

FADE IN:

1 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

1

JOHN VAUGHN (30s), a popular tech blogger and product reviewer, sits at his cluttered desk, staring intently at his laptop screen. He's dressed in a tech-branded t-shirt, worn sweatpants, colorful socks, and Birkenstocks. His hair is pulled back into a low bun, and a mischievous smile plays on his face.

The luxurious apartment is lined with unopened packages, and the kitchen sink overflows with pizza boxes. John is mid-way through an Instagram Live video, radiating a newfound confidence—bordering on arrogance—gained from his online fame.

JOHN VAUGHN

(smiling into the camera)

Thank you, thank you! I love it, too. This is the best job in the world! And hey, I've got something big coming up, I'm heading to Vegas next week to check out the latest tech developments. You know I'll get my hands on some exclusive goodies for you guys.

The doorbell rings unexpectedly.

JOHN VAUGHN (CONT'D)

(sighing, slightly annoyed)

Hold up, guys gotta grab that. Catch you later!

He ends the Instagram Live, basking for a moment in the residual rush of likes and comments. Feeling accomplished, he strides to the door, grinning.

2 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

2

He opens the door, and a small package sits on the floor. He looks around but sees no delivery person.

JOHN VAUGHN

(confused)

Hello? Don't I need to sign for this or something?

Silence. Shrugging, he picks up the package and heads back inside.

John returns to his desk, placing the package in front of him. He rips it open, revealing a sleek, metallic device with softly glowing lights. A sticky note is attached: "Test me! - LAMBDA Tech." His eyes gleam with excitement.

JOHN VAUGHN
(cracking his knuckles)
Alright, let's see what this baby
can do.

He powers on the device. It whirs to life, emitting an eerie, mechanical hum as lights pulse along its surface. Blurry images start to flicker on his screen—a disturbing, shadowy feed of what looks like a surgery room.

The device's noise grows louder, filling the apartment with an unsettling buzz. The lights overhead flicker, and the appliances around him—the toaster, the lamps, even his coffee machine—start to spark.

JOHN VAUGHN (CONT'D)
(alarmed)
What the...?

He leans closer to the screen, his face twisting as he makes out the image: a gaunt woman in a surgeon's coat, her face obscured, methodically cutting into a scalp. He recoils, the scene sickening.

JOHN VAUGHN (CONT'D)
(gagging slightly)
Oh, that's, ugh, no. What is this?

The sounds and flashing lights intensify, overwhelming him. Dizziness sets in as he stumbles, desperately trying to close the feed. He types frantically, managing to post a vague "SOS" on his blog, fingers trembling.

JOHN VAUGHN (CONT'D)
(panicked)
Turn off, c'mon... where's the off
button?

He searches frantically, but there is no visible way to shut it down. The noise escalates, filling his head like a relentless siren. His vision blurs, the edges of his consciousness fading.

Suddenly, he freezes, his eyes wide with terror. His face goes slack, and his pupils dilate, rolling back until only the whites show.

There's a beat of silence as the device glows brighter, illuminating his vacant expression. His body trembles, then collapses to the floor, still and lifeless.

The room hums ominously as the screen fades to black.

FADE TO BLACK.

4

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

4

The scene opens in hazy, unfocused blurs, as if from groggy, half-opened eyes. The dimly lit warehouse gradually comes into view—rusted beams, flickering fluorescent lights, and looming monitors casting cold, unsteady shadows. A MAN (40s), dressed in a dark suit and apron, moves in the shadows, arranging ominous medical tools on a sterile metal table. Heavy restraints clamp around a pair of struggling arms, tubes inserted into one wrist.

The man, JACK, glances over his shoulder at the restrained figure, his mouth curling into a slow, eerie smile. Just then, a metal door creaks open, scraping like nails on a chalkboard. From the darkness steps DR. SARAH SIMONS (40s), a gaunt, intense neuroscientist with calculating eyes. She wears a white lab coat over a dark skirt, exuding cold precision as she skims through a clipboard without looking up.

JOHN VAUGHN, strapped tightly to the table, tries to twist away, panic lacing his voice as he struggles.

JOHN VAUGHN (O.S.)
(struggling)
Where am I? What's happening? Look,
I'm not who you're looking for!

He recognizes the setup—the dark, eerie room exactly like the blurry footage he saw on his computer screen before he blacked out.

DR. SARAH SIMONS
(slowly, with a hint of
amusement)
Welcome back, Mr. Vaughn. I trust
you had a... restful little nap.
We've got some rather exciting
plans for you... groundbreaking."

JOHN VAUGHN
(breathless)
Plans? What are you talking about?

Dr. Simons, unbothered by his protests, whistles a soft, unsettling tune as she examines her instruments with almost loving care.

DR. SARAH SIMONS
(calling out casually)
Jack, the drill, please.

Jack steps forward, placing a sinister-looking drill in her hand, while John's struggles intensify, his voice shaking with raw fear.

JOHN VAUGHN
(almost whispering,
desperate)
Who... who are you? Why am I here?

Dr. Simons leans over him, shining a small, blinding light into his eyes, assessing him with a clinical, detached gaze.

DR. SARAH SIMONS
You're about to make history, Mr.
Vaughn. Quite an honor, don't you
think?

JOHN VAUGHN
(panicked)
I... I don't understand! Please, I
don't want this!

Ignoring his pleas, Dr. Simons retrieves a large monitor, sliding it in front of him. The screen flickers to life, displaying a pulsing image of a brain, gradually zooming in on the pineal gland and a shimmering silver cord. John's eyes widen in terror as he realizes what she's planning.

JOHN VAUGHN (CONT'D)
(screaming)
What the, no, no, please! What the
hell are you doing?!

Dr. Simons leans close, her cold smile twisting into something menacing.

DR. SARAH SIMONS
(smoothly)
We're going to take a little...
excursion, shall we? Beyond the
mind, into the soul. And once that
pesky thing is out of the way,
we'll replace it. Lambda's got big
plans for you.

John's voice cracks, desperation mounting as he begs, his words tumbling over each other.

JOHN VAUGHN

(pleading)

No! No, please, let me go! I'll do anything! Anything you want!

Dr. Simons doesn't react to his cries. Instead, she hums softly, smiling as Jack injects a thick, viscous liquid into the base of John's neck. John screams, his entire body tensing as pain rips through him, his vision flickering in and out. Tears streak down his face as he thrashes in his restraints.

JOHN VAUGHN (CONT'D)

(gasping, desperate)

Stop! Stop, please! I'm begging you!

Dr. Simons' satisfaction grows, a dark glint in her eyes. She begins to hum a haunting tune, her voice rising in a lilting, almost cheerful melody.

DR. SARAH SIMONS

(singing softly)

La la la la... la la... la la la.

John's body convulses violently, his eyes blinking rapidly as his energy drains away. His resistance weakens, his breaths coming in short, ragged gasps. The monitor flickers, displaying rapid, eerie images flashing one after another in quick succession.

As the images slow, a large corporate logo fades in—LAMBDA CORPORATION—its sinister presence filling the screen.

Dr. Simons watches, utterly pleased, as John's eyes close, his body finally limp.

CUT TO:

5

INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

5

Bella sits on the edge of her bed, a pill bottle labeled "Lambda Calmer - 5mg" in her hand. She stares at it, her face a mixture of frustration and guilt. She twists the cap slowly, glancing down at the last pill inside.

BELLA

(whispering to herself)

You don't need this...

(MORE)

BELLA (CONT'D)
 it's just a habit. You're strong
 enough to get through it.

She closes her eyes, taking a deep breath, clearly wrestling with the decision. After a long pause, she clenches the bottle shut and shoves it into her bedside drawer. A small look of pride flickers across her face.

Just as she's trying to hold onto that decision, her phone buzzes with a notification. She picks it up and sees a promotional message from Lambda Pharmacy:

ON SCREEN
 Need calm in a stressful world? You
 deserve it. Order your refill of
 Lambda Calmer now and save 20% on
 your next bottle."

Bella stares at the message, her resolve wavering. A slick, sleek image of a smiling person is attached to the message, looking peaceful and serene.

BELLA
 (sighing)
 Of course! always right on time.

She deletes the message, shoving her phone aside and clenching her fists, as if physically fighting the urge. She lies down, closing her eyes to try and sleep, but after a beat, she opens the drawer again, staring at the bottle, her willpower draining.

CUT TO:

6 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

6

15-Second Commercial Script:

We open with a montage of diverse families smiling warmly, children laughing, and doctors using state-of-the-art medical technology. The visuals are vibrant, giving a sense of warmth, trust, and well-being.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 (at a calm, reassuring
 pace)
 At LAMBDA Corp, we're transforming
 healthcare—saving lives and
 bringing families closer.

Visuals shift to children playing outside, an elderly couple holding hands in a caring hospital room, and researchers working passionately in a modern lab.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Our treatments and innovations pave
the way for a healthier tomorrow.

The screen transitions to the LAMBDA Corp logo, paired with the tagline: "Innovation. Compassion. Care." The visuals maintain a calming, inspirational feel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

LAMBDA Corp, leading the way to a
better life. Schedule your
appointment at a Lambda health
center near you and step into a
brighter future.

The commercial ends with a website overlay:
www.lambdahealth.com - The Future of Healthy Living. The
final scene shows a joyful family running through sunlit
fields, laughing together.

[End with a soft musical fade-out.]

CUT TO:

7

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

7

The bustling coffee shop hums with life—diverse people chatting, the clatter of mugs, and soft music in the background. At a cozy corner table, KIRA FREY (early 20s), a sharp-eyed Computer Science student, sits across from BELLA WILSON (mid-20s), her best friend and an introspective high school math and philosophy teacher. They each sip coffee, absorbed in conversation.

Through the door bursts SAMANTHA WILSON (late teens), an ambitious high school senior, her arms piled high with textbooks that she drops onto the table, knocking over a couple of salt and pepper shakers.

SAMANTHA

(rushed, apologetic)
Sorry! Sorry!

BELLA

(grinning, shaking her
head)
Whoa! Hey, little sis. You okay?
Still nervous?

Kira scoots over, making room for Sam.

KIRA
(calmly)
Come here, take a breath.

Sam sits down next to Kira, exhaling as if she's been holding her breath all morning.

SAMANTHA
(exhausted)
Hi, Kira. I didn't sleep at all
last night. I'm so freaked out.

Kira and Bella share a glance, amused and sympathetic.

KIRA
(smiling)
Relax, you've got this. What's got
you all worked up?

Sam lets her face fall into her hands dramatically.

BELLA
(amused)
First tech lecture for her
internship tomorrow at...

She gestures to a TV behind the counter, where a polished LAMBDA Corp commercial plays, showcasing bright families, smiling doctors, and the Lambda logo.

Kira's eyebrows lift as she watches the ad.

KIRA
Lambda? That's huge.

Samantha nods.

KIRA (CONT'D)
What's the lecture about?

SAMANTHA
(pulling her hands away,
trying to stay calm)
They're talking about these new
microchips, they're supposed to
reduce pain and even addiction.

BELLA
(interested but cautious)
"Addiction? As in... any kind?"

SAMANTHA

(nods, hesitant)

"Yeah... but it's more than that.
They want to implant it directly
into the brain."

Bella's expression changes, a hint of worry crossing her face.

BELLA

Into the brain? Doesn't that
seem... risky?

KIRA

(watching Sam closely)

Sounds like you're not exactly sold
on it.

Sam pauses, glancing down as if weighing her thoughts.

SAMANTHA

(quietly)

I'm not sure I am. If something
goes wrong, it could mess with a
person's mind in ways we've never
seen before. Imagine... something
tampering with your brain every
second of the day.

A beat as the weight of her words sinks in. Bella shivers slightly.

BELLA

That's terrifying.

KIRA

(thinking aloud)

I heard Lambda wants to launch the
first model in two weeks.

SAMANTHA

(sighs)

Yeah... I know.

The barista comes by to refill their cups, and they all fall silent for a moment, the tension lingering.

KIRA

(curious)

How did you even land that
internship?

SAMANTHA

(relieved to talk about
something else)

I applied through my high school
months ago. It's mandatory for my
degree. Lambda on a résumé opens a
lot of doors.

Kira nods, understanding the opportunity, while Bella's face
fills with pride.

BELLA

(proudly)

You'll do great.

KIRA

(reassuring)

Just be yourself, Sam.

SAMANTHA

(sighing, voice low)

Technically, I'm too young for it.
They never take underage interns.
Everyone there has way more
experience. If I mess this up, it's
over. No scholarship... no med
school in Nexora.

Bella reaches over, squeezing her sister's hand.

BELLA

Don't worry about that now. We'll
figure it out.

Kira nods firmly in agreement.

KIRA

It'll be fine. You're as ready as
you'll ever be.

Sam musters a small smile, looking at them gratefully.

SAMANTHA

"Thanks... I've been prepping for
weeks. Just need to get out of my
head.

BELLA

"I thought your debate club friend
was helping you?

Sam's face darkens slightly.

SAMANTHA

She was, but she disappeared. I haven't heard from her in two weeks.

BELLA

(frowning)

That's strange.

SAMANTHA

Yeah... grandma's been helping me out instead.

Bella's expression softens.

BELLA

(grinning)

How is she doing?

SAMANTHA

(shrugs)

She's okay, I guess... But I don't think anyone's thrilled to spend their last days in a retirement home.

They let that thought linger, each looking pensive. Kira breaks the silence, glancing at Bella.

KIRA

(to Bella)

I wanted to visit her anyway. Maybe I'll stop by tomorrow after class?

SAMANTHA

(nods)

She'd love that.

KIRA

(smiling)

Want to come, Bella?

BELLA

(sighing)

I wish I could. I have exams to correct... and a date tomorrow night.

Kira's eyes light up.

KIRA

(grinning)

A date, huh? Spill.

BELLA
(blushing)
Just a guy I met online. Don't get too excited, no expectations.

KIRA
(laughing)
Hopeless romantic. Just... don't fall too fast, alright?

BELLA
(rolling her eyes)
I'll be careful. Now go before you're late.

Sam checks her watch and stands, grabbing her bag.

SAMANTHA
Right, I have to run. Wish me luck!

KIRA
(smiling)
Good luck, Sam!

Sam quickly gathers her things, giving both Bella and Kira a quick hug.

SAMANTHA
Thanks for everything. See you soon!

Bella and Kira watch her dash out the door, laughing softly. Kira looks back at Bella.

KIRA
Take care, alright? And don't let that date distract you too much.

BELLA
(smiling)
I'll try.

Kira glances at her watch, quickly finishing the last sip of her coffee.

KIRA
I'd better get going too, got class in fifteen minutes.

BELLA
Okay, see you.

She grabs her bag, giving Bella a quick hug as she stands.

Kira waves as she heads out, leaving Bella with a pensive smile, staring out the window as the barista brings the bill. She pays, her thoughts drifting, worry lingering on her face.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

8

Kira steps out of the coffee shop, a content smile on her face as she unlocks her bike. She takes a deep breath, savoring the fresh air, then hops onto her bike, settling her bag over her shoulder.

9 EXT. MEADOWBROOK MAIN STREET - DAY

9

Kira pedals smoothly, her hair flowing in the breeze as she glides through the charming streets of Meadowbrook. The town is alive with gentle activity: shop owners setting out flowerpots, children laughing as they play, and neighbors chatting at small outdoor tables. Sunlight filters through the trees lining the street, casting dappled shadows on the pavement.

A neighbor, MR. HARRIS (70s), waves from his front porch.

MR. HARRIS
Morning, Kira!

Kira waves back, smiling.

KIRA
Hi, Mr. Harris!

Further down the street, MRS. GREEN (40s), the friendly baker, steps out of her bakery carrying a basket of freshly baked bread. She spots Kira and gives a warm nod.

MRS. GREEN
Off to college?

KIRA
(grinning)
Yep!

MRS. GREEN
Drive careful!

KIRA FREY
I will!

She continues down the quiet, picturesque streets, the soft rustle of leaves overhead, the hum of a few distant cars, and the sound of her bike tires gliding along the pavement. She takes in the little details—the scent of blooming flowers, the warm sunshine on her face, the comforting familiarity of her town.

As she reaches the edge of Main Street, the open road before her, Kira takes a deep breath, her smile widening. She leans forward, picking up speed, the wind rushing through her hair and carrying her laughter into the crisp, clear air.

She rides past the neighborhood park where a few kids wave as she passes. She waves back, feeling a simple joy as she cycles freely, surrounded by the small-town charm of Meadowbrook.

CUT TO:

10

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

10

A spacious, state-of-the-art conference hall, buzzing with anticipation. Professionals, students, and tech enthusiasts fill the seats. On stage, a sleek panel table hosts DR. SARAH SIMONS, in her early 40s, the poised and self-assured lead scientist from Lambda Corp. A large screen behind her is titled "The Future of Microchip Technology: Reducing Pain and Addiction."

In the middle rows, SAMANTHA WILSON (late teens) sits, notebook open, her pen poised. Her expression is a mix of fascination and a faint unease.

MODERATOR

(smiling at the audience)

Thank you all for joining us today.
We're thrilled to discuss the remarkable advancements in microchip technology and its revolutionary potential for treating pain and addiction.

He turns to Dr. Simons, inviting her to begin.

MODERATOR (CONT'D)

Dr. Simons, as the lead scientist at Lambda Corp, would you share your insights into this groundbreaking technology?

Dr. Simons smiles, her demeanor warm yet commanding, as she addresses the audience.

DR. SARAH SIMONS

(smiling confidently)

Thank you. At Lambda Corp, we're driven by a mission to uncover the full potential of microchip technology. Our latest innovation involves microchips implanted directly in the brain, designed to regulate pain receptors and lessen the dependency on addictive substances.

The audience listens intently, captivated. Samantha leans in, her pen moving rapidly over her notebook.

DR. SARAH SIMONS (CONT'D)

(projecting authority)

This technology is revolutionary not only in concept but in its precision. The microchips can target specific neural pathways, essentially reprogramming the brain's response to pain and addiction triggers. Imagine a world where chronic pain can be treated without opioids, or addiction is addressed at the neurological root. This is the future we're building.

The audience reacts with soft, appreciative applause. Samantha glances around, noticing the captivated expressions around her. She shifts in her seat, an unsettled look crossing her face.

MODERATOR

(impressed)

That's incredible, Dr. Simons. Still, there are bound to be ethical concerns surrounding such direct intervention in brain function. How does Lambda address these potential implications?

Dr. Simons' smile doesn't waver, but her gaze sharpens subtly as she takes in the question.

DR. SARAH SIMONS

(smoothly, unwavering)

Ethics are at the very heart of our work. We're deeply aware of the responsibility that comes with altering brain function.

(MORE)

DR. SARAH SIMONS (CONT'D)

That's why every step of our development process is informed by strict ethical standards and reviewed by regulatory bodies. Our goal is to enhance lives, not control them. Patient safety, privacy, and well-being are always our top priorities.

Samantha's eyes narrow slightly, sensing a well-rehearsed answer. She scribbles "Ethics?" in her notebook, not fully convinced.

MODERATOR

(smiling)

Thank you, Dr. Simons. It's reassuring to hear. Let's open the floor to questions.

Hands shoot up across the hall. Samantha hesitates, then slowly raises her hand. The moderator gestures to her.

MODERATOR (CONT'D)

(encouraging)

Yes, you... there in the middle. Please state your name and question.

Samantha clears her throat, her voice steady but cautious.

SAMANTHA WILSON

Hi, I'm Samantha Wilson. Dr. Simons, with such a groundbreaking technology, how do you address the risk of dependency on these microchips? Is there a chance people could become reliant on the technology itself, rather than treating the root causes of pain or addiction? And what happens if there's a malfunction?

The room quiets and a few heads turn to look at her. Dr. Simons' smile tightens slightly, her gaze assessing.

DR. SARAH SIMONS

(smiling, calm)

An excellent question, Samantha. Dependency is something we've deeply considered. These microchips aren't intended to replace traditional treatments;

(MORE)

DR. SARAH SIMONS (CONT'D)
 rather, they're designed to work
 alongside behavioral therapy,
 providing a comprehensive approach
 to pain and addiction management.

She pauses, eyes lingering on Samantha with a hint of appraisal, before continuing.

DR. SARAH SIMONS (CONT'D)
 As for malfunctions, we have
 partnered with healthcare providers
 to ensure continuous monitoring.
 Any issues with the chip's
 functionality can be identified and
 addressed immediately. Rest
 assured, the safety and security of
 our patients are Lambda's highest
 priorities.

Samantha nods, jotting down "Dependency" and "Monitoring?" in her notebook. Though she thanks Dr. Simons with a polite nod, a hint of skepticism remains in her eyes.

SAMANTHA WILSON
 "Thank you, Dr. Simons."

Dr. Simons smiles back, but a flicker of something calculating crosses her expression. She shifts her attention back to the panel, though she sneaks a quick, penetrating glance at Samantha.

Samantha returns to her notes, her instincts telling her there's more beneath Lambda's polished presentation.

CUT TO:

11 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK - DAY

11

Samantha, mid-teens, is standing by her locker, pulling out a few books, when JULIE, her debate friend, approaches with a bright smile. They're both animated, talking about their mutual interests in tech and science, Julie with an extra spark of excitement.

JULIE
 (bubbly)
 Have you heard? Lambda's running
 this internship program, well,
 it's, like, super selective, but
 they're letting high school seniors
 apply. We should totally do it
 together, Sam!

SAMANTHA WILSON

(grinning)

Really? I thought they only took college students. But yeah, let's go for it! It'd be amazing to see what they're doing up close.

Julie nods, her excitement barely contained.

JULIE

And get this, they're testing some crazy new stuff in brain science. I heard they're on the edge of a breakthrough with microchips for things like pain management and... well, other things they won't talk about.

They share a look of intrigue, both feeling the pull of Lambda's mysterious reputation.

SAMANTHA WILSON

(slightly hesitant)

Yeah, sounds cool... but doesn't that sound a little intense? I mean, brain microchips? That's major.

Julie shrugs, brushing off Samantha's concerns.

JULIE

Exactly why it's fascinating! Imagine being part of the future, of something groundbreaking. And hey, if anyone's looking for bright minds, it's us.

Samantha laughs, her curiosity outweighing her apprehension, and the two walk off together, still chatting excitedly.

12

INT. SAMANTHA'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

12

Weeks later, Samantha is texting Julie, her phone screen illuminated in the dimly lit room. A few unanswered messages already sit above her new one.

ON SCREEN

Samantha: Hey, how's it going? I haven't seen you at debate lately. Everything ok?

She waits, her fingers hovering over the screen, refreshing the chat. But no reply comes.

13 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK - DAY

13

Samantha stands by her locker, glancing down the hall where she used to meet Julie. The spot is empty. Samantha frowns, feeling a knot of worry growing in her chest. She overhears two students talking nearby.

STUDENT 1

(intrigued)

Did you hear? Julie dropped out of debate. Just... stopped showing up. Nobody knows why.

STUDENT 2

(whispering)

Yeah, and she's not even online anymore. Like, at all. It's weird.

Samantha's concern deepens. She glances around, feeling the weight of Julie's absence.

14 INT. COLLEGE LECTURE HALL - PRESENT - DAY

14

As Dr. Simons speaks confidently on the Lambda stage, Samantha watches, a flicker of recognition crossing her face. She catches a hint of something calculated in Dr. Simons' expression, something eerily familiar that reminds her of the sudden silence from Julie.

Her pen pauses mid-note as she watches Dr. Simons, her curiosity now tinged with suspicion and a trace of dread.

CUT TO:

15 INT. MEADOWBROOK COLLEGE COMPUTER LAB - DAY

15

The clattering of keys fills the room, underscored by a distant lecture voice. In the bustling lab, students are scattered around, some struggling to keep up, others glued to their screens. Amid them, KIRA FREY (20s), sits absorbed in her laptop, coding with intense focus. Her fingers fly across the keyboard, complex lines of code rapidly filling her screen. She's in her element, completely undeterred by the chaos around her.

At the front of the room, PROFESSOR K.C. TONER (mid-30s) lectures passionately, looking every bit the eccentric coder: wild beard, messy hair, glasses, and an old sweater over jeans. His hands move animatedly as he explains a complex backend concept.

K.C. TONER

(voice carrying over the students)

Alright, great work today, everyone! Keep practicing those coding techniques. For next week, focus on backend problem-solving strategies. Exam's coming up—be prepared!

The students murmur nervously, exchanging glances as they gather their belongings. Some glance at Kira's screen, looking both awed and overwhelmed.

As Kira begins to pack up, K.C. Toner's voice calls her over.

K.C. TONER (CONT'D)

Kira, could I see you for a second?

Kira pauses, closing her laptop before approaching him, curious.

KIRA FREY

Hey, Professor.

K.C. gives her an approving nod, a hint of a smile on his face.

K.C. TONER

Listen, I wanted you to hear this from me first...

Kira's expression shifts, slightly concerned.

K.C. TONER (CONT'D)

You scored a perfect 100 points on last week's advanced coding exam, top of the class. Actually... the highest score anyone's ever received.

A proud, shy smile spreads across Kira's face, a faint blush touching her cheeks.

KIRA FREY

Oh, wow. Thank you, Professor. I just... I get lost in coding sometimes. I could do it for hours, I love it.

The professor chuckles, nodding in agreement.

K.C. TONER

Believe me, I get it. It can be addictive. And in your case, it's paying off. Keep that passion; it's rare. You're a natural.

KIRA FREY

(grateful)

Thanks, Professor. I will.

K.C. hesitates, glancing around the room.

K.C. TONER

One more thing, I noticed we were missing a few today. Have you seen John? He was supposed to help out with the lesson but didn't show.

KIRA FREY

(shrugs)

Don't really talk to him much, but I think some students follow him online. He's got a blog or something, right? I could ask around.

K.C. TONER

(waves it off)

Nah, don't worry. He'll probably turn up.

Kira nods, adjusting her backpack.

K.C. TONER (CONT'D)

Alright, that's all. See you next week, Kira.

KIRA FREY

(smiling)

See you, Professor.

With a final nod, Kira turns and heads out of the classroom, her confident stride showing a quiet pride in her achievement.

16

EXT. MEADOWBROOK COLLEGE COMPUTER LAB - CONTINUOUS

16

She takes out her phone and quickly googles for John Vaughn. The internet is full of him, showing his successful social media channels. She clicks on one of his profiles, seeing that his last posts were 2 days ago.

KIRA FREY
Hmm, that's weird.

With her phone in hand, she continues walking down the corridor, running into another student.

OTHER STUDENT
Ah! Don't you have eyes?

Kira looks up.

KIRA FREY
Sorry, sorry.

She is captivated by her phone. She scrolls through his feeds until she finds his blog. Nervously, she opens it. Last entry, two days ago, at 4:25 PM "SOS".

Her eyes widen. She scrolls some more, but nothing. This is the last online mark John left. What happened to him?

CUT TO:

17 INT. MEADOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - BELLA'S CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

BELLA WILSON, in her mid-20s, stands in front of her high school philosophy class, gazing thoughtfully at her students—twenty-five teens, ages 14-16. Teaching them about the depths of the human psyche and their untapped potential is her passion, though it's often met with blank stares. Today, she's determined to spark something in them.

BELLA WILSON
One of the most important things we can do is learn to control our consciousness, our ability to choose between what feels right and what doesn't, and to trust ourselves.

She scans the room, noticing a few confused expressions. SUSAN, 14, raises her hand.

SUSAN
Miss Wilson, what's 'consciousness'?

BELLA WILSON
(smiling)
Good question, Susan. Consciousness is... well, it's the state of being aware of your surroundings, your thoughts, and your feelings.
(MORE)

BELLA WILSON (CONT'D)

It's what lets you think, sense,
and respond to the world around
you. It's what makes you you.

NICK, 15, raises his hand, curiosity piqued.

NICK

Can you give us an example?

BELLA WILSON

Sure. You know that feeling you get
in your gut when something just
feels... off? Like when you're
about to do something and a voice
inside tells you it doesn't feel
right?

The class nods in recognition, intrigued.

BELLA WILSON (CONT'D)

That's part of your consciousness,
your inner knowing. It's like an
instinct or intuition that guides
you. It tells you when something
isn't right for you. But here's the
tricky part: you can only really
hear that inner voice when you're
connected to yourself when you're
aware of your thoughts and
feelings. And in today's tech-
filled world, it's easy to lose
that connection.

She pauses, watching their faces, hoping to make an impact.
Nick raises his hand again, a thoughtful look on his face.

NICK

So, are you saying that technology
is... bad for us?

BELLA WILSON

(slightly chuckling)

Not necessarily. Technology can be
incredible, if we stay in control.
But when we let it start
controlling us, when we become too
dependent on it, that's when it can
get dangerous.

Just as her words start to sink in, the school bell rings,
signaling the end of class. The students snap out of their
thoughts and begin packing up quickly.

BELLA WILSON (CONT'D)

As you go, finish reading the story we started today and write a one-page continuation. Imagine where it could lead, and explain why you see it that way.

The students gather their things, filing out in a hurry. Bella watches them go, a quiet determination in her eyes, hoping her words stick with them long after the lesson ends.

CUT TO:

18 INT. MEADOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - BELLA'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the last student leaves, Bella takes a deep breath, the lively classroom now echoing with silence. She reaches into her bag, pulling out a worn pill box labeled "Lambda's Xanax." The logo on the box is faded a clear sign of frequent use. She stares at it, her eyes distant and troubled.

With a slight tremble, she opens the box and tips two pills into her hand, swallowing them dry. She closes her eyes briefly, letting out a shaky exhale. Her fingers absently trace the box's edges before she looks inside and notices only one pill remains.

BELLA WILSON

(muttering to herself)

Shit.

She snaps the lid shut, her expression a mix of guilt and resignation.

The camera zooms out as Bella starts to remember something...

19 INT. BELLA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

19

Bella sits at her kitchen table, papers spread out in front of her, student essays, lesson plans, and overdue bills. She's disheveled, her hair loosely tied, her face drawn with exhaustion. A half-eaten sandwich lies untouched next to a cold cup of coffee. She stares blankly at a letter in her hand, the bold words "Final Notice" glaring up at her.

She lets out a sigh, dropping the letter and burying her head in her hands. Her phone buzzes, and she glances at it: a text from her landlord, a reminder of overdue rent. She closes her eyes, breathing heavily, as the weight of it all presses down.

The phone buzzes again. This time, it's a message from her sister, SAMANTHA: "Hey, can we talk? I'm feeling really down."

Bella stares at the screen, the conflict evident on her face. She desperately wants to be there for her sister, but the strain of keeping herself afloat is pulling her under. Her hands begin to shake slightly.

After a beat, she reaches for her bag and pulls out a small, new, looking pill box labeled "Lambda's Xanax." She stares at it for a moment, hesitant, her fingers tracing the logo.

BELLA
(whispering to herself)
"Just to take the edge off... just
this once."

With a shaky hand, she opens the box, takes out a single pill, and hesitates. She glances at the letter on the table, the bills, her phone, and the weight of responsibility pressing down like a tidal wave.

Finally, she swallows the pill, her expression a mixture of guilt and relief. After a few moments, her body visibly relaxes, the tension easing ever so slightly. She leans back, staring at the ceiling, her eyes empty but momentarily calm.

FLASHBACK END.

20

INT. MEADOWBROOK PHARMACY - LATER

20

Bella steps nervously into the spotless yet oddly stale-smelling Lambda Pharmacy. She glances around, eyes darting to the rows of pristine white shelves, all lined with Lambda products. Behind the counter stands an OLD WOMAN, in her mid 50s, gaunt with overly large glasses, lips painted in a smeared, dark red that bleeds onto her yellowed teeth. Her smile is unsettling, as though she's been waiting for Bella all day.

OLD WOMAN
(grinning, voice
saccharine)
Hello, dear. What brings you in
today?

Bella hesitates, her hand gripping the strap of her bag, shame flickering in her eyes. She clears her throat, trying to steady her voice.

BELLA WILSON

(quietly)

I—I need... do you carry... Xanax?

The woman raises an eyebrow, her smile widening as she studies Bella with a gleeful glint in her eye.

OLD WOMAN

Prescription?

Bella looks down, unable to meet the woman's gaze.

BELLA WILSON

No... I don't have one.

The woman leans in, her eyes narrowing slightly, as if she can sense Bella's desperation.

OLD WOMAN

(slowly)

I see and what's the reason for usage?

Bella fidgets, her face flushing. She forces herself to look up, attempting a weak smile.

BELLA WILSON

(awkwardly)

I... I lost my parents in a car accident. Five years ago. I... haven't slept through a night since.

The woman tilts her head, an almost delighted smirk playing at the corners of her mouth, as though savoring Bella's vulnerability.

OLD WOMAN

(taking her time)

Mmm... I see.

She taps a few keys on the computer, and with a mechanical bling, a small compartment opens behind her, revealing a freshly packaged bottle of Lambda's Xanax. She retrieves it slowly, turning it over in her hand before holding it out.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

That'll be twenty dollars.

Bella nervously fumbles through her wallet, pulling out a crumpled bill. The woman's eyebrows lift.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (smiling slyly)
 Card only, sweetheart.

Bella swallows, pulls out her card, and slides it into the reader. The woman eyes her with a look of satisfaction, her fingers drumming on the counter as she watches Bella's discomfort.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (with a knowing smile)
 And don't forget to sign up for the
 microchip program next time. It'll
 save you money on these...

She shakes the bottle of pills slightly, savoring the implication.

Bella shifts uncomfortably, forcing herself to nod as she takes the bottle, quickly stowing it in her bag as if hiding her shame.

BELLA WILSON
 (barely audible)
 Thank you.

The woman's eyes linger on Bella as she walks away, her thin lips curling into an unsettling smile, one that relishes in the grip the pills have on her customers.

As Bella leaves the pharmacy, she feels the woman's gaze burning into her back, a feeling of humiliation washing over her

CUT TO:

21 EXT. MEADOWBROOK COLLEGE FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE - EVENING 21

As the last light fades, KIRA exits the college building, bundled up against the evening chill. She unlocks her bike and takes a deep breath, her breath visible in the crisp air. She pedals through Meadowbrook, and the camera follows her, cutting to beautiful drone shots capturing the town's charm—snow-dusted mountains, quiet lakes, winding rivers, and cozy downtown streets lined with glowing storefronts.

CUT TO:

22 FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - YEARS AGO 22

Teenage Kira sits beside a hospital bed, her brother lying weak and pale, a hospital monitor beeping softly.

A doctor stands nearby, showing her mother some tablet-based diagnostic software that tracks her father's recovery and future treatment options.

DOCTOR

(to her mother)

This program allows us to monitor vitals in real time and make instant adjustments to the treatment plan. We're seeing real breakthroughs in recovery with this technology.

Kira watches intently, her eyes fixed on the screen as the doctor explains. A spark of fascination flickers within her, and she can't help but ask a question.

KIRA

(quietly, to the doctor)

This software... it's saving him, isn't it?

The doctor glances at her with a reassuring smile.

DOCTOR

(nods)

Yes, it is. Thanks to technology, we're able to intervene faster and more accurately than ever before. It's making a big difference.

Kira's gaze shifts back to her brother, a determination building within her. She squeezes his hand gently, a flicker of hope lighting her eyes as she imagines the potential of technology to help others in need.

23

FLASHBACK - INT. KIRA'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

Kira, now a bit older, is huddled over her laptop in the quiet of her room, her face illuminated by the screen's glow. Lines of code scroll across her screen as she studies a programming tutorial on healthcare software. She's completely absorbed, eyes narrowed in focus.

The camera zooms in on the screen, showing early attempts at coding medical solutions, her own small way of learning how to help others. Her fingers type with a quiet intensity, a look of satisfaction crossing her face as she executes a small program successfully.

KIRA
(murmuring to herself)
If this can help one person...
it'll be worth it.

24 EXT. MEADOWBROOK STREETS - PRESENT - EVENING 24

Back in the present, Kira's face softens into a small, determined smile as she pedals through the town. The memory has reignited her purpose, reminding her of why she chose to study computer science in the first place and her passion for making a difference, in helping families like her own.

She looks forward, her resolve clear, as she pedals faster through the streets, her destination in sight.

25 EXT. STREETS OF MEADOWBROOK - CONTINUOUS 25

Kira cycles through the quiet streets, her silhouette moving past softly lit street lamps. Her route takes her by a massive Lambda Corp billboard with a looming ad: "10 Days Until Microchip Implementation - Sign Up Now." She eyes the sign, her face tense, and shakes her head, picking up speed as she moves past it.

26 EXT. KIRA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER 26

Kira arrives at her modest apartment complex, parks her bike, and jogs up the steps. She pauses to check her mail by the entrance, flipping through the usual bills and flyers before heading toward her apartment door. Across the hall, the light from her neighbor's apartment glows, casting eerie shadows under the door. She hesitates, feeling a prickling sensation of being watched. She looks at the door a beat longer before entering her own.

27 INT. KIRA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS 27

The light flickers on, revealing a cluttered one-bedroom apartment that needs tidying. She tosses her bag on the floor, sighing as she surveys the scattered papers, empty coffee cups, and books piled on the table. Opening the fridge, she's greeted by a near-empty shelf and grimaces at a container of leftovers. Giving it a cautious sniff, she shrugs and pops it in the microwave, all while powering up her laptop.

As the microwave hums, her doorbell rings, echoing in the quiet apartment.

28

EXT. KIRA'S APARTMENT - DOORWAY - MOMENTS LATER

28

Kira peers through the peephole, revealing RICHARD (mid-50s), her neighbor—a slightly disheveled man with a nervous smile.

KIRA
(slightly wary)
Ja?

RICHARD
Oh, hi, Kira! I just... wanted to remind you that tomorrow's garbage day. I noticed you didn't put out your trash yet, so... thought I'd let you know.

Kira suppresses a sigh, forced to keep her patience. She glances over at the trash calendar glued to her door and realizes he's right.

KIRA
Thanks, Richard. I'll take it out later.

RICHARD
(lingering)
Why not now? Just in case you forget...

KIRA
I'm in the middle of eating.

RICHARD
(frowning)
But... what if you still forget?
It's—

Kira rolls her eyes and shuts the door firmly. She mutters under her breath.

KIRA
(quietly)
Weirdo.

She glances over at her overflowing trash bin, a brief flicker of guilt crossing her face. She opens the fridge, finds it as empty as before, then grabs a microwave meal from the cupboard. After a resigned sigh, she puts it in the microwave, watching it spin in slow, monotonous circles.

As it heats, she pulls out her phone, opening the "SOS" blog post she'd seen earlier. Her eyes scan the post, and an uneasy feeling settles over her. Something about it doesn't sit right, a subtle sense of dread creeping in.

She stares at the screen, her mind racing, unable to shake the feeling that something's very, very wrong.

CUT TO:

29

INT. KIRA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

29

Kira sits cross-legged in front of her laptop, multiple tabs open—all leading to JOHN VAUGHN's profiles, posts, and articles. Her face is tense, brows furrowed in concentration.

KIRA

(murmuring to herself)

There's got to be something... some trace.

She attempts to locate his last known mobile activity, but a message flashes: "No signal." She frowns, staring at the screen in confusion.

KIRA (CONT'D)

Strange... why would someone so active online suddenly disappear?

She dives deeper, scrolling through his recent blog posts, and reading his words aloud.

KIRA (CONT'D)

(reading)

'Always looking forward to testing the newest high-tech gadgets... about to start my first partnership with Lambda-Tech... testing a device linked to their upcoming microchips... thrilled AF'.

Her eyes widen as she reads, her mind connecting dots.

KIRA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Lambda... they're everywhere.

She glances around her dimly lit apartment, feeling a chill. The camera cuts to her untouched microwave meal, slowly going cold on the table. With renewed urgency, she continues typing, fingers flying across the keys, the intensity building.

CUT TO:

30

INT. LAMBDA LABORATORY - NIGHT

30

A drill whirs in rapid, precise circles under the cold fluorescent lights. DR. SARAH SIMONS, her lips painted a striking, bloody red, is deep in concentration as she performs an open brain surgery. Her gloved hands move with calculated precision, and her white lab coat is splattered with blood and fragments of tissue. The room smells sterile, but the scene is anything but.

Charts and scans of the human brain are pinned to the wall, all marked with lines pointing to the pineal gland. Dr. Simons hums a twisted melody under her breath, absorbed in her work.

DR. SARAH SIMONS
(singing softly)
La-la-la-la... la-la... la-la-la...

Her hands move in time with her song, each cut and extraction like a note in a macabre symphony. She sways slightly, her feet tapping along with her eerie tune. She's completely absorbed, almost as if conducting a dark performance.

DR. SARAH SIMONS (CONT'D)
(murmuring)
A few more tests... and humanity
will be reborn."

A cold smile touches her lips as she picks up the drill again, pressing it against the exposed brain matter. The sound intensifies, blending with her melody. As she makes her next incision, the lights suddenly flicker, casting erratic shadows across the lab. Dr. Simons pauses, glancing up briefly with a hint of irritation.

The drill whirs again, but this time, the entire room shudders as the power fluctuates. The screen plunges into darkness, leaving only the haunting echo of her song.

31

INT. LAMBDA LABORATORY - SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

31

The dimly lit hallway is silent except for the faint hum of fluorescent lights. One of Dr. Simons' assistants, dressed in a sterile white jumpsuit and latex gloves, drags a large, black body bag down the narrow corridor. The shape inside is unmistakable, a human figure, and a few strands of familiar hair peek out from the zipper's edge—it looks like John Vaughn.

The assistant moves methodically, his expression flat and unfeeling as the bag scrapes along the cold tile floor.

He pauses at a heavy steel door labeled "DISPOSAL" and punches in a code, the door hissing open. As he heaves the bag onto a metal gurney inside, the fluorescent lights briefly flicker, casting eerie shadows across the stark walls.

The assistant unzips the bag slightly, revealing the lifeless, pale face of a man with an unmistakable resemblance to John Vaughn. His eyes are shut, his skin drained of color. The assistant pulls the zipper back up, sealing the bag tightly.

He glances around, as if checking for any witnesses, then shoves the gurney further into the room. The steel door closes with a heavy thud, leaving the hallway silent once more, the faint hum of machinery the only sound echoing in the emptiness.

32

INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - THE NEXT DAY

32

Morning light filters through the small kitchen window, casting a soft glow over the modest room. BELLA sits at the table, a mug of coffee in her hands, looking worn out, her gaze distant. SAMANTHA, dressed and ready for her first day at Lambda, walks in, adjusting her bag over her shoulder. She notices Bella's expression and pauses, concerned.

SAMANTHA WILSON

(frowning)

Bella? You okay? You look... kinda tired.

Bella blinks, snapping out of her thoughts. She forces a small smile, waving her hand dismissively.

BELLA WILSON

(softly)

Oh, I'm fine. Just didn't sleep well, that's all.

She takes a sip of coffee, shifting her focus to Sam, her smile widening a bit as she tries to shake off her own worries.

BELLA WILSON (CONT'D)

(trying to sound cheerful)

Anyway, today's your big day! First day at Lambda, huh? Are you excited?

Sam picks up on Bella's attempt to change the subject but decides to let it go for now. She nods, her own excitement mixed with nerves.

SAMANTHA WILSON

A bit nervous, but yeah.

Bella reaches over, squeezing Sam's hand reassuringly.

BELLA WILSON

Just be yourself.

Sam smiles, grateful for the encouragement. She leans in, giving Bella a quick kiss on the cheek.

SAMANTHA WILSON

"Thanks, Bella. Have a good day at school, okay? And... take it easy."

Bella nods, her smile softening, though the tiredness in her eyes lingers.

BELLA WILSON

I will. And don't forget, text me at lunch, let me know how it's going.

SAMANTHA WILSON

(grinning)

Promise.

Sam heads toward the door, glancing back one last time, and waves. Bella watches her go, her smile fading slightly as she sips her coffee, her gaze thoughtful and distant once more.

CUT TO:

33

INT. KIRA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

33

Sunlight streams through a crack in the curtains, spilling onto a cluttered desk filled with notebooks, open laptops, and scribbled notes about John Vaughn and Lambda Corp. KIRA is asleep, face down on her laptop, a faint snoring sound breaking the stillness. Suddenly, her eyes flutter open, squinting against the light.

She sits up groggily, stretching—until she catches a glimpse of the clock on her laptop screen.

KIRA

(gasps)

Oh no... NO!

The clock reads 9:15 AM. She's already late for her first class of the day.

34 INT. KIRA'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 34

Kira scrambles out of bed, tripping over a pile of books as she rushes to get dressed. She pulls on a random sweater, grabs her bag, and snatches her bike keys from the kitchen counter, muttering to herself the whole time.

KIRA
(half-panicked, half-
annoyed)
Can't believe I slept in... one
night of research and I'm totally
off my game.

She shoves a notebook into her bag, nearly forgetting her phone before doubling back to grab it.

35 INT. KIRA'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER 35

She swings the door open, almost colliding with her neighbor, RICHARD, who looks startled.

RICHARD
(smiling)
Morning, Kira-

KIRA
(breathless)
Not now, Richard!

She squeezes past him, bolting down the hallway.

36 EXT. KIRA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - BIKE RACK - MOMENTS LATER

Kira skids to a halt at the bike rack, unlocking her bike with shaky hands. She hops on, barely securing her bag over her shoulder before pedaling away at full speed.

37 EXT. STREETS OF MEADOWBROOK - CONTINUOUS 37

She zooms through the quiet streets of Meadowbrook, weaving between pedestrians and cars, the wind rushing through her hair. She checks her watch, groaning as she realizes just how late she is.

KIRA
(under her breath)
Come on, come on... I can still
make it.

Her expression is a mix of frustration and determination, her focus solely on reaching the college as fast as possible. She picks up speed, racing through a narrow alley to cut time.

38 EXT. MEADOWBROOK COLLEGE - FRONT ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER 38

Out of breath, Kira arrives at the college, quickly parking her bike and rushing toward the entrance. She adjusts her bag and takes a deep breath, trying to compose herself before dashing inside.

CUT TO:

39 INT. LAMBDA CORP MAIN LOBBY - DAY 39

The sleek, high-tech lobby of Lambda Corp hums with activity. SAMANTHA WILSON, steps inside, nervously adjusting the strap of her bag, her eyes wide as she takes in the state-of-the-art surroundings. The bright lobby is filled with polished glass, futuristic displays, and bustling professionals.

An enthusiastic HR REPRESENTATIVE approaches her with a warm smile.

HR REPRESENTATIVE
(excitedly)
Welcome to Lambda, Samantha! We're
thrilled to have you. Ready for
your first day?

SAMANTHA WILSON
(nervously smiling)
Yes, thank you. I'm really excited
to get started.

She glances around, both curious and wary, as she takes it all in.

HR REPRESENTATIVE
(beginning to lead her)
Great! Let's start with a quick
tour of the facility.

They walk through bright, expansive hallways lined with glass-walled labs, bustling with scientists and technicians. State-of-the-art equipment gleams in each room. Sam's eyes dart around, absorbing everything with a mix of awe and suspicion.

SAMANTHA WILSON
(trying to stay calm)
Yes, please.

HR REPRESENTATIVE
(pointing out areas)
This is our research and
development wing, where most of the
innovation happens. Over there's
the AI lab, and just ahead, you'll
find the medical research
department.

As they walk, Sam is captivated by the sleek design and
advanced technology everywhere. But as they reach the end of
a corridor, one door stands out. Unlike the others, it's
plain, with a worn handle and a small, foggy window near the
top. Sam slows, her curiosity piqued.

SAMANTHA WILSON
(pointing)
And what's behind that door?

The HR Representative's smile falters, a flicker of unease
crossing his face.

HR REPRESENTATIVE
(quickly)
"Oh, that? Just storage. Old
equipment... nothing of interest."

He forces a smile, shifting uncomfortably.

SAMANTHA WILSON
(innocently)
Ah, I see. Interesting.

She gives the door one last look, feeling a strange pull
toward it. The HR Representative clears his throat, eager to
move her along.

HR REPRESENTATIVE
(with forced enthusiasm)
Come on, let me show you something
much more exciting.

He gently steers her away from the door, guiding her towards
a large, bustling lab filled with scientists in white coats,
all working intently. Inside, DR. SARAH SIMONS, is speaking
with a group of researchers. She notices Sam passing by, and
a spark of recognition flashes in her eyes.

HR REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)

(lowering his voice)

This is our main lab, where a lot of the groundbreaking testing happens.

Sam glances around, impressed. Her eyes land on Dr. Simons, who steps out of her conversation to greet her.

DR. SIMONS

(smiling warmly)

Samantha, isn't it? I remember you from the lecture.

Sam freezes momentarily, caught off guard, but quickly recovers, a mix of excitement and nerves.

SAMANTHA WILSON

(surprised)

Yes, that's right. Dr. Simons, it's an honor to meet you again.

Dr. Simons' smile widens as the scientists around her give Sam curious looks.

DR. SIMONS

(smoothly)

The pleasure is mine. I remember your insightful question. I'm glad to see such curiosity. How's your first day treating you?

The HR Representative shifts awkwardly, glancing at the other scientists with a sheepish smile.

SAMANTHA WILSON

(brightening)

It's been incredible so far. I can't wait to learn more about what you're working on and see how far you've come with brain research.

DR. SIMONS

(interrupting, with a knowing nod)

Wonderful to hear. I'm always looking for bright minds like yours. How would you feel about joining my team directly?

The HR Representative raises his eyebrows in surprise but doesn't object. Sam's face lights up as she tries to contain her excitement.

SAMANTHA WILSON
(flustered but thrilled)
That would be amazing. Thank you so
much, Dr. Simons.

DR. SIMONS
(smiling)
Fantastic. I'll take over from
here.
(to HR Representative)
Thank you.

The HR Representative nods, giving Sam an encouraging smile before walking off. Dr. Simons turns her full attention to Sam, letting the other scientists wait.

DR. SIMONS (CONT'D)
(leading her deeper into
the lab)
We'll start with some preliminary
tasks to familiarize you with our
procedures. Nothing too daunting at
first.

Sam follows her, trying to stay composed, her excitement visible.

SAMANTHA WILSON
(eagerly)
Sounds perfect.

Dr. Simons gestures for Sam to follow her, leading her toward a smaller, more secure area of the lab. They step through a narrow door, disappearing from view as the other scientists watch from a distance.

CUT TO:

40 INT. LAMBDA LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

40

The lab is sterile, bustling with focused scientists working on various projects, the hum of high-tech equipment filling the room. DR. SIMONS leads SAMANTHA to a quieter corner with a desk and a computer terminal.

DR. SIMONS
(pointing to the terminal)
This will be your workstation for
today.

Sam nods, glancing around, taking in the precision and order of the space.

SAMANTHA WILSON

Okay.

Dr. Simons boots up the computer, then opens a door to a smaller room overflowing with neatly organized files.

DR. SIMONS

Here you go. These files need sorting and categorizing. It might seem tedious, but familiarizing yourself with our data structure is critical to deeper involvement later on.

Sam's enthusiasm falters slightly.

SAMANTHA WILSON

(slightly disappointed but determined)

Got it. I'll get right on it.

DR. SIMONS

(nods)

Good. Please scan and store everything you find here in paper form onto our digital Lambda system.

Just as Dr. Simons is about to respond further, her phone vibrates with a notification. She glances at it, and a brief flicker of tension crosses her face as she reads the name: MERCER. Composing herself quickly, she puts on a polite smile, though there's a hint of urgency in her voice.

DR. SIMONS (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I need to step out briefly. If you have any questions, ask one of the team members.

SAMANTHA WILSON

Sure, no problem.

Dr. Simons gives a faint, almost forced smile.

DR. SIMONS

It's great to have you with us, Samantha. Just... stay here and focus on your tasks, alright? I'll be back within the hour.

Dr. Simons turns, her smile lingering as she strides out of the lab, typing rapidly on her phone, her expression tense. Sam watches her leave, curiosity piqued by the abruptness. After a beat, she refocuses on the task at hand.

41

INT. LAMBDA LABORATORY - SAMANTHA'S WORKSTATION - DAY

41

The lab hums with quiet, focused activity. SAMANTHA sits at her designated computer, carefully categorizing files, glancing up every so often to see the other scientists engrossed in their work. She shifts in her seat, stretching, when her screen blinks—a folder flashes onto her desktop in bright red: "Classified - Internal Access Only."

Samantha freezes, staring at the file. It seems to taunt her, pulsing slightly as if inviting her to look inside.

SAMANTHA WILSON
(murmuring to herself)
Classified? That's... strange.

Her eyes flick around the lab. No one is paying attention to her. She bites her lip, curiosity building as she hovers her mouse over the file. She glances once more around her, ensuring everyone's still focused on their tasks, then takes a deep breath and clicks.

The screen loads slowly, revealing a series of encrypted files. They have vague, unsettling names like "Patient Trials - Phase I", "Neuro Modulation Protocols", and "Synthetic Reconfiguration." Samantha's fingers twitch as she scrolls through, her eyes widening.

SAMANTHA WILSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
What are you hiding, Lambda?

She continues scanning through the names of files, her heartbeat quickening. One catches her attention—"W.C. Toner - Preliminary Results." Her brow furrows in recognition.

SAMANTHA WILSON (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Toner... where have I heard that name before?

She opens the file just a crack, catching a glimpse of a chart filled with patient vitals, brain scans, and strange annotations. The text references "neural compliance" and "subdermal chip monitoring." Before she can delve further, the screen suddenly flashes an "ACCESS DENIED" message, and the file closes abruptly.

Samantha quickly closes out of the screen, her heart pounding as she glances around. No one seems to notice. She straightens in her seat, her face a mixture of confusion and unease.

SAMANTHA WILSON (CONT'D)

(thoughtfully)

What are you working on, Dr.
Simons?

She takes a shaky breath, her curiosity now tinged with suspicion and a growing sense of dread. Carefully, she continues her tasks, but her thoughts are far from the files in front of her, the odd discovery lingering in her mind.

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INT. LAMBDA CORP - DR. SIMONS' PRIVATE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Simons enters her sleek, dimly lit office, locking the door behind her with a subtle click. Her gaze is sharp and focused. She pulls out her phone and reads the message from MERCER:

"Problem in Sector 7. One machine stopped producing the electrical field. We risk losing that soul. Handle it. ASAP!"

A smirk forms at the edge of her lips. She taps out a quick response, her mind already shifting back to another pressing matter—her new intern.

Dr. Simons places her phone down, crossing to the large glass window overlooking the lab floor. Below, SAMANTHA is seated at her workstation, cautiously eyeing a Classified file flashing on her screen. The faintest gleam of satisfaction flickers in Dr. Simons' eyes as she watches Samantha, seemingly alone, leaning in with that undeniable spark of curiosity.

Dr. Simons folds her arms, leaning against the glass, studying Samantha's every move with a pleased, almost predatory smile.

DR. SIMONS

(murmuring to herself)

Ah, Samantha... I knew you couldn't resist. Let's see how far you're willing to go.

Her smile deepens, a calculated glint in her eyes as Samantha hesitates before reaching out to click the file. Dr. Simons tilts her head, reveling in the success of her deliberate test.

DR. SIMONS (CONT'D)

(whispering, tauntingly)

Let the games begin.

She straightens, moving away from the window with renewed purpose, her fingers trailing over the controls on her desk as she presses a button. In the lab below, a hidden camera zooms in on Samantha's screen, recording every move she makes.

Dr. Simons watches the live feed on a secondary monitor in her office, her eyes narrowing, her expression a blend of amusement and something darker.

FADE TO BLACK.