my first one, I think I'm in the right spot...

She shows the nurse her paper. The nurse nods politely for confirmation, then they stand in silence for a bit.

ALLISON

I always find it funny when management tries to be 'motivational' and stuff.

(gesturing to the poster)

My last job was just like that, always for show, anything to make us overlook how thankless the job actually is, right?

NURSE

He's actually really nice. I've met him.

ALLISON

Oh? The CEO?

NURSE

Mm-hmm. He meets all the new employees.

(Allison is genuinely impressed)

I've been here almost ten years, it's not just for show, it's a good place to work.

ALLISON

Oh wow. You know, that's really neat- I guess I've just always lucked out with my. Well, not, what's the... I mean not 'lucked out', like the opposite of that, with the places I've-

NURSE

I know what you mean.

ALLISON

(chuckles)

But that's good to know, I'll apply here, although it might be a conflict, you know, until I'm done doing this... test, or whatever. But I'll, gotta file that away. Thanks.

The nurse nods. More awkward silence.

ALLISON

So you said you've been here 10 years? Wow, that's really incredible, it must be so-

NURSE

Oh, I think we're ready.

She's happy to interrupt their small talk and switch focus to Mack, who's approaching them excitedly. He looks as eager and wide-eyed as the opening video, although it's been a few years since then.

MACK

Allison? Allison Richards, right?

(she nods)

Mack. Mack Powell. It's a pleasure to meet you.

ALLISON

Same. Mack, Mack...

MACK

It's not short for anything, it's just... Mack. Like the truck, my dad was obsessed with them.

(they chuckle. He unlocks the door)

Come on in.

(to the nurse)

We'll be ready in a minute. Thanks.

The nurse nods and waits quietly while Mack and Allison enter the testing room.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

The room is sparsely furnished but comfortable, like a cross between a cold examination room and an intimate psychiatrist's office.

On one wall are locked cabinets, a sink, and a countertop. The other wall has a few generic landscape paintings and medical charts. The furniture includes two leather chairs and a coffee table.

Mack locks the door behind them. While Allison wanders around the room, Mack empties his briefcase. He has a notebook and pen, a few playing cards, a coin, and a small glass vial with blue liquid in it.

He sets the vial gently on the counter, then brings the other supplies to the table.

MACK

You can have a seat.

He and Allison both sit down.

MACK

So. Welcome to Apex Labs, I assume it's your first time here?

(she nods)

Excellent. Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule for some science. Full disclosure, I'm not sure how long today's test will go, and I know week-mornings aren't ideal, so we can-

ALLISON

Oh it's, actually I'm looking for work. I guess THIS is my 'job' for now. Better than nothing in the interim, right?

MACK

I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to assume-

ALLISON

No no, it's okay. I'm... Comfortable.

(she relaxes in the chair)

VERY comfortable, good Lord... This is nice!

MACK

Isn't it great?

(they laugh)

So... What has Nigel told you about... All of this?

ALLISON

Not a lot, he just said it's a new drug, told me it was ground-breaking. Very mysterious actually, my curiosity is thoroughly piqued.

MACK

(chuckles)

Well, let's hope it hasn't PEAKED, we're just getting started.

Allison doesn't understand the joke. Mack is embarrassed, but after a few seconds she gets it.

ALLISON

Oh, PEAKED! Like p-e-a-k, got it! Clever!

They laugh awkwardly.

MACK

Thanks... So. I don't know if Nigel told you, but he's been working on this for several years now, but in a nutshell... We are testing to see if we can access parallel realities.

(her eyes go wide)

Yeah. So obviously, this NDA you signed, this is VERY binding. You cannot discuss this AT ALL, with ANYONE. Except Nigel, but only because it's his project.

ALLISON

Parallel realities... Wow... And yeah yeah, absolutely, I'll be very hush-hush.

MACK

Good, good. Because if word got out before we're ready to go to market, I mean... And we test a LOT of drugs, chemicals, materials-

ALLISON

I was going to say, I thought you guys just had like chemistry labs. But you've got a whole, almost your own little hospital.

MACK

Yep. In-house medical, security, labs, offices, like a city. It's a big operation. But this is... This drug has unbelievable potential, so we're keeping a close eye to make sure-

ALLISON

Don't have to worry about me, lips are sealed.

Mack sighs with relief. Allison leans forward eagerly.

ALLISON

So like, parallel realities... What are they like? Are they on other planets, or like, a dystopia... What have you guys found so far?

Mack leans forward as well, equally excited.

MACK

We're not entirely sure. We've never actually tested on a person yet, you're our guinea pig.

ALLISON

Wow... No pressure then.

(they laugh)

Well? Let's do it, the suspense is killing me!

MACK

Yeah, same here!

He jumps up, unlocks the door, and has the nurse come in.

MACK

Hope you're okay with needles.

ALLISON

Hey, if it means I get to explore-

Mack glares at her, then at the nurse. Allison immediately catches herself. The nurse isn't really paying attention, but Mack is hyper-cautious.

ALLISON

If it means exploring new possibilities in the frontier of science, it's worth it.

MACK

That's the spirit!

(to the nurse)

I think we're doing...

(he double-checks his notes)

1 milliliter.

The nurse nods uninterestedly and fills a syringe with 1ml of the blue liquid. Allison takes deep breaths.

NURSE

Roll up your sleeve, please.

Allison rolls up her right sleeve and tries to keep calm. The nurse injects the liquid into her shoulder, then puts a bandage over the area.

NURSE

All done.

MACK

Thanks.

The nurse nods politely and leaves. Mack locks the door behind her.

MACK

Alright, it may take a few seconds to kick in.
What are you feeling right now?

ALLISON

Nothing yet. Oh wait, waaaaait, it's-

Suddenly it's like a silent explosion of stars, the world fractures like glass into empty space.

Allison is being torn apart as light bursts around her. There's a piercing tone, the light freezes and rushes back, the void is engulfed by a blur of cascading galaxies.

Then as abruptly as it began, it's over, and she's back, sitting in the chair, disoriented. She opens her eyes and gasps for breath

ALLISON

What the hell...?? What was... What just...

MACK

Welcome back. Deep breaths, everything's okay.
You blacked out, but you're back now.

She takes a few seconds to recenter herself.

MACK

Do you need some water?

She nods. He goes to the cabinet, finds a glass, fills it with water from the sink, and hands it to her.

She drinks it quickly, while Mack sits in the chair and waits patiently. Soon, she's settled down.

ALLISON

Wow...

MACK

So we definitely need a smaller dose...

(they chuckle)

Well? What did you see?

ALLISON

I... It was all so fast, it was like, almost like everything was breaking, and I was out in space, and... I don't know, I just felt... Fractured, but then it was over really fast, like...

(she tries to describe it by pulling her hands apart intensely)

Like I just, I snapped, then it was done.

MACK

(taking notes)

Okay, and when you say it was over really fast?

ALLISON

Like, five or ten seconds.

MACK

Five or ten seconds... That's about as long as you were blacked out, hardly at all.

ALLISON

It was all just... But I didn't see any other... there weren't any other realities, just space.

MACK

Interesting. Like I said earlier, we don't know what to expect, so it may not even work. But did you notice anything else?

ALLISON

No, that was... It was just quiet, then suddenly really loud, and then it was over. I can't, sorry, I'm not the best at describing it.

MACK

No no, that's okay, this is perfect.

He finishes taking notes. Allison still seems a bit dazed, but also relieved.

ALLISON

So is that... Is that the whole, that's it?

MACK

Almost. Just a few quick tests.

(he flips the page on his notebook)

Question 1: What color am I thinking of?

Allison stares at him blankly for a few seconds.

ALLISON

I have NO idea.

MACK

Okay, the answer was cerulean.

(he makes a note, Allison is baffled)

Question 2. Need the coin for this one.

(he flips the coin - heads)

What city did I pick for heads?

ALLISON

What? I don't, I genuinely don't know.

MACK

No worries if you don't know the answers, again, we're testing the drug, and it's very possible that it doesn't work. It was Paris for heads. Tails is Rio De Janeiro.

ALLISON

Okay...

MACK

And lastly, question 3.

He mixes up the four playing cards facedown. Each one has a different color on the back: red, yellow, green and blue. After they've been shuffled, green is on top.

MACK

Alright, can you tell me what card this is?

ALLISON

I don't know.

He flips it over.

MACK

Ten of diamonds. And the other three?

ALLISON

Same, I don't know any of them.

MACK

Alright. No problem. And that's it for today.

They both stand up. Mack puts the vial and his supplies back in his briefcase, then leads her to the door.

MACK

So, keep an eye on anything that seems off, or strange or inexplicable. And if you feel sick, reach out to us right away. Here's my card, with my personal cell number.

(hands her his business card)

We're honestly not sure what the side effects will be, so again, if you feel anything's wrong, let me or Nigel know, ASAP.

ALLISON

Will do... I think I'm good, now that the initial shock or whatever is done.

MACK

Okay, but again, reach out if ANYTHING is off. And remember, complete confidentiality

(she nods in agreement)

Well, be safe, nice to meet you, and assuming nothing goes wrong, we'll meet again same time tomorrow morning.

ALLISON

Looking forward to it!

With that, Mack unlocks the door and they leave the room, both heading off in separate directions.

INT. APEX LABS LOBBY - DAY

Allison strolls through the vast corporate lobby, while technicians, managers, chemists, analysts, and a few security guards go about their business.

In the background, there are a few large-screen TVs with pre-recorded interviews from the CEO. He has a pleasant Southern drawl and a charming demeanor.

CLIFF CLIFFORD

You know, I remember back when Apex was just a two-bit operation in my dad's toolshed, whoo, didn't dream in a million years that our little makeshift 'lab' would be a multi-billion-dollar research center, golly...

INT/EXT. ALLISON'S CAR - DAY

Allison seems fully recovered as she drives home and listens to classical music on the radio.

EXT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Allison walks out of the garage to talk to NIGEL (63), her next-door neighbor who's gardening in his front yard.

ALLISON

Hey Nigel. Hate to break it to you, but the test didn't work.

NIGEL

(just now noticing her)

Oh hey, Allison. Hi! Done already? That was... Thought you might take longer.

ALLISON

Well, I was just saying, hate to break it to you, I don't think it worked.

NIGEL

Mm. That's why we test it, right?

They chuckle. Nigel resumes gardening while they chat.

ALLISON

What was it supposed to do?

NIGEL

Well, it was SUPPOSED to give you access to parallel realities. In theory.

ALLISON

I see. It did freak me out for a second, it was like a big explosion and I was out in space.

(Nigel is intrigued)

It was really quick though, then it was over.

NIGEL

Fascinating... Well, as they always say, if it's true in theory, then it's... True in theory.

(he chuckles to himself)

But hey, you got to visit the lab.

ALLISON

I did, it was kinda fun! I didn't realize how much they had going on. Speaking of... Aren't you supposed to be there right now?

NIGEL

Took the day off. I always take the day off whenever one of my drugs begins human trials, sort of an ingrained superstition, don't want to jinx it by being there.

ALLISON

You're funny! I'll unjinx it for you.

NIGEL

Bless you. So, Mack, was he-

(her phone rings)

Oh, go ahead, we can catch up later.

ALLISON

Let's see...

(she pulls out her phone and groans)

I'm really sorry.

NIGEL

All good. You know where to find me.

They laugh. He continues gardening as Allison grudgingly goes into her house.

INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Her place is well-decorated, spacious, and filled with potted plants. She takes her shoes off, sighs, and finally answers the phone. It's her mom, JUNE (55).

ALLISON

Mother. You're back from the void, I was hoping I'd lost you for good. Who was it this time?

JUNE (PHONE)

This is why I don't call more often, DAUGHTER, because every time I try and connect with you, you're always reading into things.

ALLISON

Forgive me for not wanting to be your rebound relationship once every three months.

JUNE (PHONE)

You're not JUST my rebound relationship.

(Allison sighs)

Fine, so I AM between men right now, BUT-

ALLISON

Wow... And you wonder why I-

JUNE (PHONE)

BUT... Can I finish please?

(Allison rolls her eyes)

But I do enjoy catching up with my daughter.

ALLISON

Whenever you have no one to talk to.

JUNE (PHONE)

This is how you treat me, after I just got my heart broken? No wonder you're still single...

Allison sighs and bites her tongue.

JUNE (PHONE)

I'm cooking lasagna tonight, and I KNOW you're free because you are ALSO between men. And jobs.

(Allison sighs)

So, come over, we'll watch Wheel of Fortune, and you can commiserate with your... AGING mother, because Lord knows when I'll see you next.

ALLISON

Mmm... I do like your lasagna... A lot... Damn it. Alright, it's a date.

JUNE (PHONE)

Splendid. Pick up a bottle of sherry, if you wouldn't mind. Let's plan on 6.

ALLISON

Will do.

JUNE (PHONE)

And for the record, I'd like to point out that I'm ALWAYS the one who calls YOU, and never the other way around. Anyways, how is-

Suddenly the world grinds to a stop. Allison's eyes widen slowly as June's voice drags out and time freezes, before plunging her into the cosmic explosion from earlier.

After a few painful seconds of light shattering and pieces of her mind being torn apart and smashed together, Allison abruptly finds herself back in the testing room.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

She bolts out of the chair and gasps for breath.

ALLISON

Holy shit, hoooooly shit...

MACK

Welcome back. Deep breaths, everything's okay. You blacked out, but you're back now.

She has a simultaneous vision of Mack saying those exact same words, as if it's overlapping the current reality.

Mack stands up slowly and approaches her cautiously.

MACK

Do you need some water?

Again, she has a vision of Mack asking her for water, like a distant memory. She nods.

He slowly goes to the cabinet, finds a glass, fills it with water from the sink, and hands it to her. She's having an intense feeling of *déjà vu* and only takes a sip of water.

ALLISON

What the hell is happening?

MACK

So we definitely need a smaller dose...

Another echo of him saying the line. She's reeling and struggling to make sense of it.

MACK

Maybe you should sit down...

She nods and slowly walks over to the chair.

ALLISON

(sitting down)

I... This is, we already did this...

MACK

Okay, good, what else?

She has another overlapping memory, this time of Mack writing in the notebook instead.

ALLISON

It's a little different though.

Mack looks at her quizzically and sits next to her.

MACK

Do you remember me asking questions?

ALLISON

Yeah, I...

She has a memory of Mack asking to think of a color.

ALLISON

The color was cerulean, right?

(he nods)

And then it was...

She has a memory of him flipping the coin. Except she sees both the heads AND tails flip, and hears Mack's answer for each one, like two separate memories.

ALLISON

Heads was Paris, Tails was Rio De Janeiro.

Mack is trying to contain his excitement. He gets his notebook and starts jotting everything down.

Allison remembers him shuffling the cards, and remembers four distinct variations - one for each color.

ALLISON

The green was the ten of diamonds-

(she focuses on each memory one at a time)

Red was king of spades, blue was ace of clubs,
and yellow was three of hearts.

Mack is in awe and grins excitedly. Allison is terrified and runs out of the room.

INT. APEX LABS LOBBY - DAY

Everything is similar to how Allison remembers it, the bustle of people, the interview on the TV. But it's as if she's seeing dozens of overlapping memories, which are nearly identical, but with subtle differences.

The effect is disorienting. As she faints, Mack rushes in and catches her just before she hits the ground.

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: Nigel

INT. NIGEL'S LABORATORY - DAY

Nigel is alone in the cluttered lab, holding a mouse and gently injecting a small drop of blue liquid into him.

NIGEL

Almost done...

He gingerly sets the mouse down inside a maze, then waits. After a few seconds, the mouse passes out, twitches, then jolts awake suddenly.

NIGEL

Come on... You can do it...

The mouse looks around, frightened, then cautiously ventures into the maze. He chooses the correct path on the first try and makes it successfully to the exit.

NIGEL

God almighty...

INT. MACK'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is filled with office supplies, knick-knacks, and posters of sci-fi movies. It's tucked in the corner of a sea of cubicles; both the corner walls are full windows.

Mack is sitting on an exercise ball at his desk; Nigel is pacing across from him. Both are ecstatic.

MACK

So it works.

NIGEL

In theory... Yes. I can't think of any other explanation for how they solved the maze without having done it before, and I replicated it on over thirty different subjects.

MACK

That's unbelievable.

(he laughs)

I mean, you get how big a deal this is, right?

NIGEL

Ohhhh yes.

Mack claps his hands together excitedly while Nigel continues pacing.

MACK

Alright, so we we, we get... We start doing tests with real people, right?

(Nigel nods)

Could you imagine if word got out? I mean, it WILL get out eventually, I don't even want to think that far ahead... You realize that protocol will not WORK here, at all.

NIGEL

We could ask for 24/7 security...

MACK

We could... Let's see... Think...

(he rocks back and forth)

What if we start with one person? I know it's standard to have control groups and all, but assume we only had one subject.

NIGEL

I mean, that's certainly CHEAPER.

MACK

And that way, there's one point of failure... There's still a risk, but containing it would be significantly more manageable.

NIGEL

How could we even take this to market?

Mack thinks it over, laughs in disbelief, then buries his head in his hands. Nigel walks out of the room, then returns a few seconds later and keeps pacing.

MACK

This is ridiculous.

NIGEL

Preaching to the choir.

MACK

Okay... Focus Mack, focus!

He stands up and starts pacing too.

MACK

We get ONE test subject, somebody who we can monitor and trust.

NIGEL

Somebody we know, preferably.

(has an idea)

My neighbor. Sweet gal, lives alone, I've never seen anyone at her place other than her mother.

MACK

How long have you known her?

NIGEL

Years. She's unattached, I trust her, no reason to think she'd take advantage of it.

MACK

Perfect. Run it by her, and if she's interested, have her sign NDAs. LOTS of NDAs.

NIGEL

Got it.

MACK

So we'll do preliminary tests with her, then... Gah, there's no way we can release this, this is Pandora's box on speed.

NIGEL

Yep.

They pace in silence, still awestruck at their discovery.

EXT. NIGEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Nigel is out front gardening, humming quietly to himself. He notices Allison pull into her garage, but pretends not to see her.

Sure enough, she beelines straight toward him.

ALLISON
Nigel! We need to talk NOW.

NIGEL
(pretending he just noticed)
Oh hey, Allison. Hi! Done already? That was...

ALLISON
I don't know what you guys are trying to pull, but that was...
(she tears up)
Why didn't you TELL ME it would be so... GAH!
(she clutches her head)
How do I make it STOP?

Nigel stands up slowly and approaches her cautiously.

NIGEL
Do you want to go inside?
(she nods)
Come on.

They start walking towards her front door.

NIGEL
You know, normally I'd be at the lab right now, but I'm taking the day off. Sort of an ingrained superstition I have, don't want to-

ALLISON
Don't want to jinx it by being there, I know.

NIGEL
Oh. Oh... We've had this conversation already...

Allison nods. Nigel chuckles as they go inside.

INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Nigel is sitting on Allison's couch while she makes tea in the kitchen. Her phone is buzzing on the end table.

NIGEL

Do you want me to get that?

ALLISON

No, it's my mother trying to guilt me into spending time with her. I'll call her back.

NIGEL

Okay. So... How much of this did you... How far did you see before you reset?

ALLISON

About this far, actually.

(walks into the living room)

And I didn't... I didn't see THIS, because it didn't play out this way, but it stopped while I was on the phone with her.

NIGEL

I see. And do you... Do you remember, well, what's your memory like of the version you DID see?

ALLISON

It's mostly consistent, little changes though.

(walks back to the kitchen)

Like it's blurry, you know? Like maybe there's some guy walking across the street, and he's MOSTLY clear, but he's... Blurry...

(walks back in tensely)

I don't know, Nigel, I don't know, you tell me. What SHOULD it feel like? Huh?

(walks back)

Mack tried to explain it, I could NOT pick up what he was putting down.

NIGEL

(chuckles)

Let me see if I can describe it in a way that makes sense...

INT. CLIFF CLIFFORD'S OFFICE - DAY

Cliff's office is open, ornate, and oak-panelled, with a large window offering a beautiful view of the city from the fourteenth floor of Apex Labs.

Cliff is slumped at his desk like a six-year-old forced to attend a college lecture, his eyes glazed over while Mack and Nigel give their presentation.

NIGEL

Now, the idea behind the Monte Carlo method is very straightforward. In essence, it's a way of guessing how a system behaves by looking at a collection of random samples, then piecing them together into a larger picture.

CLIFF

Uh-huh...

NIGEL

So, imagine you had a big room, you have no idea what's in it, and all you have is a flashlight that flickers.

CLIFF

Okay...

NIGEL

If you shine the flickering light everywhere, eventually, you have a pretty good idea of what's in the room, right?

(Cliff nods slowly)

That's Monte Carlo. It's essentially just taking a bunch of snapshots and combining them to make one big picture.

CLIFF

Snapshots for one picture. Got it.

(still mostly confused)

And this... Applies how?

Sensing he's not getting anywhere, Nigel defers to Mack, who gladly takes over the presentation.

MACK

So, by taking the drug, you get access to multiple parallel realities.

NIGEL

We don't know how many.

MACK

Right. Could be two, could be twenty, could be hundreds or thousands.

NIGEL

Millions even.

MACK

We just don't know. Theoretically though...

He has an idea. He stands up and grabs a gold pen that's sitting on Cliff's desk.

MACK

Can I borrow this?

CLIFF

Go right ahead.

MACK

So theoretically, imagine there's our timeline, our reality. Where the pen drops from my hand-
(he drops it)
-to the desk. There's exactly ONE outcome, only ONE path it follows. Okay?

CLIFF

Okay...

MACK

But, there are an infinite number of ways it COULD drop. Little changes in the air maybe, or at an atomic level. It won't always land the exact same way every time. It'll LAND every time, but each drop is different, right?

Cliff nods slowly, semi-following.

MACK

When you take the drug, it's like you get a glimpse at every single time it drops, EXCEPT the time where it ACTUALLY drops.

CLIFF

What?

MACK

It's like... It's like time freezes, and you split into all the parallel branches and see all the thousands of ways that the pen drops in OTHER parallel realities.

NIGEL

It's like you're seeing thousands of snapshots.

MACK

Right. And then you come back to the present, where the pen drops for real.

NIGEL

Except now you've seen all the different ways it COULD drop. As WELL as the way it DOES drop.

CLIFF

So you're predicting the future?

MACK

Yes. And no.

(Cliff recoils in confusion)

You're seeing the possible futures. You don't know for SURE what the future will be, but you have a reasonable guess based on the various possibilities you saw.

NIGEL

Remember, it's like snapshots, You get all these snapshots of the future, like a sneak preview. And then you see the actual future. Which is really really really CLOSE to the snapshots.

CLIFF

But not quite.

MACK

Right. For instance. Let's say that... Okay, so assume you try the drug, and you see a future where some kid gets hit by a car, okay?

(Cliff winces at the thought of it)

BUT, now that you see that future, you can save the kid in the REAL timeline.

CLIFF

Ohhhh. I see. By you saving him, you're creating a NEW future.

MACK

Exactly.

NIGEL

But you have the memories of him getting hit, because in the sneak previews, you didn't KNOW he was going to be hit, so you couldn't save him.

CLIFF

Well wait wait, if I'm seeing thousands of these sneak previews, couldn't I save him in THOSE, AND in real life?

NIGEL

No. Because they happen simultaneously.

(Cliff is confused)

When you see the possible futures, your brain is basically splitting. So it's not like you're taking one snapshot after another, and learning and remembering each one. It's like a thousand versions of you are taking a thousand snapshots at the same time, then combining them all.

CLIFF

Hmm... You lost me there. However, you sold me at 'you can see the future and change it', because THAT I can sell.

(he pivots toward the window)

Christ on a sofa...

(he pivots back)

Gentlemen... Not gonna sugarcoat it, this'll be like a hog set loose in Tokyo.

MACK

Is that a bad thing?

CLIFF

You tell me. Either of you ever seen a hog set loose in Tokyo?

(they both shake their heads 'no')

Then who's to say whether it's good or bad?

(chuckles and grins proudly)

Excellent work.

He stands up and shakes their hands. Both Mack and Nigel are beaming with pride.

CLIFF

Now, funding is tight, though for a project of this eminence, I could make an exception.

(pauses slyly)

But I'd need to be... Looped in... On your tests, if you catch my drift.

MACK

You mean, you want to take the drug too?

(Cliff nods)

No, that's not happening.

CLIFF

Come now, Mack...

MACK

Sir, we've only had one test on a human so far. It certainly seems viable, but the experience is intense, and until we've done more testing, the side effects are largely unknown. It could be lethal for all we know.

(Cliff turns to the window)

And with all due respect, given the incredibly sensitive nature of the... Well, the ability to predict the future, we're not in a rush to just give it out to anyone who wants it.

CLIFF

(still facing outside)

Oh, Mack, please, you don't trust me?

MACK

I don't know if I'd trust MYSELF, sir, if I'm being honest. We're playing with fire, and it's best to keep the fire from spreading.

CLIFF

Well, as the one PAYING for the fire, I think that's rather selfish of you, if I may be blunt.

Mack doesn't cave. Nigel looks at the ground nervously. Finally, Cliff chuckles and turns back around.

CLIFF

Alright, fair enough. I'll wait my turn like everyone else. And in the meantime-

MACK

Funding is tight. Got it.

(he chuckles)

Any chance you could keep it confidential, sir, or is that asking too much?

CLIFF

(thinks it over)

No sense in advertising beef if the cow's still in the calf stage... You have six months.

MACK

Six months?! That's impossible!

CLIFF

Mack... That's not the Apex attitude.

MACK

Understood. We'll do what we can, SIR.

CLIFF

You'll do what you have to.

(winks at him)

You take care now, y'hear?

Mack storms out of the office, visibly rattled from the exchange. Nigel nods politely and smiles at Cliff, then quickly follows after Mack.

Mack is in no mood to talk and hurries down the hall. Nigel waits until he's gone, then re-enters the office.

CLIFF

Can I help you?

NIGEL

I can get you some.

CLIFF

Then I can get you more funding.

(he grins)

That didn't take long. I didn't figure you for a Judas... All types I suppose.

(Nigel is embarrassed)

Money's a dog, ain't it? Don't realize how much you need it til you don't have it. I'm still holding you to six months though. That should be feasible now, right?

NIGEL

We'll make it work. Just please promise you won't tell Mack, because-

CLIFF

Nigel, please, do I look like an imbecile?

(Nigel shakes his head 'no')

Course, I am a CEO, so I wouldn't blame you if you said 'yes'...

(chuckles)

He won't know I'm using it. I promise not to unravel the space-time thread.

NIGEL

He'll know if we suddenly have more money...

CLIFF

Not if you throw him off the scent. Christ, you have a PhD, right? So get your D out of your Ph and concoct something.

Nigel nods slowly and heads to the door. Cliff smiles and extends his hand, but Nigel refuses to shake it, so Cliff just pats him on the back as he leaves.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mack is sulking on the floor. Nigel knocks quietly, then lets himself in.

NIGEL

So I had an idea...

MACK

We are NOT letting him try the drug.

NIGEL

No, no no, of course not. I was-

MACK

Un-be-fricking-lievable. 'As the one PAYING for everything, I get to break the rules.'

(Nigel doesn't know what to say)

I'm sorry. You had an idea?

NIGEL

Well, I have a... Sort of a rainy day fund that I've been accruing, for... Something. I've never known what, until now.

MACK

Nigel, I don't - that's generous, and I really appreciate it. Believe me. But don't feel like you have to pay out of pocket.

(sighs)

We can stretch the money, I've got a little bit of a reserve for when a project is over budget. We'll figure it out.

NIGEL

I know, and I'm not doubting your...

(he sits next to Mack)

Look, I know we CAN make it work, but I WANT to invest in this. I discovered it, and I think it will fundamentally change history - which sounds hyperbolic in any other context, I know.

(he chuckles)

But I'm happy to invest. Like I said, that money is for moments like this. I got it covered.

Mack sighs and mulls it over.

MACK

I just feel like, as your boss.

NIGEL

Please. I'm old enough to be your father.

(they laugh)

Plus, I think the boss-employee boundary is rather immaterial in light of being able to predict the future.

(they laugh again)

I've got it covered. Don't fight me on it.

MACK

Fine. Thank you.

They smile and do an awkward side hug/handshake, then Mack springs up excitedly.

MACK

So, just for the record, this is now your full-time project. We'll need to MAJORLY ramp up production for upcoming tests, which means we'll need a much larger stockpile.

NIGEL

Do we want to loop in the production team yet, prepare them for mass-

MACK

No, just you producing for now. The fewer people who know, the better. But any chemicals or equipment you need, your fund can cover it.

NIGEL

Will do. And I did come up with a name, finally: PTX. Short for polytemporex.

MACK

Perfect. PTX. PTX. I like it... Sounds very high-tech and top-secret.

(Nigel smiles proudly)

Alright, let's get to work!

BEGIN SEQUENCE

There are a number of different scenes intercut for this next part. There's only background music, no dialogue.

- 1) Nigel works diligently in the lab on producing more glass vials of PTX (the blue liquid). They're filled, sealed, and labelled one at a time.
- 2) In room 214, there's a timelapse showing Allison and Mack running tests on different days. Mack takes LOTS of notes, while Allison becomes more comfortable with the injections.
- 3) In between tests, Nigel shows up and restocks the cabinet with more vials of PTX. He's producing them just a bit faster than they're being used, so after a few weeks, there are fifty or sixty on the shelf.
- 4) Outside of work, Nigel chats with Allison regularly. There are several clips of them meeting outside as she excitedly recounts the test she did that day.
- 5) Nigel also shows up to Cliff's office regularly, and exchanges vials for cash. These trades make Nigel uncomfortable, but Cliff always pats him reassuringly on the back.

END SEQUENCE.

INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Allison and Nigel are eating dinner - Allison prepared a full spread of meats and cheeses, complete with candles, fine wine, and her best china.

NIGEL

This is something, truly, thanks again for inviting me over.

ALLISON

Of course! I figured we should do something special to celebrate one month!

NIGEL

Feels more like a first date.

(they chuckle)

You know I'm gay, right?

ALLISON

Mm-hmm. Fancy dinners aren't just for romance.

NIGEL

Hear, hear!

(they clink glasses)

To the future.

ALLISON

Literally.

They laugh and sip the wine, then dig into the food.

NIGEL

I feel like it was just yesterday that I even DISCOVERED it, and suddenly here YOU are, actually seeing the future... And maybe in a year, everyone will be using it...

ALLISON

I feel like an explorer. And to be fair, you've used it too, right?

NIGEL

(chuckles)

No... I just make it.

ALLISON

Oh come on, you're telling me you haven't at least TRIED it, just ONCE?

NIGEL

It's tempting. But no, I'll wait until it's proven to be safe. Don't want to risk it.

ALLISON

Wow, that makes me feel better.

(they laugh)

It's a trip for sure. So wait, but really, promise I won't tell anyone, you can't expect me to believe you haven't used it yet.

NIGEL

Nope, I swear on my dad's grave.

ALLISON

Wow... I mean there's willpower, and then there's WILLPOWER... I'm impressed.

NIGEL

Believe me, it's taking enough willpower to keep my mouth shut. I'm glad I have you and Mack to talk about it with, otherwise I'd go crazy.

ALLISON

I know, right? That's the worst part, is I can't TELL people. I mean it's SEEING THE FUTURE.

NIGEL

Exactly. And you haven't told anyone right, like not even your mother?

ALLISON

Please, we barely talk. No loose lips here.

Nigel smiles, then they eat in silence for a bit.

ALLISON

So... When it's been tested and we know it won't kill you - you're welcome, by the way.

NIGEL

Your country thanks you.

ALLISON

(chuckles)

What will you do with it?

NIGEL

What would I do with it...? Well, I had one idea, where I'd take it, then randomly choose a topic on Wikipedia, and read about it for an hour, and in theory, once the hour is up, I'd return with the knowledge of however many pages I read, so maybe thousands, tens of thousands, and I'd be like a human encyclopedia.

ALLISON

Booooooring.

NIGEL

Well, it's better than people who just want to play the stock market, or bet, right? At least I'd be using it for good.

ALLISON

But you'd be able to SAVE people, and stop crime, and you know, stop fires, prevent accidents... Wouldn't that be more 'good' than just learning?

NIGEL

Not if I use my knowledge to help humanity.

(she rolls her eyes)

Think of it this way. Once this is mainstream, presumably there will be a whole new class of everyday vigilantes, right? People who use it exactly like you described.

ALLISON

Okay...

NIGEL

So, with my newfound wealth of knowledge, I can make more inventions, find more drugs, basically be the best researcher alive. And with the money, I'll donate to the vigilantes.

ALLISON

But that's not the same as actually being there. And to be fair, I haven't done this a lot, but sometimes I'll stop an accident, or help someone by changing the timeline, and it's... It's a rush, because you're making a real difference.

(Nigel thinks it over)

Not saying your Wikipedia idea is bad, but you should give saving people a try, at least once, isn't that the point of it? To use it to make life better by preventing the bad stuff?

NIGEL

Very true... I'll certainly drink to that.

They clink glasses again and both take another sip, while Allison's words rattle around Nigel's mind...

INT. NIGEL'S LABORATORY - DAY

Nigel is alone in his lab the next morning, replaying the conversation from last night. *'Isn't that the point of it? To use it to make life better?'*

He takes a new vial, fills it with water from the sink, then puts a drop of blue food coloring in it. He puts on the PTX label and places the vial in his shirt pocket.

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Nigel walks in discreetly. Cliff is practicing his golf shots on a mini indoor putting green.

CLIFF

Nigel, always a pleasure.
(he sinks the ball in the hole)
How's my favorite prognosticator?

NIGEL

Wouldn't YOU be the prognosticator?

CLIFF

(chuckles)
Oh, right you are. Let me get your cash...

NIGEL

This is wrong, and I can't... I don't feel comfortable doing this any more.

CLIFF

But you felt comfortable the other times, no?
(Nigel glares at him)
That's not fair to lead me on, Nigel.

NIGEL

Regardless, I'm cutting you off.

CLIFF

Fine. Here's my counteroffer.

He steps right up to Nigel and stares him down intently.

CLIFF

See, most people, I could threaten to pull their funding, terminate them, go after their friends and family. But your button is so pathetically easy to push, almost feels criminal pushing it. See that camera up there?

(points to a security camera in the corner)
I'm gonna send Mack all the tapes of you and I making our little swaps. I'll tell him it was YOUR idea, which it was. And he'll hate you.

Nigel is silent, biting his lip, genuinely conflicted. Cliff laughs and pats him on the shoulder.

CLIFF

OR, we keep business as usual, and Mack will be none the wiser.

(there's a knock at the door)
Speak of the devil. Come on in!

JUMP AHEAD TO THEIR MEETING A BIT LATER.

Mack and Nigel are seated across from Cliff at his desk, giving a status update on the program.

MACK

And then, once the last two weeks of testing are completed - making six total - we'll be ready to begin trials with multiple subjects, and we can also begin ramping up production. We would-

There's another knock at the door.

CLIFF

Who is it?

It's the nurse who does the injections. She opens the door timidly and quietly addresses them.

NURSE

I'm really sorry to interrupt, but it's about the PTX supply, it's... It's completely gone...

Nigel and Cliff glance at each other suspiciously...

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: Mack

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

Mack and Allison enter the room while the nurse waits outside the door. Allison sits down. Mack locks the door and sits next to her.

MACK

Ready for day two?

ALLISON

I guess we'll find out...

MACK

That's the spirit!

(chuckles)

I'm really sorry about yesterday, it was a lot, and we'll definitely slow things down so you're not overwhelmed.

ALLISON

Thanks... I think, maybe I just need to get the hang of it? And now I know what to expect, so that'll help too.

MACK

Agreed. So, quick recap. We know that you're seeing the future, because you were able to predict the answers to my questions.

ALLISON

Right. And the way Nigel explained it, it's like snapshots of MULTIPLE futures. That's why I saw heads AND tails for the coin flips.

MACK

Exactly. We'll explore that later. It's also a 'noisy' experience, it sounds like, because of all the overlapping futures. So for now, we're doing a basic test, trying to answer a basic question: how long does each dose last?

ALLISON

Oh. Shoot, well, I don't quite... I don't remember when exactly I 'reset', sorry.

MACK

That's no problem, no problem, that's what we're testing in this session. Did you bring a book or a magazine?

ALLISON

(she shakes her head 'no')

Not much of a reader.

MACK

Hmm. Well basically this test, you'll be in this room for... However long. The goal is to record what time you reset. So until then, you'll just need to find something to occupy your time.

ALLISON

I've actually been meaning to apply to jobs, that'll work, right?

MACK

Well, technically when it resets, then your applications reset too, because you're applying in a parallel world.

ALLISON

Oh, right. Doi.

(chuckles)

I can LOOK for jobs though, right? And they'll still be the same jobs in this timeline?

MACK

Yeah, actually that would be perfect. That way, when you reset, you'd have the memory of all the job listings, without having to search again.

ALLISON

I just can't apply to them. I mean I CAN, but then it'll reset. Got it. Wonder what happens if I get hired in a parallel reality...

MACK

Excellent question... Which is WAY outside the scope of this project.

(they laugh)

Alright, so after the injection, I'm going to leave you alone and get work done... Which is even weirder because the real me won't remember it... But that way, you shouldn't have too many differing realities to overlap, so the memory should be a lot quieter than yesterday.

(he stands up)

Main thing, just be sure to remember what time you reset, always check the time.

ALLISON

Will do.

Mack opens the door, lets the nurse in, unlocks the cabinet, and hands her one of the vials.

MACK

We're doing 1 milliliter again.

Same as the previous day, the nurse nods quietly and disinterestedly. She fills the syringe with PTX while Allison rolls up her sleeve.

NURSE

You ready?

(Allison nods, the nurse injects her)

And... Done.

She bandages the skin, smiles politely, and leaves.

Allison sits quietly for a few seconds, breathing slowly, then her head drops and her eyes close.

Mack paces the room for a few seconds, she twitches, then suddenly jolts awake and gasps.

MACK

You alright?

She nods and catches her breath.

ALLISON

10:34. It was 10:34.

Mack looks at the clock: it's currently 9:36.

MACK

So, roughly an hour. Perfect.

(he makes a note)

Any good job listings?

ALLISON

Yeah, several. Water?

(he pours her a glass of water)

And you're right, I feel a LOT less overwhelmed than yesterday, but coming back is still hella disorienting my dude.

She takes a sip of water, then they both laugh.

ALLISON

I should probably apply to those jobs now...

INT. MACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mack is sitting attentively on his exercise ball and entering notes into a spreadsheet. He has several entries for different days of experiments.

MACK

Test 12, 6.5 milliliters.

(he enters the value)

And the time was 6 hours 21 minutes.

(he enters the time)

And the line said the words of the prophets are written in the data cells... Within Excel...

(he graphs a line)

And whispered... In the sounds... Of silence...

The line matches the data points almost one to one. Mack makes a note: 1ml \approx 1hr.

MACK

Thank you, thank you...

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

Allison is slouched in the leather chair, exhausted, while Mack is wide awake and admiring the growing collection of PTX vials in the cabinet.

ALLISON

Pleeease tell me we're done with the time tests, I'll lose my mind if I have to sit in this room much longer.

MACK

(laughs)

Yes, we can be done with those. Good news, we've proven that each milliliter is approximately equivalent to one hour of splitting.

ALLISON

Thank God...

MACK

Any luck on the job hunt?

ALLISON

Better actually, it HAS helped on that front. Just waiting on a few callbacks.

MACK

See? Boredom can be constructive.

ALLISON

And it can be boring!

(she perks up)

So now what? I was thinking, maybe I could take some of the PTX back to my place, and try tests from a different location, you know? See how it works out in the real world, like the first day.

MACK

You can definitely test leaving the lab for this next set of experiments. I can't let you take it home though, it has to stay here.

Allison looks at him with pouty eyes.

ALLISON

But Mack, honey, aren't I worth it? Are you saying you don't find me... Deserving? Just one, one small vial. For funsies.

MACK

Nope, no can do. That'll have to wait until it goes to market.

(she sighs)

We can't take any chances with this, given how many people would want to get a hold of it, so the supply stays here.

ALLISON

Fiiiiine. I guess we can do BORING tests.

(Mack chuckles)

So what ARE we testing?

MACK

So now we're doing general endurance, basically, how long can you manage with each dose. We'll start with one hour, and you'll kind of do what you did on day one. Walk around, drive, and be out and about.

ALLISON

Do I need to do anything specific, like watch the fricking time on my phone every minute?

MACK

No, no no we're done with that. Just wander, and then when you reset, we'll see how well you're able to cope with all the overlapping memories.

ALLISON

Well, it'll definitely be more interesting.

(they laugh)

Alright, let's do it.

Same as usual, Mack asks the nurse to come in. She gives Allison a 1ml injection, then leaves. After a few seconds, she blacks out, jolts awake, and re-adjusts to reality. Mack helps her recover and brings her water. This happens several times over the next few weeks.

INT. NIGEL'S LAB - DAY

There's a knock at the door. Nigel is working on a report - he adds a few lines, then saves it and goes to the door.

MACK

You have a second?

NIGEL

Sure do, come in.

Mack steps inside - the clutter is manageable, but Mack walks carefully so as not to knock over anything.

NIGEL

Sorry about the chaos.

MACK

No no, as long as we've got our supply, do what you need to. This'll be quick. Has Allison said anything to you about the tests?

NIGEL

We chat about them almost every day, yeah. Why?

MACK

I just... Something seems off. She keeps asking me for vials to take home, and... Flirting? I think? I'm TERRIBLE at picking up signals from women.

NIGEL

Can't help you in that department.

(they chuckle)

Have you given her any?

MACK

No, of course not.

(he sits down)

Maybe I'm just paranoid, I don't know, it could also be a side effect.

NIGEL

Or it could be, this is a drug that lets you see the future, so people want it...?

MACK

Yeah... Knew this would happen... But she hasn't asked you for any, right?

(Nigel shakes his head 'no')

Hmm... Probably just me then.

(Nigel shrugs)

In other news, we went up to five hours today, with her actually out and about.

NIGEL

Oh?

MACK

She seems... Worn-down. Well, sort of. When she does the initial split, she says she barely notices anymore, like she's built up a tolerance for it. But the actual tests, that's what's wearing her out, like her brain's on overload.

NIGEL

Which makes sense, because you said during the time trials, she was just sitting in the room, and she didn't feel the effects?

MACK

Right. But the more variation there is, the more she's out in the world seeing more branches...

NIGEL

What about the effect of her choosing different actions in different timelines?

MACK

That doesn't seem to be an issue, surprisingly. The way she describes it, she always follows essentially the same 'path'. So the branching is due to randomness from the environment.

NIGEL

So spending six hours in a room alone might be the mental overload equivalent of one hour on a busy street.

(Mack nods)

Fascinating...

MACK

And it makes sense, we just need a way to quantify 'mental overload'. At what point is there too much data to process?

NIGEL

Excellent question.

They both sit quietly and think things over.

NIGEL

Have you done any experiments with branching specifically? You could do half-hour sessions, and each one, you have one random event with N outcomes, and you work your way up.

MACK

Elaborate.

NIGEL

So you start with a coin flip, 2 outcomes, and you see how much stress it causes. Then a, hmm, maybe a 4-sided die roll, see how much stress THAT causes. Then 6-sided, 8-sided...

SWITCH TO:

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

Mack is continuing Nigel's speech while Allison sits and listens attentively.

MACK

Then 12-sided, 20-sided. We're testing to see what the impact is every time we add a new 'branch' to the system. Make sense?

ALLISON

Sort of...

(she massages her stomach)

Sorry, think I ate something bad...

MACK

Oh... We can cancel for today, no worries.

ALLISON

No no no, it's, it's probably nothing, just a little upset. So we're doing shorter sessions, testing coin flips and dice.

MACK

Exactly. Again, trying to figure out how stressful it is with each branch...

(she clutches her stomach again)

We can cancel today, it's fine.

ALLISON

I'll be okay. This happens sometimes, usually it's over in a few hours.

Mack looks at her hesitantly, she nods reassuringly, then he calls the nurse in for the injection.

MACK

Hi. Just half a milliliter today.

The nurse nods and fills the syringe. Allison leans back and rolls up her sleeve. The nurse gives the injection, bandages it, and leaves.

As always, Allison blacks out, twitches, then comes to. Only this time, she looks nauseous.

MACK

Shoot, let me get some water.

He rushes to the counter, finds the glass, and fills it with water. He hears the sound of Allison vomiting, and turns back to see the aftermath.

MACK

Oh shooooooooot, shooooooooot.

Allison is keeled over and apologizing profusely.

Mack hands her the water and rushes out of the room, calling for a nurse to help. After some searching, he manages to find one who's available (not the one who usually does the injections).

The two of them rush back to the room. Allison is sobbing and trying to soak up the vomit with wet paper towels.

ALLISON

I'm so sorry Mack, I'm so sorry, I didn't-

MACK

You're okay, here, we'll clean that up.

He and the nurse help Allison to her feet. She rushes out of the room, embarrassed. Mack feels awful, and helps the nurse clean up the mess.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mack is sitting in a daze. Things have settled down, and he's thinking over the interaction with Allison.

His hand hovers tentatively over his phone, and after deliberating for a few seconds, he makes a call.

OPERATOR

Nurse's station, how can I assist you?

MACK

Hi, this is Mack Powell, ID 413317. If you could please have one of the staff check the supply of PTX in room 214, I'd appreciate it.

OPERATOR

(typing)

Thank you sir, somebody will check on the room within the hour.

MACK

Thanks. Have a good day.

Mack hangs up and exhales slowly. Then he opens his desk drawer and removes a small vial with blue liquid.

He holds it up to the light, swirls it, unscrews the cap, and pours it into his mouth. He swishes for 30 seconds, then spits it out. It's just mouthwash.

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

It's the scene from earlier, where Mack and Nigel are giving Cliff an update on the project.

MACK

...begin trials with multiple subjects, and we can also begin ramping up production. We would-

There's a knock at the door.

CLIFF

Who is it?

It's the nurse who does the injections. She opens the door timidly and quietly addresses them.

NURSE

I'm really sorry to interrupt, but it's about the PTX supply, it's... It's completely gone...

Nigel and Cliff glance at each other suspiciously.

Lucky for them, Mack doesn't notice. Instead, he tenses up and heads for the door.

MACK

(to the nurse)

Thank you. I'll take care of it.

(she leaves)

You've gotta be KIDDING me...

INT/EXT. MACK'S CAR - DAY

Mack is driving angrily while on the phone with Allison.

MACK

Allison, it's over, I called the police.

ALLISON (phone)

Damn it. I never should have listened to her.

Mack is completely thrown off by the mention of 'her'...

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: June

INT. JUNE'S HOUSE - DAY

June's place is wide-open, tastefully decorated, and charmingly rustic without feeling antiquated. There are also remnants of a romantic rendezvous: flowers, a box of chocolates, and an empty wine bottle.

June stuffs all three into the trash. She makes her bed, cleans the house, does some light reading, then works out while watching TV. And all before 10 AM.

Finally, she sits at the table for a mid-morning snack and checks her phone. Five missed calls from her ex, which she swipes to the left: out of sight, out of mind.

She scrolls through her contacts and finds Allison, then calls her. No answer.

She does more house-cleaning, more reading, more workouts. Now it's 3 PM. She tries calling Allison again. This time, Allison picks up.

JUNE

There you are! I thought maybe you died. How's-

ALLISON

Let me guess. You just broke up with someone, so now you want me to come over at 6 tonight, watch Wheel of Fortune, eat lasagna, and bring sherry?

June is speechless.

JUNE

How'd you know I was out of sherry?

ALLISON

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

JUNE

Try me.

JUMP TO A FEW HOURS LATER.

Allison is over for dinner. Except neither she nor June are actually eating, they're just staring at each other.

Finally, June bursts out laughing, takes a sip of sherry, and starts eating the lasagna.

ALLISON

This doesn't bother you at ALL?

JUNE

Okay, so you can see the future. It's not the second coming of Christ...

ALLISON

Mom, this is a BOMBSHELL.

JUNE

It's quantum physics, sweetheart, it was only a matter of time.

(while chewing)

Although I'm surprised they chose YOU to test it, certainly doesn't inspire much confidence...

ALLISON

Wow...

JUNE

Oh hush. So what's your plan to get it?

ALLISON

To... To GET it?

JUNE

The drug. OBTAIN it. For profit, for blackmail, for winning the lottery. God, it's like you're sitting on a gold mine and all you see is how shiny it is.

ALLISON

Mom, I'm not stealing it, I'm supposed to be TESTING it. For scientific purposes. I shouldn't even have TOLD you.

June sighs disapprovingly.

JUNE

I mean this from a place of love, but you are obscenely disappointing as a daughter and as a human being.

ALLISON

How is that from a place of love...?

JUNE

Ooh! You should just have ME sign up for a test!

ALLISON

No! YOU'RE NOT EVEN SUPPOSED TO KNOW!

JUNE

And whose fault is that?

June continues eating. Allison refuses to, she just sits there in stunned silence.

JUNE

I thought you loved my lasagna.

ALLISON

Mom! Please take this seriously! Doesn't this... Weird you out? It's not NORMAL.

JUNE

Neither is a c-section, and yet, here you are.

(she takes another bite, Allison scowls)

Look, I already told you, I've lived enough and seen enough that it doesn't faze me.

ALLISON

Seeing the future doesn't faze you. Right.

JUNE

Honest to God, it doesn't. Now what DOES faze me is a daughter who's so... ALOOF, to put it gently... That she couldn't see an opportunity if it smacked her upside the head.

ALLISON

It's not that I don't see it... It's...
(June stares at her skeptically)
Okay, fine. How would YOU steal it?

JUNE

Mmm... How would I steal it...? Or, more relevantly,
how can YOU steal it?

Finally, Allison starts eating. June thinks it over and
takes a few more bites before answering.

JUNE

Alright, we certainly can't rely on your
lock-picking skills to break in at night.

ALLISON

I don't know how to pick a lock.

JUNE

That's what I just said, dear. Please keep up.
(Allison growls)
Well, I was going to say, we'll need to rely on
your charm, but clearly...

ALLISON

Oh I can be pretty damn charming.

JUNE

Debatable. But we'll see if we can make it work.
Now, walk me through the testing process.

ALLISON

Let's see. So there's the main hall, like a
hospital corridor, nurses and waiting rooms.
Inside the room itself, there's not much, just a
few chairs, cabinets - but they're locked.

JUNE

Okay...

ALLISON

And so there's the main guy, Mack, who actually
runs the test.

JUNE

Is he cute? Into you?

ALLISON

I don't think so.

JUNE

We'll keep him on the back burner. Who else?

ALLISON

And - oh, the nurse, she's not in the room until we're ready for the injection, then she leaves once it's done.

JUNE

Well there you go! That's the best way to get what you need, suck up to the help.

ALLISON

The 'help'??

JUNE

Sorry, the NURSING STAFF.

(takes a sip of wine)

Just get her to give it to you, should be easy.

ALLISON

Okay... Yeah, I can do that.

JUNE

Atta girl! Toast, come on!

(they clink glasses)

To Allison FINALLY doing something useful with her life.

ALLISON

Screw you too.

June chuckles, downs the rest of her wine, then leaves the table and clears her dishes.

JUNE

Hurry up, Wheel is almost on!

INT. APEX LABS HALLWAY - DAY

The next morning, Allison arrives early. To her relief, Mack isn't there yet, and the nurse is. Allison approaches the nurse cheerfully.

ALLISON

Hey there! I don't know if you remember, I was here yesterday. Good to see you again.

NURSE

Mmm.

Awkward pause.

ALLISON

So... Do you know anything about the tests?

(the nurse shakes her head 'no')

Well, it's predicting the future by looking at parallel realities. Crazy, right?

NURSE

Mmm.

ALLISON

No it's okay. It's like you go into these, they're like simulations of the future, then you reset and everything happens like you saw it.

NURSE

I don't think you should be telling me this...

ALLISON

Well, here's the thing... This drug, it could change the world, and isn't it unfair that the big tech company is keeping it secret? So, from one woman to another... Could you do me a favor, maybe get me some, on the DL?

NURSE

No. I could get fired for that.

Allison nods understandingly, then is startled by Mack unlocking the door behind her. The nurse rolls her eyes.

INT. JUNE'S HOUSE - DAY

June and Allison are arguing while June works out.

JUNE

Is it that hard to get people to like you?
Honestly, are you even trying?

ALLISON

I'm sorry I'm not an expert in asking strangers
to STEAL for me.

(paces angrily)

So now what?

JUNE

So now you go after Mike.

ALLISON

Mack!

JUNE

Whatever. I got to thinking. Whenever you're on
the drug, why don't you experiment, find out the
best way to get him to help you.

ALLISON

I, I don't follow.

JUNE

Well, these parallel realities are really just
simulations, right? Nothing you do in them will
MATTER in our world. So get his secrets.

ALLISON

How?

JUNE

Knock him out, tie him up. You're smart, you'll
think of-

(catches herself)

Oh, maybe not.

Allison rolls her eyes and storms out of the room.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

The nurse is injecting Allison. She soon experiences the cosmic explosion/split, then wakes up in a parallel world.

MACK

You feeling alright?

ALLISON

I think so? Can you get me some water please?

Mack goes over to the sink. Allison sneaks up behind him and hits him with her purse.

ALLISON

What'll it take to get more PTX?? HUH??

MACK

What the-

ALLISON

Tell me! Where's your supply?!

MACK

I'm calling security.

ALLISON

Oh no you're not!

Mack tries to stand up, but Allison knocks him out again. She tries to open the locked cabinet, fails, gives up, and bolts out of the room.

Actually, she makes it out of the lobby without being noticed, and is nearly at her car when she sees the security guards running up to her.

ALLISON

Damn it...

They apprehend her; Mack is behind them, shaking his head in disbelief. Allison chuckles knowingly as they move her to a secure holding room. Before long, the world freezes and she resets.

INT. JUNE'S HOUSE - DAY

June is repainting the living room furniture while Allison paces and vents.

ALLISON

I have tried seducing him, and attacking him, and interrogating him, and have had NO luck.

JUNE

There's a surprise...

ALLISON

I do know they're making a lot though, because every time I look in the cabinet, there's more.

JUNE

So just take one or two at a time. Slip them into your purse. Surely they won't notice.

ALLISON

I've tried that. Mack guards the stuff like a freaking hawk, I can't get to it!

JUNE

So? Distract him when it's open.

ALLISON

What part of 'I tried' are you not- Gah. There's NO window of time. Mack would LITERALLY die before he lets me have any.

JUNE

There's an idea...

ALLISON

Mother, I'm not KILLING him.

JUNE

Why not? It'd be fun! Even if you just did it in the parallel worlds.

(Allison groans)

Oh also, there's a news crew coming over at 3, they want to interview you about the drug.

ALLISON

WHAT?? I don't, NO! Plus, I wouldn't even have anything to show them!

JUNE

Oh that's right. We'll have to cancel then.

(she smirks, Allison scowls)

So you can't beat it out of him, and you can't kill him... What about bribing him?

ALLISON

Tried it. He wouldn't take the money.

JUNE

Have you tried sleeping with him?

ALLISON

Yes. Well, not successfully, but I did try.

JUNE

Is he gay?

ALLISON

No, he is not-

(she has an epiphany)

Ohhhhhh... Of course, Nigel.

JUNE

Nigel? Who's Nigel?

ALLISON

He's the... I don't know his title, but he got me into the study. It's HIS project.

JUNE

Jesus Christ you're stupid. I didn't raise you like that.

(Allison glares at her)

Why are you still here? Go talk to him, have a fancy dinner, butter him up. Geez...

ALLISON LEAVES. FAST-FORWARD THROUGH THE SCENE WHERE SHE AND NIGEL HAVE DINNER. END WITH HER BACK IN JUNE'S HOUSE LATER THAT EVENING.

Allison is sitting despondently on the couch. Now June is the one pacing with frustration.

JUNE

You know, I didn't actually think you were this fucking inept.

(Allison looks down, embarrassed)

How could you not even bring it up??

ALLISON

He's nice, mom. I'm not ruining our friendship.

June exhales slowly and stares at her in disbelief.

JUNE

You're doing this on purpose, aren't you?

ALLISON

No, I'm not doing it on purpose.

JUNE

Could've fooled me.

(paces around)

Just to be clear, when you finally get your hands on it - and you will, with my help - you better not expect any of the profit. Because you have been worthless, like always. Got it?

(Allison nods slowly)

Alright. Here's the plan.

(she hands Allison two small pills)

Try and keep up.

BEGIN SEQUENCE. AS JUNE NARRATES EACH STEP, ALLISON FOLLOWS THEM IN REAL LIFE.

JUNE (voice only)

One. You show up and act sick. Not TOO sick, it has to be believable, but you still need to get the injection so they'll open the cabinet.

Allison is in room 214 rubbing her stomach.

ALLISON

Sorry, think I ate something bad...

Mack is about to open the cabinet, but then stops and glances at Allison with concern.

MACK

Oh... We can cancel for today, no worries.

ALLISON

No no no, it's, it's probably nothing, just a little upset. So we're doing shorter sessions, testing coin flips and dice.

Mack resumes opening the cabinet. Allison is relieved.

JUNE (voice only)

Two. You get the shot, wait until the reset, then pretend you're about to throw up.

Allison wakes up after the reset looking nauseous.

MACK

Shoot, let me get some water.

JUNE (voice only)

Three. You take the pills, they'll work their magic VERY quickly.

While Mack is turned away, Allison takes the two pills, then vomits. Mack turns around and panics.

MACK

Oh shooooooooot, shooooooooot.

JUNE (voice only)

Four. When he goes to get help, fill your purse with the vials. As many as you can get.

BRIEF CUT BACK TO JUNE AND ALLISON AT THE HOUSE.

ALLISON

Wait, as many as I can get??

JUNE

Mm-hmm. We'll be leaving the country. Well, technically, *I* will be leaving the country.

ALLISON

What about me?

JUNE

That's not my problem, sweetie.

(Allison looks concerned)

Can I continue?

ALLISON NODS. BACK TO THE HEIST.

JUNE (voice only)

Four. When he goes to get help, fill your purse with the vials. AS MANY AS YOU CAN GET.

Mack rushes out of the room. Once he's gone, Allison goes to the cabinet and quickly sweeps all the vials (there are several dozen) into her oversized purse.

She closes the cabinet door, splashes water on her face to make it look like she's crying, grabs some paper towels, and starts cleaning up the mess.

JUNE (voice only)

Five. Leave. Something tells me that even your boy scout overseer will let you take the rest of the day off.

As Mack and the nurse rush back in, Allison apologizes and leaves abruptly.

END SEQUENCE. BACK TO THE HOUSE, AFTER THE HEIST.

Allison empties her purse onto the couch. The vials all tumble out. June's eyes light up.

ALLISON

Happy?

(June nods)

Good I don't ever want to see you again.

JUNE

Fine. By. Me. Here, parting gift.

She hands Allison a few vials, but Allison storms off.

INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Allison is sitting at her table crying (the tears are genuine this time). Suddenly her phone rings. It's Mack, she answers immediately.

MACK (phone)
Allison, it's over, I called the police.

ALLISON
Damn it. I never should have listened to her.

MACK (phone)
Her? What do you mean, her?

ALLISON
They're not for me, they're at a different address. Are you writing this down?

INT. JUNE'S HOUSE - DAY

June is whistling happily and slowly packing her suitcase one vial at a time, admiring each one.

Suddenly there's a loud knock at the door. June, startled, jumps up and runs to lock the door.

OFFICER
Open up, police!

EXT. JUNE'S HOUSE - DAY

There are a few officers at the scene, and also several media crews, bombarding June with questions as she's escorted from the house.

REPORTER 1
Mrs. Richards! How does it feel to-

REPORTER 2
Excuse me Mrs. Richards, but what exactly-

June smirks and doesn't respond to any of them.

JUMP AHEAD A FEW MINUTES.

June is handcuffed in the back of the police car, while Mack and Allison talk to one of the officers.

ALLISON

And she was verbally abusive, and she, she even joked about killing Mack, and I felt trapped.

OFFICER

And how long had you been planning this?

ALLISON

Gosh, since... A month, basically since I started doing the experiments.

Mack is speechless. He's staring daggers at Allison.

OFFICER

And what were the experiments for?

Allison starts to answer, but Mack cuts her off.

MACK

Hi officer, Ms. Richards is under an NDA with Apex Laboratories, but I'll personally stop by the station later and answer whatever I can.

OFFICER

Suit yourself. Alright, Ms. Richards, please place your hands behind your back.

ALLISON

Wait, what did- no, no it was her, I didn't-

MACK

I can't believe you would do this.

June's eyes light up. She grins smugly as Allison screams, protests, and is shoved in the backseat of another car. Mack, on the other hand, is genuinely shocked.

MACK

Anyone ELSE I need to lose faith in??

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: Cliff

INT. JUNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens slowly. Cliff is at the doorstep with flowers and a box of chocolates. June is inside wearing a sleek red dress and a bottle of wine.

CLIFF

My lady.

JUNE

Entrez vous.

SHOW BRIEF MONTAGE OF THEM DRINKING, MAKING OUT, GETTING UNDRESSED, AND HAVING INTENSE SEX UNDER THE COVERS.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

June is smoking while Cliff gets dressed.

CLIFF

Do you just love me for my money?

JUNE

Do you just love me for the sex?

CLIFF

It goes without saying.

JUNE

Honestly?

CLIFF

At least I ADMIT it. Now answer MY question, would you still love me if I were poor?

JUNE

I'd have to think about it.

CLIFF

Christ...

JUNE

What, suddenly we can't be honest?

CLIFF

It's one thing to be in a SEXUAL relationship because you like the SEX. It's quite another to be in it for the MONEY.

JUNE

Okay, so let's have a FISCAL relationship.

CLIFF

But see, I don't like YOU for YOUR money, so it would be rather one-sided, no?

JUNE

Like it isn't NOW?

CLIFF

Do you LIKE the sex?

(June gestures 'so-so' with her hand)

I thought so. I think this is where we part.

JUNE

That's not fair, because you got YOUR end of the bargain, but I'm still waiting on the money.

CLIFF

Still waiting? What do you think all those trips and five-star dinners and hotel rooms were?

JUNE

Foreplay?

CLIFF

We're done, June. It was fun while it lasted.

JUNE

Get out.

Cliff tries to stroke her hair once more, but she glares until he backs off. He tips his hat sarcastically, then flips her off as he walks outside. She slams the door behind him.

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Nigel is discussing how to use PTX with Cliff, who seems genuinely fascinated, like a kid in a candy shop.

NIGEL

So, first of all, it's an injection in the shoulder. I assume you, well, do you have a way to give yourself a shot?

CLIFF

Please, Nigel, give me some credit.

NIGEL

Okay, my bad. Shoulder injection, oh yeah, take one milliliter at a time, that'll last an hour. We don't know how risky it is for doses higher than that, so just play it safe.

CLIFF

One milliliter, got it.

(he giggles)

And this really works? I mean, I get to see the actual future?

NIGEL

Yes... You'll, it's obviously DIFFERENT once, after you've seen it, because you can change it, but-

CLIFF

Right, right. But assuming I DON'T change it, everything plays out basically the same?

(Nigel nods)

Well paint me burgundy...

NIGEL

And lastly, once you're done seeing the future, and you reset, it'll be disorienting, because your memories of the future will overlap with the actual present as it becomes the future.

CLIFF

You lost me.

NIGEL

Okay. First, you'll see the future.

(Cliff nods)

Second, you come back to the present.

(Cliff nods)

So now, you have both the memory of what's going to happen, and it actually happening.

(Cliff nods slower)

In other words...

CLIFF

It's like eating a hornet's nest.

NIGEL

...Sure...

CLIFF

Splendid. Then I think I'm ready.

(he pulls out a stack of bills)

It's all there.

Nigel pulls out a vial and trades with him.

NIGEL

God forgive me.

CLIFF

I already have, you're free and clear.

(he makes the sign of the cross)

Oh, one last question. So during the, what did you call it the other day, the sneak preview?

(Nigel nods)

During that phase, does anything from that part carry over into THIS reality?

NIGEL

No. It's like a simulation, it doesn't translate into our reality.

CLIFF

That could be a selling point right there... Heck, who needs the future if you can just do whatever the hell you want. Alright, skedaddle.

CUT TO A FEW MINUTES LATER.

With Nigel gone, Cliff closes the blinds, locks the door, pulls out a syringe from his drawer, and fills it with exactly one milliliter of PTX.

CLIFF

Polytemporex. Impeccable... You, my friend, will make me very, VERY rich.

He rolls up his sleeve, winces as he injects himself, then sets the syringe on the desk. After a few seconds, he feels the cosmic explosion.

Then he's back to normal. He looks around the office curiously, not sure what to expect. He decides to try smashing his window with his chair, then proceeds to ransack his office in a fit of genuine rage.

About an hour later, he's sitting on the floor, exhausted, looking at his stopwatch. The world freezes, resets, and his office is back to normal. The window is intact, the furniture is upright.

Cliff laughs to himself and grins. He has a memory of himself breaking everything in the office, and he relives it excitedly as if he's watching a movie.

Then he has an idea. He picks up his phone (he still has a landline in his office) and talks to his secretary while preparing the syringe with another dose.

CLIFF

Say, can you have Nigel... I dunno his surname, he's the researcher on the Monte Carlo project, was just in here. Can you send him up?

SECRETARY

Sure thing Mr. Clifford.

CLIFF

Thanks, doll.

A few minutes later Nigel knocks at the door.

NIGEL
Something wrong?

CLIFF
No, no no, I just got to thinking, could you...
Spot me? For my first time? Just to make sure
nothing goes wrong.

NIGEL
Oh. Of course.

CLIFF
Splendid.

He locks the door, then purposely rolls up his other
sleeve, so Nigel doesn't see the earlier mark.

NIGEL
Ready?

CLIFF
Ready.

He injects himself. Blackout, stars, fracturing, then he's
back in the present. He immediately lunges at Nigel and
pins him to the ground.

CLIFF
Alright, we've got one hour, although I'm
guessing you won't last that long.

NIGEL
What are you-
(Cliff punches him in the face)
What the, what's-

CLIFF
Nigel, stop wasting my goddamned TIME!
(he punches him again)
Now, all I want to know - and I don't reckon I'm
being unreasonable here... How can I break you?

He breaks one of Nigel's fingers. Nigel screams in pain and
tries to crawl away, but no luck.

CLIFF

Let's see. I could fire you, will that be enough to ruin your life?

(he breaks another finger)

Or what about your family?

NIGEL

Fuck... You...

CLIFF

No family. Got it.

(he breaks a third finger, Nigel screams)

What about Mack, you two close?

Nigel's eyes widen.

NIGEL

Don't... You... Dare...

CLIFF

Oh, now we're getting somewhere. Maybe I could kill him instead.

(Nigel glares at him)

Or maybe... Oh, Ohhhhh, I see. You feel like you betrayed him by selling out to me.

Once again, Nigel's eyes give him away.

CLIFF

Well shit, I better call him up, then. I'm sure you won't mind.

Cliff chuckles and goes over to his phone casually. Nigel struggles to his feet and lunges at him. Cliff knocks him aside and kicks him in the stomach.

Nigel's laying on the floor, gasping for breath, tears in his eyes as Cliff makes the call.

CLIFF

Mack? Cliff here.

NIGEL

Mack, HELP! PLEASE STOP!

CLIFF

What's that? I'm losing you, sorry.
(he hangs up and kicks Nigel again)
Wrong number I guess.

NIGEL

I'll do anything... Please... Don't tell him.

CLIFF

Don't you fret, Nigel. In-
(looks at his watch)
57 minutes, you won't remember this. Shit, what
are we going to DO until then?

Cliff kneels down calmly next to Nigel and wraps his hands slowly around Nigel's neck.

CLIFF

Contrary to rumors about the elite, I've never
killed a man before. And technically, as far as
anyone in reality is concerned, I still haven't.

Nigel struggles and gasps. Cliff seems enthralled, and he keeps his grip until Nigel is dead.

CLIFF

God-DAMN that felt good!

He laughs with relief, kicks the body, then spends the remaining time practicing his golf shots.

JUMP AHEAD TO THE RESET.

Suddenly, Cliff is back, and Nigel is still alive.

NIGEL

Well? Any side effects?

CLIFF

(staggers to his desk)
I'm a little... Disoriented... But wow, what a...
That's really something, Nigel, good work.

Nigel nods politely and leaves. Cliff is euphoric.

INT. JUNE'S HOUSE - DAY

There's a knock at the door. June is lifting weights.

JUNE

One minute!

After her last set of reps, she answers the door, and is surprised to see Cliff. With a machete.

JUNE

Cliff?

CLIFF

Junebug.

JUNE

What are you-

Blood splatters on the walls, and that's as graphic as I'm willing to write. But you get the idea. After his spree, Cliff looks surprisingly bored.

CLIFF

What else...?

INT. CASINO FLOOR - DAY

Amidst the crowd of gamblers and noise of machines, Cliff is trying to focus on the roulette wheel. He's just bet \$100,000 on red 25.

The wheel spins, the ball rolls, it slows to a stop.

CROUPIER

Red 14.

Cliff seems indifferent to having just lost all his money. Instead, he walks away nonchalantly, much to the confusion of everyone else around him.

CLIFF

Red 14... Red 14...

Not long after, he resets into the present. But as he recalls what square to bet on, he has a vivid memory of seeing ALL of them.

CROUPIER (memory)
Red 23... Black 11... Red 34... Black 29...

Cliff in the present collapses as if under a weight.

CLIFF
What in the succulent hell...?

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Nigel is there for another drop-off.

NIGEL
Got you an extra one today.

CLIFF
Oh? You're keeping busy.

Nigel chuckles, Cliff hands him a stack of bills.

CLIFF
While I have you here... I went to the casino, trying to play roulette, and... It was like I saw EVERY number being chosen, not the one that was ACTUALLY chosen... What gives?

NIGEL
You saw... Mmm, my guess is, actually, yeah, that makes sense. You're seeing every outcome because it's a random event, so there's a reality where it lands on red 12, and one where it lands on-

CLIFF
But why didn't I see the one it DID land on? Isn't that the point of this PTX crap?

NIGEL
No, the point is that it's showing you all the POSSIBLE futures.

CLIFF

Well what the hell is it good for?

NIGEL

Because most events will only have one outcome. They're not random enough to change THAT drastically. But a game that's DESIGNED to be random each time, you'll see more branches.

CLIFF

Shit... Why didn't you tell me sooner?

NIGEL

We did, that was our first presenta- never mind.

CLIFF

Hmm... What about the stock market?

NIGEL

With that? You could- no, probably not.

CLIFF

Wait, Nigel, Nigel...

(he slips him another \$100)

So no roulette, I got that, but how could I make stock-picking work.

NIGEL

Well... If it were ME, I wouldn't focus on the actual price itself, since there's a LOT of variables influencing prices. Instead, I would, and this is purely theoretical.

CLIFF

Of course.

NIGEL

I would literally just make a note of, did the price go DOWN, or UP? Then when you reset, if your memory is both down AND up, then you don't do anything, because it could go either way.

CLIFF

But if it's ONLY up or ONLY down...

NIGEL

Then you can buy or sell.

CLIFF

Nigel, you're smarter than a combine in Cairo.

(Nigel is perplexed)

Don't think about it too hard.

NIGEL

Okay...

CLIFF

Oh, and how are the tests going?

NIGEL

It's good. Been a month already, as of today.

CLIFF

Time sure does fly... Catch you later.

He escorts Nigel out of the office.

JUMP AHEAD A BIT

Cliff is sitting in front of his computer, watching the stock prices of several big companies.

He typed up the initial prices on a spreadsheet, and is watching the current prices fluctuate. He also wrote down: *Start time 3:16*. It's currently 4:12.

CLIFF

Get along, little dogies...

He refreshes his browser, then goes through the prices and records the changes on the spreadsheet.

CLIFF

Up, down, down, up, up, down, down, down, up.

He resets soon after, and scrambles to recall the changes. A few were ambiguous (both up and down), but there were four that were definitively up or down. He buys either short or long positions on those four.

JUMP AHEAD AN HOUR

Sure enough, the prices move up or down as expected, and Cliff earns a small profit. He spins in his chair giddily, then does another injection.

BRIEF MONTAGE OF HIM REPEATING THIS PROCESS SEVERAL TIMES. SOON, IT'S ALMOST 8:00 AT NIGHT IN THE REAL WORLD.

Cliff is high on the rush of his betting, and is about to leave the office, when his phone rings. It's June.

CLIFF

Well well, look who came crawling back.

JUNE (phone)

I know about PTX.

CLIFF

So do I.

This catches June off guard.

JUNE (phone)

I just- I thought you should know.

CLIFF

Why?

JUNE (phone)

Because I'll leak it to the press.

CLIFF

Okay. More business for me.

JUNE (phone)

Damn it, Cliff, I want in.

CLIFF

Not over your dead body. Which I've seen. It's...
Frighteningly erotic. You take care now.

He hangs up, pivots toward the window, and looks out contentedly over the city.

BEGIN SEQUENCE

THERE'S A BRIEF RECAP OF EARLIER SCENES IN CLIFF'S OFFICE.

Cliff is practicing his golf shots. Nigel walks in.

NIGEL

This is wrong, and I can't... I don't feel comfortable doing this any more.

CLIFF

But you felt comfortable the other times, no?
(Nigel glares at him)
That's not fair to lead me on, Nigel.

NIGEL

Regardless, I'm cutting you off.

Cliff steps up to Nigel and stares him down intently.

CLIFF

I'm gonna send Mack all the tapes of you and I making our little swaps. I'll tell him it was YOUR idea, which it was. And he'll hate you.
(there's a knock at the door)
Speak of the devil. Come on in!

The three are discussing the project.

MACK

...begin trials with multiple subjects, and we can also begin ramping up production. We would-

There's a knock at the door.

CLIFF

Who is it?

It's the nurse. She opens the door timidly and quietly delivers the bad news.

NURSE

I'm really sorry to interrupt, but it's about the PTX supply, it's... It's completely gone...

Nigel and Cliff glance at each other. Mack doesn't notice. He tenses up and heads for the door.

MACK

Thank you. I'll take care of it.

(the nurse leaves)

You've gotta be KIDDING me...

END SEQUENCE

Mack storms out. Nigel and Cliff wait until he's gone, then stare at each other, both relieved.

CLIFF

Guess we're off the hook. Now, about my supply.

NIGEL

No, I still can't.

CLIFF

MACK!

NIGEL

Wait, okay, here.

(he pulls the vial out of his pocket)

But this is the last of it.

CLIFF

I'll decide that.

(hands him the cash)

Out.

INT. NIGEL'S LABORATORY - DAY

Nigel is working quietly when there's banging at the door.

CLIFF

Nigel! Say, we need to talk.

Nigel jumps up and makes sure the door is locked. Cliff is watching him sadistically through the window.

NIGEL

I'm calling security.

CLIFF

Fine, I've dealt with them before.

He pulls out a handgun and fires three shots at the lock. Nigel immediately goes to the built-in security button on the adjacent wall and presses it.

NIGEL

(to himself)

So this is what you do with it...

CLIFF

(still outside the door)

Nigel, this would be so much faster if you'd simply let me in.

(fires another shot)

Then again, we have a whole hour, let's make the most of it.

Cliff kicks at the door. Nigel wheels one of his desks in front of it, which helps. But Cliff keeps kicking.

CLIFF

Come now, Nigel, what did I do to deserve this?

NIGEL

You're a psychopath.

CLIFF

And you're an accomplice.

He's about to fire another shot when two guards arrive.

CLIFF

Shit, Nigel, why'd you have to ruin my fun.

NIGEL

That wasn't PTX I gave you. It was just water.

CLIFF

WHAT?! YOU BASTARD! I'LL KILL YOU!!

Cliff kicks and screams as the guards overpower him and drag him off. Nigel watches him, unnerved, but relieved.

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: The Aftermath

EXT. APEX LABORATORIES - DAY

Nigel is surrounded by members of the press, an army of cameras and reporters hanging on his every word as he reads off a prepared statement.

Behind him are several senior VPs and board members, most looking ahead stoically or focusing on Mack.

MACK

Good afternoon. My name is Mack Powell, I'm the VP of projects at Apex Laboratories.

(pause)

Today's events come as a shock to myself and our community at large. As you all are likely aware, our CEO and founder Cliff Clifford tried to violently assault one of our researchers. He has been arrested and is in police custody.

(pause)

Thankfully nobody was harmed, we're all just... Shaken up, as you can imagine. This is a blow to the Apex family, and the company legacy.

(pause)

At this time, no decisions have been made about- no FINAL decisions have been made concerning future leadership, although the board members have been in discussions with senior management to determine a replacement as soon as possible.

(pause)

Once again, this is a tragedy, as Cliff was well-regarded and well-respected by many Apex employees. It goes to show that appearances can be deceiving, and nobody is above reproach.

(pause)

That's all. Thank you.

Immediately, there's a flurry of questions. Mack and the other senior officials retreat into the building without any further comment.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE - EVENING

The sun is starting to set. Mack is sitting at his desk, Nigel is in a chair across from him.

NIGEL

Good speech.

MACK

Thanks. My nerves are still shot, but hopefully it didn't show.

NIGEL

You were fine. I'm surprised they didn't have a more senior official speak... Or PR... No offense.

MACK

No, I was surprised too, honestly. Maybe because I was the only one who was critical of him?

(chuckles)

Which is a super fun spot to be in while you're waiting to be vindicated. But once the illusion shatters, being disillusioned is in vogue.

(sighs)

What about you? You were closer to the action than any of us...

NIGEL

Just a little shaken up, like you said, but I'm fine physically.

(pause)

Mentally, makes my skin crawl knowing that he must have done this before, and all those other versions of me suffered.

MACK

Yeah, I can't imagine, realizing what he was doing with it... That's a lot to process.

NIGEL

I'll manage.

Silence for a bit.

MACK

I think it's fair to say that the Monte Carlo project was about as volatile as we thought?

(they both laugh)

Probably best to table it for now, until people are ready for it.

NIGEL

Which might be never.

MACK

I was gonna say, probably never.

(they chuckle)

Man, Cliff, Allison, her mom apparently...

(Nigel nods somberly)

That's a lot to process... Oof...

NIGEL

Yeah.

MACK

Hey, look, don't feel bad about him pressuring you to give him the PTX. He is... Forceful.

Nigel is silent. Mack doesn't notice at first, but Nigel's struggling to keep his emotions contained.

NIGEL

I- He didn't... It was my idea. He didn't force me to give it to him. I offered on my own.

(Mack is devastated)

I'm so sorry. I don't know what else to say...

MACK

(tearing up)

I need you to leave.

Nigel is also getting choked up, but he leaves without putting up a fight. Once he's gone, Mack sits on the floor and sobs quietly up against the corner windows.

There's a faint knock at the door. Mack looks up slowly, his eyes stained with tears. The door creaks open and the last rays of the setting sun outline a mysterious shadow...

GO TO BLACK

SUPER: Sola

FOR THIS LAST ACT, THERE'S NO SOUND OR DIALOGUE. THE ONLY AUDIO IS THE SONG '*PACE, PACE DIO MIO*' FROM VERDI'S OPERA '*LA FORZA DEL DESTINO*'.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - DAY

The nurse who gives the injections, SOLA, is living on autopilot as the chaos of her husband and three young children engulf her.

As they play, argue, laugh, run amok, and generally don't pay Sola much attention, she cleans, cooks, does laundry, and tries not to cause trouble. She simply gazes ahead, resigned, empty, but committed to surviving.

INT. APEX LABS - DAY

Day in and day out, Sola performs nursing duties, whether it's injections, routine check-ups, or responding to the occasional emergency. She does her job professionally, but quietly, without drawing any attention to herself.

During lunch, she sits alone. A brief moment of respite, before she returns to the grind of reality.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sola struggles to get her children to bed and chases them around the house. Her husband is glued to the couch, both yelling at her in frustration, yet unwilling to actually help out himself.

At last, the kids are in bed, her husband is fast asleep next to her. She rolls to the side and looks longingly out the bedroom window. Another brief moment of reprieve, just one more day, one more day... Maybe tomorrow...

INT. APEX LABS - DAY

While waiting outside room 214, Sola is interrupted from her daze by Allison. She listens politely as Allison explains the drug she's testing.

Outwardly, Sola refuses to be involved, maintaining her detached demeanor. But after Allison and Mack enter the testing room, and Sola is alone in the hallway, an idea starts forming. The faintest glimmer of hope.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

Mack calls Sola in for the injection. Sola goes to the cabinet and notices just one other vial. As she fills up the syringe, she makes a mental note of the vial type.

After the injection, she goes to the nurse's supply room, finds a case of identical empty vials, and steals a few.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - DAY

More scenes of tumult, more indifference from her husband. But she's tuning them out, whistling cheerfully while she fills up the vials with blue dish soap.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

The next day, Sola seizes the opportunity. While she fills the syringe, she glances behind her to make sure that Mack and Allison aren't paying attention.

While they're distracted, Sola slips one of the vials into her pocket and replaces it with a fake, which looks nearly identical to the others. She checks again - the other two still haven't noticed. She gives Allison the injection, then leaves the room normally.

The rest of the day - while she's on duty, during lunch, and as she leaves the facility - she's constantly checking over her shoulder to see if anyone will stop her.

But nobody apprehends her. It's like she's invisible, unnoticed and unsuspected.

INT. BANK VAULT - DAY

The bank teller pulls out a brand new safety deposit box, hands it to Sola, then steps outside to give her privacy.

Sola unlocks the metal box, gently puts the precious vial inside, then locks it and hands it back to the teller.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As she lays in bed that night, her husband sound asleep, she smiles and breathes slowly. Contentedly. Soon enough, she's also asleep.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

Over the next few weeks, Sola continues swapping vials, taking only two or three at a time, quickly replacing them with fakes whenever she fills the syringe.

Mack and Allison never notice, and Sola purposely stores the fake vials near the back of the cabinet so they won't accidentally get used.

INT. BANK VAULT - DAY

Sola continues filling the bank vault with vials: three, five, eight, ten, thirteen...

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sola and her husband are arguing while the kids run and scream through the house. Sola storms out in frustration, which catches her husband off guard.

He follows after her, suddenly apologetic, but she insists on going for a quick drive. He angrily but grudgingly decides to give her space, and returns to the kids.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Sola checks in at the front desk. The clerk hands her the room key, Sola thanks him, and she quickly heads up the stairs to her room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sola empties her purse on the bed: she brought a syringe, bandages, and two vials of PTX. She also digs through her wallet and finds a quarter.

She takes deep breaths, sits on the bed, checks the clock on the nightstand, and gives herself the 1ml injection.

After the initial rush and fracturing, she bandages the spot on her shoulder, then flips the coin.

Heads. She packs her supplies, walks past the clerk, and drives to a nearby yogurt shop.

INT. YOGURT SHOP - NIGHT

Sola buys the biggest size dish, fills it with several flavors and dozens of toppings, then slowly and blissfully enjoys the explosion of flavors in each bite.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

In an alternate branch, Sola flips tails. Again, she packs her supplies, leaves the hotel, but this time drives to a local bakery.

INT. BAKERY - NIGHT

Sola buys over a dozen different desserts: cookies, slices of cake, muffins, brownies. Same as with the yogurt, she's in heaven as she samples bites from each one.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Reality resets. She's back in the present, and she's able to distinctly remember the yogurt shop AND the bakery. She checks the clock - it's as if no time has passed.

She falls back on the bed giddily and laughs for the first time in ages. She also cries a few tears of joy.

Afterward, she packs up, goes to the lobby, checks out (which confuses the clerk), and then drives back home.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sola returns and finds that, unsurprisingly, her husband still hasn't gotten the kids under control. He's slouched in front of the TV, but he jumps up when she arrives.

At first he's angry and accusatory, especially seeing that she's grinning from ear to ear. But she puts any suspicion of infidelity to rest by kissing him passionately.

Unfortunately for him, the kiss doesn't lead any further. While Sola finally corrals the kids and gets them to bed, her husband slowly sits back down on the couch, stunned, speechless, but apparently placated.

INT. ROOM 214 - DAY

Sola continues sneaking out vials, under the less than watchful eyes of Mack and Allison, who never suspect her.

INT. BANK VAULT - DAY

The supply in the deposit box continues to grow.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

This time, Sola has a six-sided die. After the injection, which is 3 milliliters this time, she rolls the die, then consults a notepad she brought.

She's written down the names of six restaurants, one for each number. It's a 2 - she circles the restaurant name, packs her purse, and leaves.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sola orders the most expensive items on the menu: lobster, wine, smoked salmon, with sides of garlic bread and other artisan appetizers.

Once again, she's in culinary heaven trying the food, and isn't fazed one bit when the waiter returns with the bill, which is in excess of \$200.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

She resets and jolts back into the present. The return is more overwhelming this time. At first she has a splitting headache and immediately runs to the sink for water.

But after she's calmed down and reoriented, she manages to remember scenes from each of the six restaurants, and relives the taste of all the five-star meals she ate.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Once again, she returns to chaos, sedates her husband with a kiss, and puts the children to bed.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

This time, Sola has a blank notepad with her. Before she does the injection, she turns on the TV and flips through every channel (almost a hundred). She writes down each channel number on the notepad, along with the index from one to ninety-seven.

Next, she unlocks her phone and opens a website that generates random numbers. She sets the bounds from one to ninety-seven, then does the injection, breathes slowly, splits, then wakes up.

She presses the 'generate' button on the website, and it returns sixteen. She finds the corresponding channel for line sixteen, then flips to it on the TV.

Jump ahead to the reset. This one is even more intense. Sola almost collapses on the floor from the jolt. But she eventually gets to her feet, drinks some water, and the memories start crystallizing.

Sure enough, she's able to go down the list one by one and recall exactly what was on each channel. She has a vivid memory of the programming on each one. But again, it's more painful to recall, given how many branches there were.

Nonetheless, it's intoxicating, and she feels liberated by the possibilities.

INT. APEX LABS - DAY

At the nurse's station, Sola is entering data into her computer along with a few others. One of the nurses receives a call, chats briefly, then turns to Sola and gives her a key ring.

Sola tries to mask her concern as she walks down the hall towards room 214. She unlocks the door. Luckily there's nobody inside.

Still, her heart is beating quickly. She opens the cabinet and discovers all the PTX vials are gone.

She locks the cabinet, locks the door, rushes back to the nurse's station, returns the key ring, and goes upstairs.

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Just before entering, Sola pauses, composes herself, and catches her breath. She knocks, enters, and the scene from earlier plays out, where she tells the men that the PTX is inexplicably missing.

Mack rushes out of the room. She also leaves, then waits, wondering if the other men will question her. After a few seconds of uncertainty, she returns downstairs.

INT. NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Although she's relieved nobody's following her, she's puzzled and concerned by the missing vials. She decides to clock out early and tells her boss she's not feeling well.

INT. SOLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Things escalate from bad to worse when she gets home. Although the kids are at school, her jealous husband is waiting angrily, holding the credit card bills for the hotel rooms and waving them in her face.

Sola tries to explain, but he won't hear it. He slaps her, hits her a few times, and shouts furiously. She sobs and apologizes as she hurries out of the house.

INT. BANK VAULT - DAY

Sola dumps all the vials into her purse (there are about forty total), thanks the teller, and leaves quietly.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Instead of doing any injections, Sola cries on the bed, surrounded by all the vials. Later, she turns on the TV and flips through the channels.

She stops on the local news, which is broadcasting a clip from Mack's speech to the press. It cuts to mugshots of Allison and June, then to footage of their arrest, then to Cliff's arrest, then back to Mack's brief statement.

Sola realizes she has nothing to lose, and packs up the vials one at a time... The fear and panic in her eyes has been replaced with desperation and determination.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Most of the employees are gone for the day. Sola knocks on the door to the office, then lets herself in.

Mack looks up at her, disheartened. His face drops more when she shows him all the vials in her purse.

But she pleads with him, explains her plan, and manages to convince him to try it. She helps him up, and they proceed down to room 214.

INT. ROOM 214 - NIGHT

The vials are scattered across the counter, some empty, most full and sealed. Sola is almost finished filling up a 100 mL syringe.

Meanwhile, Mack is on his phone. He finds a website that generates random vacation destinations by spinning a virtual wheel.

Finally, the syringe is full. Sola sits in the chair, and Mack helps her hold the syringe for the massive injection.

After her initial split, Mack clicks the 'spin' button and the wheel lands on Paris. Sola's eyes light up excitedly. She thanks Mack and says goodbye.

Back in the real world, Sola passes out, then begins to shake violently. The memories of hundreds of vacations begin rushing back. Paris, Rio De Janeiro, Cairo, Rome...

Mack runs out in the hall to get help. Meanwhile, the memories continue to flood back. A torrent of sights, sounds, smells, humanity, and life.

As she convulses in the chair, she smiles and laughs, enjoying the sheer adrenaline rush, the exhilaration of a lifetime of memories flooding back so intensely.

And then she's gone. Mack returns with another nurse, but it's too late. He collapses and sobs while the other nurse tries unsuccessfully to revive her.

End song.

FADE OUT.