PSI FACTOR:
CHRONICLES OF THE PARANORMAL

"Night of the Setting Sun"

Written by James Nadler

Final production draft

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FADE IN:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: FRONT GATE - NIGHT

The entrance to an abandoned factory complex from the 1800s.

FRANCO, a punk in his early twenties, wearing shiny white running shoes, sniffs the cold night air. RATTLE the gate.

FRANCO
It's locked. It's been locked forever.

With an apologetic smile, he turns to...

CLAUDIA VICKERS. Vickers is in her early thirties, fit and well put together in a Roots-style bomber jacket. She's too glamorous to be skulking around an old factory late at night.

FRANCO (CONT'D)
Over here.

Franco walks away from the gate and along the high brick wall. Vickers follows.

VICKERS
What about security?

Franco tries to put her at ease.

FRANCO
Ms Vickers, I've been in and out of here four, five times. I got you covered.

Franco piles up discarded crates to form makeshift steps against the brick wall.

FRANCO (CONT'D)
That's why I was thinking, I know we said six hundred. But really it should be more like seven-fifty. To be fair.

VICKERS
Franco, let's see if you found what I'm looking for. Then we'll talk.
Franco and Vickers clamber to the top of the wall. They swing over and drop inside the complex.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS - NIGHT

Vickers and Franco skulk along. Franco nods. This way.

POV THE WATCHER

Observes, unseen, as Vickers and Franco step into...

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: COURTYARD - NIGHT

MOONLIGHT cuts through the clouds. Their FOOTSTEPS ECHO.

They look at each other. Vickers is starting to lose her nerve. But then Vickers spots something.

VICKERS

(excited)

There.

FRANCO

See. I told you.

Vickers unfolds a large square of light canvas from her jacket pocket. Holds it in front of herself.

POV THE QUARRY

As Vickers' canvas covers it and blocks out the light.

VICKERS (O.S.)

Got it.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS - NIGHT

Vickers and Franco head to the gate. Franco carries a LIVING CREATURE wrapped inside the canvas. It squirms and SCREAMS.

FRANCO

Geez.

POV THE WATCHER

Something's coming at them. Fast.
BACK TO FRANCO AND VICKERS

As the unseen circles them. They run like thieves.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: ALONG THE WALL - NIGHT

FROM THE OUTSIDE OF THE COMPLEX --

Vickers hauls herself to the top of the wall. Turns back. Holds out her arms.

    VICKERS
    Give it to me! Now!

With a fearful backward glance, Franco hands Vickers the package. It's SQUIRMING.

    VICKERS (CONT'D)
    Hurry!

Vickers jumps down to the ground. Turns. Looks for Franco.

Franco manages to get his shoulders and arms onto the top of the wall. He muscles his torso up top. He's going to make it. He swings his legs around. But...

Something pulls him back down.

    FRANCO
    Ms Vickers! Help me!

Franco clings to the wall's rim but he is losing the battle.

    VICKERS
    C'mon!

And Franco is gone.

    FRANCO (O.S.)
    (high-pitched, shriek)
    Nooooooooo!

And then, worse - SILENCE. Beat.

    VICKERS
    Franco!

Something moves on the far side of the wall. Vickers runs into the night carrying the squirming bundle.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER
FADE IN:

INT. MOBILE LAB - DAY

DAN AYKROYD draws us into the story...

DAN AYKROYD
Like many people, I have long been fascinated by cryptozoology, the study of rare and sometimes mythical animals. Normally these creatures live in remote areas, largely untouched by man. But could it be possible for a previous unknown creature to survive undetected in the center of a modern city?

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: FRONT GATE - DAY

Even in the daylight, the factory complex looks forbidding. Abandoned. Untouched since the 1880's.

MATT PRAEGER (late 30s, intense) trails after L.Q. COOPER.

Praeger is the Case Manager, the team leader of a group of scientific operatives who investigate the strange and paranormal for the Office of Scientific Investigation and Research (OSIR).

Cooper is the team cryptozoologist. He is an odd little man whose eyes swim behind his thick glasses.

COOPER
(simmering)
Vickers calls herself an ornithologist. But she's really just an animal smuggler.

PRAEGER
And Elsinger authorized how much?

COOPER
We paid $74,000.

PRAEGER
(teasing Cooper)
That's good money for a rat with wings.

(off Cooper's look)
It's a pigeon.
COOPER
Matt, Vickers sold us a passenger pigeon. They've been extinct since 1914.

PRAEGER
Yup, In Search of...the Psi Pigeon.

Praeger considers the factory complex.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
Coop, you sure this is the place?

COOPER
Vickers found it around here. It's possible that a roost of passengers survived this century in these old buildings.

PRAEGER
This is practically downtown. (intrigued)
Why hasn't this land been developed?

COOPER
You can ask the owner.

PRAEGER
If he ever gets here.

COOPER
I don't understand why he's late. Mr. Stephenson was very cooperative on the phone.

A LATE MODEL SEDAN rumbles past them to a stop, about twenty feet away, next to the gate.

PRAEGER
Well, let's see a man about a pigeon.

Cooper and Praeger approach the car. They find...

STEPHENSON (early twenties, ashen, expensive clothes) slumped in the front seat. Praeger knocks on the window. Stephenson pulls himself upright, clinging to the steering wheel.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
Mr. Stephenson?

Stephenson rouses himself.

STEPHENSON
Yeah, right.
He emerges from the car leaving the door open. Praeger shoots a glance towards Cooper and gently closes the car door for Stephenson.

**COOPER**
I'm L.Q. Cooper. This is Matt Praeger.\

Stephenson lurches towards the front gate.

**STEPHENSON**
Don't know why no one ever called before. Don't know why. But... (coughs)
I didn't even know about them until my father died.

**PRAEGER**
Who? The pigeons?

Stephenson flails about, distraught. Guilt ridden.

**STEPHENSON**
The workmen. I didn't know. But you knew about them, didn't you, Mr. Praeger? The workmen?

**PRAEGER**
Whoa, you're going too fast.

**STEPHENSON**
That's the real reason you called. I'll show you everything. It's the responsible thing to do. I'm a responsible boy.

He laughs until he dissolves into HACKING COUGHS.

**PRAEGER**
You okay?

**STEPHENSON**
Right as rain. Here we are.

Stephenson unlocks the front gate. He keels over. Crumples to the ground.

**PRAEGER**
Stephenson!

Cooper bends to examine him.

As blood bubbles from Stephenson's mouth --

CUT TO:
EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: FRONT GATE - DAY
The back door of an ambulance SLAMMING SHUT.
PULL BACK TO REVEAL
Cooper and Praeger watch the ambulance pull away.

PRAEGER (V.O.)
Case log update. We are attempting
to determine the point of origin of
a species of bird long thought to be
extinct. Our investigation has been
complicated by the sudden death of
our contact, Neal Stephenson.

Praeger nods to DR. CLAIRE DAVISON (35, trim, efficient) as
she gets into her OSIR vehicle.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
Pathologist Claire Davison will
conduct the autopsy. Praeger out.

Cooper and Praeger are joined by PETER AXON (28, well-dressed,
a bit of a hot shot) and DR. ANTON HENDRICKS (60, scholarly).
Axon carries techno-gak.

The others follow Praeger onto...

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS
A cobblestone street lined with eight old factories and
stores. At the end of the street you can look up and see an
elevated expressway. Hear the cars BUZZ by.

Cautiously, they move forward.

CUT TO:

INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY
Davison circles Stephenson's corpse, dictating into an
overhead mike as she goes. She is accompanied by a CORONER.

DAVISON
Twenty-four years old according to
his driver's licence.

She circles the corpse.

DAVISON (CONT'D)
Feet discoloured. Almost black.

She pats down his chest.
DAVISON (CONT'D)
Good muscle tone. Something of a
looker, our Mr. Stephenson. If this
was myocardial infarction it must
have a congenital source. Those
present at the time of death report
he was coughing up a storm.

She leans down close to Stephenson's face.

DAVISON (CONT'D)
Mucous in the nostrils.
(surprised)
Crusted with blood.

She turns his head to the side. Opens his mouth. Blood
dribbles out. She looks inside.

DAVISON (CONT'D)
Blood in the mouth. He died so fast
he didn't even have time to swallow.
Could be respiratory failure.
(to the Coroner)
Let's slice and dice.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: LANE WAY - DAY

A PIGEON promenades between two buildings. Hendricks and
Cooper watch it go.

HENDRICKS
Is that one?

COOPER
No, Anton. That is a common pigeon,
a rock dove.

HENDRICKS
All right. So what does a passenger
pigeon look like?

COOPER
You'll know it when you see it.

As they walk out of view:

COOPER (CONT'D)
It has a long pointy tail. Its eyes
and throat are rust. It's a beauty.

OFF Hendricks' amusement --

CUT TO:
INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY

Davison spreads back Stephenson's ribs with a satisfying CRUNCH. The Coroner hands her a scalpel.

CORONER (O.S.)
Here you go.

DAVISON
Thanks.
(dictating)
His lungs are filled with a thin, bloody, frothy liquid. There appears to be gross pathological changes in the lung tissue.
(beat)
This is not good.

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: THE WALL - DAY

Axon leads with the magnetoscope. Praeger flaps his cell phone closed.

AXON
When's Donner getting here?

PRAEGER
As soon as she finishes her background checks. Vickers has dropped out of sight. The world of exotic animal sales is shadier than I thought.

AXON
Don't get Cooper started.

PRAEGER
(re: their search)
How we doing here?

AXON
You see that?

PRAEGER
(over Axon's shoulder)
A magnetic pulse.

AXON
Yeah. In a big way.

PRAEGER
Let's try to track it to its source.

AXON
There is no single source. We're standing on the mother of all magnets.
AXON (CONT'D)
(waves his probe around)
Could be picking up be iron waste
dumped here before there were
environmental regs. Or maybe
magnetite.

Axon plunges a core sampler into the earth. While he works...

Praeger finds a WHITE RUNNING SHOE at the base of the perimeter wall. He points out a discoloration on the shoe.

AXON (CONT'D)
Paint?

PRAEGER
Or blood.

Praeger's cell phone BUZZES.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
Praeger.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY

Davison on the phone.

PRAEGER (O.S.)
(through phone)
What's up?

DAVISON
(shaken)
Stephenson died. The symptoms, congealed lungs, blackened feet, resemble Spanish Influenza.

PRAEGER (O.S.)
(through phone)
You better get down here right away.

DAVISON
Can't. I'm under quarantine. The best I can do is forward materials to the health authorities to help develop a vaccine. Of course, that won't help anyone who is already infected. Like me.

OFF Davison's concern --

CUT TO:
Axon, Praeger and Hendricks confer. Praeger is answering Hendricks' question.

PRAEGER
Yes. She was quite specific. Spanish Influenza.

HENDRICKS
That's impossible. That strain hasn't been seen since 1919.

AXON
(bit nervous)
Anton, you're talking about the flu here. How bad could it be?

HENDRICKS
During the 1918 flu pandemic, millions perished. More people died from it than in the trenches of World War I.

AXON
So how did they stop it?

HENDRICKS
They didn't. Without explanation, the strain disappeared.

PRAEGER
Until today. And we were exposed to Stephenson.

AXON
And we were exposed to you. So we could all have it.

HENDRICKS
Not necessarily. In 1918 many hospital workers never picked up the infection at all. Or they survived thinking they'd just had a cold.

Axon sneezes. Everyone looks at Axon. Axon rolls his eyes.

HENDRICKS (CONT'D)
But its victims, predominately young men, often died within forty-eight hours.

AXON
Wonderful. What about antibiotics?
HENDRICKS
They won't work on a virus. We need a vaccine. And to find the source of the outbreak before it spreads.

AXON
Maybe we should turn ourselves in for quarantine.

That gives Praeger an idea.

PRAEGER
Maybe we should stay right here. This is pretty isolated.
(wry to Axon)
Here's your chance to get away from it all.

AXON
Great.

COOPER (O.S.)
Guys. Look at this! Look at this!

REVEAL Cooper, cradling a filthy pigeon.

OFF Cooper's joy --

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - LATER
Praeger is on his cell phone. He walks along the side of the OSIR mobile lab.

PRAEGER
(onto phone)
Okay, Lindsay, what've you got?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LUMIERE BUILDING: LOBBY - DAY
LINDSAY DONNER (28, fiercely intelligent) on a cell phone.

DONNER
Neal Stephenson was the last surviving member of his family. I tracked down his executor: a Lisa Benning. She's also a director of the family company.

PRAEGER (O.S.)
(through phone)
When are you meeting her?
DONNER
Half an hour.
(off file)
Here's something odd.

PRAEGER (O.S.)
(through phone)
What?

DONNER
Well, H.L. Stephenson & Sons is really just a holding company. Except, according to their balance sheet, they still make some hand-crafted furniture for the high end market.

RESUME PRAEGER

PRAEGER
But this place looks deader than dead. Keep in contact.

DONNER (O.S.)
(through phone)
You too. Bye.

Praeger turns the corner of the mobile lab to find...

Axon installing the gangplank which leads into the mobile lab. As Axon locks the steps into place, Praeger walks up the ladder.

PRAEGER
Thanks, Pete.

AXON
(good natured)
I don't think this was in my job description.

And Praeger heads into...

INT. MOBILE LAB: SCIENCE POD - CONTINUOUS

...where Praeger finds Cooper observing the passenger pigeon in the "snake box".

PRAEGER
Seems lively for an extinct species.

COOPER
Columba ectopistes. In the 1800's they would flock in the billions.
COOPER (CONT'D)
But a well-organized team of men and boys could net 250,000 in a single day. Pack them in barrels and sell the meat. The last passenger died in a zoological garden in 1914.

PRAEGER
So how did a bird and a virus not seen in eighty years pop up here at the same time? Could the pigeon be a carrier of the virus?

COOPER
Possibly. One theory is that flu strains originate when avian flus and swine flus combine with human strains. It's called viral sex.

PRAEGER
Kinky.

COOPER
New flu strains usually start in migratory birds.

PRAEGER
Pigeons don't migrate.

COOPER
Passenger pigeons did.

Hendricks joins them. He carries four plastic bottles filled with a viscous orange liquid. He passes them out to Cooper and Praeger.

HENDRICKS
Drink this. It should help. (off Praeger's dubious look) It's just orange juice with added glucose.

PRAEGER
What, no chicken soup?

HENDRICKS
Keep hydrated. And if you experience any back aches, coughs or other symptoms -- find me.

CUT TO:
INT. LUMIERE BUILDING: BENNING'S OFFICE - DAY

Donner talks with LISA BENNING, late 30s, stylish. In contrast, her office is a small and undistinguished.

Benning SNEEZES.

DONNER
Bless you.

BENNING
Ragweed. Every fall.

Donner hands her a card.

DONNER
This is the city health office. You should check in with them.

BENNING
(uneasy)
Thanks. I just saw Neal last week. He seemed fine.

DONNER
How well did you know him?

BENNING
Neal was a client I inherited from my dad. The fourth and last generation to guide H.L. Stephenson & Sons.

DONNER
Who takes over now, Ms Benning?

BENNING
I guess I do. His will creates a trust to preserve the factory complex as a private historical site.

DONNER
The OSIR could recommend historians to work with you on this project.

BENNING
Thank you, but we'll manage.

DONNER
Who are the trustees?

BENNING
There's only one. Josef Schullman. I believe he's a friend of Neal's.
DONNER
You believe...

BENNING
(abruptly)
I've never met him. Ms Donner, I want your colleagues to leave the factory. It's dangerous. The floorboards are rotted through. It's a firetrap.

DONNER
Really? Then why is it still producing furniture?

BENNING
Where did you hear that?

DONNER
Your annual report. Aren't company directors personally responsible for fire safety violations?

BENNING
What do you want?

DONNER
Just access for a few days.

With a sigh, Benning nods her agreement.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - DAY

Cooper, Axon, and Praeger emerge from the mobile lab.

COOPER
I think we can find the pigeons' roost before dark.

PRAEGER
Don't leave town.

Cooper heads off. Axon and Praeger set off in the other direction. No signs of life. Axon admires the buildings.

AXON
Beautiful. You know, I think I would have loved to live in the 1890s. An age of new possibilities. Scientists were like rock stars...

PRAEGER
...who ate pigeon meat.
Axon listens to something in the distance.

    AXON
    You hear that?

They listen. In the distance, faint, is the SOUND of a skipping rope SLAPPING against stone. A reedy, little girl's voice drifts towards them:

    GIRL (O.S.)
    I had a little bird...and its name was Enza...

The wind shifts and wipes away the sound.

    PRAEGER
    (calls out)
    Hello!

    AXON
    Who's there?

No response.

    CUT TO:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY - DAY

Cooper enters the vast room. Peers into the darkness.

On the floor he finds some DROPPINGS. Scraps them up into a metal container.

Cooper hears a faint WHAMP. He stands up. Listens carefully.

Cooper caps the container. Behind him the floorboards CREAK and MOAN. Cooper wheels around.

There's no one there.

Cooper exhales. He cautiously makes his way further into the room. He spots...

AN OLD FASHIONED CHICKEN COOP

Inside, passenger pigeons COO.

    COOPER
    Wow.

Cooper reaches out to the pigeons.

    CUT TO:
EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - DAY

Praeger shudders.

AXON
What is that -- you got a chill?

PRAEGER
I'm fine.

AXON
You heard what Anton said. If you've got the bug, you should head back to the mobile lab.

He moves close to Axon. Whispers in his ear.

PRAEGER
It's just my spidey sense going off. Someone is watching us.

They wait, watch and listen. In the distance, a DOOR BANGS. They race towards the source of the noise. Turn a corner of a building to find --

A door BANGING in the wind. They dash through it and into...

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Steps ECHO ahead of them, CLATTERING up the stairs. Axon and Praeger charge up the stairs. They reach the...

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: WOODWORKING SHOP - CONTINUOUS


Axon pulls a drop cloth off of a pedal-powered lathe.

Praeger finds straight-backed chairs with round legs.

PRAEGER
Shaker style. Tongue and groove construction.

Axon joins him. Praeger pokes around a workbench.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
Look at these nails. They don't look milled -- they look like they were hand forged.
Another sound. The GROAN of machinery.

AXON
Freight elevator!

They race down the stairs to --

CUT TO:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: GROUND FLOOR/ELEVATOR - DAY

The ground floor. The elevator SHUDDERS into position. The door opens. No one's there.

OFF Praeger's frustration --

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is setting.

Cooper rejoins Praeger and Axon.

COOPER
You won't believe what I found.

AXON
Easy there, Coop.

They turn and see...

POV OSIR TEAM

Eight PEOPLE silhouetted against the sky. The men wear Irish-style caps. We can't make out their faces.

A sepulchral little girl, SOPHIE, dangles a skipping rope.

A tall man, JOSEF SCHULLMAN, steps forward. Josef is in his early forties, dressed in jeans and a working man's shirt.

Josef slides a shotgun shell into its chamber. Points the shotgun at Praeger, Cooper and Axon.

PRAEGER
This your discovery, Coop?

OFF Praeger and Axon's concern --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Josef steps forward.

    JOSEF
    You must leave, Sirs. Before I must make you leave.

    COOPER
    (quietly)
    They must be the workmen Stephenson was talking about.

    PRAEGER
    Good help is so hard to find.
    (beat)
    We have permission to be here. From Mr Stephenson.

    JOSEF
    He sent you?

    PRAEGER
    Not exactly.

A woman from the group, ELENA SCHULLMAN, 20s, attractive, steps forward. She points at Axon's juice bottle.

    ELENA
    (to Axon)
    Sir. Is that juice?

    AXON
    Yes.

    ELENA
    Could I please have some for my sister?

Praeger follows Elena's glance over to Sophie.

POV PRAEGER -- of the SCHULLMANS

They look gaunt, pale, haunted. They haven't eaten for days.

    PRAEGER
    We have supplies back in our trucks.

Axon steps forward and offers the bottle.
JOSEF
Stay right there!

ELENA
You never have faith in people, Cousin. I told you Mr. Stephenson would never let us down. He will be here soon enough himself.

PRAEGER
Maybe this isn't the best time, but about Mr. Stephenson...he's dead.

JOSEF
No.

PRAEGER
But please keep your distance. We may be sick with influenza. It killed Mr. Stephenson.

ELENA
We all had the grippe ages ago. Poor Mr. Stephenson. He must have caught it from us.

Praeger catches Axon's eye. Gives him the high sign. Axon walks over to Sophie.

AXON
My name's Peter.

SOPHIE
I'm Sophie Schullman. Very pleased to meet you, Sir.

ELENA
I'm Elena Schullman. That's my cousin, Josef.

Josef lowers the shotgun.

Axon hands Sophie the juice.

SOPHIE
Thank you, Sir.

She drinks thirstily.

CUT TO:

INT. MOBILE LAB: CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The Schullmans sit around the table. They tear into OSIR prepackaged rations and plates of sandwiches.
The Schullmans eat ravenously.

Juice dribbles over the chin of a COUSIN (male 20's).

The Cousin leans close over his plate and rips apart a chicken sandwich, eating only the meat.

Food slobbers out the side of Josef's mouth. He wipes it away with the back of his sleeve. He grabs a sandwich from the center of the table. His eyes lock with his Cousin's. The Cousin backs down. Josef takes the sandwich.

On the other side of the glass partition, Praeger and Hendricks watch them eat.

PRAEGER
Charming.

With a nod, Hendricks draws Praeger into...

INT. MOBILE LAB: COMMUNICATIONS POD - CONTINUOUS

HENDRICKS
They show all the early signs of malnutrition.

PRAEGER
They must have relied on Stephenson for their groceries.

Praeger finds Sophie's skipping rope on the counter.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
That's interesting.

HENDRICKS
What?

PRAEGER
The handles are made out of wood not plastic. Look at the carving.

HENDRICKS
This is no toy. It's an antique.

Praeger considers this.

PRAEGER
I want to see what Cooper found.

CUT TO:
INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: PIGEON COOP - NIGHT

Cooper and Praeger stand in front of an old-fashioned chicken wire set of coops. Pigeons COO. Sophie gives them the tour.

SOPHIE
That's Clara and that's Lillian.

PRAEGER
Lillian. Nice name for a pigeon.

SOPHIE
She's my favorite.

PRAEGER
Sophie do you mind waiting while Dr. Cooper and I talk?

SOPHIE
No. Are you a real doctor?

COOPER
I'm an animal doctor.

SOPHIE
Oh, you're a veterinarian.

She moves away and starts skipping in the background.

COOPER
It looks like the Schullmans bred these for generations.

PRAEGER
Why?

COOPER
For meat.

The FLAP FLAP FLAP of Sophie's skipping starts.

PRAEGER
If they're eating pigeons no wonder they're starving.

COOPER
Interesting. There's only sixteen birds in the flock. They kept the bare minimum to promote genetic variation.

Praeger glances over to Sophie.
They don't look like geneticists to me.

Sophie chants as she skips:

I had a little bird. And it's name was Enza. I opened the window. And in - flew - Enza.

(SOPHIE (CONT'D)
(faster, frenzied)
I had a little bird. And it's name was Enza. I opened the window. And --

CUT TO:

INT. MOBILE LAB: MEDICAL AREA - NIGHT

Where Hendricks draws blood from Josef. Josef sits in the med chair. Josef's shirt is off. Hendricks applies a cotton swab to the crook of Josef's elbow.

HENDRICKS
Just apply a little pressure there.

JOSEF
No one in my family has needed to see a physician for some time. Really Sir, I feel fine.

Praeger joins them.

JOSEF (CONT'D)
(to Praeger)
But you, Sir, look pale. You should work more in the sun.

Praeger steps behind the chair and examines Josef's shirt as they talk. And as they talk, Hendricks checks out Josef's lymph nodes.

PRAEGER
I should. Where exactly do you and your family live?

JOSEF
In the vicinity.

PRAEGER
Here, at the factory?

JOSEF
Yes.
PRAEGER
Where does your daughter go to school?

JOSEF
Sophie? She's my cousin. We teach her at home.

PRAEGER
Doesn't she miss having friends?

JOSEF
We have our work, our family, our beliefs, Sir.

PRAEGER
And privacy.

JOSEF
It is a good life.

Josef stands up. Praeger hands him his shirt.

CUT TO:

INT. MOBILE LAB: SCIENCE POD - NIGHT

Elena coos to the pigeon Cooper captured earlier.

ELENA
You found Barrymore. Sophie will be so pleased.

Axon attaches his laptop to a SPECTROMETER.

ELENA (CONT'D)
(re: the laptop)
That is a beautiful machine, Peter. Wonderfully crafted. Can you show me how it works?

AXON
Sure.

He picks up a core sample and empties some dirt into a Petri dish. He slides it under the spectrometer's aperture.

AXON (CONT'D)
I collected this soil sample this morning.

Axon fires up a program, hoping to impress her. Numerical data races across the screen. She presses closer to him, the better to see the screen.
AXON (CONT'D)
The machine, ah, bounces light off the dirt and then tells this machine what minerals are there.

ELENA
Wonderful.

AXON
And it tells me...you are living on top of magnetic rock. Iron ore, nickel, lead. Other heavy metals.

ELENA
And that is not good?

AXON
It's not exactly healthy. How long have you been here?

Elena changes the subject.

ELENA
Have you not done enough work for the day?

AXON
(with a smile)
You planning to get me into trouble?

ELENA
No, just out in the air. I would love a walk.

AXON
Sure. You can show me around.

ELENA
No. I mean outside the wall. Outside of here. You can escort me. The other girls on the promenade will be completely jealous.

Praeger and Josef come around the corner. Josef notices Elena's attention to Axon.

JOSEF
Elena, do not bother Mr. Axon. We should go.

With a regretful glance back to Axon, Elena steps to her cousin's side.

CUT TO:
INT. MOBILE LAB: CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Team meeting. Axon, Hendricks and Cooper are seated. Donner and Davison are on the big screen (split screens). Praeger considers the white running shoe in its evidence baggie.

DAVISON (on screen)
We're making progress on the vaccine. But it's slow going.

HENDRICKS
Any more reported cases?

DAVISON (on screen)
Twelve. Three fatalities.

Praeger coughs. Axon and the others look concerned.

PRAEGER
I'm fine.

AXON
You don't look fine.

PRAEGER
Let's just say I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop.

DAVISON
Take care of him. I'll check in later.

She BLIPS off the screen to be replaced by an OSIR logo.

HENDRICKS
Matt, maybe we should get ourselves to a better facility.

PRAEGER
Maybe we should figure out what's going on first. Medical report.

HENDRICKS
All the Schullmans have influenza antibodies in their blood but few active cells. They are carriers.

PRAEGER
Background.
DONNER
(on screen)
No current records for Josef or Elena Schullman. They've never even paid income tax.

HENDRICKS
That could fit with their behaviour.
(to Praeger)
Have you noticed the close family structure, the emphasis on work and religious beliefs? These are people trying to shelter themselves from modern society.

PRAEGER
And taxes.

HENDRICKS
Perhaps Stephenson exploited their fears in return for cheap labour.

AXON
Why would the Schullmans agree to that?

PRAEGER
Every kind of shelter has its price. Lindsay, you said you had no current records.

DONNER
(on screen)
There was an immigration record of two Schullman families landing in Quebec City. In 1905.

PRAEGER
Maybe the Schullmans have been here for generations. Talk to the Stephenson lawyer again.

DONNER
(nods on screen)
I'll keep you posted.

She BLIPS off the screen to be replaced by an OSIR logo.

A small knock on the glass door. It's Sophie.

SOPHIE
Dr. Cooper. It's Lillian. She's sick.
COOPER
I'll be right back.

Cooper and Sophie leave.

PRAEGER
Clara. Lillian. Old-fashioned names. For an old-fashioned girl.

AXON
And Barrymore?

PRAEGER
John Barrymore.

HENDRICKS
Clara Bow and Lillian Gish. She named them after silent movie stars.

PRAEGER
From the turn of the century. Like the birds and the virus.
(quotes Sophie)
"I knew a little bird and its name was Enza...?"

HENDRICKS
"Ashes ashes we all fall down." That's from the Great Plague. Children often create rhymes to deal with truly horrible events. Sophie's doggerel dates from 1918.

PRAEGER
Have the Schullmans been here for generations? Or have they...just always been here?

CUT TO:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: PIGEON COOP - DAY

Sophie hovers over Cooper as he works with Lillian the pigeon. The bird is old and ill.

COOPER
(to pigeon)
Shh shh shh shh.

SOPHIE
(to herself)
I opened the window and in-flew-enza.

COOPER
Where did you learn that song?
From a little boy who came through the fence to play. That was a long time ago.

How long?

It's hard to remember. I don't know. Eighty years.

Off Cooper's amazement...

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: FACTORY 2ND FLOOR - DAY

As Josef sharpens a knife on a wheel, Praeger questions him.

JOSEF
Eighty years? Sophie is a little girl...with a big imagination. You should only believe what you can turn over in your hands. And in the Almighty.

PRAEGER
How long have you been here?

JOSEF
Long enough.

PRAEGER
I'd like to bring in more people to meet you. Anthropologists. Historians.

JOSEF
Then we will not be here anymore.

PRAEGER
Where are you going?

JOSEF
Presume we stay. And that we are what you think we are. Your doctors and alienists will take away from us our, our special-ness. Sophie will start playing your games.

(re: a chair)
I will take the easy path, use electrical machines instead of my own muscles. We will be observed until we resemble the observers.

Josef's old-fashioned lathe breaks down. He throws a tool across the room in frustration. Praeger examines the lathe.

PRAEGER
The problem is you need more torque. I think I can fix this.
INT. LUMIERE BUILDING: BENNING'S OFFICE, RECEPTION - DAY

Donner and RAY DONAHUE (late 40s, former cop) KNOCK at the door.

RAY
Pretty sleepy office. Can't be too much money in wills and trusts.

DONNER
She said she'd be here. Any leads on Vickers?

RAY
Pigeon lady? Working on it.

DONNER
Ray, I know you have your trade secrets, but how do expect to find...

RAY
An international animal smuggler. I'll dangle a little cash, she'll surface soon enough.
(shrugs)
So my expense account will be high this month.

They hear A THUMP.

Donner swings open the door to the inner office and finds...

INT. LUMIERE BUILDING: BENNING'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Benning slumped behind her desk. They rush to her.

DONNER
Ms Benning.

Benning's in a bad way. She GASPS for breath.

Ray dials 911.

RAY
(into cell)
Hello. Yeah. We need an ambulance.

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - DAY

Axon and Elena. They take their promenade.
AXON
You know the Japanese believe that magnets re-energize the iron in your blood and prevent aging. Maybe the magnetic soil here is the reason for your longevity.

ELENA
(flirting)
Do I really look one hundred and twenty years old?

AXON
Not a day over one ten.

ELENA
Thank you, Sir.

Elena's gaze is a little too intense for Axon so he steps a few steps away. She links her arm through his.

ELENA (CONT'D)
Have you been to Japan?

AXON
Yes. I stayed with a friend of mine. His apartment was so small, the fridge was in the living room. It was emerald green. All the refrigerators there are colourful because, well, they're in your living room. A fridge is like an...an ice box.

ELENA
I am not as sheltered as you think. I see the cars go by on the roadway. I used to go to the moving picture shows. Mr. Stephenson would bring me books.

AXON
Sounds like he was sweet on you.

ELENA
He was a boy. He wanted to keep the world away from us. I have my own ideas.

The attraction between them grows. Elena reaches over and gives him a kiss. Axon kisses her back.

Josef violently pulls Axon away from Elena. Josef's eyes glitter with anger. He has his shotgun.
ELENA (CONT'D)

Josef.

AXON
Take it easy.

JOSEF
Sir, you don't understand.

AXON
Oh, I think I understand fine. But I'm not getting in the middle of anything here.

Axon lunges forward, grabs the barrel. The two men struggle.

Axon bangs Josef against the building. And again. Josef lets go of the shotgun. Slides down the side of the building to the ground.

AXON (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Axon walks away from him. Hands the shotgun to Elena. Heads towards Praeger who has been watching the action.

ELENA

Peter!

PRAEGER
(overlapping)
Axon!

Josef tackles Axon from behind. Axon goes down like a sack of potatoes. They wrestle in the dirt.

WHAP. Axon takes one across the face. WHAP. Again.

Axon breaks free. Turns on Josef and clocks him.

AXON
(in pain)
Gah!

Axon nurses his right hand.

Josef advances and...

BLAM!

Elena fires the shotgun into the air.

ELENA

Enough!
The fight stops. Josef wheels and faces his cousin.

JOSEF
I don't like the game you are playing, Cousin.

PRAEGER
Elena, why don't I hang on to that for a while?

ELENA
As you wish.

She hands him the shotgun.

JOSEF
Call together everyone. Decisions must be made.

ELENA
Josef.

JOSEF
Now.

Josef and Elena head into the factory building.

AXON
(proud of himself)
Not bad for a physics major.

PRAEGER
Can I see you for a moment?

CUT TO:

EXT. MOBILE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Axon and Praeger sit on the steps.

PRAEGER
What did that accomplish?

AXON
Matt, I was defending myself.

PRAEGER
But Pete, you put yourself in that situation.

AXON
You're taking his side.

PRAEGER
There are no sides here.
AXON
They're lying to us. I don't know what they're hiding, but you're taking their side.

PRAEGER
We are guests here.

AXON
Of Stephenson.

PRAEGER
Of the Schullmans. This feels like their home.

AXON
Like they've been here for a century?

PRAEGER
We should step lightly. There are eight of them and four of us.
(re: shotgun)
And maybe Josef Schullman has another noise maker.

AXON
If you want me to roll over, I'll roll over.

PRAEGER
Just keep your mind on your work.

AXON
(tight)
Noted.

PRAEGER
Damn it, Pete.

Before things get out of hand, Cooper pops out and...

COOPER
There's a call for you, Matt.

PRAEGER
(re: Axon's hand)
You want Anton to look at that?

AXON
He'll just ice it down.

PRAEGER
We'll continue this later.

Praeger goes into the mobile lab. Axon and Cooper.
COOPER
I have to see Sophie.

Cooper steps down off the gangplank and heads towards the tannery. Axon follows Cooper.

AXON
What's up?

COOPER
I want to learn how the Schullmans managed to breed the passengers in captivity. All attempts at the turn of the century failed.

AXON
Why?

COOPER
The pigeons' migratory instincts were so strong that they threw themselves against aviary walls, killing themselves.

AXON
Hang on. That fits. Birds use the earth's magnetic pole as a beacon in their migrations. Maybe the magnetic pulses here countermanded the flock's need to migrate.

(beat)
How's Lillian doing?

COOPER
I just conducted the autopsy.

AXON
Ah. What killed her?

COOPER
Old age.

INT. MOBILE LAB: COMMUNICATIONS POD - DAY
Praeger talks with...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY
Donner on her cell phone.

DONNER
I have a lead on that running shoe you found.
PRAEGER (O.S.)
(through phone)
Great.

DONNER
Have you seen anyone on the property by the name of Franco Berri?

PRAEGER
No. Why?

DONNER
Vickers left more behind than just a shoe. Franco has been missing for five days.

PRAEGER
Got you.

HENDRICKS (O.S.)
Matt!

PRAEGER
(into phone, to Donner)
I'll get back to you on that. Thanks.

Donner turns off her phone. Davison and Ray arrive.

RAY
I got us sprung.

DONNER
How did you manage to do that?

DAVISON
Neither of you two are symptomatic. So, you are prime candidates to test out whether the existing swine flu vaccine will prevent the Spanish version.

Davison pulls out a long needle.

RAY
What's that?

DAVISON
We think it may take.

RAY
You think it may take.

OFF Ray's discomfort --

CUT TO:
INT. MOBILE LAB: SCIENCE POD - CONTINUOUS

Praeger joins Hendricks over at the microscope.

PRAEGER
(to Hendricks)
What do you have?

HENDRICKS
Josef and Elena both possess extensive amounts of telomerase in their systems.

PRAEGER
I take it that's unusual.

HENDRICKS
Normally, you'd only find telomerase in cancer cells. It's the enzyme which helps protect the chromosomes and allows cells to keep reproducing.

PRAEGER
Anton, start from the top.

HENDRICKS
(beat)
Think of a cell like a shoelace.

PRAEGER
Okay.

HENDRICKS
Over time. Just from ordinary use, our cells lose their elasticity and start to fray. That's one theory as to why we age.

PRAEGER
And telomerase...

HENDRICKS
Builds the plastic tips which protect the ends of shoelaces. So long as you have that, your cells keep reproducing. Now, cancer cells have the unlimited capacity to keep going until their source of nutrition, the tissues they attack, is gone.

PRAEGER
So the Schullmans' entire system works like a cancer.
HENDRICKS
Yes. You know what this means? If we can replicate the Schullmans' biochemistry, we can stop all degenerative diseases associated with aging. We could live forever.

PRAEGER
But on what exactly?

CUT TO:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY - DAY

The sun is setting: its light barely cuts into the gloom. The room is empty. Axon turns on his flashlight.

COOPER
Where's Sophie?

AXON
Maybe she's at the Schullman town meeting. What's that?

He turns the beam around to...

THE STEEL FIRE DOOR

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY, 2ND ROOM - NIGHT

The door SCREECHES open. Light shines inside, silhouetting Axon and Cooper. They move inside and find...

FRANCO
Almost dead. Ghastly pale. Hanging like a slab of meat, bound to rusted machinery. He wears only one shoe.

FRANCO
No.

PRAEGER
Hang on.

FRANCO
STAY AWAY! STAY AWAY!
(beat)
Don't bleed me again.

OFF Axon's horror --

END OF ACT THREE
FADE IN:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY, 2ND ROOM - NIGHT

Cooper and Axon lay Franco down on the floor.

AXON
Take it easy. Take it easy.

FRANCO
They pulled me down off the wall and...and she left me. With them.

Franco passes out again.

AXON
I'm getting Hendricks.

COOPER
What did they do to him?

He turns around and sees

SOPHIE IN THE DOORWAY

Her mouth is crusted with blood and gristle. In her hands, the remains of a pigeon. She sinks her teeth into it.

AXON
(to Sophie)
What do you have there?

SOPHIE
I didn't want to do it, but I got hungry.

AXON
(re: Franco)
We can carry him.

COOPER
Not a good idea until Hendricks checks him out. I'll be okay with Sophie. Sophie and I are friends, right?

Sophie stands silently, watching them.

AXON
Okay.

Axon carefully sidles by Sophie and is out the door.
Sophie takes a few steps closer to Cooper and...

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY - NIGHT

Axon runs through the deserted complex towards the mobile lab. He thinks he HEARS SOMETHING over on his right.

He's grabbed from his left and pulled into the shadows...

AXON

No!

INT. MOBILE LAB: SCIENCE POD - NIGHT

Praeger and Hendricks.

HENDRICKS
The Schullman cells replicate the way a cancer would. They would require massive amounts of iron to stay alive. Liver, other internal organs.

PRAEGER
I'm betting they order their steaks raw.

HENDRICKS
The Schullmans -- or people like them -- may actually be the factual basis for the vampire myth.

PRAEGER
So the Stephensons locked the gate not to keep the world out, but to keep something in.

With a BHHHHHHHJH the lights dim down to emergency level.

HENDRICKS
What was that?

Praeger checks the machinery and control consoles.

PRAEGER
We're on auxiliary. Someone must have pulled out the cab's battery.

HENDRICKS
Who would do that?
Josef Schullman's eyes pierce through the semi-light.

JOSEF
Why not, Sir? Simply because I choose not to use electricity or modern conveniences does not mean I do not understand them or their use.

HENDRICKS
What do you want?

JOSEF
Our lives returned. But with Stephenson dead and you here that does not seem possible.

Josef steps into the light. He is flanked by two of his COUSINS. They are not armed.

JOSEF (CONT'D)
We will take what we need and be off. I cannot vouch for the behaviour of all my family.

PRAEGER
Who can?

HENDRICKS
We know how you survived this long.

In the background, the cousins empty out Hendricks' medical cabinets.

JOSEF
Do you? I really do not think so. You cannot know what it is like to be reviled and hunted. For never aging, for having hungers so acute that you need to slaughter animals for their blood alone. For being different.

Praeger grabs the shotgun.

Josef shakes his head sadly. Holds out in his hand the shotgun shells.

JOSEF (CONT'D)
She fired both barrels.

A THIRD COUSIN circles behind Praeger and Hendricks. They are boxed in.
Then we came to the New World and thought we would be left alone. But it was the same.

The Third Cousin edges closer.

Until the Stephensons offered us a shelter of sorts.

The Third Cousin launches at Praeger. Praeger grabs a fire extinguisher off the wall. Clouts the Third Cousin.

NO!

The Third Cousin falls to his knees. Praeger sprays him with the extinguisher.

Get him under control.

Over here.

The Third Cousin, partially blinded, staggers past Hendricks and Praeger to Josef.

He wasn't thinking.

Guess not. Why are you doing this?

Don't you think we deserve to survive?

Not at any cost.

We can help you.

Maybe you can.

OFF Josef moving towards them --

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY - NIGHT

Elena presses herself against Axon.
ELENA
You smell good.

AXON
There's a man in that building there. He's been hurt.

ELENA
Josef wants us to leave, but I won't. Not without you.

AXON
We have to get him help.

ELENA
You can come with us.

AXON
Are you listening to me?

ELENA
Yes.

AXON
I have to get a doctor.

ELENA
Don't you worry about him. He's nothing - just a boy.

Axon pushes her away from him.

ELENA (CONT'D)
Come to me, Peter. Don't push me away. Kiss me. Please.

CUT TO:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY, 2ND ROOM - NIGHT

Cooper stands with Franco.

SOPHIE
I'm hungry, Doctor Cooper. We're going on a long trip. And I'm hungry.

Sophie approaches them. Franco whimpers.

COOPER
What will happen to the pigeons?

SOPHIE
We will have to eat them, I suppose.
COOPER
You know, I was thinking about Clara and the others. Maybe they would like to fly again. Maybe they want to be on their own. You could release them, Sophie. They would have a chance.

SOPHIE
But I'm so hungry.

Sophie stares at the pigeon coop.

Cooper takes the opportunity to gather Franco up.

OFF Cooper's fear --

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY - NIGHT

Elena nuzzles into Axon.

RAY (O.S.)
Step away.

AXON
Ray?

RAY (O.S.)
You heard me.

AXON
It's fine.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Ray circling towards Elena and Axon, gun extended.

RAY
Ma'am, step away from him.

ELENA
(husky)
No.

Axon steps back two or three paces.

AXON
Put the gun down, Ray.

RAY
Shut up.
ELENA

Peter.

RAY
Damn you're dense.

ELENA
I need you! NOW!

With a guttural ROAR, Elena launches herself at Axon. She has a knife. It glints in the moonlight.

BAM!

Elena is hit. She slides from Axon's arms.

AXON
What, what the hell did you do?

RAY
I did you a favour.

Ray turns Elena over and reveals to Axon that she had a knife in her hand.

AXON
We have to get her to a hospital.

RAY
Whatever.

Ray kicks the knife away.

Praeger, Hendricks and Josef arrive.

JOSEF
Elena.

Josef cradles her in his arms.

RAY
Matt, she was attacking Axon.

JOSEF
I tried to warn you.

RAY
We're getting out of here. Where's Cooper?

COOPER
Here.
JOSEF
Go. I won't be able to hold my family back for long. They will hold you responsible for this.

AXON
This way.

He picks up Elena.

AXON (CONT'D)
Let me try to get her help.

JOSEF
Yes, of course.
(bitter)
We must travel light.

PRAEGER
(to Josef)
Where are you going?

JOSEF
No. Leave me! You've done enough for us already.

Off Praeger's deep regret...

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Axon carries Elena. Praeger and Hendricks carry Franco on their shoulder. Ray's gun is out.

They pass beside the mobile lab and see the front gate in front of them. They are retreating.

PRAEGER
Keep together.

They hear MOANS and RUSTLES in the dark around them.

HENDRICKS
(re: Franco)
I'm amazed he's still alive.

RAY
Just keep moving.

Hands come out of the darkness and grab at Cooper. Ray fires a warning shot into the air.

Praeger pulls Cooper away from his assailant.
They race to the front gate and...

Cooper turns, looks around and sees...

A flock of pigeons take flight.

CUT TO:

INT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: TANNERY, PIGEON COOP - NIGHT

Sophie releases her last pigeon.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY

Davison dictates as she works on Elena's body.

DAVISON
Subject apparently died from a single bullet wound. Entry from behind. Between the sixth and seventh rib. Subject is female. Caucasian. 48.9 kilograms. 1.6 metres. Age... undetermined.

CUT TO:

INT. MOBILE LAB: CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Praeger records the following:

PRAEGER
Final case manager's log. With the aid of the blood samples taken from the Schullmans, authorities have been able to create an effective vaccine. Mass immunizations are underway.

Praeger fidgets with Sophie's skipping rope. Praeger coughs.

PRAEGER (CONT'D)
Terrific.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: MAIN STREET - DAY

Axon is in the middle of a buzz of activity from COPS and OSIR TECHNICIANS. He scuffs his feet along the ground. His heart isn't in it.
PRAEGER (V.O.)
(records again)
On our return to the site this
morning, we were unable to locate
any member of the Schullman family.

CUT TO:

INT. MOBILE LAB: MEDICAL AREA - DAY

THE PASSENGER PIGEON

Alone in its cage. Cooper feeds it.

PRAEGER (V.O.)
And with only one passenger pigeon
still in captivity, Cooper observes
that this may be a second extinction.

CUT TO:

EXT. H.L. STEPHENSON & SONS: FRONT GATE - DAY

A MAN watches the activity of police and OSIR technicians
bustle around in the factory complex.

PRAEGER (V.O.)
It is sad to think that it is
isolated, alone, the last of its
kind. Praeger out.

The man turns to face the camera - it is Josef.

CUT TO:

INT. MOBILE LAB - DAY/NIGHT

DAN AYKROYD
There have been many claims, most
notably in Soviet Georgia, indicating
communities of people with remarkable
longevity. Are these claims true,
or merely a reflection of our own
desires for a chance at immortality?
For Psi Factor, I'm Dan Aykroyd.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR
THE END