

TERMS OF ENTANGLEMENT

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TEASER

INT. RESIDENTIAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Wielding a small LED flashlight, four figures creep forward.

SUPER: "2054. Two decades after the Data Catastrophe -- the scrambling of most of the world's digital records."

A blue light glows from underneath a door at the end of the hallway.

SUPER: "Quantum Computers -- QCs -- are suspected of playing a role in the catastrophe."

As they approach, a faint HUM increases in volume.

INT. THE BLUE ROOM

The door opens, bathing ELLE (mid-forties) in blue light. She glances back at her three companions: ALPHONSE, BETTY and CHRIS.

SUPER: "Teams of data archivists seek out data fragments and attempt to restore what has been lost."

Dust wafts down through the eerie light.

ELLE

Christ, it's still running. How's that even possible?

ALPHONSE

Solar array?

ELLE

For 20 years?

They move toward the light.

NEW ANGLE

Elle and the others are silhouetted by a constellation of flickering blue lights woven into an array of curved, thin copper tubes and wiring harnesses -- a quantum computer.

Chris moves toward a workstation next to the computer. She turns on the monitor.

Behind her, Elle and the others lean toward the computer, studying it.

BETTY  
Q.C. thirty-one. One of the early ones.

ALPHONSE  
Networked?

Betty circles the device, looking for connections.

BETTY  
Nope. Could have been, but not now.

ELLE  
What would --

CHRIS  
-- I'm ready.

Chris holds up a thumb drive. Elle nods. Chris inserts it into a port near the monitor.

On the monitor: rapidly ascending lines of code. Then, a static list of files and associated data like "file size" and "date created." Chris checks her watch.

LATER

Chris and the others are huddled around the monitor. Chris points at a line on the screen.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
It's done.

She extracts the drive and hands it to Elle.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Seventeen minutes. Should be intact.

ELLE  
Let's get out of here.

ALPHONSE  
Should we shut it down?

ELLE  
No, not --

CHRIS  
-- Guys!

Chris points at the screen.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
The file size...

Chris' finger touches the screen.

On the screen: To the right of a file named "Journal" a file size indicator reads "7886KB."

ELLE  
So...

CHRIS  
Watch.

The indicator changes to "7888KB."

Elle and the others flinch.

ELLE  
Jesus!

ALPHONSE  
The A.I.?

CHRIS  
Can't be. Wrong file.

ELLE  
Scroll right.

Chris slides her finger across the screen.

On the screen: A column header of "Date Created." Below it "05/07/2053."

ELLE (CONT'D)  
Nine months ago. There's no way.  
Who is doing that?

CHRIS  
Someone --

All four of their phones emit an alert. Elle looks at the message on hers: "Get out!"

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

SUPER: "Two weeks earlier."

We scan a bookshelf filled with dozens of introspective books: Tao Te Ching; Meditations; Walden; The Power of Positive Thinking; The Road Less Traveled, etc.

NEW ANGLE

Near the bookshelf, Elle practices yoga on a mat in a modern, sparsely appointed living room. An unseen speaker guides her.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)  
Updog, inhale... downward facing  
dog, exhale... raise the right leg  
and up point the toe... inhale...

Elle strains to hold a pose as the voice drones on.

INT. BATHROOM

Elle lights a ceremonial candle surrounded by large crystals. She pauses in contemplation before it.

LATER

Elle, in sudsy bath water, rests her head on a bath pillow as ambient music plays in the background. She closes her eyes. Darkness.

LATER

Elle's husband JOHN, a badge hanging from his belt, squeezes Elle's toe. She wakes suddenly. John dips his fingertips into the gray bathwater and reaches toward the candle.

JOHN  
(softly)  
For those who follow us.

He pinches the wick to extinguish the flame .

ELLE  
Hey! That was mine.

JOHN  
It counts against our quota.

Elle sits up, drawing her knees in.

ELLE

It's part of my routine. It helps.

John frowns and turns to exit the bathroom.

JOHN

Which routine? The one you started last week? Or the one you were obsessed with a year ago? Or the year before that?

ELLE

Don't be a dick.

John stops at the doorway.

JOHN

I'm just being practical.  
(resumes walking away)  
And if you can't do it for the greater good, then do it for her.

Elle slams her hands down into the water.

ELLE

What is wrong with you? It was just a candle!

She buries her head in her knees and suppresses a scream.

INT. DINING TABLE - NIGHT

John and Elle eat in silence. He portions out some supplement pills and hands them over to Elle. She ignores the outstretched hand. John sets the pills on the table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John, on the couch, works on a crossword puzzle. Elle, in a love seat, reads a book.

JOHN

Actress Elena Blank. Fifth letter  
"U."

He looks at Elle, hopeful. She remains focused on her book.

ELLE

F.U.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Elena lay on their sides, facing away from each other. Long beat. He turns and places his hand on her shoulder.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

ELLE

Do you know what for?

JOHN

Pretty much everything I said.

She turns toward him.

ELLE

And?

JOHN

Bringing her into it. I don't know what caused me to do that.

ELLE

It hurt.

JOHN

I know. It was wrong.

ELLE

It's not just that. I've been thinking about her. A lot.

JOHN

Me, too. It's always there, but it feels like it's... ramped up recently.

ELLE

We can't undo what we did. I know that. But... I thought we'd be able to have some way of knowing where she was, how she was doing.

JOHN

We would have...

ELLE

Do you think... do you think she'll ever look for us? Try to meet us?

JOHN

If a cop and the chief data archivist can't find her, how could she possibly find us?

ELLE

I've been thinking about that, too.

Elle sits up.

ELLE (CONT'D)

We've been recovering data for over 20 years. But we haven't been able to analyze it properly. If we had a pre-catastrophe quantum computer --

JOHN

-- The interdiction is there for a reason.

ELLE

Q.C.s, by themselves, did not cause the data catastrophe. It was only when they were networked.

JOHN

That? That's just a theory. And a screwy one at that.

ELLE

All quantum theory is screwy. It's unknowable. The whole point is uncertainty. But what is certain is that we had Q.C.s for years with no problem. But the second they were networked... poof!

John sits up.

JOHN

Fine. You get your hands on a working Q.C. What happens then?

ELLE

We use it to reconstruct the data and find out what happened to our daughter.

JOHN

Yeah? Before or after Merkin hands my ass to me and throws you in jail?

Elle purses her lips, pouting.



JOHN (CONT'D)

Can't it at least wait another 18 months? Once I have my pension, I can tell Merkin to fuck off.

ELLE

I don't wanna lose my pension either, but there might not be any Q.C.s left if we wait much longer.

JOHN

Even if we take that risk, first we have to find one... and then we'll need resources, help, to make it work.

ELLE

I know. I've been thinking about that, too.

JOHN

The three amigos? They'd be onboard?

Elle smiles.

ELLE

Si, senior. Them, and maybe someone else...

JOHN

Please tell me you won't ask the Guild for help.

Elle smiles.

ELLE

I won't ask the Guild for help.

JOHN

Then who?

ELLE

Dylan Keefe?

John slides down. As he lays flat, he inflates his cheeks and slowly releases a long breath.

JOHN

Yeah... good luck with that...

INT. HOTEL CONVENTION CENTER HALLWAY - DAY

SUPER: "Ten days later."

Elle, in business attire, knocks at a hotel room door.

ELLE  
Guys? It's me.

Chris, in a bathrobe, opens the door. Her buzzcut drips water. She wraps a towel around her head and retreats to the bathroom.

Alphonse and Betty sit up on the king-size bed that dominates the room. Out of modesty, they pull the sheets up.

ELLE (CONT'D)  
My throuple-three -- the taxpayer loves ya, but jeez, if one of ya ever gets promoted ahead of the others, you're going to tie H.R. in knots.

Chris emerges, brushing her teeth.

CHRIS  
Didja giff him?

Elle nods and smiles.

ELLE  
Drinks tonight. In his penthouse.

BETTY  
All of us?

ELLE  
Yep.

ALPHONSE  
And John?

ELLE  
He'll be with Merkin, kissin' ass.

BETTY  
*Asi es.* Keep your enemies close.

Elle sits on the edge of the bed.

ELLE  
Someone's gotta do it.

Chris takes a seat next her.

CHRIS

Dylan Keefe. Wow. I guess he needs us.

ELLE

We all want the same thing.

ALPHONSE

But can we trust him?

BETTY

Up to the point we get our hands on a Q.C. -- our interests are the same. After that... *quien sabe?*

Alphonse and Chris nod, agreeing with Betty. Elle gets up.

ELLE

Let's see what he has to say. Just understand one thing -- no matter what happens, it's Merkin we need to worry about. If he finds out we met with Keefe, our careers are over. Maybe worse.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER AUDITORIUM - DAY

On a spotlit stage, two seated men face each other across a small table. Behind them is an illuminated billboard-sized display divided into two sections.

On the left of the display: A head shot or smiling billionaire DYLAN KEEFE above the words "Dylan Keefe, CEO SafeData, Inc."

On the right of the display: A head shot of a grimly determined AVERILL MERKIN above the words "Averill Merkin, Regional Commissioner of Interdiction."

An audience of hundreds, including Elle and the three amigos, listens to Merkin and Keefe debate.

MERKIN

... So much is on the line right now -- climate, pandemics, the anti-aging initiative... Our success as a nation -- as a species -- all depends on the good stewardship of data. We can't risk another catastrophe.

DYLAN

I agree with you, but that doesn't exclude the use -- a judicious, careful use -- of Q.C.s to make the best use of that data.

MERKIN

Quantum computing caused the catastrophe, Dylan. Until we find and secure every single Q.C., we face the risk of a repeat catastrophe.

DYLAN

Commissioner Merkin, with all due respect, we made quantum computers for a reason -- to help us solve all those real world problems you mentioned. And it was working.

MERKIN

Until it didn't.

DYLAN

You're missing the point. 80 million climate refugees in the last decade. 13 million dead from the last pandemic. We're running out of time. We know how to protect data better now. But without Q.C.s, we won't find the solutions we need.

MERKIN

And I suppose your interest in this matter of national security is purely as a concerned citizen? Or maybe it has something to do with adding another billion onto your money pile...

INT. AUDITORIUM - AUDIENCE

Betty leans over to Elle and John.

BETTY

They are really going at it.

ELLE

Merkin's little sneer is not helping his argument.

JOHN

Sneer or not, let's be first in line to tell him how great he was up there.

Alphonse leans into the conversation.

ALPHONSE

Merkin's no fool. Shake his hand, don't overplay it.

INT. ELEVATOR

Elle and the three amigos watch the floor indicator lights ascend to "PH." The elevator stops. Elle enters a code into a keypad. The doors open. Dylan Keefe waves them in.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOUNGE AREA - NIGHT

Elle and the others are seated. A casually dressed Dylan, standing, fills his guests' wine glasses.

ALPHONSE

Kind of below your pay grade, isn't it?

Dylan smiles.

DYLAN

Staff and privacy don't mix well. I assume you want a bit of discretion, yes?

ELLE

Sorry. Alphonse has a direct way about him -- it's usually helpful. But yes, we appreciate keeping this little chat as quiet as possible.

DYLAN

I suppose Alphonse's approach has its benefits. I'll get right to the point.

Elle and the others lean toward Dylan. Still standing, swirling wine in his glass, he ponders his next words.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

You're familiar with the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, yes?

ALPHONSE

Oooh, boy...

Elle holds up her hand to stop Alphonse.

ELLE

We're all familiar with it. It's part of our training. You know that.

Dylan nods.

CHRIS

Which variant?

Dylan smiles.

DYLAN

Von Neumann-Wigner.

Alphonse sighs and leans back.

ELLE

We know that, too. Most of us don't agree with it...

(nods at Alphonse)

... but it is only slightly less weird than any other interpretation.

CHRIS

And yet...

DYLAN

And yet... it seems to fit in most neatly with some details of the catastrophe.

Chris nods. The others do not.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

And there are the reports of anomalies in some of the Q.C.s that have been interdicted...

ELLE

Even if we could comment on that, I haven't personally seen it. It may all be Guild rumors.

DYLAN

I'm happy to sponsor the Guild -- that's no secret -- but I am not relying on them for my information.

(MORE)

DYLAN (CONT'D)

The reports exist. You are not the only archivists I've spoken to.

ELLE

Then why do you need us?

DYLAN

Because there is a quantum computer operating in your district. A working one.

ELLE

I haven't heard of it.

DYLAN

Neither has Merkin...

CHRIS

Did you say a working one?

BETTY

Who told you?

ALPHONSE

It's running right now?

Dylan holds up his hands.

DYLAN

How I know this is not why we are having this chat. The real question is -- what do we do with this information?

ELLE

We?

Dylan takes a seat.

DYLAN

A private citizen can't be caught with a working Q.C. unless he's been on jail time... but for you four, the situation is a little more flexible.

ELLE

We're obligated to report it.

DYLAN

So the lawyers tell me. But they also tell me that the obligation to report only kicks in once the device is verified as a "potentially operable quantum computer."

CHRIS

And verification takes time.

The others look at Chris.

ALPHONSE

You two twins or something?  
Finishing each other's sentences  
and shit...

Chris and Dylan smile at each other.

DYLAN

It's funny that you mention  
"twins"...

Chris raises her hand to stop Dylan.

CHRIS

Don't go there.  
(to Alphonse)  
No, not twins. Just the only two  
people in the room who --

ELLE

-- Stop it. Let's hear it from  
Dylan. And, Dylan... get to the  
point.

Dylan raises his eyebrows. He extracts a thumb-drive from his pocket and lays it on the table.

DYLAN

Non-invasive A.I. Its lifespan in a Q.C. environment maxes out at about 20 minutes. It will leave no trace of its use. If my information is correct, you could run it on the device and extract a good part of its data and... explore any anomalies.

Alphonse picks up the thumb drive.



ALPHONSE

I suppose you'll let us test this first...

DYLAN

No. It's one use only. Can't have like-minded A.I.s popping up here and there.

BETTY

Why should we trust you? We don't even know what your end game is.

DYLAN

The end game is to recover the lost data. All of it.

ALPHONSE

Impossible. It's gone.

DYLAN

Not gone. Moved. Shifted may be a better word.

BETTY

And then what? You sell it back to the world?

DYLAN

No. I only need one tiny piece of it. An algorithm.

Elle takes the drive from Alphonse. She looks at it, thinking.

ELLE

No trace, huh?

Dylan nods.

ELLE (CONT'D)

Can you add a specific task to this? A search for, say, information about a photo?

The others look at Elle, uncertain of what she is doing.

ELLE (CONT'D)

You know, to test its accuracy.

Dylan nods.

DYLAN

Should be no problem.

Elle hands the drive to Dylan. She then fiddles with her phone and shows the screen to Dylan.

ELLE

This photo.

On the screen: a cropped, grainy photo of a man and a woman. Dylan opens his phone and flicks a finger across the screen.

DYLAN

Got it.

Elle gets up. The others follow suit.

ELLE

Good. Once you've updated the A.I., have it sent to room 609 before noon tomorrow. I'll need the address of the Q.C. as well.

Dylan grins as they depart.

DYLAN

I'm not used to people talking to me like this. It's kind of... refreshing.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. ELEVATOR

Elle takes a deep breath. Alphonse, Betty and Chris stare at her.

ELLE  
I need a drink.

BETTY  
What was that?

ALPHONSE  
He liked it.

CHRIS  
Guys! Focus. A working Q.C. -- this calls for a celebration.

The doors open at the mezzanine. Merkin is standing there.

ELLE  
Commissioner! Uh, how nice to see you again. Would you like to... join us for a drink?

Merkin gestures with one arm for them to exit. They shuffle out.

MERKIN  
Well, I, uh suppose I could have another...

Chris scoots away from the group. Merkin notices her exit before the others see it.

MERKIN (CONT'D)  
...but, you know, maybe, maybe not tonight. Some other time?

Elle forces a smile. Betty and Alphonse join in.

ELLE  
Of course, sir. You have a good evening.

He boards the elevator. The doors close. They watch the floor-counter flash through a few numbers.

ELLE (CONT'D)  
Now I really need that drink.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Chris, dressed, tiptoes near the bed as an unseen Betty and Alphonse sleep. She picks up a small bag and begins to turn the door latch.

BETTY (O.S)

Hey.

Chris turns to see Betty in bed, propped up on one elbow. Betty motions her over with a head tilt. Chris sits next to her.

BETTY (CONT'D)

You okay?

CHRIS

Yeah. Thought I'd get some exercise in.

Betty knits her eyebrows a little.

BETTY

You sure?

Chris nods, forces a smile.

BETTY (CONT'D)

We still on for tonight?

Chris nods again.

BETTY (CONT'D)

I'll make you something good.

Chris bends over and gives her a perfunctory kiss.

CHRIS

You always do.

She gets up and tries to exit the room as quietly as possible, but the door mechanism is noisy. Alphonse stirs next to Betty.

ALPHONSE

Somethin' going on with her.

Betty thinks about it and nods.

EXT. LAWN AND GARDEN EQUIPMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Chris, carrying her bag and wearing a surgical mask, walks through a crowd of shoppers loading bags of soil, seedlings and other garden items in their carts.

At the back of the complex, she pauses at an unmarked door to a cinderblock structure. She looks around before entering.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Chris hustles up a dimly lit stairwell. She enters a code on a doorway keypad.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Chris approaches another door and enters a key code. She enters.

INT. GUILD MEETING ROOM

Chris takes a seat next to several other people. The GUILD LEADER, a woman in her fifties, stands in front of a blackboard with a chalk planning diagram on it.

GUILD LEADER

You're late.

Chris grimaces.

GUILD LEADER (CONT'D)

As I was saying, this will be an all-hands recovery. The Guild's success depends on retrieving this Q.C. I'll be leading this one personally.

The members of the Guild wriggle in their seats. One MEMBER raises his hand.

MEMBER

I'm happy to lead the team. No need to put yourself at risk.

GUILD LEADER

No, this one is too important. It might be the only one left in the district.

(points at the board)

You all know your roles. Any questions?

Chris raises her hand.

GUILD LEADER (CONT'D)

Yes?

CHRIS

What if it's not the last one?

GUILD LEADER

Do you know of another for certain?

CHRIS

Not for certain.

GUILD LEADER

Well, this one is for certain, and it's the last one we'll need. Any one else?

Head shakes all around.

GUILD LEADER (CONT'D)

Then let's get ready.

INT. PANEL VAN - DAY

Chris, the Guild leader and three others sit across from each other on benches as the electric van motors quietly through city streets.

Chris puts on her surgical mask, inserts an airpod-like earpiece and opens the door when the van stops.

EXT. CITY STREET

Chris watches the van disappear around a corner. She surveys the area around her.

CHRIS

Six reporting. In position.

INT. LOADING DOCK OF SKYSCRAPER

The van backs into the empty bay of a loading dock. The Guild leader and two others exit the van, wheeling an empty flatbed cart behind them.

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR

The Guild leader and the two other members stare ahead as the elevator rises.

INT. CARPETED HALLWAY

The Guild leader pauses at a door as her accomplices catch up to her with the cart. She punches in a key code and depresses the door handle.

INT. PANEL VAN

The van's DRIVER looks up as the loading bay door begins lowering.

DRIVER

The door...

A RAP on his side window. The driver looks over and sees a gun pointed at him.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Abort...

A GUNSHOT. The window shatters.

EXT. CITY STREET

Chris tries to look casual on a street corner. She touches her earpiece.

DRIVER (V.O.)

Abort.

Chris hears the gunshot. Scared, she looks in both directions. Sees nothing. She quickly begins walking down the street, removing the earpiece and snapping it in half.

Near a trash can, she twists her phone into pieces, tosses it and continues walking.

INT. SKYSCRAPER OFFICE

The Guild leader and the two others enter a dark room. She touches her earpiece.

GUILD LEADER

What? Repeat.

The lights come on. Merkin and four uniformed officers, guns drawn, are waiting for her. She puts her hands on her head and looks from side to side, searching.

MERKIN

It's not here. Not anymore, at least.

Merkin motions to one of his men. The man produces some handcuffs and puts them on the Guild leader.

GUILD LEADER

You have it?

Merkin smiles.

MERKIN

Oh yeah. And now I have you.

INT. CITY BUS

Chris, her hoodie pulled up and head bowed, enters the bus and takes a seat. She chances a small glance up and to the side. She sees a security camera.

INT. BUREAU OF INTERDICTION - DAY

Merkin and a DETECTIVE stand next to the interrogation room's one-way glass. Inside the room, the driver, hand-cuffed and with dozens of small cuts on his face, waits.

MERKIN

Nothing?

DETECTIVE

Gotta hand it to him. Dude literally shit himself when we shot his window out. But now... nothing.

MERKIN

Let me know when you track down the others.

Merkin leaves.

INT. MERKIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Merkin, reading a file, looks up when the Detective enters.

DETECTIVE

Look like the others disappeared.



Merkin frowns.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

We did pick up this on a security  
cam nearby. Might have been a  
lookout.

He hands Merkin a printout.

On the printout: a grainy photo of a masked and hooded Chris  
on the bus, glancing at the camera.

Merkin pores over it for a few moments, not looking up.

MERKIN

Not much to go on, is it?

He shakes his head, still looking at the printout.

MERKIN (CONT'D)

What about the others?

DETECTIVE

Lawyered up, already. And they're  
saying if we don't produce the Q.C.  
soon, the charges will never stick.

Merkin sighs and looks up.

MERKIN

Fuck 'em. I'm taking it to the  
disposal facility tomorrow.  
Convictions or not, the Guild is  
broken. And there'll be one less of  
these goddamn machines out there.

INT. BETTY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Betty and Chris cuddle on a couch, watching a TV news report.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...the four suspects are believed  
to be members of the Guild, a quasi-  
religious organization intent on...

On the screen: the Guild driver, his face bleeding, but very-  
much alive, is shoved into a police car.

Chris' eyes widen and she takes a deep breath. Relieved, she  
smiles to herself and snuggles closer to Betty.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

John, driving, squints as he drives the car around a corner.

JOHN

That it?

Elle looks right, through her window.

ELLE

Looks like it.

ELLE'S POV

A tall black metal fence. Well behind it, a large distinctive mansion looms. It bears several Victorian turrets and is capped by a sharply angled roof.

Shiny and black, the roof and turrets gleam in the afternoon sun, doubling as solar power collectors.

INT. ELLE'S CAR

In the back seat, Alphonse, Betty and Chris nod.

ALPHONSE

Kind of spooky looking.

John accelerates the car.

JOHN

I'm going to drop you off a block from here... but when your done, I'll be nearby.

ELLE

You don't have to do this.

JOHN

I know.

He pulls the car over.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'll give you blast if I see anything or pick up anything on the scanner.

Elle gives him a kiss before getting out.

EXT. SECURITY FENCE

Elle and the others pause in a secluded area next to the tall, thick, black metal bars that surround the property. Elle checks the bottom area of several bars with her fingers.

ELLE

This one. And the next.

Alphonse grabs a bar, shoves it loose, and lays it down carefully. He repeats this with the other bar. They climb through the gap. Chris, carrying a bag, looks at the cut bars.

The bars have been neatly cut and notched. The metal glimmers -- no rust.

CHRIS

Dylan sure did his part.

After Chris passes through the gap, Alphonse puts the bars back in place.

EXT. INSIDE THE PROPERTY

Emerging from the hedges adjacent to the security fence, they look up at the mansion's shiny black turrets and peak like roof.

A WHIRR distracts them. They look over to see a drone. Elle nods toward it.

ELLE

Dylan.

The drone rocks side to side and then slowly makes its way along a wall, toward the back of the house. Elle and the others follow.

EXT. BACK OF THE HOUSE

A small arched roof covers steps leading down into the basement. The drone comes to a rest next to the steps. Alphonse descends toward a chained, metal doorway.

Chris hands Alphonse a pair of bolt cutters. He cuts the chains. Chris hands him a large key. Alphonse ponders it. He glances at the drone.

ALPHONSE

Really did your homework...

The drone's blades whirr briefly in acknowledgement. Alphonse turns the key and yanks the door open. They enter.

INT. DARK HALLWAY

Elle and the others walk slowly toward a door. Blue light trickles out from under the door. Elle clicks on a flashlight.

NEW ANGLE

SUPER: "20 minutes later."

Elle and the others leave the blue room and hustle through the dark hallway.

ELLE

Keep cool...

BETTY

Trying...

EXT. BACK OF THE HOUSE

They emerge cautiously, looking in all directions. Elle waves the others ahead and takes a knee next to the drone. She loads the thumb drive in the drone's belly compartment.

Elle waits for a few long seconds. The drone's blades rev up and it takes off, rapidly disappearing upwards. Elle runs toward the hedge.

EXT. SECURITY FENCE

Alphonse muscles the bars back in place and jumps into Elle's car. The car takes off.

INT. ELLE'S CAR

John grips the wheel, putting all his focus on the getaway. Elle stares at him, glances back at the others, then stares at John again.

ELLE

Well?

John keeps his eyes on the road.

JOHN

I... I think we're fine.

BETTY  
Think?!

ELLE  
What?

ALPHONSE  
Are they coming or not?

JOHN  
There was a patrol shift on the scanner. They were coming toward us. But then...

BETTY  
What?

JOHN  
They got called somewhere else right after I blasted ya. Still...  
(glances back)  
Better safe than sorry? Right?

Betty, incensed, cuts loose with a stream of EXPLETIVES. Elle and Alphonse sigh in relief.

CHRIS  
Guys!

She waits a beat for everyone to calm themselves and listen.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
We did it.

Everyone thinks about it. Some nod. Long beat. Chris' eyes widen.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
The anomaly! We have to go back.

Betty discourages the suggestion with another stream of EXPLETIVES.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DUSK

A military helicopter's blades power down. Several soldiers unload a crate from it as Merkin, standing next to a van, looks on. Other soldiers with weapons stand guard.

LATER

As dust swirls around the van and HELICOPTER NOISE recedes, Merkin taps on an iPad-like tablet.

On the tablet: "Destination: Disposal Facility. Route: C5"

Merkin slots the pad into a receptacle inside the van's dash area. He walks around to the back and enters, closing the door behind him.

LATER

The driverless van -- on autopilot -- careens along a rural road in the dark, with no headlights, at high speed.

INT. VAN

Merkin and three SOLDIERS sit around the crate in the windowless, poorly-lit rear section of the van. Sudden decelerations, turns, and accelerations jostle them.

One of the soldiers vomits into a sickness bag. Merkin rolls his eyes. He looks at his watch.

SOLDIER  
How much longer?

MERKIN  
Another hour, give or take.

The sick soldier vomits again.

LATER

The van powers down and stops jostling its passengers. The rear doors open. Three MEN IN BLUE UNIFORMS stand outside. Merkin exits. The soldiers stay.

EXT. VAN - NIGHT

The men in dark blue uniforms maneuver the crate out of the van and place it on a dolly. Merkin closes the van's rear door and watches it power up and scoot away.

MERKIN  
Poor bastards...

Merkin and his new companions head toward a decrepit-looking mine entrance.

MAN IN BLUE UNIFORM #1  
Staying over?

Merkin nods.

INT. INSIDE THE MINE

As they tramp through the mine with flashlights, Merkin looks back at the receding mine entrance, many yards away. They trudge on.

LATER

The group comes to a stop and extinguishes their flashlights. A CHIRP and a STATIC burst sound penetrates the darkness.

MAN IN BLUE UNIFORM #1  
(to walkie talkie)  
R.T. at Post One.

CHIRP sound.

A blue light scans them. LATCH SOUNDS and WHIRRING as a nearby door opens, flooding the mine with light. Merkin and the others head toward the light source.

INT. DISPOSAL FACILITY - POST ONE

In a plain, brightly lit room, Merkin approaches a metal counter topped by a dark window of thick glass. A small tray pops out from under the counter.

Merkin puts a lanyard and badge into the tray. He holds still, staring at the window as a flash illuminates his face briefly. The tray pops out again and Merkin picks up a badge.

VOICE (V.O.)  
(on speaker)  
Welcome back, sir.

Merkin nods and pins the badge on his jacket. He turns around and waits as an elevator door opens. They board it.

INT. DISPOSAL FACILITY - HALLWAY

Merkin watches the FACILITY COMMANDER swipe a card near a secure door. The three men in blue uniforms pass through the door with the crate and re-emerge seconds later without it.

FACILITY COMMANDER  
Thank you, fellas.

The three men walk away. When they are gone, the Facility Commander and Merkin enter the secure room.

INT. DISPOSAL FACILITY - SECURE ROOM

The Facility Commander closes the door behind them and flips on a light switch. The room lights up. Standing next to the crate, he gives Merkin a nudge.

FACILITY COMMANDER  
Heard you had a good day yesterday.

Merkin stares straight ahead.

MERKIN  
Had its ups and downs.

FACILITY COMMANDER  
I hear ya...

They both stare ahead.

REVERSE ANGLE

A gymnasium-sized room contains scores of workbenches, each one with a quantum computer sitting on it. Cables, wires, monitors and equipment fill the spaces between each one.

MERKIN  
I hate this place...

FACILITY COMMANDER  
Me too, Averill. Me too. God help us if we ever have to turn these fuckers on again...

END OF ACT TWO



ACT THREE

INT. ELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Elle, in workout attire and sweating, pauses her routine to run to get her buzzing phone. She picks it up.

ELLE

John!

John hustles in and looks at the phone in Elle's outstretched hand.

JOHN

Rooftop?

ELLE

I guess he'll deliver it with the drone.

They look at phone.

On the screen: "8pm. Rooftop. 149 E. 24th Street."

Elle looks at her phone hopefully, then at John.

ELLE (CONT'D)

This could be it.

JOHN

God, I hope so.

They embrace.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - NIGHT

John drives as Elle checks her phone again. She sees Dylan's text, then swipes her phone. The photo of the couple appears. We close in on it.

FLASHBACK - INT. CASE WORKER'S OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: Twenty years earlier - two days before the Data Catastrophe"

A younger Elle, tears on her cheeks, sits across from an older woman -- a CASE WORKER -- in business attire. The woman pages through a file on a tablet device.

CASE WORKER

I'm sorry, when the adopting party chooses to remain anonymous, the law prevents us from disclosing their identity.

ELLE

I thought it would be different.

CASE WORKER

You signed a release agreeing to respect their wishes on this point.

ELLE

I signed lots of things! You don't know what my situation was! I just thought I'd be able to know...

The case worker regards Elle with sympathy. She glances down at the tablet she is cradling.

On the tablet: the photo of the couple, standing in front of a turreted mansion with a peaked roof.

CASE WORKER

The law says I can't tell you. I'm sorry. I really am.

The case worker's landline BEEPS. She glances back to her handset, then at Elle.

CASE WORKER (CONT'D)

I have to take this. Please wait for a just a little bit. We can discuss your options.

The case worker locks eyes with Elle for a moment and gives her the slightest nod of encouragement. She lays the tablet, face up, on her desk and turns away to take her call.

Elle frowns at first, angry at being ignored. Her eyes drift down to the tablet. She pulls out her phone, reaches over, and takes a picture of the photo on the tablet.

The case worker turns slightly in her seat and side-eyes Elle, then turns back to conclude her conversation. Elle pockets her phone.

The phone call over, the case worker turns back to Elle.

CASE WORKER (CONT'D)

Like I said, I can't tell you who the adoptive parents are.

(MORE)

## CASE WORKER (CONT'D)

But, I can make sure that your information is in the file in case the child wishes to learn your identity after she becomes an adult.

ELLE

I'd like that.

The case worker taps and swipes a few times on her tablet. She hands the tablet to Elle with an e-Pencil.

CASE WORKER

Sign here, and you'll be good to go.

Elle signs and hands the tablet back. The case worker smiles at her.

INT. YOUNG ELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Elle pulls a piece of paper from her laser printer and frowns. She folds it in half.

LATER

Elle removes a piece of paper from her laser printer. She smiles. It is a picture of the couple, cropped to enlarge their appearance.

LATER

She walks over to her fridge and tapes to it the cropped photo of the couple.

LATER

Now at her bookshelf, she takes the folded, uncropped, copy of the photo and inserts into the back of a book: The Power of Positive Thinking. She places the book on the shelf.

END FLASHBACK

INT. ELLE'S CAR - NIGHT

Elle looks up from her phone as the car stops.

JOHN

I'll drive around while you're up there.

Elle nods and exits.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Elle, hands in her jacket, scans the dark sky. She paces back and forth. As she turns to complete another lap, the drone descends to her eye-level. She pauses.

ELLE  
You again?

The drone rocks back and forth, then descends to the rooftop. Elle removes a wrapped thumb drive from its undercarriage and steps back, showing the drive to the drone.

ELLE (CONT'D)  
Thanks.

The drone takes off, disappearing into the night.

Elle removes the paper wrapping from the thumb drive. The inner layer has writing on it. She squints at it.

On the paper: "C will have decrypt key."

ELLE (CONT'D)  
Goddamnit.

INT. OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DATA ARCHIVIST - DAY

Betty, Alphonse and Chris, each holding cups of coffee, hover around a cubicle, whispering. A tired-looking Elle sidles up to them and groans.

ELLE  
Morning.

The trio looks at her sympathetically.

ELLE (CONT'D)  
I got no sleep last night.

CHRIS  
Me neither.

Chris gives Elle a look. Then a nod.

ELLE  
Normal day today. Okay?

They nod.

ELLE (CONT'D)  
After work, my place at 7, okay?

INT. MERKIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Merkin and the detective stand in front of a large cork-board.

On the board: photos of Guild suspects surround a city map with red pins in it. Pinned string connects some photos with pins on the map.

The detective draws a string from the map to the photo of Chris on the bus.

DETECTIVE

How many more do you think are left?

MERKIN

Less than ten.

DETECTIVE

Gets harder as we go along.

MERKIN

When was the last time we canvassed the archivists from other districts for information on Q.C.s in our district?

DETECTIVE

'Bout six months.

MERKIN

Do another round. And let's really do a scrub of their data.

Merkin taps the photo of Chris.

MERKIN (CONT'D)

Anything more on this one?

DETECTIVE

No.

MERKIN

Track down and question everyone on the bus if you have to. We need to I.D. her.

DETECTIVE

Think she's Guild?

MERKIN  
 Maybe. She's something...

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chris watches TV alone, snacking on some food.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 ...according to Commissioner Merkin  
 earlier today, the remaining  
 members of the Guild have nothing  
 to fear.

Chris looks up at the screen.

On the screen: Merkin.

MERKIN  
 (on TV)  
 Cooperate, and you will be treated  
 fairly. You have my solemn promise.

Chris stabs the remote at the screen and shuts it off. She gets up and walks over to a nearby desk. On it, her phone buzzes and flashes. She picks it up.

On the phone, a message from "D": "Can we talk?"

She punches in her response. "No."

A reply: "Please. It's important."

Chris: "No."

She stares at the mirror above her desk, trying to calm herself. We close in on her necklace -- a simple silver chain bearing a Gemini symbol.

FLASHBACK - INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A younger Chris, her face bruised and eyes red, nervously fingers her Gemini necklace as she listens to three adults murmuring heatedly in the hall outside the office.

She has to know. She tiptoes over to the door and presses her ear against it. She hears her PRINCIPAL's voice.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)  
 ... two other students saw it. I  
 can't just ignore it.  
 (MORE)

PRINCIPAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If you two can't come up with an acceptable solution, I'll have to expel your boy.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I understand. Can you give us moment together?

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Of course, Senator. I'll be right down the hall.

Chris waits -- hopefully.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

This is Jakob's third school in two years. I can't deal with another expulsion.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

That's not my problem.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Actually, it is.

Long beat.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

You wouldn't.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh yes I would.

Chris looks worried.

CHRIS

(whispering to herself)  
Come on, dad. Come on.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A sharply dressed, immaculately coiffed SENATOR ELLEN ALBRIGHT smiles imperiously at a younger Merkin.

SENATOR ALBRIGHT

Hell, I can place a hold on your nomination forever, and no one will even know it's me.

MERKIN

I can go to the press.

Albright snorts.

SENATOR ALBRIGHT

Go right ahead. No one gives a shit about you or your, your... daughter. People are trying to put their lives back together, Averill. They won't care.

Merkin, furious, stares at her. But he can't pull the trigger.

SENATOR ALBRIGHT (CONT'D)

She'll get over it. This will all blow over and we will all come out the better for it.

Merkin, in pain, turns away.

SENATOR ALBRIGHT (CONT'D)

You know I'm right.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Chris, a look of horror on her face, stumbles over to her chair and begins sobbing into her hands.

LATER

A stony-faced Chris sniffles and yanks her body away when Merkin puts his hand on her shoulder.

MERKIN

Let's go home, Chrissie.

Chris gets up and faces Merkin squarely.

CHRIS

What home?

She slams her palms into Merkin's chest and storms out of the office.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT

Chris looks down at her phone again. Another message.

On the phone: "Please."

Chris taps on the phone several times.



On the phone: "Block D?"

She clicks "Yes."

INT. ELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Elle, John, Alphonse and Betty huddle around her, Chris types on a desktop computer. She inserts a thumb drive.

CHRIS

There's a lot here. It'll take a few minutes to copy.

LATER

Chris, Alphonse and Betty sit around the dining table, talking excitedly.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

There's two sets of almost identical data in parts of it, but it's like they're both incomplete in small ways...

ALPHONSE

Seemed like a couple of VR access points here and there. Not saying you're right about all this, but might be worth a try...

BETTY

If we could get an old headset, we could see more of what's there...

CHRIS

Dylan should be able to get one, right?

Behind them, at the desktop computer station, Elle and John type and stare at the screen.

ELLE AND JOHN

Their eyes widen in excitement.

ELLE

"James and Mary Allen?"

JOHN

Allen? James? Mary? You fucking kidding me? The needle got smaller and the haystack bigger.

ELLE

Hush.

Elle types away intently.

LATER

Elle and John's mouths open at the same time.

ELLE (CONT'D)

No, no, no, no, no...

Elle types frantically.

On the screen we see snippets of what Ellen is typing: "Allen Next of Kin" "Allen car crash" "Allen survived by" etc.

LATER

Ellen slams her fists on the table holding the computer. John, stricken, tries to comfort her.

Alphonse, Betty and Chris come over to them. John looks up at them and shakes his head "no."

JOHN

They died 18 years ago. There's nothing... nothing ... about her.

Elle gets up.

ELLE

No relatives, no addresses, no school records, nothing. It's... it's like she never existed.

Betty tries to comfort Elle. Elle waves her off.

CHRIS

We can go back. We think there's a way --

ELLE

-- we got everything. There's nothing more there.

CHRIS

Here there, maybe not. But there there --

ELLE

-- Don't!

CHRIS  
The anomaly --

ELLE  
No! It's not what you think it is.  
It can't be.

CHRIS  
We have to go back.

Elle holds up her hands.

ELLE  
You're crazy.

Elle leaves the room. After she closes the bedroom door, John turns to the others.

JOHN  
It's too risky to go back.

CHRIS  
If Dylan and I are right, we can  
find her. We can find everything  
that's been lost.

Alphonse and Betty stand beside Chris, nodding.

ALPHONSE  
I think it's crazy too. But there  
is a small chance she's right. And  
if she is --

BETTY  
-- then we gotta do it.

John gives up.

JOHN  
Just... leave us out of it.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. GUILD MEETING ROOM

CHRIS  
There is another one.

The decimated ranks of the Guild turn in their seats to face Chris.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
I've seen it.

A man -- the ACTING LEADER -- clears his throat. Everyone turns back to face him.

ACTING LEADER  
Where is it?

Chris stands.

CHRIS  
The only reason you're standing  
there is because our last mission  
was a disaster.

Everyone turns to her. It's like watching a tennis match.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Merkin knew we were coming.

Now it's in the Acting Leader's court.

ACTING LEADER  
If the Guild's been compromised,  
there'd have already been other  
consequences. We still have the  
seven.

Back to Chris.

CHRIS  
I'm not blaming you. In fact,  
you're the only one I trust now.  
With Ericson and Hicks burnt,  
you're the only one left who knows  
the location of the seven.

Back to the Acting Leader.

ACTING LEADER  
And three must know.

Murmurs of assent in the room.

CHRIS

I call for elections. I will stand for the honor. As the only people in the room with knowledge of the location of one or more of the eight, we must both stand.

ACTING LEADER

And the third?

CHRIS

A believer. One who is our friend. And one who did not know of the last retrieval plans.

More murmurs of assent.

EXT. COMMUNAL GARDEN - DAY

Chris, on her knees, pulls weeds. Dylan, wearing a hat, glasses and surgical mask, arrives and kneels next to her. He lays a sack next to her and joins her in weeding.

DYLAN

2028 model. Still works.

Chris glances at the sack.

CHRIS

Thanks.

DYLAN

There's an A.I. with it.

CHRIS

Guess you didn't find what you were looking for.

DYLAN

No. But it's there. It has to be...  
(beat)  
When are you going back?

CHRIS

Soon.

DYLAN

Good. One of my contacts in another district says Merkin is checking their data and asking questions. We may not have much time.

CHRIS  
Maybe we can distract him?

DYLAN  
Maybe.

CHRIS  
There's something else.

DYLAN  
What?

CHRIS  
The Guild needs you.

DYLAN  
They get my money. That's enough. I don't need to be seen consorting with them.

CHRIS  
You won't have to. They just need someone they can trust. To carry on in case things go to hell.

DYLAN  
Carry on with on with what? Your pseudo-science mysticism?

CHRIS  
The Guild's goals are the same as yours.

DYLAN  
I doubt it. And they have no resources... other than what I give them.

CHRIS  
You underestimate them. And they have exactly what you want.

Chris takes the sack and walks away. Dylan, stunned, strains to get up. He watches Chris disappear.

DYLAN  
(mutters)  
These people...

INT. THE BLUE ROOM - NIGHT

Standing near the humming QC, Chris holds the VR headset in her hands. Alphonse and Betty sit near the terminal, Betty at the keyboard.

On the monitor: a loading bar reading "67%."

BETTY

Get ready.

Chris dons the VR rig.

THE VR DISPLAY

Black and white static fills the display screen. Near the bottom of the screen, a legend reads "A.I. Integrity: 100%"

INT. THE BLUE ROOM

Betty and Alphonse draw closer to the monitor. The loading bar reads: "95%"

ALPHONSE

Almost there...

INT. PINK WORLD - THE PINK ROOM

Bathed in pink light, an unattended, open laptop's screen flickers on. Among several icons on the bottom of the screen, a camera icon switches from white to green.

We close in on the tiny camera lens above the laptop screen.

INT. THE BLUE ROOM

Chris faces the QC, holding her hands out awkwardly, grasping at nothing. She balances carefully, one foot in front of the other, crouching slightly. She lurches backward.

CHRIS

Whoa!

THE VR DISPLAY

A distorted fisheye view of a QC bathed in pink light. The legend at the bottom reads "A.I. Integrity: 98%"

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You guys recording?

BETTY (O.S.)  
It's on. What do you got?

CHRIS

Her right arm extended, Chris slowly rotates her open hand.

THE VR DISPLAY

Chris' view of the QC draws closer as the rig zooms in. The legend at the bottom reads "A.I. Integrity: 94%"

CHRIS (O.S.)  
It's the Q.C.... I think. The light  
is pinkish/red, though.

BETTY (O.S.)  
Look around you.

INT. THE BLUE ROOM

She turns toward Betty and Alphonse, rotating her hand in the other direction. She takes a step toward them. Stops. Leans forward slightly, swiping her left arm in front.

Alphonse ducks the swipe.

ALPHONSE  
Hey! Be careful.

Chris freezes.

CHRIS  
You're there?

She carefully searches in front with both hands.

THE VR DISPLAY

Chris' virtual hands sweep back and forth in front of the QC terminal's monitor.

ALPHONSE (O.S.)  
Haven't moved.

Her virtual left hand extends forward slowly toward the monitor. The legend at the bottom reads "A.I. Integrity: 91%"



INT. THE BLUE ROOM

Chris' hand inches toward Alphonse's face. Her index finger grazes his nose. Then her hand explores his face a little less gently.

ALPHONSE

Stop it.

Chris raises her VR rig to look at them with her own eyes. She then lowers it back on.

CHRIS

Christ, this is weird. You're not there. Everything's pink...

ALPHONSE

The A.I. must be modifying your view.

BETTY

Why would it do that?

ALPHONSE

Maybe Dylan doesn't want us to see something, I don't know --

CHRIS

Stop. Let me see the monitor more closely.

Betty and Alphonse clear some space as Chris inches forward, rotating her right hand.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Betty. Open the anomaly file.  
"Journal."

Betty types on the keyboard.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Is it open?

BETTY

Yes. Can't you see it?

THE VR DISPLAY

Chris' view of the monitor only shows the file list -- the one she saw the first time. The legend at the bottom of the VR display reads "A.I. Integrity: 83%"

CHRIS (O.S.)  
Add some text. Anything.

On the monitor: as we hear Betty type away, the file size for "Journal" changes from "8391kb" to "8392kb."

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
All I see is the file list. And the  
file size just ticked up.

ALPHONSE (O.S.)  
A.I. could be doing that, too.  
Wouldn't be hard.

Diffuse white light encroaches on the left side of the display. The display POV shifts back toward the QC. Behind it, with the new illumination we see a rack laden with...

The POV zooms in -- QCs line the rack. The white light disappears.

CHRIS (O.S.)  
What the --

An out-of-focus dark blob passes by in the foreground.

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Ahhhh!

INT. THE BLUE ROOM

Chris leaps backward, tearing the rig off her head. She looks around frantically.

Betty and Alphonse look at her like she's crazy.

BETTY  
What is it?

Chris shakes her head a little, takes a deep breath, and puts the rig back on. She turns toward Betty and rotates her right hand.

THE VR DISPLAY

We slowly zoom in on the back of a woman seated at the QC terminal. She has long blond hair.

CHRIS (O.S.)  
I don't think an A.I. can do this.

The blond woman reaches into a bag of fast food that she has placed next to the monitor. She pulls out a hamburger and unwraps it. We zoom in on it.

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Christ, is that real?

The blond woman, her back still to us, eats the burger.

The legend at the bottom VR display reads "A.I. Integrity: 59%."

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come on. Turn around.

The legend reads "A.I. Integrity: 57%."

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come on. Come on. Turn!

The legend reads "A.I. Integrity: 54%."

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Turn around! Do it! Turn!

The blond woman pauses eating, turning her head ever so slightly, like she hears something behind her.

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come on!

The woman stands up. As she turns, the VR display flickers.

The front of her torso draws near. The screen flickers. The legend reads "A.I. Integrity: 51%."

The torso leans forward and a face comes into view.

Chris' face.

Diffuse white light on the left of the display again. The POV shifts in that direction. It's a young woman, maybe 20 years old, walking into the room. She draws near.

The screen flickers and is replaced by static.

ALPHONSE (V.O.)  
Chris?

BETTY (V.O.)  
Chris? Chris? Chris!

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. ELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Elle practices yoga on a mat.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)  
Updog, inhale... downward facing  
dog, exhale... raise the right leg  
and up point the toe... inhale...

Elle strains to hold a pose and collapses.

LATER

Sitting on the mat with her head resting on her knees, Elle cries. The yoga instructor's voice drones on.

LATER

Elle, red-eyed, stares at her bookshelf. Her face contorts.

ELLE  
Arrgh!

She drives her hand through the books, swiping them off the shelf. John arrives to comfort her. She buries her head in his shoulder.

JOHN  
It's okay, it's okay.

Elle raises her head a bit.

ELLE  
It's not.

JOHN  
I know.  
(beat)  
Come on. I'll start a bath for you.

John gives her a nudge. Elle sniffles and stares at the mess of books on the floor.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
I'll clean it up later.

Elle, still staring at the books, nods. They slowly move to another room.

## THE BOOKS

Scattered across the floor, the detritus of two decades of self-help wisdom. One book, The Power of Positive Thinking, its spine broken, lies facing up.

A yellowing, folded piece of paper pokes out near the book's back cover.

Footsteps hurrying back. Elle's hands carefully take the paper and unfold it, revealing the photo.

## THE PHOTO

The couple -- the Allens. The house. All of it -- not the cropped version on Elle's phone. All of it.

The shiny black Victorian turrets. The sharply angled roof.

The house with the QC.

Her house.

END OF PILOT