

TITLE CARD:

YEAR 2086 — TWO YEARS INTO THE X9 PANDEMIC

EXT. NAIROBI — MAKESHIFT CLINIC — DUSK

Flies buzz. A young BOY (5), skin ash-gray and fevered, lies motionless in his mother's arms. She hums softly, trying not to cry.

Nearby, a tired MEDIC draws blood from another patient. Behind him, a crude sign reads:

X9 TRIAGE ZONE — NO ENTRY WITHOUT PPE

To the left, tarp tents flap in the wind. Dozens of coughing, trembling patients lie on cots. A little girl convulses as a YOUNG MOTHER (early 30s) clutches her hand, begging for help.

CLOSE ON: A tag pinned to the girl's chest: "X9 POSITIVE — STAGE IV"

A NURSE rushes over—mask soaked in sweat—and shakes her head. The mother lets out a sharp cry... that cuts to silence—

INT. GLOBAL NEWSROOM — SPLIT SCREEN — NIGHT

Footage flickers: hospitals overwhelmed in New Delhi, food riots in Sao Paulo, body bags loaded in Berlin.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
...cases have tripled this quarter.
International labs continue to
clash over whether X9 is airborne
or waterborne...

INT. GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC SUMMIT — DAY

PRESENTER (O.S.)
...as X9 mutates, estimates suggest
one in six may be carriers by next
year. Without full neural mapping,
there is no vaccine—only
adaptation.

ANDREA stands toward the back of a long line of students.

Shoulders taut, eyes darting between the front of the line and the worn notebook clutched in her hands. The air hums with nervous ambition—murmured hopes, quiet rehearsals.

She cranes her neck, scanning the crowd. Searching.

At the front, DR. RAJ GUPTA—calm, composed, flanked by TOP OFFICERS—offers a generic wave. No handshakes. No words.

He turns and walks off.

The line exhales in unison—groans, mutters. Students peel away, deflated. Disappointment ripples through the crowd.

Andrea doesn't move.

Through the thinning crowd, she spots a WOMAN approaching—surrounded by her own set of officers. Poised. Confident.

She shakes hands with Dr. Gupta. Then, Dr. Gupta exits—a swift disappearance into the back.

But the woman stays. She heads for the podium—DR. BROWN (40s). Wise eyes, youthful energy. Warmth wrapped in command.

Andrea watches, transfixed, as Dr. Brown fires off crisp, efficient orders to her team. The energy in the room recalibrates—she's in charge now. Then—Dr. Brown turns. Starts toward Andrea. Deliberate. Direct. No hesitation.

Andrea straightens, bracing herself as the distance closes.

ANDREA

Hi... You're Dr. Brown, aren't you?

Dr. Brown turns—barely interested.

DR. BROWN

Check the program.

She turns back to her work.

ANDREA

I read your White Note on the "X9 Anti Virus" and your journal on adapting your Viral-Singularity Schematic to a Global Scale.

DR. BROWN

Well, then you know exactly what I wanted you to know.

ANDREA

But there's nothing in there about using the ocular nerve as a conduit—for immersive broadcasting from third parties.

Dr. Brown freezes. Looks up. Walks to the edge of the stage, eyes sharp, looming over Andrea.

DR. BROWN
I haven't done that yet.
(beat)
Our goal was containment. Not manipulation.

ANDREA
But you're building a viral network to piggyback on the immune system. That's not just a cure. That's...

DR. BROWN
A global operating system.

ANDREA
I can give you my contact—if you could forward it to Dr. Gupta or anyone at Biotech Pharma, I would—

DR. BROWN
I haven't done that for anyone.

She stares—flat, serious.

EXT. GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC SUMMIT

SUPERIMPOSE: YEAR 2091 - FIVE YEARS LATER

Dr. Brown paces behind a stone pillar, arms folded tight. Andrea sits on a nearby bench, slouched, hands in her lap.

DR. BROWN
Hmph... It's counter-intuitive. No one with half a brain would run with that.

Andrea flinches, shrinking slightly.

ANDREA
It's just an idea.

A pause. Dr. Brown studies her.

DR. BROWN
How old are you?

ANDREA
Twenty-Two.

Something shifts in Dr. Brown—not soft, just more curious.

DR. BROWN
And you're here?

ANDREA
I finished the entire PRE-BIOTECH
PHARMA Curriculum in just one year.

DR. BROWN
Then why do you need me?

ANDREA
(sighs)
I got kicked out. For running
trials in my garage.
(beat)
It worked—for a week. I should've
gotten a medal.

Dr. Brown stops pacing.

DR. BROWN
I've made up my mind.

Andrea sits up straighter, tension rising.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
You wanna cure X9?

Andrea blinks—thrown, but pulled in.

ANDREA
How?—

Dr. Brown extends her hand, a wide grin cracking her usual
reserve.

DR. BROWN
Welcome to Biotech Pharmaceuticals.
What's your name?

ANDREA
(smiling, stunned)
Andrea.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

EXT. SOUTH AFRICA - DAY - YEAR 2020 - FOUND FOOTAGE

Crisp, sun-bleached frames. Scorched plants curl inward,
choking on the heat. Cracked soil. Wilted crops.

GUPTA (V.O.)
No, I don't think we can ignore it.

CUT TO:

A FEEBLE CHILD, curled in the fetal position, ribs visible, skin clinging to bone. A dead bird lies nearby in the dust.

GUPTA (V.O.)
Africa holds 65% of infected patients alone--

PRESENTER (V.O.)
Dr. Gupta, The World Health Organization is producing new numbers. It might even be higher...

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NEWSROOM SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Bright lights. Polished set. Branded backdrop: *Global Health Today*.

At the desk, Dr. Gupta faces a FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR (30s), both poised under the glare of studio lights. A red light blinks.

ANCHOR
Dr. Gupta, the numbers today show global mortality rates plateauing for the first time in months. Is that due to the new protocol?

GUPTA
That's right. Our data suggests the X9 suppressant has stabilized late-stage immune collapse in 62% of enrolled patients.

ANCHOR
That's a breakthrough. Some are already calling it a miracle drug.

GUPTA
Let's not get ahead of ourselves. It's not a cure. But it gives people time. Hope.

ANCHOR
Eight years, you've said?

GUPTA
On average. That's triple what we projected when this began.

ANCHOR

And with Biotech leading the charge, public trust has never been higher.

Gupta nods humbly. He knows exactly what he's doing.

GUPTA

We're grateful for that trust. And we're doing everything in our power to honor it.

ANCHOR

Final question. Halstrom Enterprises—their expansion's been headline-worthy. Competition?

A flicker of amusement crosses Gupta's face.

GUPTA

More hands on the wheel never hurts. But we're always focused on the road ahead.

She smiles back, cue cards closing in her hands. The cameras fade to black.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - DAY

Worn counters. Peeling cabinets. A flickering TV hums in the background.

RHEA MAHARAJ [RHEA] (20's) female, in a bathrobe, towel around her head, winces as she moves. She butters toast, ignoring the TV.

ISHARA MAHARAJ [ISHARA] (40's) her no-nonsense mother, sits at the table.

ISHARA

Why is this taking so long?

RHEA

It'll be ready in a minute.

ISHARA

No. The virus.

RHEA

It's hard, mom...

Rhea barely looks up, distracted as she butters toast.

ISHARA

These companies—they think their money lets them decide who lives and who doesn't.

Rhea finally glances up, strained.

RHEA

Mom, it's not like that.

ISHARA

Just remember that when the prices go up. I'll say, "Told you so."

FLORA (7) bursts in—bright, innocent, full of energy.

FLORA

Mom!

She launches into Rhea's lap. Rhea winces.

FLORA (CONT'D)

You okay?

RHEA

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine, sweetheart.

FLORA

Look what I made!

She holds it up. Rhea smiles.

RHEA

It's beautiful, Flora.

Ishara watches, worried. Rhea slowly rises, every movement measured.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Come on, let's get you ready for school.

Flora hops down. Rhea steadies herself, fragile but determined.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The light from an aging laptop casts faint shadows across Rhea's face. She types into a terminal window—strings of code, precise and fast. An error blinks:

[ACCESS DENIED - ADMIN KEY EXPIRED]

She exhales, rubs her temple.

RHEA
(under breath)
That's not it either...

She types again. Another denial. Her jaw clenches. Not at the machine— at herself. She used to crack this without thinking.

A dry cough slips out. She swallows it.

From outside the room:

FLORA (O.S.)
Mom?

Rhea shuts the laptop gently.

RHEA
Be right there, sweetheart.

She stands slowly, steadying herself with the desk.

Before leaving, she looks back—at the lines of code, the machine she once mastered. A flicker of something stirs in her eyes. Then she turns out the light.

INT. DR. BROWN'S BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

Dr. Brown stands before the mirror. She applies red lipstick with precision—too much for a day in the lab. She steadies her hands. Closes the tube. Stares at herself. A beat. Her phone buzzes—Gupta's name. She lets it ring out. She lifts her sleeve, revealing a scar along her upper arm—an old injection site. She covers it with makeup.

DR. BROWN
(softly)
You sold it to yourself, too,
remember?

She smiles faintly at her reflection. A mask, now in place.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - BOARD ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Glass walls, a table polished to a mirror sheen. The city skyline burns gold in the distance. Dr. Brown, Andrea, and Gupta sit mid-debate.

DR. BROWN
We need an influx of funds. A cure
is within reach—

GUPTA

I'm not pulling stable revenue to gamble on hope.

DR. BROWN

It's not hope. It's data. You've seen the results.

GUPTA

What I've seen is a treatment model that works. It keeps people alive—and it keeps the board happy.

DR. BROWN

For now. But that won't last.

GUPTA

No, but it's predictable. A cure? That's a black hole. Trials, delays, approvals... and not one billable outcome for years.

Gupta turns to Andrea.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

You have an opinion?

Andrea glances at Brown, then back.

ANDREA

Why not both? Reallocate—pull from lower-priority sectors. No one's saying we burn the foundation.

GUPTA

(scoffs)
That's the problem with theorists. You all assume there's fat to trim, and no cost to cutting it.

DR. BROWN

She's right. If we boost now, we could reach efficacy in months, not years.

GUPTA

You think speed is the issue? You're forgetting everything after discovery. FDA. SAHPRA. Human trials. Global validation. You want us to bleed out before we cross the finish line?

DR. BROWN
I'd infect myself to prove it
works.

A heavy silence. Gupta stands. Smooths his jacket.

GUPTA
That kind of talk is what makes
investors nervous. I'll look into
options.
(beat)
You think I don't want a cure? I've
buried two cousins. But I'll be
damned if I send another child into
a trial with half a protocol.

At the door, he turns back.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Just don't infect yourself while
I'm gone...

He exits. Andrea lets out a tight breath. A beat.

ANDREA
We're all cowards. We hide behind
simulations.

She turns to Dr. Brown.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
My parents didn't get protocols.
They were the protocols.

DR. BROWN
It's not bravery to die for optics.

ANDREA
Maybe not. But sometimes dying is
the only way to make people watch.
You are brave to think about
injecting yourself.

DR. BROWN
(low, off Andrea's look)
You think I'm brave? I helped
design the very protocol that
killed your mother. I wasn't
brave—I was promoted.

Andrea drifts to the window.

ANDREA
Honestly? That went better than I
expected.

Dr. Brown gathers her tablet.

DR. BROWN
Let's talk tonight.

She exits. Andrea stares out over the city, her reflection shimmering faintly in the glass.

EXT. SUMMIT PARK BENCH - NIGHT

Andrea finds an empty bench. The glow of distant city lights shimmers beyond the summit hall.

She sits heavily, pulls a battered wallet from her coat. From it, she removes a folded, crumpled newspaper clipping.

INSERT: Headline: "Parents Die in Experimental Biotech Trial. No One Held Accountable."

A grainy photo: two smiling faces—her mother and father.

Andrea's thumb drifts over the faces, lingering. Her jaw hardens. The clipping folds slowly, almost reverently, before sliding back into her wallet.

She rises, eyes blazing, and bolts into the night.

EXT. RUNNING TRAIL - LATER

Dusk settles in.

Andrea runs, breath ragged, headphones in. She listens to old University notes with her Professor, PROFESSOR NYSTUEN.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Biotech's scaled up fast.
Manufacturing, distribution,
treatment lines...

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (V.O.)
They burn billions doing all of
it—and still call it R&D.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Seven major diseases avoided
through human trials. That's still
impressive.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (V.O.)
 Look closer at the timelines. Two
 decades ago it took years to reach
 a cure. Now? Months.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 Stronger strains?

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (V.O.)
 Stronger profits.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 You're bitter.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (V.O.)
 They rejected my research. It'll
 happen to you.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 I'm not going to Biotech--but if I
 did, that doesn't mean they'll
 reject my research too.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (V.O.)
 Someone there will poach you. And
 when they do, be ready to play by
 their rules. And a day will come
 when you'll miss this little
 University and the shelter it gave
 you--

The recording is cut off by a notification via her
 Smartphone's AI:

AI (V.O.)
 One mile to go.

Andrea stops, breath heavy. Sweat on her brow. She exhales,
 hands on her hips.

ANDREA
 ...Begin cool-down.

She stares into the distance, thoughts racing.

INT. GUPTA'S OFFICE - LATE EVENING

Gupta's desk is cleared, surgical in its order. He pours
 himself a glass of mineral water. Behind him, tucked between
 books, is a child's drawing: a red rocket, three stick
 figures holding hands.

It's signed: To Uncle Gup - bring us to the stars! He picks it up. Studies it. Behind him, Andrea's voice echoes faintly from the hallway—heated, urgent. Gupta mutters to the drawing:

GUPTA

I am bringing them. Just not how
you meant.

He sets it back. Straightens his jacket. Faces the door. The armor clicks back into place.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - DR. BROWN'S LAB - NIGHT

Andrea and Dr. Brown work side by side, bathed in flickering light from a 3D RNA SEQUENCE rotating on a translucent screen—spiraling data, alive with motion.

ANDREA

There...

The strands react—unfurling into a simulated replication labeled: "ANBRYOSIS."

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Run it back. Save everything.

Dr. Brown taps commands into a TABLET, eyes strained.

DR. BROWN

You'll have to walk me through the
last part.

ANDREA

(Confused)

It's the same X9 cure model. You
okay?

Dr. Brown rubs her temples, drained.

DR. BROWN

We're so close to mapping the full
sequence.

ANDREA

We'll finish it tomorrow.

Dr. Brown stands, crosses to another station.

DR. BROWN

Might get hotter tomorrow. Thirty
people spent the day trying to
mirror the X9 RNA pattern...

She opens a drawer, pulls out a CYLINDRICAL TUBE and shakes it—it hovers.

Andrea feeds the RNA sample beneath it. The sequence rises into the cylinder, which begins to spin.

ANDREA
Uploading today's outbreak-risk
data.

DR. BROWN
Punch it.

POP!

The RNA combusts into black ash.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
How did that happen?

ANDREA
Newer strands aren't surviving the
outbreak model.

DR. BROWN
That's... strange.

ANDREA
It's acting synthetic.

Dr. Brown stiffens. A long pause.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Have you been synthesizing X9?

DR. BROWN
Not me.

ANDREA
I've tried over ninety percent of
the possible permutations. Nothing
holds.

DR. BROWN
Stay on it.

She pinches some ash, rubs it between her fingers.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
We've managed heat before. But if
you're still only ninety percent
there...

ANDREA

The data's blurred. How's Gupta masking RNA like this?

DR. BROWN

It's not how. It's why. So we can't.

ANDREA

Why not force him to share it?

DR. BROWN

Because he needs a villain. That way he gets to play hero. Hold the world hostage—then blame us.

Andrea flicks open a holographic data spread and casts it to Dr. Brown's tablet.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)

That can't be right...this doesn't even look like what we've been building.

ANDREA

No. It's not.

She points to a cluster of flickering neural nodes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

This isn't just a virus. It's a bioweapon—targeting memory and emotion. It rewires immune response. Hijacks recall. Programs belief.

She zooms in—neural strands snap one by one.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

If you can't trust your memories... You'll trust whoever writes the story.

DR. BROWN

Search for correlations—show me how this leads to a global outbreak.

Andrea locks in.

ANDREA

We should go public. Blow the whistle. Expose Gupta—

Dr. Brown covers Andrea's mouth—gently but firm.

DR. BROWN
I've wanted to do that for years.

ANDREA
Then why haven't you?

Dr. Brown just looks at her. No answer. Only weight. Andrea turns away, uneasy.

DR. BROWN
Hungry?

ANDREA
Not while people are dying in their sleep.

DR. BROWN
You've been around me too long.

A small smile. Then back to work. Andrea pulls out another capsule, loads a new sample.

SHAKE. HOVER.

Sequence lifts. The tube spins. Dr. Brown leans in—then winces. Andrea sees it.

POP!

Another burst of ash. Dr. Brown staggers back, sweating.

ANDREA
Dr. Brown!

Andrea rushes over.

DR. BROWN
Stay back!

She fumbles for a blood slide and swab, collects a sample—shaking. Pulls a file from the drawer, shoves it into Andrea's hands.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
We don't have long.

ANDREA
What is this?

DR. BROWN
You can't trust them, Andrea. You never could.

Andrea stares at her, stunned.

ANDREA

What?

DR. BROWN

I thought I could change it from the inside. But the system only ever takes.

ANDREA

Takes what?

DR. BROWN

My husband. My brother. Patients I can't even name. X9 didn't mutate in a lab. It mutated in a boardroom.

Beat.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)

And if it's going to end... It has to be by someone they don't see coming.

She smiles—grim, certain.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)

That's you.

Andrea presses the file tight to her chest, eyes hard.

ANDREA

This doesn't leave the lab. Not until I'm sure. Not until it's mine to release.

Dr. Brown studies her — concern flickering.

DR. BROWN

Andrea... if you lock it away, you're no better than him.

She doesn't answer. Just tucks the file into a drawer, hand lingering on the handle.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)

Please put a mask on.

Andrea lifts the file and glances at it. Buried in the data spread—a faint watermark. Gupta's initials, almost mocking. She swallows hard. Did he want her to find this? Did he really do this? Andrea looks at Dr. Brown. The air between them feels poisoned.

No going back now.

INT. SECOND SCIENCE LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Andrea helps Dr. Brown onto a bench, guiding her down.
Monitors blink. Ventilation fans hum overhead.

ANDREA
Hold on. Just breathe slowly.

DR. BROWN
(weakly)
I thought I'd feel it sooner...

Andrea grabs a first-aid kit, pulls out a sterile injector.
Dr. Brown catches her wrist.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
It's too late for me.

She reaches into her coat, pulls out a security keycard and a
sealed sample vial. Hands them to Andrea, trembling.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
They can't have it. You know that.

Andrea looks at the items—realizes. Her voice catches.

ANDREA
No. I'll get you help. You're not—

DR. BROWN
(softly)
It's too late for me. Go. Now.

Andrea slowly backs away, then bolts out the door, clutching
the sample and keycard.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Andrea tears off her mask as she sprints. Behind her—A deep
rumble builds.

BOOM.

The lab door erupts outward in a fireball. A shockwave hurls
Andrea off balance.

ANDREA
Dr. Brown!

She starts to run back—but a SECURITY GUARD seizes her arm.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Let me go back! She's in there!

ALARMS WAIL. Red lights strobe. Sprinklers hiss. Chaos blooms down the corridor. Andrea is yanked back. She clutches the vial like it's sacred. The hallway swims in smoke and flashing red.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - EVIDENCE ROOM - DAY

DETECTIVE HARRIS

We pulled the camera feeds from Brown's office corridor.

OFFICER

And?

DETECTIVE HARRIS

Blurry as hell. Light from the window blows out half the frame, and the angle's garbage - you can barely make out who's who. Nothing we can use for a charge.

OFFICER

So we're blind on that?

DETECTIVE HARRIS

For now. If something pops later, we'll revisit.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - LATE AFTERNOON

Mourners filter away, their footsteps soft on pavement. Andrea stands alone, head bowed, eyes fixed on Dr. Brown's name etched in stone.

Murmurs catch her ear. She turns-REGAN (22), lean, sharp-edged, stands with a Funeral Home Employee (female). His posture: restless. Off.

Andrea approaches. Watching him closely.

ANDREA

Can I help you?

REGAN

Just cleaning up.

ANDREA

Oh-sorry. Thought you were a guest.

REGAN
I worked at Biotech. With my
aunt—if that helps.

ANDREA
Your Aunt? What's your name?

REGAN
Regan.

ANDREA
I've never heard of you--

REGAN
And you are?

ANDREA
I'm Andrea.

REGAN
Figures. You're one of them.
(shifts)
Get out of here.

ANDREA
Excuse me?

REGAN
I said—go.

Beat. Andrea blinks, caught off guard.

ANDREA
I'm sorry...

She backs away. Regan watches her go, shoulders sinking. He
grabs a trash bag. Emotion flickers—then buries itself again.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - LATER

Andrea enters, crushed and visibly upset. The silence wraps
around her. She stands still. Then crosses to her desk.

Click. A small lamp glows to life. She sets the slide down.
Just stares at it.

Above the desk, a framed photo: young Andrea between her
parents, smiles locked in time. Her eyes well. She turns
away.

Across the room: a couch. She drops into it. Her POV: under
the desk, in the soft lamp glow—a large trunk chest.

She rises. Kneels beside it. Hand resting on the lid. A beat. She shakes her head—and walks away. Her gaze lands on the file Dr. Brown gave her. She opens it. Her expression shifts—eyes wide.

EXT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - MORNING

Andrea, composed and ready, strides toward the building.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - CONTINUOUS

She walks through the building. The place is eerily quiet. Vast. Empty. Andrea stops. Looks around. Something's wrong.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - DR. BROWN'S LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Andrea steps inside. The lab is gutted—desks bare, cabinets open. Nothing left. She stares in disbelief.

Behind her—Dr. Gupta emerges, lays a hand on her shoulder.

GUPTA

I'm so sorry, Andrea--

ANDREA

(startled)

Dr. Gupta!

He nods solemnly, voice low.

GUPTA

Dr. Brown was one of our finest scientists.

ANDREA

Yes...

She turns slowly, eyes scanning the empty room.

GUPTA

We've had to quarantine everything.

(beat)

You should get your blood tested, just in case.

Andrea stiffens.

ANDREA

Dr. Gupta....What caused that explosion?

Gupta's face darkens.

GUPTA
We believe...Dr. Brown triggered
it.

Andrea reels.

ANDREA
No—she wouldn't—She'd never—Biotech
wouldn't do this either. Not the
company I know.

GUPTA
She wanted to break away. Go rogue
with her research. I warned
her—Biotech couldn't support that.

Andrea looks down, conflict twisting across her face.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Maybe... she preferred no cure at
all.
(softly)
I can only imagine how betrayed you
feel.

He leans in, offers an embrace. Andrea doesn't resist.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
We'll set you up on something new.
X9's cure is on hold—for now.

Mid-embrace, she lifts her eyes—a fire behind them.

INT. DATA CUBICLE - NIGHT

The hum of servers. Andrea sits alone, lit by blue screen glow. Open on her screen: a paused video of her mother in a hospital bed, waving weakly to the camera. Andrea stares. Clicks play. The voice is faint.

MOTHER (V.O.)
You'll do amazing things, Andrea.
But promise me—you won't go looking
for ghosts.

Andrea closes the laptop. Rubs her eyes. She pulls out a small voice recorder. Presses record.

ANDREA
 (quiet, to herself)
 What if I'm not ready. What if I'm
 just loud.

A beat.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 Pushing too fast. Pretending I know
 what I'm doing.

She hits stop. Sits in silence. Then deletes the recording.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - MORNING

Rhea opens the fridge. Cold air hits her pale skin.

RHEA
 Mom...

She moves mechanically—sets food on the counter, shuts the
 door. Stares at the items.

RHEA (CONT'D)
 Okay...

There's a grogginess—sluggish, distant. She pulls a KNIFE
 from a DRAWER. Starts slicing an apple—each cut: sharp,
 hollow.

RHEA (CONT'D)
 (Fading)
 ...Mom?

She collapses. Silence.

ISHARA (O.S.)
 Rhea?

Ishara steps into the kitchen—stops cold.

ISHARA (CONT'D)
 Rhea...

She sees her daughter on the floor, unconscious.

ISHARA (CONT'D)
 (Yelling)
 Rhea!

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - LATER

The news hums in the background. Andrea's on her phone, half-listening.

NEWS (V.O.)
...cases are rising worldwide. With
the loss of Dr. Brown, Biotech's
progress on the cure is uncertain.
Dr. Brown was known for her
relentless pursuit of a solution...

Andrea freezes. Her eyes land on a photo—her and Dr. Brown, smiling. A soft smile crosses her lips—then fades. She crosses the room. Unlocks the trunk.

Inside: scientific gear, untouched. Waiting.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME BASEMENT - LATER

Andrea flicks on the lights. Dust floats. The room sits frozen—machines, cables, gear.

Andrea takes it in. Then—she moves. Clearing. Rewiring. Reviving.

EXT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Andrea approaches the shadowed side of the building. Pulls out Dr. Brown's ID, weighing it in her hand.

She shakes her head, pockets it.

ANDREA
Too easy to trace.

She presses her palm flat to the biometric scanner.

CLICK. The lock disengages. Andrea exhales, unsettled.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Guess security hasn't pulled her
access yet.

She slips inside.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - HALLWAY

Andrea moves quickly, keeping low. The corridor echoes with her steps. She nears the lab. Slows. Eyes locked on the door.

INT. DR. BROWN'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

She raises Dr. Brown's ID to the handle. BEEP. Inside—a shadow moves.

ANDREA

Hey!

She throws the door open. Lights snap on. Regan freezes at the back of the lab.

REGAN

What are you doing?

ANDREA

Regan?

REGAN

Turn the lights off!

ANDREA

No, stay right there.

She shuts the door behind her.

REGAN

How did you get in?

Andrea walks towards him, calm but direct.

ANDREA

I work here. I actually use this lab.

Regan looks away, something guarded in his eyes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Sit down.

He hesitates, then drops into a chair. Sets his backpack down, pulls out a worn security badge. His own photo ID stares back — younger, stiff smile — but behind it, tucked in the sleeve, a faded photo of him and Dr. Brown grinning side by side.

Andrea crosses to the lights. Kills them. She sits across from him, their faces dimly lit by the glow of the monitors.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

So... what are you doing in my lab?

REGAN

My Aunt's lab.

A beat. Andrea softens. She leans in—hugs him.

ANDREA

I'm sorry. I looked up to her.

Regan pulls away.

REGAN

I'm fine...

Andrea composes herself and straightens.

ANDREA

You know the cameras will catch this.

Andrea swipes her console. The surveillance feed skips, looping static.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Not anymore. We've got a window — make it fast.

She holds up Dr. Brown's ID.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

At least I have her ID. How'd you get in?

REGAN

I never left.

ANDREA

What?

REGAN

I came to grab my stuff and hid in here.

ANDREA

Oh...

REGAN

You worked closely with her?

Andrea nods.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Then you know. They did this to her.

He stands. Starts pacing.

ANDREA

Gupta said it was her fault... but
that doesn't make sense.

(beat)

This isn't Biotech. Someone twisted
it. She mostly, trusted them. So do
I.

Andrea stands up and starts opening cabinets. Searching.

Regan watches. Frowns.

REGAN

You won't find anything good here.

Andrea exhales, and thinks for a moment.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. DR. BROWN'S LAB - NIGHT

Dr. Brown stuffs a drive into a zippered case. Andrea
watches, tense.

ANDREA

You're backing it all up?

DR. BROWN

Trust is a luxury I can't afford.

She zips it shut. Meets Andrea's eyes.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)

My living room's better equipped to
vaccinate the world than this
place.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - DR. BROWN'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

Andrea scrambles, collecting loose items. Regan watches her,
puzzled.

ANDREA

Come on.

REGAN

Where? I can't leave.

Andrea locks eyes with him—calm, clear.

ANDREA
Your Aunt left us everything.

Regan blinks—then follows.

INT. DR. BROWN'S LAB - NIGHT

Andrea lingers behind. Regan's footsteps fade down the hall.

She runs her hand along the desk edge. Sees a cracked mug. A scribbled sticky note tucked beneath the monitor.

She picks it up. It reads: "You don't stop." Andrea exhales. Fragile.

ANDREA
(soft)
I won't.

She pockets the note and walks out.

EXT. DR. BROWN'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Andrea and Regan cross the street toward Brown's place. Police tape flutters in the wind. Regan glances around. Then ducks under it. The porch is quiet.

Andrea glances at the curb. A single patrol car idles, engine running, but no one's in sight.

ANDREA
Surprised they didn't seal the place.

REGAN
She didn't die here. They probably just grabbed what they needed and left.

Regan pulls out a key, unlocks the back door.

INT. DR. BROWN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, quiet. Stale air. Regan heads to a dim stairwell leading to the Basement.

REGAN
Biotech's tearing this place apart tomorrow.

He disappears down the steps. Andrea switches on a lamp. Warm light blooms. A towering bookshelf spans one wall—overflowing with texts and manuals.

She runs her finger along the shelves, scanning titles. As she kneels, her finger grazes a spine. It crumbles off.

ANDREA
(Embarrassed)
Oh...

She pauses. Something's off. Peels back the false layer—revealing hidden notebooks.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
What?

She opens one. Eyes widen. Starts flipping through them. Regan returns, lugging two large containers.

REGAN
These'll do.

Andrea points to the shelf.

ANDREA
Regan, have you seen these?

Regan steps closer. Scans a page.

REGAN
No... what is all this?

ANDREA
This looks like every project your aunt ever touched.

REGAN
She hated Biotech Pharma.

Andrea looks up.

ANDREA
Hated?

REGAN
With a passion.

He starts organizing the containers.

ANDREA
I don't want to believe that. Not yet.

She opens a final notebook. Tapes spill out.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Eight-one....Eight-eight....Eight
fifteen...
(beat)
These are recent.

She turns to Regan.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Where's her recorder?

Regan opens a drawer. Pulls out a TAPE RECORDER.

REGAN
This?

ANDREA
Yeah...

She hesitates. Presses play.

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
If you're hearing this, either I'm
gone or you're doing something
reckless.

Andrea freezes - her thumb trembles.

DR. BROWN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You don't stop, Andrea. That's your
flaw. That's your fire.

Andrea closes her eyes.

DR. BROWN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Just... don't forget why you
started.

Andrea exhales. Then - she clicks stop.

ANDREA
Let's find out.

Loads the next tape, and presses play.

KAREN FARRIS (V.O.)
So, where are you now?

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
Incomplete...

KAREN FARRIS (V.O.)
But you think it works?

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
I haven't tested it. I'm not
allowed.

KAREN FARRIS (V.O.)
Can you do it behind closed doors?

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
Not without hospital access.

KAREN FARRIS (V.O.)
What are they telling you?

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
Same story. I show the board
progress, they call it
inconclusive.

KAREN FARRIS (V.O.)
But it's not.

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
It's not even just Gupta.. He
answers to the board. Their pockets
are swimming with profits from the
current treatment.

KAREN FARRIS (V.O.)
There's a story here. But I need
more.

KNOCK. KNOCK. From the back of the room.

DR. BROWN (V.O.)
Ah--

TAPE STOPS.

Andrea rifles through the notebooks.

ANDREA
She's gotta have it all here. Help
me find her X9 notes.

Regan grabs notebooks. They dig. After a beat--

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Here!

She holds a notebook under the lamp--eyes locked to the page.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Do you know who she was talking to?

REGAN
No. But I'm guessing you'll figure it out.

ANDREA
"You"? If we split them up, we can-

REGAN
I can't help. Not now. They're gonna be watching me like a hawk.

Andrea nods, frustrated.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Maybe in a few weeks--

ANDREA
We don't have weeks. In a few weeks, this could be global.

Regan hesitates. Andrea leans in.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
You're the only one I trust.

A long beat. Regan exhales.

REGAN
Alright... fine.

Andrea smiles, determined.

INT. GUPTA'S PRIVATE STUDY - NIGHT

Dim. Sleek. Glass walls reflect city lights, not the sky. Everything hums with wealth and pressure.

Gupta sits slouched at his desk. Across from him stands TALIA (40s), his stoic personal aide. Quiet. Unblinking.

A floating screen displays a paused video: A TEENAGE GIRL, bald, frail, nasal cannula in place. Next to her, a tearful WOMAN, late 30s.

GIRL (VIDEO)
(softly)
Daddy, I don't feel anything anymore. Not even scared. Is that normal?

Gupta stares at the screen a long moment. Then:

GUPTA
Leave it up.

Talia taps a console, freezing the image. She waits. Gupta pours a shot of bourbon. Doesn't drink it.

He gestures, and a 3D virus model spins up in the air—X9 in all its mutating glory.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Twenty-seven trials. Zero
survivals. Until her.

He traces a glowing strand: "Ocular Conduit - UNSTABLE."

GUPTA (CONT'D)
If I slow it down, it spreads too
far. Harden the immunity wall, it
kills faster.

A long pause. Then he looks to Talia.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Tell me again I'm wrong.

TALIA
You're not.

GUPTA
I didn't build X9 to hurt her.
(beat)
I built it to save her. She was
dying of a disease no one cared to
cure. So I made something that
could rewrite her body. Rewrite
memory. Rewrite fear.

He finally downs the bourbon. Sharp burn.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
The world doesn't want cures. It
wants control. That's why it needs
monsters. Monsters who don't blink.
To make everyone else feel safe.

A BUZZ on his wrist console. He reads: "Andrea Santiago made unauthorized breakthrough. Project D72 at risk."

His expression ices over.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
I gave her a chance. That's more
than anyone gave me.

He deletes the message. The video plays again. The girl's
voice weaker now:

GIRL (VIDEO)
You'll fix it, right? You always
fix it.

He doesn't answer.

INT. GUPTA'S STUDY - LATER

Lights low. The screen now blank.

Gupta crosses to a drawer. Pulls out a chessboard—mid-game. A
few black pawns deep in white territory. No queens in play.

He mutters to himself, sets a black rook forward—diagonally.
Illegal move.

GUPTA
New rules.

From his pocket, he takes a lone black queen. He turns it
over in his hand.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
You'd hate this part.

He sets the queen down—off the board. Just watching. For now.

Talia steps forward.

TALIA
Shall I reset?

GUPTA
No.
(beat)
Let it play out.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - SMALL LAB - DAY

Andrea walks into a small lab and shuts the door. The lab is
sparse, underwhelming—bare-bones setup, flickering lights
overhead.

She rolls her eyes, drops into the chair, pulls out a TABLET
and starts working.

KNOCK--KNOCK

Gupta enters.

GUPTA

Good, you're here already.

Andrea quickly hides the tablet, sits straighter.

ANDREA

Yeah, IT reconfigured me. Admin team walked me over.

GUPTA

Perfect. You'll get your data packets soon. I want your focus on the treatment team.

ANDREA

We're already administering the latest version, right?

GUPTA

We can do better...

Andrea's eyes narrow.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Dr. Brown's politics aside, we shelved a lot of her work. Time to revisit it.

ANDREA

Really?

GUPTA

She wanted a better treatment. We think longer cycles might be the key.

ANDREA

Longer—for the patients?

GUPTA

Exactly. Drawn-out delivery. Extended absorption. Slower recovery. Improves life expectancy.

ANDREA

By weakening the anti-virus...

GUPTA

We want that weaker strain live within a month. Can you deliver?

ANDREA

Um... sure.

GUPTA

Fantastic. More staff's coming in
to keep you focused.

(beat, faint smile)

Welcome back.

He exits. Andrea exhales. Stares out the window. Then she
pulls out her SMARTPHONE - and texts Regan: 7PM

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - LATER

Ishara struggles to guide Rhea up the stairs.

ISHARA

Come on, Rhea!

RHEA

(weak, dizzy)

Mom...I'm...

ISHARA

You're sick, dear.

RHEA

Call Flora's dad. Ask if she can
stay a few extra days.

She clutches her stomach. A realization flickers across her
face. They reach the-

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ishara sets Rhea down beside the toilet.

ISHARA

Here we go...

RHEA

I should go to the hospital.

ISHARA

Hospital? You don't eat enough as
it is. We'd be living in the dark
if we get that bill.

Rhea looks away-bitterness under exhaustion. She turns to the
toilet.

RHEA
Can you get me a towel?

ISHARA
Sure...

Ishara exits.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ishara walks down the hall.

SLAM - LOCK

She spins. Bathroom door-locked.

ISHARA
Rhea? Rhea!

She rushes back to the door, pounds on it.

ISHARA (CONT'D)
What are you doing in there?! Open
up!

RHEA
Mom, you have to stay out.

ISHARA
Open the door!

RHEA
It's X9, Mom...

Ishara stops cold.

ISHARA
X9?

RHEA
I've been dizzy for days... I
didn't want to believe it.

ISHARA
(panicked)
Rhea, open this door!

RHEA
I don't want you to get it.

ISHARA
Rhea!

RHEA
You need to get help. Please.

INT. ANDREA'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The makeshift lab hums—microscopes, notes, blacked-out windows. A war room in motion.

Andrea stares at the monitor, eyes dry from sleepless hours. Regan leans against the wall, groggy.

REGAN
That's... new.

Andrea doesn't speak. She gestures him over. On the screen—A glowing cell sequence. It stabilizes. Holds.

The monitor pings:

****RESPONSE: 94% - IMMUNE REGENERATION TRIGGERED****

Regan stares.

REGAN
That's not just progress.

ANDREA
It's holding.
(over a whisper)
For two hours.

She exhales. Numb. Certain.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
It's real.

REGAN
Then we go. Now.

Andrea nods. No celebration. Just resolve. She locks sample in a REINFORCED CASE, grabs Dr. Brown's ID.

ANDREA
We need proof. Trials.
Verification. Not too fast.

REGAN
No time. If Gupta finds out—

Andrea cuts him off, fire in her voice.

ANDREA

-Then we make sure the world hears
first.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - GUPTA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gupta sits behind his desk. Calm. Predatory.

A KNOCK.

The door opens. In walks CAL HALSTROM (40s) - bald, steely-eyed, a predator dressed in a suit.

GUPTA

You look a bit different than I
expected.

(beat)

But you'll do. Shut the door.

Cal closes it without a word.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

You're the most expensive asset
I've ever acquired.

He circles Cal, studying him like merchandise.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

I read about Istanbul - bioterror,
panic-

CAL

That wasn't me. Rogue cell hijacked
my data. Used it on civilians.

GUPTA

Tomato, to-mah-to. Your
fingerprints were there.

A flicker of tension in Cal's jaw.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Now... Mr. Halstrom-

(beat)

There are people I need you-and
your friends-to deal with.

He leans in.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Not with bullets. Not yet anyway.
Dead bodies bring questions.

(MORE)

GUPTA (CONT'D)

We ruin them first - credibility,
reputation, lives. Cal meets his
stare. Something unreadable passes.

CAL

Understood.

INT. ANDREA'S BASEMENT - LATER

Low, surgical light. Notes scattered. Machines hum softly.
Andrea and Regan hunch over their work.

ANDREA

It's minor. But it's stronger than
the last Biotech strain.

REGAN

Wanna load it onto the nanos?

ANDREA

Yeah. Let's do it. Prep a human
cell strip.

Regan opens a SUB-ZERO CONTAINER, extracts a petri dish with
gloved care. He pulls a sample with a tiny baster, drops it
into a small rectangular black box.

REGAN

Heating...

The unit begins to warm.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Nanos ready?

ANDREA

Ten seconds max for RNA induction.
Watch that temp.

REGAN

Okay...Three...Two...One...

He opens the lid.

Andrea peels the plastic cover off a small METALLIC
RECTANGLE—a thin layer of nano-dust shimmers faintly.

Regan takes the tiny baster, pulls the liquid from the black
box. Carefully transfers the heated sample onto the surface.

ANDREA

Shut it off.

Regan powers down the black box. He opens a fresh Petri dish, and Andrea carefully slides in the damp nano-layer.

Regan seals it, slides it beneath the microscope.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
(Relieved)
Alright...

REGAN
Basement beats billion-dollar lab.

ANDREA
Unless we've got mold.
(smirks)

REGAN
Monitor on.

The screen flickers: human cells in decay, nanomachines crawling through.

ANDREA
Okay, let's load the sequence.

Andrea takes a second Petri dish, this time, the liquid inside is BLUE. It's their supposed CURE based on Dr. Brown's notes.

She preps a SYRINGE.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Okay, Dr. Brown. Let's find out how right you were.

She taps the notebook beside her. Carefully, she moves the syringe to a tiny port on the petri dish lid.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
You ready?

Regan nods.

Andrea slowly injects the cure.

Onscreen-nanomachines react. They surge toward the blue. They consume. Adapt. Merge.

Andrea and Regan hold their breath.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

POP! A CHAMPAGNE CORK rockets across the room.

Andrea and Regan laugh, flushed with adrenaline.

ANDREA
We have a cure!

She pours champagne into Regan's glass. He grabs the bottle and tops off both glasses. They collapse into chairs at the kitchen table, breathless.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Your aunt nailed it...

A beat. The weight of her absence lands. The joy fades—grief fills the quiet.

REGAN
Cheers.

ANDREA
To Dr. Brown.

They tap glasses. Andrea downs hers in one go.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Now we just have to get it to work
on a live patient.

REGAN
Well, I've got some good news. I
listened to all the tapes last
night.

Andrea perks up, instantly alert.

ANDREA
All of them? When did you sleep?

REGAN
Half the night. The rest I ran
voice matches against copyright
databases.

ANDREA
And?

REGAN
It's a reporter. Independent.
Name's Karen Farris.

ANDREA
Karen Farris? She's... she's an
ally?

BANG! BANG!

Hard slams—windows rattle. Andrea and Regan lock eyes—frozen. Then—they bolt for the basement.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

They rush down the stairs. Andrea yanks a tarp over the table.

ANDREA
Unplug the monitor.

Regan pulls the plug, grabs the last few notes—then bolts back upstairs.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Regan bursts up the stairs, yanks open a cabinet—grabs a crowbar. He moves slowly, checking corners, eyes scanning. He reaches the back door, hesitates... then opens it.

Branches lash outside, restless in the dark. Andrea walks up behind him.

REGAN
Could've been just the wind...

He crosses to the kitchen window, double-checks the LOCK—clicks it tighter.

Andrea quietly refills their champagne flutes.

ANDREA
We need to reach that reporter,
now.

INT. CITY - STREETS - DAY

SIRENS

KAREN FARRIS (30's) — tall, sharp, striking — stands in front of a charred high-rise, camera crew nearby.

KAREN FARRIS
As the X9 death toll climbs and
infection spreads, social and
economic fallout escalates.

She gestures to the building behind her — scorched, skeletal.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)
 This national bank is just the
 latest in a growing wave of
 attacks—acts of desperation by
 those who've lost—

She trails off. Eyes flick toward the sirens.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)
 These sirens are murdering us...
 (To cameraman)
 Use what we got earlier. Get it
 uploaded.

She steps out of frame.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - LATER

Karen walks through a REVOLVING DOOR and into a sleek, quiet lobby. Her phone buzzes.

VFX TEXT BUBBLE: +11 978 5115

Buzz. VFX TEXT BUBBLE: Call now. She slows. Taps the screen.

RED BANNER: DELETE MESSAGE?

Before she can respond—

VFX TEXT BUBBLE: X9

Karen freezes. Dismisses the delete prompt. Dials. RING...
 RING...

ANDREA (V.O.)
 Hello?

KAREN FARRIS
 Who is this?

ANDREA
 Is this Karen?

Karen walks over to a quiet corner.

KAREN FARRIS
 Who is this?

ANDREA
 Did Dr. Brown ever contact you?

KAREN FARRIS
 Okay, sick joke. I'm hanging up.

ANDREA

Wait. Please. She was right.

(beat)

There's a cure for X9. We need to meet.

Karen freezes, eyes narrowing.

KAREN FARRIS

I don't know you. Or who you think you're talking about.

She softens slightly. A breath.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)

But I do love Burnham Café.

(beat)

They make a killer green tea.

Click. She hangs up.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - ANDREA'S OFFICE

Andrea lowers her phone. The door opens—Gupta enters, measured smile in place.

GUPTA

Andrea, how are you?

ANDREA

I'm good.

She taps her tablet—screen lights up. Gupta watches, hawk-like.

GUPTA

Any progress?

ANDREA

I'll send my latest data. We're getting there.

Gupta nods, shifts gears.

GUPTA

I've arranged a memorial for Dr. Brown at Halstrom Hospital. I want you to speak.

Andrea looks up, wary.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
You worked closest with her. Only
one nearer was her nephew—though
that brat coasted on her
coattails...

Andrea stiffens.

ANDREA
I wouldn't know, sir.

GUPTA
No reason to.

He paces, choosing words.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Halstrom's officially joining us on
the treatment. I'll announce it at
the ceremony—a clean handoff,
symbolically speaking.

He moves to the door. Andrea stands.

ANDREA
Sir... what about her nephew? Maybe
he should be invited. She'd want
that.

Gupta pauses. A beat.

GUPTA
Noted. Thank you, Andrea.

He exits.

Andrea waits a moment... then moves, decisively.

INT. CAFE - LATER

Andrea and Regan step into the cafe, scanning faces
awkwardly.

ANDREA
I don't see her.

REGAN
Here, let's sit.

They slide into a booth, still scanning. They turn
forward—and jump. Karen Farris is already seated across from
them.

KAREN FARRIS
You scientists really don't blend
in. All that "leave no rock
unturned" energy? Makes you stick
out like road flares.

Andrea and Regan blink, stunned.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)
You're the ones who called, right?

ANDREA
Yeah, that was us.

KAREN FARRIS
(Frustrated)
What's wrong with your generation?
At least Dr. Brown had the good
sense not to be seen with me.

ANDREA
We need help getting the truth out.

KAREN FARRIS
You have the cure?

ANDREA
Yes.

KAREN FARRIS
And a story?

ANDREA
We need people to know, so we can
find a test subject.

Karen chuckles—sharp and bitter.

KAREN FARRIS
Oh, no. No, no. You don't get how
this works. You heard the tapes,
right?

REGAN
Yeah--

KAREN FARRIS
Then you know I can't just scream
"cure" into the void. Best-case, I
get branded a crank. Worst-case?
Biotech Pharma sends someone to
shut me up—for good.

REGAN

We think they already did that to Dr. Brown.

KAREN FARRIS

Of course they did! That board isn't giving up their third vacation homes for some miracle vial that'll keep a few million people off the drip.

Andrea stares at her, blindsided. Regan can't mask his shock either.

ANDREA

You... you already knew?

REGAN

How the hell do you know that?

Karen doesn't answer directly — just presses on, proving she's deeper in than they imagined. Andrea leans forward.

ANDREA

We need a patient.

KAREN FARRIS

So did Dr. Brown. This isn't new.

ANDREA

If we give you proof—real data—does that change the story?

KAREN FARRIS

It upgrades me from "conspiracy theorist" to "professional laughingstock."

REGAN

But even that gets attention. People will bite.

Karen studies them, unconvinced.

KAREN FARRIS

You don't know the ground you're standing on.

Andrea holds her stare, unflinching.

ANDREA

Then show us how to stand.

Karen exhales, a grudging respect flickering.

KAREN FARRIS
Alright. When can I see the data?

ANDREA
We'll be in touch. There's a-

KAREN FARRIS
No. Don't tell me.
(beat)
Remember Dr. Brown. Tread lightly.

She turns to leave. Regan watches her go.

REGAN
She was my aunt.

Karen stops. Looks back.

KAREN FARRIS
Then I'm sorry.
(beat)
You want to send a message over a
wall that high? You don't climb it.
You dig under it-until it
collapses.

She walks out.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - KITCHEN

Takeout boxes crowd the counter. Andrea hands Regan a plate of food.

REGAN
This was my Aunt's favorite spot.

ANDREA
Don't forget to add more mayo.

They both laugh. Then... the silence returns.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
My parents were a part of the first
Biotech trials.

Regan stops mid-bite.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
I pushed them into it. I was in
school-young, idealistic. Thought
Biotech was going to change
everything.
(beat)
(MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)

They died. Days apart. They died believing they'd helped stop this virus.

REGAN

Then why work for Biotech?

ANDREA

I told myself it was science. Trial and error. But the truth? It wasn't error. It was greed.

(shaking head)

Working with your aunt... I saw the rot up close.

She lifts her drink. Swallows.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I want to believe Gupta's trying to save people... but the numbers keep saying otherwise. If I'm wrong, I need to know—fast.

REGAN

He knew. It was never going to work.

Andrea reaches across the table, grabs Dr. Brown's old file.

ANDREA

Not long after my parents died, Biotech landed another huge funding boost.

She takes a bite of food—chews, steadies herself.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Your aunt left this for me. She knew about my parents. Knew that if she'd told me earlier... I might've walked away before the science could save anyone.

Regan laughs.

REGAN

(chuckles)

It's not too late.

They share a smile.

ANDREA

How do we even find someone?
Someone willing to be infected—just
so we can cure them?

REGAN

It's gotta be someone with nothing
left to lose. And we're low on
nano.

ANDREA

Not sure.
(she pauses, then
remembers)
Wait—I forgot. I have something of
hers. Be right back.

Andrea exits the room. Regan watches her go. Then quietly
reaches into his backpack. He pulls out a hologlass card.
Activates it.

DR. BROWN (V.O.)

Don't just build answers, Regan.
Build better questions.

He breathes—soaks it in. Swipes to another.

DR. BROWN (V.O.)

You'll do more than I ever did.
Just remember—tech solves speed.
People solve courage.

He blinks—once, slow. Footsteps approach. He quickly shuts
off the card and stuffs it back in his bag.

Andrea reenters, holding a weathered notebook.

REGAN

(taps the bag lightly)
Already beat you to it.

He smiles—just a little differently now.

INT. ANDREA'S BASEMENT LAB - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Andrea paces while Regan watches her closely, half-eaten
takeout forgotten on the table.

ANDREA

(quietly)
I'm frustrated.

REGAN

Yeah. Me too.

Regan's eyes stay locked on the phone screen as he scrolls through unfiltered Biotech footage.

MONTAGE - BIOTECH FILE FOOTAGE (ON PHONE SCREEN)

- A row of schoolchildren ride silently on a bus, each one masked and strapped to portable oxygen tanks. - Protesters scream outside Biotech HQ in Berlin, clashing with riot police as banners burn. - Drone footage reveals rows of anonymous, unmarked graves being dug outside Rio de Janeiro.

- A U.S. Senator slumps forward at a press briefing, gasping mid-sentence before aides rush the stage.

- Regan's thumb pauses on one video: a girl convulsing on a hospital bed. His expression shifts.

He looks up at her. She slides over a cracked tablet. Its headline blares:

"More Deaths. Will Anyone Stop X9?"

Andrea exhales—shoulders sagging with guilt. Then looks up—eyes sparking with something new. But just as quickly, she shakes it off.

REGAN (CONT'D)

What?

ANDREA

What if I was the patient?

REGAN

No.

ANDREA

I know it's not ideal, but...I'd be a perfect test subject.

REGAN

That's the last resort.

(beat)

We need someone else. Someone willing. Not you.

He shifts, then changes tack.

REGAN (CONT'D)

If we can get people to believe in the cure, Gupta can't control the narrative.

ANDREA

We need more than belief. We need records. Trial data. The things Brown and Gupta never let us see.

REGAN

I'm locked out of all that.

ANDREA

So am I. Biotech never let me near the patient data.

(beat)

Makes you wonder why.

REGAN

We'd need a hospital. Somewhere big.

A beat.

ANDREA

(Snaps fingers)

The banquet.

REGAN

You mean the one that hijacked my aunt's funeral? No thanks.

ANDREA

Well, We won't need to stay long.

INT. ANDREA'S BASEMENT LAB - LATER

Dim light. The hum of old equipment. Andrea is gone. Regan still sits at the desk, the cracked tablet pushed aside. His phone rests in his hand. He taps the screen. A video plays.

Grainy hospital footage. A young girl - maybe twelve - gasps on a ventilator. Her fingers twitch. Alarms blip in the background. Regan watches, jaw clenched. On screen, a nurse enters the room, says something to the girl - too soft to hear. She's crying now. She reaches toward the camera. Then flatlines. Regan doesn't flinch. But his grip tightens around the phone. He watches the moment again. And again. A beat.

REGAN

(softly, almost to himself)

I should've stopped it.

He locks the screen. Sits still in the dark.

EXT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A towering facade glows under cold spotlights. Glass and steel. Corporate. Unwelcoming.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Those offices up there...
(pauses)
They're swimming in patient data.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

A sea of well-dressed elites. Music pulses—muted, submerged, like underwater sonar.

SPLIT SCREEN: Andrea and Regan enter from opposite ends. Dressed to kill. Elegant. Controlled. Calculated.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I don't think anyone knows how well
we know each other...

They glide through the crowd in slow motion, eyes scanning. Predator energy beneath polished veneers.

ANDREA (V.O.)
But this is Gupta's coming out
party. He's partnering with
Halstrom, and the place is going to
be swarming with people like us
with eyes on Biotech Pharma.

They spot each other. Lock eyes. Move toward each other. Andrea flicks a glance—Gupta's heading their way.

ANDREA (V.O.)
So, let's make sure we meet for the
"first" time.

ANDREA
Hi. Dr. Andrea Santiago.

REGAN
Dr. Santiago. Regan Ellis.

ANDREA
Pleasure to meet you.

Gupta slides into frame, timing surgical.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
(lightly performative)
Gupta! I see you invited Mr. Ellis
after all...

GUPTA
Yes, Dr. Santiago. You look
stunning tonight.

He turns to Regan with a waxy grin.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
My boy. A sincere pleasure to honor
your beloved aunt this evening. She
was... brilliant. Far beyond her
peers.

REGAN
Thank you, sir.
(pauses)
I wasn't sure I'd come... but I
changed my mind. For the greater
good.

Gupta nods, pleased.

GUPTA
Far ahead of everyone else.

Gupta changes the subject, voice brightening.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
And now, the two of you... here to
witness the dawn of Biotech's next
great chapter.

Without a goodbye, he melts back into the crowd.

REGAN
What an eccentric creep.

Andrea's smile fades—eyes narrowing.

ANDREA
Right.

From across the room, Cal in all black watches them.

Up front, Gupta ascends the stage, stepping to a gleaming
mic. All eyes turn.

Andrea tenses, taking a step toward Gupta.

REGAN
(under his breath)
Not now. Cameras everywhere.

She bristles, eyes locked on Gupta—then Cal—anger bubbling. Regan grabs her arm, pulling her back. A guest glances their way, suspicious.

REGAN (CONT'D)
You're gonna get us killed.

ANDREA
(through gritted teeth)
Ok, see you in a moment.

REGAN
Don't tell me what I miss.

They peel away—Regan's espionage begins.

GUPTA
Good evening.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Regan slips through a side door. Controlled. Quiet.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Gupta commands the stage.

GUPTA
Tonight, we celebrate. A
partnership with one of our dearest
allies— Dr. Cal Halstrom, of
Halstrom Enterprises.

Applause. Andrea's jaw tightens.

ANDREA
(to herself)
Cal Halstrom...?

Cal joins Gupta onstage, face unreadable.

GUPTA
Together, we guarantee a healthier
world. One step at a time.

More applause. They shake hands. Cal exits.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
X9 has waged war against us for far
too long—

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER
Regan darts up the stairs. Checks corners. Swift and quiet.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - BANQUET HALL - SAME
Gupta gestures to Andrea.

GUPTA
--led by Dr. Andrea Santiago!

Heads turn. All eyes fall on her. The attention is
unexpected. Andrea freezes.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Dr. Brown led the charge against
X9. A pioneer. A relentless mind.

Beat. Silence.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
And now, Andrea—her protégé—will
carry the torch. Our treatment will
evolve into something greater than
we ever imagined.

Thunderous applause. Andrea forces a smile. She nods. But her
eyes say something else entirely.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - UPSTAIRS OFFICES

Low, murky ambience. Dim. Still. Regan moves through shadows.
He locates a lone COMPUTER TERMINAL. Onscreen:

LOGIN/PASSWORD

He kneels, checks a drawer. Finds a small ring of keys.

REGAN
(mutters)
C'mon, Halstrom. Make it slightly
harder.

INT. BACK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Rows of filing cabinets. Regan snaps open drawers.

He pulls out patient files. Phone light casts blue flickers as he photographs records.

REGAN
(To himself)
X9...X9...

Behind him, a shadow appears in the doorway—Cal, motionless.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - BANQUET HALL

Gupta stands tall at the podium. Lifts a champagne glass.

GUPTA
This partnership brings not just
prosperity to South Africa...
(beat)
...but to the world at large.

Applause erupts.

INT. UPSTAIRS OFFICES

Cal enters. His eyes land on the glowing terminal.

SUPER: LOGIN/PASSWORD

He freezes, hand brushing back his jacket. Moves quickly, yanks open the back office door—empty. His gaze sweeps the corners, sharp. His phone VIBRATES. He checks the screen—urgent.

CAL
One sec.

He slips into the hall.

Inside, Regan exhales. Slides the last drawer shut, pockets his phone, and slips out the opposite way.

EXT. CITY - STREETS - MORNING

Karen Farris walks briskly downtown. Earbuds in. Focused.

She receives a text reading: PATIENT DATA

She stops. Dials.

INTERCUT - INT. ANDREA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Andrea, surrounded by notes, files, open tablets. Exhausted, raw. She answers.

KAREN FARRIS
This is our last call.

ANDREA
We've got data—patients on
Biotech's treatment versus ours.
Their outcomes tank. Ours—

KAREN FARRIS
Jesus. Stop. Don't say cure. Don't
say "fail." Not on a recorded line.

ANDREA
Right. Sorry.

KAREN FARRIS
You want a headline, not a thesis.
No one goes viral for charts.
You're not shorting a stock—you're
targeting an empire.

ANDREA
So... what sells?

KAREN FARRIS
Emotion. Danger. Personal risk.

ANDREA
What if I'm the patient?

Karen stops walking.

KAREN FARRIS
(quiet)
Say that again.

ANDREA
I'll take it. The dose. On record.
I'll say I contracted X9.

KAREN FARRIS
Now that... that's news. But make
it personal. Not political.

ANDREA
If I do this, Gupta burns. For
good.

KAREN FARRIS
Then give me a video.
(beat)
Close-up. Direct to camera. Use
your own words. Make people feel
it.

Andrea nods. Guts knotting.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)
And Andrea?

Andrea waits.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)
This was our last call.

Click. She hangs up.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - GUPTA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Cal enters. Gupta doesn't look up.

CAL
Dr. Gupta—

GUPTA
I know. There's another.

CAL
He's working with Andrea.

GUPTA
Predictable. A few Brown loyalists
clinging to scraps...
(beat)
...chasing truth. As if that was
ever the point.

Gupta finally stands. Moves to the window. Calm. Unhurried.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Time to... reduce the noise.
(beat)
A little fire drowns out a thousand
whispers.

Cal nods once. Understood.

EXT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - LATER

Regan exits the building, eyes glued to patient data photos on his phone.

Screech!

A crowd runs past him—panicked. Cars peel away.

REGAN

What the—?

BOOM!

An explosion. Biotech's south wing erupts in flames. Screams. Sirens. Chaos. Regan stares—frozen. Then bolts to the parking lot, thumbs out a message:

SUPER (TEXT): EMERGENCY. Check BPH. I'm coming now.

INT. REGAN'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Regan drives fast, scanning his phone. Jaw clenched.

REGAN

Where are you, Andrea?

He slows—spots a grocery store in uproar. People pounding glass, shouting. Regan gets out.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

A CITIZEN pounds the locked door.

CITIZEN

Let us in! I'll break it down!

REGAN

What's happening?

CITIZEN

Theft shutdown! And good luck out there—X9's on the wind.

(shouts again)

Open up!

Regan scans the mob — chaos everywhere. Then he spots Ishara at the edge of the crowd, shouting, frantic. She shoves against the locked store doors, ignored.

ISHARA
Please! Somebody help me!

Regan pushes through the panicked bodies toward her.

ISHARA (CONT'D)
Please! She needs help—now!

ISHARA (CONT'D)
It's my daughter. She locked me out
of the house two nights ago — said
she didn't want me catching it. I
haven't heard from her since.

Regan stiffens.

REGAN
How long since symptoms started?

ISHARA
Four... maybe five days.

Her voice cracks.

ISHARA (CONT'D)
I don't even know if she's still
alive.

PHONE BUZZ

Regan checks it.

SUPER (TEXT): That blast hit my wing.

His eyes narrow. Time is gone. He quickly throws on a mask
and a pair of gloves.

REGAN
I can help you both. But we need to
leave. Now.

BOOM!

Another blast echoes. Closer. The crowd surges.

REGAN
We move now—get her in my car.

ISHARA
Wait—who are you?

REGAN
Someone who's not giving up.
(beat)
But you have to trust me.

She studies him. Something in his voice—his calm, his urgency—clicks.

Ishara turns. Then nods.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - BASEMENT

Harsh LED lights cast Andrea in a pale glow. The syringe trembles in her grip—tip poised at her vein.

BUZZZZ—

Her phone vibrates. She freezes. Glances. "REGAN."

She exhales. Hesitates. She lowers the needle and answers it.

INTERCUT:

INTERCUT - INT. REGAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Regan drives, white-knuckled. In the backseat, Ishara cradles Rhea—feverish, ghost-pale, barely breathing.

ANDREA
(quiet)
What is it?

REGAN
Fire up the lab. All of it.

Andrea looks at the humming machines around her.

ANDREA
What's going on?

ISHARA
Where's the nearest hospital?!

REGAN
Forget the hospital. Andrea, we've got a miracle in the backseat.

Andrea is already moving.

EXT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Regan's car skids to a stop outside a modest, darkened home. Ishara fumbles with her keys, frantic.

ISHARA
She locked herself in days ago. I
couldn't- (swallows) I couldn't
break the door.

Regan doesn't wait. He sprints up the steps, already having on a mask and gloves. One hard kick - CRACK. The door splinters open.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

They rush inside. The house is dim, suffocatingly quiet. Regan shoulders through the bathroom door - hinges give. On the tile floor: Rhea. Fever-soaked, trembling, barely conscious. Ishara collapses beside her.

ISHARA
Rhea! Baby, please-

Regan crouches, checks her pulse, then scoops her up with no hesitation.

REGAN
We don't have time.

He barrels out, Ishara on his heels.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - MINUTES LATER

Regan BURSTS through the door, carrying Rhea.

REGAN
Where do I put her?

ANDREA
(beat, shaken)
It's not ready. The sequence isn't
stable.

REGAN
She doesn't have more time to wait.
Give it to me.

Andrea freezes. Rhea convulses in his arms. Ishara sobs. Andrea's mask cracks.

ANDREA
God help me. Downstairs.

They move quickly downstairs.

REGAN
There was an explosion at Biotech.

Andrea's eyes go wide.

ANDREA
He's scrubbing the whole trail...

ISHARA
Wait—who are you people?

ANDREA
(locking eyes)
We're the only shot your daughter
has.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Rhea lies on the med-chair, drenched in sweat. Her chest rises in quick, shallow gasps. Machines blink. A heart monitor chirps—irregular.

ISHARA
What is all this?! Why isn't she at
a hospital?!

ANDREA
Because hospitals run on lies. We
don't. And they can't give her what
we can. You're not a scientist.
Stay back.

Andrea slips gloves on. Regan threads wires and sensors. A
BLACK FIBER CABLE connects the chair to a humming console.

REGAN
She's three days in. Maybe less
than three hours left.

Andrea freezes. Her eyes flash to Ishara. Then the microscope
feed.

Under it: BLOOD CELLS—deformed, sluggish, clumping.

ANDREA
Eighty-seven percent degradation...

REGAN

How long?

ANDREA

We're on the wire.

She whirls to a cryo-case. Opens it. Inside—one glowing vial.

REGAN

That the last?

ANDREA

This is it.

She loads it into a spinning centrifuge. The WHIR builds.
Andrea draws the final serum.

She kneels beside Rhea, syringe steady.

ISHARA

Will it hurt her?

ANDREA

Not as much as waiting will.

EXT. ANDREA'S HOME

The long-lens camera clicks. Andrea's blurry silhouette
crosses the window.

HENCHMAN 1

That's her. Send it.

Inside the van, a tablet flashes: DATA CONFIRMED - LOCATION
TAGGED.

HENCHMAN 2

Wait... hold up.

On the console, Andrea's phone GPS pings across town — at
Biotech HQ.

HENCHMAN 2 (CONT'D)

She's not here. She's at the Pharma
building.

HENCHMAN 1

Then who the hell's in the window?

INT. BASEMENT

Regan kills the overhead light, yanks a burner phone rigged to a signal spoofer from his pack. He tosses it on the workbench.

REGAN

Your GPS says you're clocking in at Biotech right now.

Andrea exhales. Relief and adrenaline.

ANDREA

Nice trick.

REGAN

Won't last long. They'll figure it out.

Andrea presses the syringe to Rhea's arm - no more hesitation.

The monitors flicker-tracking data. A regeneration bar creeps upward:

14%... 22%... 47%...

REGAN (CONT'D)

No way...

Microscope view: Cells un-clump. Pulse with light. Healthy. Restored.

ANDREA

Degradation: zero.

REGAN

Cell function-restored.

Rhea stirs. Blinks.

RHEA

(barely)

Mom...?

Ishara crouches beside Rhea, stroking her damp hair.

ISHARA

Stay with me, baby. Flora's safe. She's with Mrs. Miller. Just stay with me.

REGAN
(to Andrea)
It worked.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME BASEMENT - LATER

Rhea, wrapped in a thick blanket, cradles hot chocolate.
Ishara watches her like she'll vanish if she blinks.

ANDREA
How's that drink?

RHEA
Hot...

ANDREA
That chocolate will give you a nice
little boost.

RHEA
Thank you.

Across the room, Regan guides Ishara into the med-chair.

REGAN
Ma'am—we should get you dosed too.
Just to be safe.

ISHARA
(shakes her head)
You said you don't have much. Save
it.

ANDREA
(gently)
We have enough. I'll go last.

Ishara hesitates—then nods. Andrea sits beside Rhea as Regan preps Ishara.

RHEA
What was that stuff?

Andrea taps the monitor. Nanobots swirl onscreen.

ANDREA
Custom RNA in nanoshells.
Programmable medicine.

RHEA
And they're in me?

ANDREA
They fixed you. In a few
years—you'll dose from your phone.

RHEA
That's wild...

ANDREA
Why didn't you go to a hospital
sooner?

Rhea glances at her mom.

RHEA
She'd live to a hundred, but not if
I buried her in medical bills. I
used to be a computer engineer.
Company went under...

Andrea walks to a tablet. Pulls up Gupta's smug Biotech
profile.

ANDREA
He profits off suffering. We're
burning him down.

Rhea joins her—gaze hardening.

ISHARA
That's the guy from the news...

REGAN
Easy...

Andrea nods to Regan—he doses Ishara quickly.

Onscreen, her cell activity stabilizes. Color returns to her
cheeks.

ISHARA
Call me Ishara.

REGAN
Of course.

Andrea turns to Rhea.

ANDREA
You said you're good with numbers?

RHEA
It's kind of my thing.

ANDREA

Good. Regan'll set you up on the network.

(to Regan)

Take them upstairs. I need a clean testimonial.

REGAN

You got it.

They head out—Regan, Rhea, Ishara—one by one.

Alone now, Andrea returns to the metal tray. Lifts the syringe she almost used on herself. And just stares at it. Silence.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - KITCHEN

The phone camera RECORDS. A makeshift light rig casts soft glow over Rhea, seated, wrapped in a blanket. Her eyes are tired—but fire simmers beneath.

RHEA

(to camera)

It doesn't have to be like this. X9 isn't unbeatable.

She swallows, voice catching.

RHEA (CONT'D)

There's a cure. Not treatment. Cure.

She holds up her tablet—screen glowing with biometric readouts. Her name. Her vitals. Clean.

RHEA (CONT'D)

I'm cured. My mom... cured.

Her voice breaks. But she powers through.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Flora—baby girl... we're alive.

She sets the tablet down, hands shaking slightly.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Ask your doctor. Ask Biotech. Ask Halstrom. They know the cure works.

(beat)

They're just... not giving it to you.

She leans closer, raw now.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Demand better. Demand your life
back.

The red RECORDING light flicks off.

REGAN
(softly)
One take.

ISHARA
She's brilliant.

Ishara hugs her daughter, fierce with pride.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - BASEMENT

Andrea pulls a small container from refrigeration. Labeled:
"X9 - LIVE SAMPLE."

ANDREA
(whispers)
You made my parents test subjects.
I'll show the world what you've
done.

FLASH CUT - Her parents, emaciated, being wheeled away in a
Biotech clinic.

She draws the fluid into a syringe. Her hand is rock steady.

RHEA (V.O.)
Protest Halstrom. Protest Biotech.
Make them listen.

Andrea sits. Rolls up her sleeve. Breathes in. And injects.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Andrea reappears, holding her phone. Regan looks up from the
table.

REGAN
Karen needs this video—now.

Andrea shakes her head.

ANDREA
Karen's out. Doesn't want the risk.

Regan rises, rattled.

REGAN

Then we wait—find another way to—

Andrea holds up the phone.

ANDREA

Already sent.

She taps the screen. Message flies.

REGAN

Andrea!

He stops. The message is sent. There's no undoing it.

Andrea's already crossing the room, joining Ishara and Rhea. Calm. Grounded.

ANDREA

I'll need to monitor you both
overnight. Just in case.

Regan watches her, stunned. Then turns—sees Rhea smile weakly as Ishara kisses her forehead.

He exhales. Something has started.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - MORNING

The house sleeps. Stillness. Morning haze floats through half-drawn curtains.

Downstairs, Andrea leans over a glowing screen, face pale, eyes red-wired, wrecked. Behind her, footsteps.

RHEA

(softly)

You haven't slept?

Andrea doesn't look up.

ANDREA

Can't. Not while people are still
dying... and I might have something
that works.

RHEA

You do have something. You saved
us.

Andrea finally looks at her. Dark circles, but a faint smile.

ANDREA
I didn't even know if it'd work.
Not really.

RHEA
I didn't care. I just needed to get
back to my daughter.

Andrea's gaze softens, a lump rising.

ANDREA
X9 feeds on desperation. And the
cure? It feeds greed.

RHEA
Not anymore.

Rhea touches her shoulder—warm, grounding.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Try to rest.

She exits toward the bathroom. Andrea exhales. Rubs her eyes.
Picks up her phone—

DING!

She frowns, taps a notification...and her eyes go wide.
Millions of views. Comments flood in. Shares, reposts,
reaction videos.

She gasps.

ANDREA
Regan, you have to see this!

Regan sits up, groggy. She throws the phone at him.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Look.

He scrolls. Blinks hard. Hope flares—

Then—

RHEA (O.S.)
Andrea...

She's back. White-faced. Holding her phone out like it's
radioactive. Andrea takes it. Sees the headline:

**"Disgruntled Employee Spreads FAKE Cure—Sabotage at
Biotech"**

Her hands tighten around the phone.

ANDREA
He's twisting the truth...

She tosses the phone back to Rhea. Comments roll in:

"Typical scammer BS"

"She's endangering lives!"

"#BiotechWins"

Ishara stirs on the couch.

ISHARA
Is everything okay?

But Andrea's already halfway up the stairs.

REGAN
(rushing after her)
Andrea—wait! Where are you going?

MONTAGE - MEDIA BACKLASH - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

ANCHOR 1 (TV)
Self-proclaimed scientist Andrea
Santiago accused of spreading
conspiracy videos.

ANCHOR 2 (PODCAST)
Sources say Dr. Andrea Santiago may
have faked data to destabilize
Biotech.

TWITTER FEED
Another fame-seeking fraud.
#BiotechWins

YOUTUBE COMMENT
You endangered patients! Hope ur
proud. Hope u burn!

FACEBOOK FEED
We fact-checked the so-called
'cure' - here's the truth. #fraud

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ishara is fully awake now. Rhea rushes to her.

ISHARA
What's happening?

RHEA
We're okay, Ma. Just stay down.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Andrea SLAMS a drawer, grabs supplies—vials, tablets, medkits. Regan barrels down after her.

REGAN
(low, sharp)
You rushed it. You didn't let the story build. You gave him back control.

Andrea stops. Guilt, raw and heavy, passes across her face.

Then—

ANDREA
I won't let him bury us.

BANG! The windows shatter inward — not from a bomb, but from the shock of a power surge ripping through the house. Sparks rain from a smoking fuse box. Lights strobe, then die. Silence.

ISHARA
(startled)
What was that?!

A faint hiss comes from the kitchen. Regan sniffs, tenses.

REGAN
...Gas.

Andrea bolts for the stove. The line has been slit open. A curl of flame from the sparking wires licks dangerously close.

ANDREA
They want it to look like an accident.

BUZZZZ— the doorbell. Too calm. Too ordinary. Regan snatches a crowbar, moving to the window. A DELIVERY MAN stands outside with a bag of food. Andrea freezes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
I didn't order anything.

The man just waits. Too patient. Too still.

REGAN
(under his breath)
Quiet's worse than loud.

Andrea's eyes harden. She kills the stove, motions everyone back.

ANDREA
They're not sending an army.
They're sending ghosts.

They retreat into the basement, fast and quiet, as Regan watches through a crack in the blinds. The "delivery man" speaks into his sleeve. No food in the bag. Just weight. Andrea whispers, steady but urgent:

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Every move from now on — assume
they're already here.

INT. ANDREA'S BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

A syringe falls from Andrea's shaking hand—shatters on the concrete.

She stares. Only one vial left. Her breath catches. Eyes wide.

And somewhere above, chaos keeps coming.

EXT. ANDREA'S HOME

A sleek BLACK SEDAN purrs at the curb, lights off.
Inside—Cal, calm, surgical.

Two henchmen step out, not with rifles, but with silenced pistols and a slim signal jammer case.

HENCHMAN 1
On your mark...

They move toward the house, deliberately, like cleaners finishing a job.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - KITCHEN

Regan crouches low, peering through a slit in the blinds. He spots the men — too quiet, too precise. No food bag. No clipboard.

REGAN
(under his breath)
Ghosts... just like she said.

He turns to the others, urgent.

REGAN (CONT'D)
They're not leaving till someone's
dead.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - BASEMENT

Andrea zips the duffel shut. She looks up at Ishara and Rhea.

ANDREA
We split. If they can't pin us in
one place, they lose control of the
story.

Andrea pulls a portable drive from the console, presses it
into Ishara's hands.

ISHARA
Me? I don't—

ANDREA
(urgent, locking eyes)
They'll expect me. Not you. Get it
out. No matter what.

Ishara clutches it, terrified but resolute.

INT. ANDREA'S HOME - KITCHEN

Regan pulls out his phone, hands it to Rhea.

REGAN
Switch phones with me. If they're
tracking, they'll follow yours.

She hesitates. He presses it into her hand.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Go. With Andrea. Now.

He checks the window again. The henchmen retreat to the
sedan, frustrated. Cal watches, unblinking. The car rolls
forward, headlights flashing once — a signal. Regan's jaw
sets. He grabs keys off the counter.

REGAN (CONT'D)
I'll draw them out.

He bolts for the door.

EXT. STREET

The henchmen jump back into the sedan. Tires screech as it pulls off. Regan dives into his own car, slams the door, and guns the engine.

The chase is on.

INT. REGAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Regan floors it—peels onto the street, trailing Cal.

He dials on Rhea's phone, eyes locked on the sedan's taillights.

INTERCUT - REGAN'S CAR / ANDREA'S BASEMENT

ANDREA

Hello?

REGAN

You're alive.

ANDREA

What the hell just happened?

REGAN

Gupta's panic attack. You rattled the hive.

ANDREA

And he sent ghosts. Quiet, surgical.

Andrea yanks another cable from the wall, tosses it in the bag. Rhea and Ishara rush in — rattled, breathless, still shaken from the gas leak.

REGAN

He flipped the narrative. Now we're the threat. We need other hands on this. Other labs.

ANDREA

No. Every time we let others in, they corrupt it. That's how Biotech wins. Brown's dead. My family's dead. This isn't about others.

(MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)
It's about Rhea. About every person
they've erased.

REGAN
And if we don't? Then we're already
finished. They erase us next.

Andrea looks at him, torn – still clutching grief, while he
maps the bigger board.

ANDREA
That's always their move –
discredit, then erase.

A beat.

REGAN
We need their nanotech. Tonight.

EXT. STREET

Regan cuts a tight corner. The black sedan looms ahead—still
in sight.

INT. BASEMENT

Andrea zips the duffel shut. Rhea hands over a second phone.

RHEA
Karen. Says it's urgent.

Andrea meets her eyes—tense, then turns back to the call.

ANDREA
(to Regan)
Stay sharp. They're not playing.

REGAN
Neither are we.

He hangs up—eyes hard. Grip the wheel tighter. Foot presses
the gas-engine SCREAMS.

REGAN (CONT'D)
(under breath)
Who the hell are you really, Cal?

Andrea presses the new phone to her ear.

ANDREA
Hello?

INTERCUT - KAREN'S CONFERENCE ROOM / ANDREA'S BASEMENT -
NIGHT

Karen Farris paces a dimly lit space—laptop open, news feeds streaming. Her hand grips the phone, knuckles white.

KAREN FARRIS
So... you're not dead?

Andrea freezes, duffel in hand.

ANDREA
Come again?

KAREN FARRIS
What the hell is happening?

ANDREA
Gupta's torching everything. I'm
lucky I'm still breathing.

Karen stops pacing. Her voice drops—almost a whisper.

KAREN FARRIS
I'm breaking my own rules calling
you.

ANDREA
You said "not dead." What are you
talking about?

Karen lifts a tablet off the table. Her face hardens.

KAREN FARRIS
Headline: "Dr. Andrea Santiago
Killed in Terrorist Blast. Gupta
Resigns."

ANDREA
What!?

KAREN FARRIS
Sending it now.

PING. Andrea taps her screen. A news clip opens.

ON TABLET -

Gupta at a press podium, solemn, bathed in flashbulbs.

GUPTA (ON TABLET)
...Following Dr. Brown's tragic
passing, and now Dr. Santiago's
untimely death...

B-ROLL: Biotech's building—charred, smoldering holes across its side. Emergency crews swarm the scene.

GUPTA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...Halstrom Enterprises will
spearhead the global containment
strategy...

Andrea stares, stone-faced. Then— SLAM. She smacks the tablet against the table.

ANDREA
Global epidemic?

KAREN FARRIS
CDC just validated it. Halstrom
confirmed new numbers.

Andrea paces, chest rising and falling fast.

ANDREA
He's staging a full-scale outbreak.
All to erase us before we go
public.

Karen's voice cuts sharp.

KAREN FARRIS
Did the cure work?

Andrea's eyes flick to the shattered syringe on the floor.
Then to the one pristine vial—still glowing faintly.

ANDREA
They had hours left. Now they're
walking, talking, breathing.

Karen exhales—heavy. Her voice steadies.

KAREN FARRIS
If I go live, there's no going
back.

Andrea lifts the vial. Her reflection swims in the glass.

ANDREA
Then don't look back.

Silence. Then Karen sits, opens her laptop.

KAREN FARRIS
Strap in.

Click.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Regan floors it, pulls alongside Cal's sedan—windows down, wind tearing through.

REGAN

Hey—!

Cal glances over, calm as ever. Lifts the machine gun.

Regan's eyes flare.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Shit!

He jerks the wheel, slams the brakes—his car veers hard, tires screaming.

A delivery truck barrels past, missing him by inches. Silence. Just the faint hum of the engine and Regan's pulse in his ears.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Yeah... can't learn that in school.

He spins the wheel—tires bite pavement. U-turn. He guns it—back toward Biotech Pharma.

INT. BASEMENT

Andrea slings the duffel over her shoulder. Looks to Rhea and Ishara.

ANDREA

One more place left.

INT. NEWS STATION - NIGHT

FULL SCREEN: Rhea on a phone camera, steady and resolute.

RHEA (ON VIDEO)

They know it works. They're holding out. It's time to take control of our health. Demand your cure.

The video shrinks and slides to the corner of the screen.

ON AIR LIVE FEED: Karen Farris sits center-frame at the anchor desk. Composed. Fire behind her eyes.

KAREN FARRIS

Dr. Gupta's issued denial after denial—each aimed at discrediting what you just saw. But I've verified that footage. No edits. No tricks. That woman is alive today because someone broke ranks.

She leans forward, tone cutting through the air.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)

So we ask: How long has the cure existed? Why was it hidden? And why now—on the cusp of a so-called global epidemic?

A beat. Silence.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)

How many lives are too many to trade for profit?

She looks straight into the lens.

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)

The time to act is now. Speak up. Protest. Take your lives back.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - NIGHT

Andrea bursts through double doors, eyes sweeping the room like a soldier returning to a battlefield. Rhea hurries behind her, clinging to a stuffed bag.

ANDREA

Come on...

She moves fast—ripping open drawers, snatching supplies.

RHEA

Didn't you work here?

ANDREA

Worked. Studied. Then I knocked on Biotech's door—hard enough they had to let me in.

A faint knock. The door creaks open.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (50s), wiry and soft-eyed, enters mid-sentence.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN
I thought--wait, is that really you?

He steps forward, arms ready to hug.

Andrea lifts a palm, firm.

ANDREA
I wouldn't get too close...

His face sinks. He steps back, understanding.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN
They're saying you were killed.

ANDREA
They want me gone. But I need
syringes. All of them.

He clocks Rhea in the corner.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN
And you are...?

RHEA
Rhea.

Andrea keeps moving, eyes locked on a microscope case.

ANDREA
We need to convert this place into
a temp lab. Fast.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN
Andrea, that's not how this works--

ANDREA
We have a working cure. I just need
space. And peace.

He doesn't respond.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Biotech torched my home, Professor.
We don't have infrastructure. We
have momentum. I just need forty-
eight hours.

Silence. Then:

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN
Forty-eight hours. And nothing
leaves this room.

He turns to go, then pauses.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN (CONT'D)
I never saw you.

Andrea stops. Her voice softens.

ANDREA
Thank you.

He nods once and disappears down the hall.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - GUPTA'S OFFICE - MORNING

The doors swing open. Two POLICE OFFICERS step into the polished, glassy interior—stiff suits, grim faces.

Cal sits off to the side, silent and still. Gupta rises smoothly to greet the officers, offering a handshake like a seasoned diplomat.

GUPTA
Gentlemen.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Dr. Gupta.

Gupta gestures toward Cal.

GUPTA
This is Dr. Halstrom. Halstrom Enterprises. He's joining us in our efforts to contain the situation—ally in protecting lives during... unspeakable tragedy.

POLICE OFFICER 2
We need to ask you a few questions regarding the recent attacks.

Gupta motions to the sleek chairs in front of his desk.

GUPTA
Of course. Anything I can do.

POLICE OFFICER 1
We'll need access to your communications—call logs, internet activity, internal correspondence.

GUPTA
Naturally. I'll authorize a full data pull.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Also staff records. Medical files.
Anyone confirmed or presumed
dead—we'll need identifiers, maybe
even dental.

Gupta's face tightens. Just a flicker.

GUPTA
You'll have everything. I want the
truth uncovered as much as anyone.

POLICE OFFICER 1
There's one more thing. We'll need
to evacuate the building.

A pause hangs. Gupta doesn't move. Eyes lock with Cal. The
tension thickens.

GUPTA
That's not possible.

POLICE OFFICER 1
It's standard protocol during
active investigations—

GUPTA
This facility is the front line of
a global health crisis. You shut us
down, people die.

POLICE OFFICER 2
We can relocate your operations—

GUPTA
You think you can replicate this
infrastructure? These resources?
This data?
(leans in, calm but cold)
I can offer your families full care
packages—private coverage. No
expense. Just... let us work.

The officers exchange a glance—weariness settling in.

POLICE OFFICER 2
We'll work around it.

They stand.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Appreciate the cooperation.

The men exit.

Gupta watches them go, then turns to Cal with a small, satisfied nod.

GUPTA

Nice to see the world still
understands leverage.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - PRIVATE CONFERENCE ROOM -
MOMENTS LATER

Low light. Shadows cast long across the glass walls. Cal stands beside two senior BIOTECH SCIENTISTS—one older, weary-eyed; the other younger, unreadable.

Silence stretches. Finally, the older team member steps forward, jaw tight.

TEAM MEMBER

We followed your specs. Your
orders. Now the story is: rogue lab
techs?

Gupta adjusts his cuffs, slow and deliberate. His smile never reaches his eyes.

GUPTA

The board doesn't care who started
the fire.
(pause)
Only who owns the extinguisher.

The scientist's fists clench. Cal throws a sharp look his way—don't.

Gupta steps in close. His voice is silk over steel.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

You like your clearance? Your
pension?
(beat)
Then remember who signs off on
both.

He pivots, calm again—but something in his gaze frays. The room stays frozen behind him.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - GUPTA'S OFFICE - LATE MORNING

The air's tight. Cal adjusts a cufflink, eyes flicking to Gupta, who stares out the window—jaw locked, still.

Cal crosses the room, lifts Gupta's tablet, pulls up surveillance logs. Rows of calls, timestamps, locations roll down the screen.

CAL

We could move now. Clean shot — no one would see it coming.

GUPTA

Not yet. They're still leading us to what we need.

CAL

Her phone's running a secure channel — military grade. We can't tap it without tripping federal alarms.

GUPTA

Then we stay close, and we wait.

CAL

Here. Thirty days' worth. Every number, every ping.

Gupta scans the data. A slow exhale.

GUPTA

I want them buried. All of them.
And I want this building gone.
Ashes.

CAL

Already mapping routes.

Gupta strides toward the door, but pauses—glances back.

GUPTA

Has my office at Halstrom been prepped?

CAL

It's ready.

Gupta turns for one last look at his office—pristine, gleaming, empty of sentiment.

GUPTA

It's been fun.
(smiling coldly)

GUPTA (CONT'D)

But I have a higher calling...

He walks out without another glance.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights flicker above Andrea—pale, steady, hunched over the central bench. Beside her, Rhea lines up syringes, glancing between monitors, her fingers moving fast but eyes alert.

The door swings open. Regan enters, breath ragged.

REGAN

How we doing?

Andrea looks up—relief softens her. The first genuine exhale in hours.

ANDREA

You're alive!

A rare smile flickers between them.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

We're close. Sequence is stabilizing.

She coughs—tight, low. Regan clocks it but doesn't call it out.

He pulls on gloves, steps beside her like he's always belonged in a lab.

REGAN

Dr. Brown's house was ransacked.
They're not playing anymore.

Andrea nods toward a faintly glowing vial under the biohood.

ANDREA

They're looking for this.

REGAN

Well, we better finish fast.

ANDREA

We have forty eight hours to scale it.

She checks the monitor. A green bar crawls: 97%.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

One last update—then we run it.

She coughs again. Harder this time.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY

Professor Nystuen walks briskly through the corridor, fatigue etched into his face.

A sound outside—low engines, tires rolling over gravel. He glances out a window.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CONTINUOUS

Three unmarked SUVs roll to a stop. Doors open in sync. Six men step out—black suits, black boots, zero expression.

BACK TO HALLWAY

Nystuen freezes. The men enter. One locks eyes with him.

PROFESSOR NYSTUEN
(stammering)
You—you can't be here...

They pass him like he's glass.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

Gunshots ring out. Distant. Closer. Andrea jolts. Regan grabs her shoulder.

REGAN
Hide. Now.

They scatter. Andrea and Rhea dive behind steel tables. Regan stays upright, posts at the door.

Footsteps thunder closer—

A HENCHMAN bursts through, gun raised—

Regan's on him in a blink. A sharp elbow, a twist—gunfire rips into the ceiling. The body drops.

Regan grabs the fallen weapon, rushes to Andrea.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Keep your wrists firm—with a little
give in the elbow.

ANDREA
You know how to do this?

REGAN
Dr. Brown had... unconventional
ideas about lab safety.

ANDREA
Unconventional?

REGAN
She taught me hand-to-hand between
RNA lectures. Said science without
survival was pointless.

A second HENCHMAN charges in—Regan spins, fires—drops him.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Rhea! Grab the core drive!

The laptop pings: 100%. Rhea yanks it. Tablets and vials go
into her bag.

More boots. More guns. The next wave crashes in—glass
shatters, metal screams. Andrea yelps, squeezes the
trigger—BANG!

A henchman spins, slams into a metal cabinet, crumples.

ANDREA
(startled)
Did I—? Was that—?

REGAN
Dead center. Totally intentional.

ANDREA
I closed my eyes!

REGAN
Never admit that!

Regan fires—controlled, sharp. One shot—drop. Another—drop.

Andrea fumbles to reload. Drops the clip. Fumbles again. She
ducks just as a bullet whizzes overhead.

ANDREA
I think I hate this part of
science.

Regan kneels beside her, calmly swaps her magazine out.

REGAN
You get used to it.

Tables flip. Vials explode. A henchman charges—Andrea shrieks, fires blind.

Glass bursts. The man collapses. Andrea peeks up, stunned.

ANDREA
That one I aimed for.

REGAN
Now you're a scientist and a statistic.

The last henchman slams into a shelf—out cold. The lab goes still.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Move!

Andrea's halfway out when she stops. Pulls out her phone.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Andrea!

ANDREA
They'll erase this. I won't let them.

She captures it—bodies, broken equipment, scorched walls.

Then Regan grabs her wrist and they sprint out of the room.

INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

More henchmen thunder down the stairs—Regan and Andrea fire as they run, bullets exchanging mid-air.

Exit doors ahead.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

They burst into the parking lot. Andrea freezes.

Nystuen's body sprawls across the steps. Bullet through the chest. Eyes wide, lifeless.

ANDREA
(soft, gutted)
I'm so sorry...

Regan doesn't stop.

REGAN
We have to go!

Andrea lingers a second. Then she runs. They vanish into the dark.

EXT. CITY - STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Regan's car tears through downtown, headlights slicing through the urban blur.

INT. REGAN'S CAR - MOVING

Andrea twists around, breathing hard, watching the shadows behind them.

ANDREA
Where's your mom's house?

RHEA
It's--

SCREEEECH!

A BLACK SEDAN whips around a corner behind them, tires screaming.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

A bloodied henchman leans across the seat, wild-eyed. Gun out the window.

INTERCUT - BOTH VEHICLES

REGAN
(strained)
We've got company.

He punches the gas. The chase kicks up.

They whip past late-night traffic-side mirrors SMACK parked cars, horns erupt.

Bullets PING off the trunk.

RHEA
He's gaining!

Up ahead—a CONCRETE DIVIDER rises like a guillotine, splitting the lanes before an underpass.

REGAN
Hold onto something.

At the last second, he cuts left—hard, threading the sliver between traffic and divider.

Behind them—CRUNCH!

The black sedan tries to follow—slams the concrete barrier, flips sideways, glass raining.

INT. REGAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The impact throws everyone forward. Then—Silence.

Andrea throws open the laptop on her lap.

ON SCREEN: SEQUENCE COMPLETED - 100%

ANDREA
Yes.

She slams it shut, grinning like she just stole fire. Adrenaline pulsing.

INT. NEWS STATION - DAY

FULL SCREEN VIDEO: Grainy phone footage. A university lab in chaos. Shattered glass. Unmoving bodies in black. A bloodied logo reads: Biotech Pharma.

KAREN (V.O.)
Tensions surge after a suspected terrorist assault at the University of Cape Town—just hours after the Biotech blast.

The video slides up to the corner.

LIVE ON AIR: Karen Farris. Sharp. Controlled fire in her voice.

KAREN FARRIS
First Biotech. Now a university science lab. Why these sites? Why now?
(beat)
Dr. Gupta warns of a growing shadow war. But the real question—
(MORE)

KAREN FARRIS (CONT'D)

(leans in)

—are the enemies of science out
there... or already among us?

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

Gupta watches the broadcast on a sleek tablet, jaw clenched.
Tension simmering.

GUPTA

Who the hell is this?

Cal enters, grim.

CAL

Our men are down, sir.

GUPTA

(still watching)

Clearly.

He paces—contained fury building.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

The police are circling. After
this, they'll be on my doorstep.

Cal offers a second tablet.

CAL

We might not have to worry about
that.

Gupta grabs it. Surveillance footage rolls—Andrea, sprinting
down a corridor the night of Dr. Brown's death. Explosion
imminent.

GUPTA

Why isn't this whole place ash?

Cal's already halfway out the door.

INT. GUPTA'S OFFICE - LATER

The two police officers from earlier return. Gupta greets
them—serene mask firmly in place.

GUPTA

Officers... I'd like you to see
something.

He hands over the tablet. The officers watch closely.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

We believe Dr. Brown wasn't acting alone. Possibly a wider radical cell.

Both officers' phones buzz. One lifts a walkie.

POLICE WALKIE (O.S.)

Explosion at Biotech. All units respond!

GUPTA

Dear, God!...

(To Cal)

Call over there! Evacuate them—now.

The officers rush out. Gupta turns. Cold calculation behind his eyes. Calls Cal.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Push the damage claim. The insurance alone makes it worth the smoke.

CAL

What about her?

Gupta stares out the window—glass reflecting the firestorm outside.

GUPTA

Let them believe she's a killer. A terrorist. Let them fear her.

(turns)

She'll be too busy staying alive... for now.

EXT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - NIGHT

Flames roar from the building's twisted frame. FIREFIGHTERS cut through smoke, silhouetted in flickering orange light.

Glass glitters in the street like broken promises.

Above it all, a black column of smoke coils into the sky—rising, dissolving.

INT. UNDERGROUND SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Dust settles around the old equipment. Flickering light from a lone terminal washes over Andrea, Regan, and Rhea.

Onscreen: grainy surveillance footage from Gupta's private suite.

GUPTA (V.O.)
Let the world believe she's a
killer. A terrorist. Let them fear
her.

Andrea's fingers float over the keyboard.

She locks eyes with Regan.

REGAN
(grim)
This time... we do it right.

Andrea hits SEND.

The screen bursts to life—data firing off like fireworks. Encrypted files, footage, internal memos—all routed to whistleblower portals, newsrooms, public health servers.

MONTAGE - NEWS OUTLETS & SOCIAL MEDIA ERUPTING

ANCHOR 1 (V.O.)
Breaking: Shocking new evidence
implicates Biotech CEO in smear
campaign against Dr. Santiago.

ANCHOR 2 (V.O.)
Global outrage erupts as leaked
video confirms conspiracy to frame
whistleblower.

TWITTER TRENDING:
#JusticeForAndrea #GuptaExposed
#BelieveTheTruth

FACEBOOK TRENDING:
Explosive evidence ties CEO Gupta
to false-flag conspiracy. #TheTruth

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - BASEMENT - LATE EVENING

Cables snake across the floor. Monitors hum, glowing with code. Regan and Rhea work fast. Andrea stands nearby—arms crossed, eyes like steel.

REGAN
How's it feel to be dead?

Andrea smirks.

ANDREA
Biotech still spinning?

REGAN
Half the staff walked. The rest are
pissed. Your video hit socials
before I made it back. They're
evacuating in 24.

ANDREA
And Gupta?

Regan's silence answers her.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Of course. Gone like a ghost.
(beat)
He's cornering the world—bury the
cure, sell the panic.

REGAN
Maybe. But protests already broke
out at Biotech. People are waking
up.

The screens finish booting—BEEP. Rhea glances up.

ANDREA
Can we be ready by morning?

RHEA
Absolutely. I can configure
everything within twelve hours.

Regan holds up a USB drive—pauses, half to himself.

REGAN
Time to solve with courage.

He hands it to Rhea.

REGAN (CONT'D)
This hooks into the old Biotech
network. Might still ping through
their cloud.

Rhea nods, already plugging it in, focused.

Ishara descends with a tray of drinks.

ISHARA
You all look like death. Hydrate.

They take a beat. The quiet is eerie. A calm before detonation.

REGAN

Gupta's turning Biotech into a ghost town.

ISHARA

Then maybe that makes it the perfect place to test your future cure.

Andrea's eyes spark.

ANDREA

Why not go back? No security. Empty labs. Full access. No one to stop us. We use their own lab to prove the cure!

REGAN

If I show up... with Gupta's moles still lurking...

ANDREA

We upload everything live. Feed the CDC real-time proof.

ISHARA

See? I'm useful.

ANDREA

(To Regan)

Give me your phone.

He hands it over. She starts recording—eyes locked.

ANDREA (INTO CAMERA) (CONT'D)

Still breathing. If you want to be on the right side of history—meet me at sunrise.

She ends the video. Hands it back.

REGAN

I'll rally whoever's left.

He turns to go—but Rhea intercepts with a glance.

RHEA

There's something else.

She looks to Andrea.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Gupta now knows you're alive.
Walking in is asking to get shot.

ANDREA
Then maybe I should.

Everyone freezes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
You've got the cure. The data. We
made it this far.
(beat)
Let him see me. Let him try. On
camera. If I die—let the world
watch.

REGAN
That's your plan?

ANDREA
Only if he wants the kill shot more
than control.

Rhea digs into a drawer—pulls out a BROADCAST UNIT and
EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE.

RHEA
Stream everything. Wear your phone
like a necklace. I'll connect the
feed.

Andrea places her phone on the table. No hesitation.

ANDREA
Do it.

Regan chuckles, shaking his head.

REGAN
You're insane.

Ishara points to Andrea and Rhea.

ISHARA
(to Andrea, squinting)
You and Rhea are the same size,
right?

Blank stares.

ISHARA (CONT'D)
You're gonna need a red dress.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Andrea stands at the sink, rinsing a glass. The water runs-forgotten.

In the window's reflection: her own face, weary but composed. Behind her, the red dress, draped like a dare.

Rhea enters, holding a tablet.

RHEA

The feed's synced. We'll go live
the moment you cross the threshold.

Andrea nods but doesn't turn.

ANDREA

You think he'll kill me?

RHEA

If he does, the world sees it.

ANDREA

That's not what I asked.

Rhea hesitates, then softens.

RHEA

I think... he wants to win. And
dead girls don't lose. They become
symbols. You scare him more alive.

Andrea glances at the window again—eyes hard, but doubt flickers.

ANDREA

What if it's not enough? The cure,
the stream, the outrage. What if
they bury it anyway?

RHEA

Then go there... and make him say
it out loud.

Andrea turns, wary.

ANDREA

You think he will?

RHEA

If you ask the right questions...
and keep him talking.

(beat)

(MORE)

RHEA (CONT'D)
Make him monologue. All great
villains do.

Andrea almost smiles.

Regan appears in the doorway, holding a battered FIELD
RECORDER.

REGAN
If you're walking into the lion's
den... take this too.
(sets it down)
Backup mic. In case he jams the
phone.

ANDREA
Paranoid much?

REGAN
Yep.

Beat.

ANDREA
This only works if he sees me as
something he couldn't kill.
If he believes I'm fearless.

RHEA
You're not?

Andrea lifts the red dress. Drapes it over her arm.

ANDREA
I'm terrified.
(beat)
That's how I know I'm ready.

She walks out.

A moment passes. Then:

ISHARA (O.S.)
Try not to bleed on the dress. It's
vintage.

INT. GUPTA'S COMPOUND - SECURITY HUB - NIGHT

Dim lighting. Surveillance monitors glow—streets, drones,
satellites. A TECH OPERATIVE clicks furiously.

TECH OPERATIVE

Her livestream just added another
fifty thousand viewers. That's
three separate mirror uploads.

Gupta looms behind him, sleeves rolled, eyes on the feed:

Andrea approaches in her red dress. Her phone streams live
from her chest.

GUPTA

Kill her, she becomes a martyr.
(beat)
Let her in... maybe I control the
narrative.

CAL (O.S.)

Sir?

Cal storms in, tense.

CAL (CONT'D)

We've had three clean shots. The
house. The protest. The university.
Every time, you stopped it. Why?

Gupta turns slowly.

GUPTA

Because every time I almost kill
her... the world leans in.
(beat)
If I do it while she's
broadcasting, we ignite a movement.
If I discredit her—on air—I win
twice.

Cal folds his arms.

CAL

And if she's holding something?
Proof? The cure?

GUPTA

Then we stay close. Here, I shape
the frame. We jam nothing... until
I say so.

He walks out, calm and deliberate.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

The world wants a show. So let's
give them the illusion of mercy.
(MORE)

GUPTA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Just make sure she doesn't leave.

On the monitors, Andrea steps up to the gate.

EXT. GUPTA'S PRIVATE COMPOUND-NIGHT

Andrea, radiant in red, approaches the gate like it's a runway. Her phone blinks LIVE.

She presses the intercom.

INTERCOM VOICE

Excuse—

CRACKLE. Line goes dead.

The gate slides open.

She smiles. And walks through the moonlit courtyard like she owns the place. The front doors open before she reaches them.

Gupta waits, stone-faced.

ANDREA

I've come back from the dead to
haunt you.

GUPTA

Tell me why I shouldn't have you
shot right here.

She casually taps her phone.

ANDREA

Might make for your most-watched
livestream.

A beat. Then she walks forward.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

You should've listened to Dr.
Brown. Extortion pays, sure. But
hell's got a seat waiting—with your
name stitched in velvet.

Gupta exhales. Moves aside.

GUPTA

Be my guest.

INT. GUPTA'S PRIVATE COMPOUND - ESTATE BANQUET ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Andrea enters opulence. Vaulted ceilings. Gleaming stained glass. A banquet hall set for a hundred... but empty. Too clean. Too perfect.

Gupta leads her to a table. Pulls out a chair.

GUPTA
Sit. I'll be right back.

He vanishes behind a curtain.

Andrea tests the space. Touches plates, silverware—replicated perfection. Manufactured. Chilling.

Gupta reappears, carrying a SILVER TRAY like a waiter. Suddenly—he hurls it to the ground. CRASH. Plates and crystal shatter across the floor.

Andrea flinches.

ANDREA
Is anyone else here?

GUPTA
Not a soul.

He sets a covered plate before her. Lifts the dome. Seared tuna. Arugula. Gouda. Artful, excessive.

He uncovers his own. Sits.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
If we're going to roleplay... let's commit.

Andrea hesitates.

ANDREA
I'd like to discuss a new position.

Gupta's tone tightens.

GUPTA
Your cure. It works... or it doesn't. Which is it?

ANDREA
It worked. In live trials.

GUPTA
One trial. You think you're ready
for billions?

A tense beat.

ANDREA
We'll find out.

She steadies herself.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Dr. Brown believed in it. You
buried her work.

GUPTA
Why don't you join me? Halstrom and
Santiago. Unlimited labs. Full
funding.

ANDREA
You torched Biotech. Now I'm
getting a job offer?

GUPTA
You're brilliant. Even I see that.

ANDREA
Regan. Rhea. The engineers?

GUPTA
All of it. Greenlit.

A long pause.

ANDREA
Why'd you erase Brown's research?

Gupta leans forward. Calm. Deadly.

GUPTA
Because if everyone thinks they can
replicate our tech, we lose
control.... and the world becomes
noise. We'd spend all our time
erasing the echo.
(beat)
And power isn't about invention
anyway. It's about exclusivity.

ANDREA
Is there anyone you wouldn't
extort?

Gupta smiles—leans in, and points to her phone.

GUPTA

Why don't you turn that off?

Andrea glances down at her phone. Streaming. A long beat.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

I'm sure you have more than enough
evidence that you were here.

She taps the screen. Stops the feed.

He calmly collects her plate. Returns with two domed trays.

Andrea'S POV: A message from Rhea begins streaming across her hidden broadcast interface. It's still live—secretly.

Gupta lifts the covers. Bone-in ribeye. Perfectly marbled.

He steps behind Andrea. Gently places utensils in her hands. Fingers guiding hers—deliberate. Controlling. He helps her cut into the steak. A tender pink center appears.

ANDREA

Is this from a real animal?

GUPTA

Oh, yes. Raised with care. Coddled.
Until the end.

Andrea tastes. Her body responds—unexpectedly overwhelmed.

Gupta unveils a vintage bottle. Slashes the neck clean with a blade.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Ever had the real thing?

ANDREA

A few Toulous vintages. Once or
twice.

GUPTA

So we do have some common ground.

He pours. She sips—small. Controlled.

ANDREA

You want to bleed the world for
profit. I'd never work with you.

Gupta doesn't flinch.

GUPTA
Andrea, let me tell you a story.

MONTAGE - GUPTA'S MONOLOGUE (V.O.)

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - Karen flips through files. Cal steps behind her.

EXT. CAL'S CAR - Trunk rattles. Something... alive?

INT. BIOTECH LABS - Controlled demolitions. Labs erupt in fire.

INT. ANDREA'S HOUSE - Cal soaks the home in gasoline. The match drops.

GUPTA (V.O.)
When I was your age, I wanted to
save the world. But death... it
teaches faster than life ever
could.

INT. GUPTA'S PRIVATE COMPOUND - ESTATE BANQUET ROOM - RETURN
TO PRESENT

Andrea stares at Gupta, realization dawning. The match. The
labs. Dr. Brown.

Gupta watches her process it. He grins. Vicious. Inevitable.

GUPTA
We're hours from collapse. I'll
never let that cure see daylight.

He taps his tablet. A headline flashes:

"Dr. Santiago Implicated in Dr. Brown's Death - NEW EVIDENCE"

Andrea's breath catches.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Looks like truth is whatever I
upload first.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
You're nothing. You're done. A
whisper in the hurricane. And
now... a criminal.

Long pause. Andrea exhales. Slow. Composed. Sets down her
fork. Straightens.

ANDREA

Tomorrow, you don't fall because of me. You fall because now it's theirs. The cure, the truth – it's not mine anymore, it belongs to everyone. I'm done hiding.

Beat. She rises. Calm. Controlled. Meets his gaze—just long enough. Then turns. And walks out.

Gupta watches her go. No guards stop her. No bullets fly. Only the quiet hum of a war about to break.

EXT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - LATE NIGHT

Regan charges in—gear strapped, jaw tight. The building's a skeletal blaze, flames curling into the sky. No responders. No help. Just smoke and silence.

He stares into it. Beaten. Then boiling.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Smoke claws through the corridor. Regan sprints, dodging debris, lungs burning. The flames lick at the walls as he barrels forward.

FLASHBACK: INT. ANDREA'S HOME - EARLIER

BOOM. A violent eruption—walls splinter, fire consumes everything.

INT. BIOTECH PHARMACEUTICALS - HALLWAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Regan blinks the memory away. Keeps going. Ahead—panicked SCIENTISTS stumble through smoke. They freeze at the sight of him.

SCIENTIST

Everything's gone—north labs, east wing. All of it.

REGAN

How much is left?

SCIENTIST

South wing. Still standing. For now.

Regan squares his shoulders.

REGAN

Would you risk your lives to save
millions?

They hesitate—but only for a second.

SCIENTIST

That's why we're here.

Regan lifts his case—his eyes blazing with purpose.

REGAN

Then I've got something you need to
see.

(beat)

How many of you have cars?

EXT. ANDREA'S HOME - LATER

Andrea reaches her block—her house a wall of flame. She
staggers toward it. Embers swirl like ash ghosts. Fumbling,
she dials Karen. No answer.

She stares at the screen, then lowers it. Frozen. SIRENS
echo, closing in. Her eyes snap alert. She turns—and runs.

INT. HALSTROM HOSPITAL - UPSTAIRS OFFICES - CAL'S OFFICE -
LATE NIGHT

A sleek, clinical office. Sterile as the man inside. Cal
rises as Gupta enters, dragging fury with him.

CAL

Have a seat.

Gupta doesn't. He taps his tablet. Fires. Protest videos.
Crashing stocks.

GUPTA

Goodbye, Biotech.

(to Cal)

You've done exemplary work, Doctor.

CAL

The treatment's live. Their immune
systems won't recover. Some won't
walk again.

Gupta scrolls—until he stops.

Headline: "Andrea Santiago Linked to Dr. Brown's Death"

A flicker of something... broken.

GUPTA

She made me burn my own empire to
the ground...

He paces, voice cracking like glass.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Let the world drown. Let X9 take
the lungs of every continent.

CAL

Sir, you've never had more power.
More reach.

Gupta's smile vanishes.

GUPTA

And it still isn't enough.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - SUNRISE

The lab hums—bright and bursting with coordinated chaos.
SCIENTISTS. ENGINEERS. TECHS.

Voices overlap:

TECH #1

Sequence updated!

TECH #2

Upload's live!

TECH #3

Simulations running!

Screens flash. Charts spike. Vials swap hands. Progress
surges like electricity.

Regan emerges, tablet in hand, moving through the whirlwind.

A ripple—then stillness—as Andrea bursts in.

Breathless. Eyes blazing. Hair windswept.

ANDREA

Hi...yeah, I'm alive. Get used to
it.

The team nods—and immediately gets back to work. Regan steps
forward.

REGAN
How was it?

ANDREA
He's smarter than we thought. Years
ahead.
(beat)
He's made them believe I'm dead—and
the villain in their story now.

She paces, reeling.

REGAN
Not everyone believes that.

Their eyes meet. Truth lingers between them. Not everyone
doesn't mean no one.

ANDREA
Forget it. Let's pivot. This
story's not about me anymore.
It's about beating the virus.

REGAN
We're ahead of the curve.

ANDREA
Then let's stay there. We need Rhea
patched in.

She unlocks her phone. One tap—SPEAKERPHONE kicks in.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Rhea, you with us?

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - BASEMENT

Rhea, surrounded by glowing monitors, leans in.

RHEA
Patched and synced.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Andrea steadies her breath.

The lab glows with readouts, holograms and hope. Everyone's
locked in.

RHEA (V.O.)
This is it. X9 dies tonight—or
takes the world.

Regan taps the tablet.

A 360° HOLOGRAPHIC MAP of South Africa fans across the room—color-coded outbreaks, cure distribution arcs.

Andrea leans in.

ANDREA
Is the outbreak spreading?

REGAN
We're not seeing new zones—

ANDREA
Risk projection?

RHEA
Point-zero-four degrees.

Andrea narrows her eyes.

ANDREA
Regan?

REGAN
We log enough recoveries, the curve breaks.

Hold steady, we win. Suddenly—FLASH. A tablet notification pings.

REGAN (CONT'D)
(reads)
"Karen Farris found dead. Suspected overdose."

Silence. Andrea freezes. She stares at the South Africa map, trembling.

ANDREA
From this moment... this is your cure.

REGAN
Mine?

ANDREA
If Gupta wants to hide in the shadows—so will I. I'm gone. Publicly.
(beat)
No posts. No texts. No mentions. I was never here.

REGAN
(quiet, focused)
We're thirty seconds from going
live.

The lab falls into hush. All eyes on her. Andrea's hands
shake. Regan steps closer—takes her wrist gently.

REGAN (CONT'D)
You okay?

ANDREA
Just... fatigue.

Regan watches her. Knows.

REGAN
You infected yourself?

No answer. Just the look. A long beat. Then:

REGAN (CONT'D)
Then let's finish this.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

Cal stands, arms folded. Gupta stares out the window—rage
brewing just beneath the surface.

CAL
Want me to deploy the rest of my
men?

GUPTA
No, we can't risk it yet. We wait
for nightfall.

CAL
What about Andrea?

Gupta turns. Rage explodes.

GUPTA
I told you to kill her!

CAL
You're the one who let her walk
out.

Gupta lunges—grabbing Cal's face, jaw clenched, his grip vice-
like.

GUPTA

"Get away"? You're the one with
combat and firearms training, the
backdoor access. The mercenaries.

(beat-his grip tightens)

Do you want to see how fast I could
end her life if I wanted?

Cal stiffens, stunned. Breath shallow.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

Andrea stands frozen. Chest rising. Fear flickers behind her
eyes.

RHEA (V.O.)

Outbreak threshold: 0.03%.

REGAN

These numbers are slipping. The
sequence isn't holding.

ANDREA

We need a stronger sequence.

She yanks her hand from Regan's and bolts from the room.

REGAN

Andrea!

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Andrea bursts back in, hair wild, eyes blazing.

ANDREA

Rhea-pull up the full X9 cure grid.
Focus on South Africa.

RHEA

Analyzing...

HOLOGRAMS BLOOM-continent overlays, RNA swirls, threat zones
flicker.

ANDREA

Map the Halstrom RNA structure.
Full sequence.

RHEA

Incoming call-Regan.

ANDREA

Decline. Give me the map.

RHEA

RNA structure: 90.78% complete.

Andrea throws open a COOLING TANK. More data floods the air.

Inside: a pulsing, bio-luminescent green X9 cure-sheet—like a breathing scroll of life.

She tears off a strip—slaps it onto a metal slab. It immediately begins regenerating.

ANDREA

We're re-engineering this live.

(to Rhea)

Stream me 1cm of RNA path every 10 seconds.

RHEA

That's beyond human processing.

ANDREA

Do it anyway.

She wires in. Fingers flying. A translucent CELLULAR GRID overlays the growing sheet. Her phone pulses—blindingly fast warnings now. Sweat drips. She types through it.

RHEA

Regan's still trying to reach you—

ANDREA

Ignore it. Outbreak risk?

RHEA

0.02%.

Andrea stares at the sequence. Zooms in. Something off.

ANDREA

Wait... why is Halstrom's RNA sequence incomplete?

She sharpens focus—finds a blurred section. She freezes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

This isn't corruption. It's missing data.

RHEA

It's locked. Outside your access tier.

Andrea stills. Then:

RHEA (CONT'D)
Threshold holding at 0.02%.

Andrea's eyes flash. Her fingers blaze across the interface.

ANDREA
Where's the sequence now?

RHEA
91.63%.

ANDREA
We're gaining—over one percent.
(beat, commanding)
4D-print that strand. Pull the
drive from the car. Now.

The lab kicks into overdrive. Engines hum. Lasers scan.

Andrea watches the green cure-sheet expand—alive, breathing, luminous.

She exhales. Composes. Turns toward the next phase.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - ENTRANCE

Andrea bursts through the doors. She sprints to her car, flings the door open, slams it shut—

SCREECH! Tires howl as she guns it down the street.

Behind her—

Doors fly open. Scientists, engineers, med techs pour out, equipment clutched in arms. Backpacks, cooling tanks, cables.

Engines ROAR to life. A caravan forms. Dozens deep. Screeching wheels. Determined faces.

The science rebellion is on the move.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

Cal winces, clutching his chest—panic rising. Gupta looms, calm as stone.

CAL
Gupta...

GUPTA
You want mercy? Wrong profession.
(leans in)
I built the system. I know exactly
where it cracks. You? You're just
another weak spot.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

Chaos reigns. Engineers and scientists dart between monitors,
shouting data.

REGAN
(aloud)
Rhea—reach Andrea!

Rhea's voice crackles through a nearby console.

RHEA (V.O.)
She's not responding. Still on the
move.

Regan looks up from his tablet. He scans the room—people
sprinting between terminals, patching cables, yelling
updates.

He steps onto a chair.

REGAN
Everyone—listen up!

The noise dips. Heads turn.

REGAN (CONT'D)
We're not chasing headlines. We're
holding the line. We stabilize this
sequence, we get treatment live, we
prove this cure works.
(beat)
And we do it now. Before she gets
herself killed.

Eyes lock with his. The room holds still for one charged
second—then erupts into focused action.

A tech passes him a fresh data slate.

TECH
Sequence holding. Just barely.

Regan exhales—eyes flick to the clock. Time's running out.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Regan steps into the corridor, breath sharp, eyes scanning.

RHEA (V.O.)
She's still not responding...

Regan stares into the distance—caught between duty and dread.

REGAN
(quiet, firm)
Mobilize. Now.

He turns—waves down a cluster of scientists wheeling sleek REPLICATORS and med-kits.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Load everything. We're not waiting.

They rush past him, urgency building.

Regan grabs a walkie.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Patch me through to all
units—Andrea's heading into the
hospital alone. She won't make it
without us.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE - MINUTES LATER

A sea of desperate civilians. Overflow tents. Red-hued sky rippling with dust and dread.

A distant SONIC BOOM. Heads turn.

Andrea's car tears down the road—skids to a brutal halt. Dust flies. The crowd surges toward her, panicked, hungry for answers.

She climbs atop the car, grabs a roof rail—breath ragged, eyes blazing.

ANDREA
HEY!

The crowd hushes. The vehicle sways under the press of bodies.

She flings open both doors.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

This is real. It's live. We've paired a new RNA sequence with nanomachines. This—this is the cure.

She yanks open a side compartment—revealing sleek, glowing 4D-printed nanomachines, pulsing faint blue.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

How fast, Rhea?

RHEA (V.O.)

Instantaneous assimilation. Full sequence delivery.

Andrea scans the crowd—faces streaked with fear, suspicion, sickness.

ANDREA

Everyone—listen. There is a cure for X9.

RHEA (V.O.)

Andrea, what are you doing?

ANDREA

(ignores her, louder)

Too many died trying to protect the truth. I won't bury it. Not again.

A woman steps forward, stunned.

WOMAN

You're the one... they said was dead.

Andrea meets her eyes. Raw. Unapologetic.

ANDREA

They lied. I'm alive. And this—this is why they wanted me gone.

She points to the hospital's locked doors.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

They'll watch you die before admitting I was right.

WOMAN

But... you have the cure?

ANDREA

Yes. And I need it too.

(voice cracking)

I carried the virus. I've lost everything. My family. My home. I have nothing left to protect—except this.

A brutal cough shudders through her. She steadies herself on the roof.

RHEA (V.O.)

Andrea, you're hemorrhaging—

Andrea shakes her off, voice hoarse and unraveling, her body failing her, memories blinking in and out like static.

ANDREA

If we don't fight for the cure—

(coughs, harder—blood this time)

—then we've already lost.

Silence. Just wind. Faces frozen. Andrea drops to one knee. Then forces herself upright—shaking, trembling.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

So go ahead. Wait for Gupta to choose who lives. Or trust me.

The silence stretches. Then—

WOMAN

(quiet, resolute)

I'll do it.

She steps forward. Then another. And another.

Engineers arrive, trailing equipment. Scientists open portable kits. A pop-up lab forms from chaos.

Andrea SLAMS the cooler onto the hood of a car, then steps back, steadying herself.

ANDREA

You know the protocol. Take it from here.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

Cal groans, half-upright on the floor. Gupta paces like a caged animal—shirt damp, eyes bloodshot, control slipping.

CAL
Gupta, please—

GUPTA
I was this close. Hours from
locking the world in my hand. And
you—you stumble now?

He kicks Cal's side. Cal gasps, folding over.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
You opened the door. You gave her
space to breathe.

CAL
(struggling)
I... I followed your orders.

GUPTA
Then own the outcome.

He grabs Cal by the collar, hauls him halfway up.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
You helped her. And now you'll help
me fix it... or you'll be buried
with her.

Cal doesn't answer. He just stares—something cracking behind his eyes. Beat. Gupta drops him. Walks away—muttering to himself as he reboots a console.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Control the air. The water. The
signals. We silence truth. We erase
her from the grid.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE - LATER

The pop-up station hums with life. Andrea and the team move fast—administering doses, scanning vitals, recording consent.

Nearby, SCIENTISTS document every step—goggles on, cameras rolling.

ANDREA
Rhea, are you getting this?

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - BASEMENT

Rhea sits at the heart of a digital storm—feeds cascading, monitors blinking. She's locked in.

RHEA
(eyes on screen)
Every second. That was a damn good
speech, by the way.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I wasn't trying to give one.

RHEA
That's why it worked.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Regan stands frozen as the holograms spike—real-time markers
blinking green across the continent.

TECH
(overlapping)
New vitals uploaded. Viral load
dropping—significantly.

Another feed confirmed! Johannesburg reporting recovery.

A stunned silence. Then a ripple of awe. Applause erupts.

REGAN
(under breath)
It's working.

He turns, overwhelmed. Eyes glistening.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE

Andrea lowers to her knees—shaky, exhausted.

Behind her, a CHILD in a makeshift cot begins to stir—eyes
fluttering open. A nearby nurse gasps. NURSE That kid hadn't
moved in hours... The child coughs. Then reaches out.

Andrea can't help it. She breaks. A single tear.

ANDREA
Rhea?

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - BASEMENT

Rhea is already typing.

RHEA
Pushing to CDC ... now.

She slams the key. A LOADING BAR flashes across her screen.

SENT: "X9 CURE - VERIFIED. GLOBAL RELEASE PACKAGE."

INT. CDC OPERATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

Red phones ring. Terminal lights blink. Monitors flash open.

ON SCREEN: Andrea's footage. GPS-tagged doses. Verified recoveries. Every piece.

A CDC TECH gasps—then runs for the emergency panel.

CDC TECH
Sir? You need to see this—

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE

More civilians arrive. Some limping. Some holding loved ones.

Andrea works fast, dosing as many as she can.

RHEA
Outbreak-risk steady at zero-point-zero-one.

ANDREA
What about the CDC?

RHEA
No word-yet.

ANDREA
Send it to every agency. WHO, Geneva, Nairobi. Everyone.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

Gupta's tablet buzzes. He reads:

LIVE STREAM: UNAUTHORIZED MEDICAL TREATMENT CLAIMS TO CURE X9
- MILLIONS VIEWING.

GUPTA
(quiet, seething)
No. No, no, no...

Cal looks up, concerned.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
 She published it. The footage, the
 data... all of it.

He swipes to another alert:

TRENDING: #X9CURE - WHISTLEBLOWER FOOTAGE SPREADING

GUPTA (CONT'D)
 They're going to believe her. Not
 because it's true—because it's
 convenient.
 (yelling)
 Go find her. End her. Right now!

CAL
 In broad daylight, sir?

GUPTA
 (shouting)
 I don't care if it's on every
 goddamn camera in the city—
 (hissing)
 Shut. Her. Down.

Cal bolts. Gupta taps his desk, activates a secure line.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
 Security. We have a major breach.
 Escalate to red protocol. Full
 lockdown. Anyone unauthorized gets
 detained.

Gupta storms to the window, yanks the blinds. Across the
 skyline—crowds gather. Drones buzz.

He mutters to himself, pacing.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
 She was never supposed to make it
 this far...
 (beat, into his secure
 line)
 Deploy digital jammers. Flood the
 hashtags. Spin it as fake
 medicine—call it domestic terrorism
 if you have to.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE

The crowd freezes. Heads turn.

A squad of HALSTROM SECURITY storms in, rifles raised. Black visors. No names.

SECURITY OFFICER #1
Clear the area-NOW!

A ripple of panic. People hesitate, unsure.

SECURITY OFFICER #1 (CONT'D)
Hands in the air! Do it!

Silence falls. Dozens of civilians raise trembling hands.

Andrea doesn't.

ANDREA
(to the crowd)
Keep filming. Don't stop.
(to the officers)
You're not shutting this down.

SECURITY OFFICER #1
Final warning! BACK AWAY!

A long, tense beat- Then-

RHEA (O.S.)
ANDREA-DOWN!

CRACK-CRACK-CRACK! Gunfire explodes across the lot.

Bullets slam into concrete, thud into car doors. Screams erupt. The Halstrom guards dive for cover.

Up the street-ROOFTOP CIVILIANS in makeshift armor, rifles braced. They fire three more warning shots. Then vanish like ghosts.

Sirens wail in the distance.

Andrea never flinches.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

Holograms flicker-X9 markers glowing across the 3D grid. Every data point spikes green.

RHEA
Hold steady... Come on...

SCIENTIST
We've got sustained remission. No rebound.

RHEA
Outbreak-risk steady at zero-point-zero-one.

A lab tech bolts in, breathless.

SCIENTIST
CDC's online!

Regan grabs the nearest tablet. Sees it.

REGAN
Rhea—patch me through.

INTERCUT - INT. CDC OFFICE / INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

A female SCIENTIFIC COUNSELOR from the CDC leans into a secure line.

SCIENTIFIC COUNSELOR
Dr. Regan Brown?

REGAN
It's... it's Mr. Regan Brown.

SCIENTIFIC COUNSELOR
We're getting conclusive data that you have a cure for X9?

REGAN
Yes! We need--

SCIENTIFIC COUNSELOR
We're dispatching response teams now. Where are you?

REGAN
Biotech Pharma. Cape Town, South Africa

SCIENTIFIC COUNSELOR
Biotech!?

REGAN
We've converted it. The sequence and raw data are uploading now. Please—hurry.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

A glass shatters. Gupta slams his tablet down. Red-faced. Breath ragged.

GUPTA

No. NO! They went live!?

He turns—Cal stands in the doorway. No apology. Just exhaustion.

CAL

It's over. The cops, the press—they're inside the gates.

GUPTA

(overlapping, raging)
You betrayed me!?

CAL

No. I just stopped cleaning up after you. I watched you burn the world to preserve your name.

(beat)

I'm done being your silence.

Gupta's glare could scorch steel. But Cal doesn't flinch.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE

A patient gasps—then inhales deeply. Their eyes widen. Tears fall.

RHEA (O.S.)

Outbreak risk officially neutralized. CDC en route. They're reversing protocol—emergency lifted!

ANDREA

(whispers)

Yes...

Then louder, from deep within:

ANDREA (CONT'D)

YES!

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

The DDLS holograms shimmer—every marker surging green.

ASSIMILATION: 100% flashes across the central display.

Regan exhales, sagging into a chair. His tablet slips from his lap. Relief washes over him like a tidal wave.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE

The last patient receives the dose. A pause. Then: an eruption. Cheers. Cries. Strangers hugging, laughing, collapsing in joy.

Children raise vials overhead like trophies. A woman falls to her knees, praying.

RHEA (O.S.)
Signal interference
peaking—thousands uploading vitals.
It's happening. They're healing.

Andrea staggers back from the crowd, eyes wide.

The sound—laughter, crying, hope—rises around her like a chorus.

She drops to her knees, overwhelmed. Her hands cover her face. Then she throws her head back and screams:

ANDREA
YES! YES!!

The world, finally, breathes.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND – GUPTA'S OFFICE

Cal stands his ground. Gupta paces like a lion whose cage is shrinking.

CAL
It's over. Call it what it is.

Gupta stops. His voice drops to ice.

GUPTA
We built this. The reach. The
control. We were gods.

CAL
We were butchers.

Gupta lunges—but Cal sidesteps. He's no longer afraid. Just done. Gupta glares at him, wounded pride twisting into a sneer.

GUPTA
You'd walk now? After everything?

CAL
I'm already gone.

He turns for the door.

GUPTA

Let me spin the story. You'll be
the hero. You'll be remembered.

Cal doesn't look back.

CAL

No. You will.

He exits.

INT. GUPTA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Silence presses in. The door clicks shut. Gupta drifts to his desk. Opens the drawer. The chessboard sits inside. He pulls it out.

The pieces are chaos. Bent pawns. Missing knights. A black king tilted. No queen.

His fingers tremble. He finds her—his daughter's piece—and places it gently, right in the center.

Alone. He stares for a long time. Then—

CRACK. He slams the black king into the board. Pieces scatter like shrapnel.

GUPTA

You fix the board...not the
pieces...
(softening)
The queen never belonged in the
game.

He closes the board. Locks it. And sits there. Breathing. Blinking. Nothing left.

EXT. HOSPITAL QUEUE - LATER

Ash from the spent replicator curls skyward. Andrea leans on the car, drained but steady.

She looks at the machine—smoking, finished. Then at the crowd, still glowing with life.

ANDREA

(quietly, with resolve)
Alright... let's go.

INT. ANDREA'S CAR - MOVING

Andrea drives hard. The wind lashes through the open window, her eyes locked forward.

ANDREA
Rhea-unfilter Gupta's last message.

RHEA (O.S.)
Pulling it now.

ANDREA
Connect me.

A breath.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Let's slice the head off the
serpent.

INTERCUT - INT. GUPTA'S OFFICE / ANDREA'S CAR

Gupta appears onscreen, practiced calm.

GUPTA
Andrea. I've shared everything. The
outbreaks are being contained—

ANDREA
Cut the act.

GUPTA
I'm proud of you. Truly. I think
it's time to rebuild—together.
Biotech, reborn. You and me.
Imagine the reach...

ANDREA
I don't want your reach. I want a
world where people don't die for
your margins.

She glances down at her speedometer. Calm, focused.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
You're out of moves.

Gupta paces, his mask slipping. Sweat beads on his temple.

GUPTA
I still have resources. Influence.
Name your future. You'll be global.

His fingers reach for her through the screen—desperate, hollow.

ANDREA
You'll be exposed. In every language. Every feed. And when the world sees what you did... they'll bury your empire in shame.

She pauses.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
She was right. I don't stop. But I remember now... why I started.

Gupta scoffs.

GUPTA
You're still just a bleeding idealist. You think you'll save them all? There'll be another outbreak. Another X9. Always will be.

ANDREA
Then I'll be ready.

She turns to the windshield, road stretching before her.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
I'm taking Biotech. Merging it with Halstrom. No secrets. No gatekeepers. Without you.
(beat)
Rhea?

RHEA (O.S.)
Standing by.

ANDREA
Release everything. Our full statement. All X9 data—tied directly to Gupta.

Gupta stiffens.

GUPTA
Wait—Rhea? I can offer you a stake. Influence. Legacy.

RHEA (O.S.)
Sending.

A pulse of silence. Then:

GUPTA
You don't know what I've built.
What it's capable of—

ANDREA
You underestimated everyone. Dr.
Brown. Regan. Me.

She ends the call. Cold. Clean.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SCIENCE LAB

The room bursts—cheers, fist bumps, shouts of disbelief.
Holograms spike with activity. Data flooding in.

RHEA (O.S.)
Regan. He's trying to call us
directly.

Silence.

Regan steps forward. Wipes his face. Looks around at the
buzzing lab.

REGAN
Is all that red tape hitting the
feeds?

RHEA (O.S.)
Flooding every channel.

He smiles.

REGAN
Bless you, Karen. Block him.

Click. Silence.

INT. ANDREA'S CAR

She sits still. Wind whispering through the cracked window.

RHEA (O.S.)
All parties offline.

Andrea's eyes drift toward the sky. Blue. Boundless.

ANDREA
Give me a minute.

She exhales. Then shifts gears.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Time to go home.

She guns it. The car roars away down the road.

INT. HALSTROM INDUSTRIES COMPOUND - GUPTA'S OFFICE

Gupta stares at his screen. Static. No call. No connection. No control. He opens a drawer. Pulls out a pistol. Trembling.

A footstep.

Cal appears in the doorway, breath caught. His face hollow with grief.

CAL
Gupta—

GUPTA
I told you... kill them.

He raises the gun. Fires. Cal drops. Click. No bullets left. Gupta breathes, ragged. Collapsing into the chair.

Outside: footsteps. Sirens. Radios.

POLICE (O.S.)
Dr. Gupta! Step away from the desk!

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NEWSROOM SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Andrea sits beneath studio lights. Calm. Poised. A woman who walked through fire.

PRESENTER
Dr. Santiago—you stopped a global outbreak. The world calls you a hero.

ANDREA
I had a team. Some of them wanted to stay anonymous. Some didn't make it.

Off-stage, Regan nods.

INT. MAHARAJ HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - DAY

Rhea, now in Biotech gear, watches from home. Ishara beside her. Flora races in, throws her arms around Rhea.

Laughter. Peace.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NEWSROOM SOUNDSTAGE

PRESENTER

What do you say to those who still
fear Biotech Pharmaceuticals?

Andrea turns to camera.

ANDREA

If you or someone you love has
X9... there's a cure. And if we
could stop it once—we'll stop it
again.

PRESENTER

But after Gupta's sentencing—how do
you rebuild trust?

Andrea gestures to the stage screen.

ANDREA

Regan?

He taps his tablet.

The screen comes alive—blood under a microscope. Infected.
Then nanomachines. Healing. Brightening.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

This is my blood. I still carry X9.
And I'm taking the cure. Right now.

Cheers erupt.

Onscreen, her cells bloom healthy.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

That's the new Biotech. No more
secrets. No more kings.

Andrea steadies herself, eyes on the lens.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

This cure doesn't belong to
Biotech, or to me. It belongs to
everyone watching right now.

She rises. Shakes hands. The audience thunders with applause.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Andrea and Regan drive through green pastures beneath an open blue sky. Quiet. Whole.

EXT. CEMETERY - DR. BROWN'S GRAVE - LATER

Their car pulls up to a small, quaint, cemetery road.

Andrea and Regan walk up to Dr. Brown's grave. A few moments pass. Andrea lays a hand on the headstone.

ANDREA

We couldn't have done it without
you...

Regan sets down a worn notebook—her old research. A tribute.

REGAN

Think Gupta'll survive a hundred
life sentences?

ANDREA

I hope he loses his mind trying.

She smiles. Bittersweet. They turn and walk away.

EXT. CEMETERY - WIDE - CONTINUOUS

From high above, we see Andrea and Regan walk back to the car and they disappear into the horizon. Just two figures against a world they saved.

INT. PRISON - GUPTA'S CELL

Dark. Damp. The camera creeps in.

Gupta rocks slowly. Shackled. Alone. Lips parted, eyes empty. A man unmade.

The queen piece—hidden in his palm. He rocks. And rocks. And doesn't blink.

The mad king dethroned.

FADE OUT.