

THE SIMULACRUM

Written by

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EXT. OIL RIG - MORNING

The early morning sun breaks over the horizon, casting a reddish-orange glow across a sprawling oil rig.

A lone worker, JACK, late-20's, gets out of his pickup truck and walks towards the main building. As he reaches the rig, he glances around. *No voices. No machinery. Just the unnatural stillness of dawn.*

He checks his watch. Half past six.

Jack pushes open the door to the breakroom, expecting to see the night shift crew wrapping up or grabbing coffee. Instead, the room is empty. Half-eaten sandwiches and mugs of cold coffee sit on the table.

JACK  
(under his breath)  
What the hell...

He walks over towards a window overlooking the central platform of the oil rig and stops cold.

A part of the ground is completely gone - collapsed into a massive, gaping sinkhole. Inside is a twisted, sprawling landscape of manmade structures. Entire rooms, streets and buildings have sprouted out of the earth, organically grown beneath the surface.

Jack stares, speechless, as something **WRITHES** inside the sinkhole. A **DISTORTED** voice emerges from the depths, a **CACOPHONY** of cries, one a shrill high-pitched scream and the other a **BONE-RATTLING GROWL**.

The floor buckles beneath Jack's feet, the plastic tiles of the rig splintering and cascading into the gaping void below. He makes a frantic **LEAP**, but it's too late - he's pulled down, swallowed into the **EERIE SUBTERRANEAN WORLD**.

INT. LECTURE HALL - UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

WILLOW (30s) is a striking figure - lean, manic, and sharp. She paces the front of the lecture hall, eyes darting as she sizes up her new students.

WILLOW  
(smiling)  
Alright, everyone! Time to wake up.  
Welcome to **Parasitism, Symbiosis,  
and Biomimetic Design**.

She turns sharply and scrawls the words **Parasitism, Symbiosis, Biomimetic Design** across the chalkboard.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

Think *zombies*. Think *flesh-eating microbes*. Think nature's best hackers - organisms that hijack others to survive. **They're freaky, they're genius, and they're gonna control you if you aren't careful.** So study up, if not because you want an A, then because you want to keep your body and mind your own!

The door to the lecture hall CREAKS open and a figure slips in.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

If you're late, just take a seat. I won't start docking points until the third class, I know you're all still figuring out parking...

She TRAILS OFF as she notices the visitor. It's a man, dressed in a crisp black suit.

INT. LECTURE HALL - UNIVERSITY OF AKRON - LATER

As the students all file out, the man in the black suit is still there.

WILLOW

Can I help you?

AGENT COLE

Mind if we go somewhere to talk?

INT. CLASSROOM 146 - DAY

An empty classroom. Sunlight streaming in through dusty blinds. Desks in neat rows. Faded notes on the chalkboard. The room reeks of awkwardness.

AGENT COLE

I'm Agent Cole. Would you like anything to drink before we begin?

WILLOW

What do you mean? I-

AGENT COLE  
My apologies. I'm used to doing  
this in my office.

WILLOW  
Are you a department head?

AGENT COLE  
Here? No...

WILLOW  
Oh, okay... so-

AGENT COLE  
(interrupting)  
*I liked your book.*

WILLOW  
Which one...?

AGENT COLE  
Right, you've got a few, don't you?  
"Chameleons and Con Artists:  
Nature's Greatest Pretenders."

WILLOW  
So I take it you're a fan of  
mimicry?

AGENT COLE  
Sure. I particularly enjoyed your  
chapter on humans - how we're the  
best behavioral mimics of any  
species.

WILLOW  
It's true. And I'm not the first to  
say it.

AGENT COLE  
(nodding)  
I had no idea we were the only  
species that could accurately  
imitate the calls of other animals.

WILLOW  
Yep. It's what makes us masters of  
our environments-

AGENT COLE  
What if we weren't the only ones  
that have mastered mimicry-

WILLOW  
 (unable to help herself)  
 Well, we aren't the only ones.  
 We're just the best at it-

AGENT COLE  
 That might be what you think-

WILLOW  
 Not just think. The data shows it.

AGENT COLE  
 Data? How do you quantify that?

WILLOW  
 Through longitudinal studies,  
 behavioral analyses, controlled  
 experiments. We've quantified  
 mimicry across social learning  
 rates, vocal imitation accuracy,  
 and interspecies adaptability-

AGENT COLE  
 What about chameleons? They mimic  
 behavior, sure, but they also mimic  
 their environment-

Willow holds up a hand to silence him.

WILLOW  
 Behavioral mimicry, Cole. Not  
 physical. This is my field of study-

AGENT COLE  
 I wasn't trying to condescend to  
 you, I was just trying to explain-

WILLOW  
 Of any known species on planet  
 earth, we are the most skilled at  
 mimicry, maybe not evolutionary or  
 physical mimicry, but behavioral?  
***Absolutely.***

AGENT COLE  
 I don't doubt that-

WILLOW  
 And that doesn't even begin to  
 include our architecture, our  
 designs. We use the mechanisms of  
 other animals to invent. Our  
 species are the best mimics that  
 evolution has ever created-

AGENT COLE

**What if I told you we've discovered  
something that does it better.**

The banter stops cold. Willow shifts, and then, it sinks in. There's no humor there – just a heavy, unwavering seriousness.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

The room is dimly lit, the hum of a projector filling the silence. Agent Cole clicks a remote, projecting an image on the wall: a massive sinkhole, its depths shrouded in shadow.

AGENT COLE

We're calling it the Simulacrum. It appears to be a complex system of architecture – buildings, furniture, even entire cities, that have formed beneath the ground...

He clicks again, images flashing of derelict hallways, crumbling brick facades, and eerie, fully-furnished rooms with elements from various eras—Victorian lamps, 80s decor, modern steel beams.

WILLOW

This is fascinating... what do you think caused this?

AGENT COLE

We have no idea... we were hoping you might.

WILLOW

Me? I'm flattered, but you need an archeologist...

AGENT COLE

This isn't archeology. It's biology-

WILLOW

You think it's alive?

AGENT COLE

We have *confirmed* that it's an organism.

WILLOW

That's impossible.

AGENT COLE

It wasn't here two months ago. It wasn't here five years ago, ten years ago. This thing has grown—organically.

WILLOW

Stone, steel, wood... these are not living materials—

AGENT COLE

Yet it keeps growing. Somehow, it's feeding—gathering nutrients, information. It's getting more accurate by the hour. It's alive—

WILLOW

What do you mean it's getting more accurate?

AGENT COLE

It's learning. Mimicking.

He clicks to another slide, showing early images of the structures—skeletal frameworks, unfinished spaces.

AGENT COLE (CONT'D)

When the sinkhole first opened, the structures weren't complete. Just molds. Skeletons.

He clicks again, revealing newer images—fully formed facades, intricate details.

AGENT COLE (CONT'D)

But now, the exteriors are filling in. The buildings are growing. The spaces expanding. Can you think of any reason it would be doing this?

WILLOW

What? No. This is nothing like I've ever seen before. I'd need to do days of research—

AGENT COLE

Do you think you could figure it out with a team?

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

CASS (26) does pull-ups, long blonde hair swaying behind her. She seems out of place in a prison like this...

The camera shifts – her face, head-on. *Lethal. Cold.*

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - LATER

Cass strides down a sterile hallway, flanked by two guards. Her hands are cuffed in front of her, but still, the guards keep a wide berth, exchanging nervous glances.

Cass remains silent, eyes forward, calculating, waiting...

And then, there's a **SHOUT** and a **CRASH**.

GUARD 1 stiffens, turning toward the noise. His radio crackles.

GUARD 1

Stay here.

He rushes ahead, leaving Cass alone with GUARD 2. They exchange a look – brief, but charged.

SIRENS BLARE outside.

Cass's eyes flick to the hallway door as paramedics rush in, pushing a stretcher.

Cass steps back as the paramedics pass. One of the paramedics, WILL, catches her eye – nods – *all a part of the plan*.

In the chaos, Will breaks away from the group, slipping behind Cass to swiftly unlock her cuffs with a subtle flick.

Then, without hesitation, he PLUNGES a syringe into Guard 2's neck, knocking him out instantly.

GUARD 1 follows the stretcher back into the hallway, confused, and Cass doesn't hesitate.

She STRIKES, disarming him in one fluid motion and SLAMMING him against the wall.

He slumps down into the corner, head drooping, unconscious.

Will gestures to the stretcher, sliding it out in front of Cass.

WILL

(low)

Your ride.

She quickly DIPS her fingers into the wound on the back of Guard 1's head, smearing it across her clothes, making herself look wounded.

CASS  
 (hard Russian accent)  
 You couldn't have gotten me something cool? Like a helicopter? Or a motorbike? Violet once sent in a whole fake SWAT team for me.

WILL  
 Cassidy-

CASS  
 Don't call me that-

WILL  
 It's your name-

CASS  
 Not anymore.

WILL  
 Fine. *Cass*. Just get on the damn stretcher. *Please*.

CASS  
 (cooing)  
 Aw - only because you said please.

WILL  
 Fuck off.

She plants a quick, manic KISS on his cheek, then swiftly slips onto the stretcher as they roll it toward the exit.

EXT. PRISON GATE - CONT'D

The paramedics push the stretcher toward an idling ambulance.

The gates BUZZ open, and for a brief moment, freedom is within reach. But just as the ambulance doors swing open-

Tires SCREECH!

**Two black SUVs BLOCK their exit, FBI agents pouring out, weapons drawn.**

At the head of them stands AGENT COLE, calm but intense, his eyes locked on Cass.

AGENT COLE  
(coolly)  
Going somewhere, Cass?

INT. BLACK SUV - LATER

Cass sits in the back, her eyes drilling into Cole through the rearview mirror.

CASS  
Who ratted?

AGENT COLE  
No one, actually. Just good timing.  
But you know we would have caught  
you anyways...

CASS  
(aloof)  
I know that. I like the chase.

AGENT COLE  
Sure you do. You've got a new job.  
High priority.

CASS  
New job means new handler. What's  
he like?

AGENT COLE  
*She*, actually.

CASS  
A bitch? That's new.

AGENT COLE  
She's smart. You'll like her.

CASS  
That's what you said about the last  
one.

AGENT COLE  
And he's still breathing, so I'd  
say it worked out.

CASS  
Barely. You know I don't play well  
with babysitters.

AGENT COLE

She's not here to babysit. She's a professor—an expert. She'll give you any intel you need.

CASS

Sounds boring. I don't need someone feeding me intel—it's more fun when things go wrong.

AGENT COLE

Believe me, no amount of prep will stop this from going wrong.

Cass lets a small grin spread over her face and then—

CASS

Good. Is she hot?

AGENT COLE

*Stop.*

CASS

(Meaning: tightwad)

Oh come on, ЖMOT , I was only kidding...

AGENT COLE

You weren't.

CASS

(shameless)

I wasn't... Is your wife hot?

AGENT COLE

*Enough.*

CASS

Oooooh... Or do you even have one?

He catches her gaze in the mirror and frowns.

CASS (CONT'D)

(mock concern)

Oh no... Used to? That's pretty sad, you know... man of your age, divorced. Did she make you move back into a bachelor pad?

AGENT COLE

Drop it.

CASS  
Drop what? I'm not your dog, Cole.  
I'm just making conversation-

AGENT COLE  
Cassidy-

CASS  
*Don't call me that.*

AGENT COLE  
*Then don't bring up my wife.*

A tense silence lingers, their eyes locked, the air thick with tension. Then...

Cass CACKLES.

CASS  
(menacing)  
Oh my god, Cole! You got so serious... all protective. *She must've been hot.*

He presses a button on the car's console, and a DIVIDER quietly slides up between the driver and the backseat.

Cass SCOWLS.

CASS (CONT'D)  
Hey, идиот! Don't block me out, да?!  
Что за хрень?!

As the divider snaps shut, she slumps back into her seat, a childish frown spreading across her face.

Then... she begins **POUNDING** her feet against the divider.

INT. PRISON CELL - LATER

REED "MUTT" GRAYSON (22), huddled in the corner, delicately CARVES a small wooden bird from the bedpost, eyes focused, movements precise.

The rhythmic SCRAPE of the carving knife is broken by heavy FOOTSTEPS echoing down the hallway. Mutt freezes, his head snapping up just as the cell door creaks open.

GUARD  
Mutt, where did you get a knife?

MUTT

Man, I promise I'm only using it to carve...

GUARD

I know, but you're gonna get in trouble.

The guard steps aside as AGENT COLE strides in, casting a quick glance at Mutt and the bird carving.

AGENT COLE

Mutt, it's your lucky day.

INT. PRISON HOSPITAL WING - CONTINUOUS

OMAR PATEL (42), sits on the edge of a gurney, hands bloodied, knuckles split open, a fresh gash slicing through his lip. He doesn't flinch as the door swings open, his gaze locking onto AGENT COLE.

AGENT COLE

Think it's time you stretched your legs, don't you?

Omar wipes his lip with the back of his hand, eyes steady, but says nothing.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Cass, and Mutt sit strapped to metal chairs around the sterile briefing room. Thick restraints keep their arms and legs pinned. Cass, restless, leans as far back as the straps allow.

CASS

(sardonically)  
Cozy set up, no?

MUTT

Could be worse.

CASS

(sarcastic)  
Yeah, I guess.

The door swings open, and OMAR is escorted in by a GUARD. Cass immediately recognizes him and DUCKS her head.

CASS (CONT'D)

(quiet, under her breath)  
Oh, fuck this guy-

Omar's eyes land on Cass.

OMAR

You piece of shit, Cass! I swear to god, the second they let me out of these cuffs, I'll rip your fucking face off-

Cass grins, leaning forward as far as her restraints allow, her eyes alight with mock concern.

CASS

(mocking, sweet)

Omar! Oh my god! It's you-

Even cuffed, he BREAKS free of the guard behind him and **LUNGES** for her.

Cass, still seated, barely flinches and casually brings her knee up, slamming it hard into his groin.

Omar stumbles back, groaning, but Cass just grins, leaning forward with a twisted smile.

CASS (CONT'D)

(meaning: *baby*)

Omar, МАЛЫШ, I was going to come back for you!

OMAR

Like hell, you were!

CASS

(meaning: *my love*)

The second I left, I regretted it!

I'm sorry, МОЙ ЛЮБИМЫЙ-

She breaks into manic laughter, watching as Omar seethes, still doubled over.

Guards quickly step in, grabbing Omar and SHOVING him into his seat, strapping his cuffs to the armrests.

The scene slowly zooms out, revealing the reflection of Omar and Cass through double-sided glass.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Standing on the other side, AGENT COLE and WILLOW observe silently, their faces partially shadowed, studying the four through the glass.

WILLOW  
(taken aback)  
This is my team?

AGENT COLE  
Yes.

WILLOW  
Are *any* of them suited for this?

AGENT COLE  
Well, Cass is a highly intelligent  
sociopath-

WILLOW  
I gathered that actually-

AGENT COLE  
But she's also an expert in  
ecoterrorism.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE BEGINS:

INT. FOREST - NIGHT

A dense forest bathed in moonlight. Cass (17), crouches near a patch of wild plants, plucking leaves and carefully squeezing the toxins into a small vial.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)  
She's killed government officials  
using nothing but toxins from local  
plants.

INT. MANSION BEDROOM - NIGHT

A lavish Russian bedroom, dimly lit. A wealthy MAN in his 60s lies in bed, eyes glazed over, his face contorted in pain, breathing his final, strained breaths.

A girl silently slips out the window, right as a woman starts to SCREAM.

INT. ORCHARD - DAY

Cass moves through an orchard, slicing open citrus fruits and extracting compounds with quick, practiced movements. She assembles small containers, mixing ingredients with precision. Moments later, an explosive detonates, sending factory debris flying.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)  
Crafted explosives from compounds  
found in citrus trees...

CUT TO: INT. ABANDONED FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Inside a dimly lit farmhouse, Cass stands over a makeshift lab setup, mixing common agricultural chemicals. She stirs carefully, pouring the concoction into vials, and then loads them into crude delivery devices.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)  
...and created makeshift nerve  
agents using agricultural  
chemicals.

CUT TO: EXT. OIL RIG - NIGHT

Cass watches from a safe distance as an oil rig explodes into a fiery blaze, her face unreadable, eyes cold. She turns and disappears into the night.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)  
She knows how to weaponize the  
natural environment—and how to  
destroy it when it suits her.

CUT BACK TO: INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

WILLOW  
How many people has she killed? Do  
I even want to know?

AGENT COLE  
You don't, but I'll tell you: Forty-  
three, that we know of. Could be  
more - could be less. She's not  
exactly one to leave evidence  
behind.

WILLOW  
And you think she's going to help  
us... why?

AGENT COLE  
She'll help herself. If that  
happens to keep the rest of you  
alive, consider it a bonus.

WILLOW  
Okay. And what about the others?

AGENT COLE

You won't have any trouble with Reed - he's no killer. His worst offense is drug smuggling—and even then, it wasn't the hard stuff. They call him "Mutt," cause the kid can survive just about everything.

Cole flips through Mutt's file.

WILLOW

Mutt? That's cruel...

AGENT COLE

No. Not really. It's a sign of respect.

WILLOW

How?

AGENT COLE

It's a testament to his resilience. He got captured during border conflicts and spent months in enemy detention camps.

INT. DETENTION CAMP CELL - NIGHT

Mutt is locked in a dark, cramped cell. Barely able to stand, he sits slumped against the wall, eyes staring forward, expression unbreakable. The sound of distant, tortured screams echoes down the hall.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)

They put him through psychological and physical testing—torture, disease exposure, you name it.

INT. DETENTION CAMP - MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

Mutt lies strapped to a makeshift cot. A camp medic approaches, injecting a syringe into his arm, exposing him to some unknown substance. Mutt's body writhes in pain, but he grits his teeth, refusing to scream.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)

Somehow, he made it out.

## INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WILLOW

Does he say how?

AGENT COLE

No. Claims he didn't do anything special. Our theory is that he's so fried - maybe from past drug use - that he's resistant to most psychological tactics.

WILLOW

And physically? How'd he survive disease exposure?

AGENT COLE

We have no idea. Maybe just a god given gift?

WILLOW

Nothing's a god given gift. Just an evolutionary one.

AGENT COLE

It's a figure of speech, Willow.

WILLOW

(under her breath)

An inaccurate one.

AGENT COLE

Are you done?

WILLOW

(sheepish)

I'm done.

AGENT COLE

As for Omar, he's ex-military...

## EXT. DESERT BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Omar moves through a sandy landscape under heavy fire, his expression calm and focused. He signals to his unit, guiding them to cover with precision.

Explosions sound nearby, but Omar remains steady, his eyes scanning the field.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)

Combat skills, tactical awareness, survival training.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN - DAY

Omar leads a small team up a rocky incline, moving swiftly but cautiously, signaling each step. The team trusts his judgment, following without question.

He pauses to survey the landscape, calculating every possible threat.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)  
Knows how to assess threats, handle  
high-stress situations, and manage  
recon.

INT. MAKESHIFT BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Omar kneels over a wounded soldier, calmly administering field medicine. His hands are quick and practiced as he stitches a wound.

AGENT COLE (V.O.)  
Even done a bit of field medicine-

BACK TO: INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

WILLOW  
Well that's good, we'll certainly  
need that-

AGENT COLE  
Let's hope not. If any open wounds  
get exposed to what's down there,  
we have no idea what kind of  
infection or reaction we'd be  
dealing with.

Agent Cole glances down, checks his watch.

AGENT COLE (CONT'D)  
Well... it's time.

WILLOW  
For what?

AGENT COLE  
Your brief.

WILLOW  
My brief? I barely know more than  
they do?

AGENT COLE

You're going to be the one leading them down there-

WILLOW

Cole, I only found out about this two hours ago. If you want me to brief an entire team, I need more than a two hour turnaround.

AGENT COLE

We don't have the time.

WILLOW

Well, that's not how I work. I can't just throw myself into something blind - I need time to study this thing. If you wanted someone who could make split second decisions, then you should have gone to the military-

AGENT COLE

How long do you need?

WILLOW

What do you mean?

AGENT COLE

To give a full brief. If I give you all the documents, everything we have, how long will you need?

WILLOW

If I start now? Maybe 9 hours.

AGENT COLE

Okay. Then you have it.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

QUICK SHOTS:

- Willow leans over a cluttered desk, fingers smudged with ink as she goes through countless files.
- PHOTO: Tree roots forming the structure of a dining table.
- She scribbles a note on the corner of the photo "**BIO-ALCHEMY**"
- Her eyes flick between photos on the wall, and the files in her hands.

- PHOTO: A rodent body merged with stone.
- She furiously scribbles "**SYMBIOTIC FUSION?**"
- Empty coffee cups begin to pile up.
- A timer on her watch goes off. She slaps it silent, doesn't look up.
- She shuffles through drone footage, pauses on a frame, zooms in. A ripple of color washes over the walls of the structure.
- She scribbles "**CHAMELEON EFFECT**".

*The next clips all come in rapid, nauseating succession:*

- CLIP: Shifting walls.
- "**ADAPTIVE MORPHOLOGY?**"
- PHOTO: A thin tendril bursting through a cracked sidewalk.
- "**SENSORY NODES???**"
- PHOTO: A glistening residue on the wall of the structure.
- "**NEUROCHEMICAL SECRETIONS...**"
- CLIP: walls pulsing faintly, as if breathing.
- "**ORGANIC RESPIRATION??**"
- PHOTO: A dark space where shapes seem to shift in patterns that mimic shadows.
- "**MEMORY IMPRINT?**"
- Another coffee cup goes down, crashing into an overflowing trash can.

Her hand trembles as she writes one final note...

**"SELF AWARE?"**

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

The room buzzes with tension as the inmates argue with Agent Cole. Cass leans back in her chair, rolling her eyes as Omar challenges Cole.

OMAR

This is a joke. You think we're disposable.

AGENT COLE

You're not disposable. In fact, this is *an opportunity*. If you succeed, you could walk free-

CASS

You're being cruel, Cole. We're never going to walk free. You know that. You're just hoping we'll all die down there, free up some cell space-

AGENT COLE

I'm serious, Cass. Finish this, and every charge you have is gone.

CASS

That's not possible.

AGENT COLE

It is. We've lost two teams down there already. We are *desperate*.

CASS

How do we know you'll keep your word?

AGENT COLE

You don't. **But I will.**

CASS

What makes you think we can even kill this thing? It's not a normal organism, it doesn't have a nervous system, a heart, a brain-

WILLOW

(from the doorway)  
*That's not true.*

CASS

What do you mean?

Willow steps fully into the room.

WILLOW

It doesn't have a heart, lungs, organs, at least in the typical sense, **but it does have a brain.**

AGENT COLE

How do you know?

WILLOW

Sensory nodes.

She pulls out a file.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

For the longest time, I couldn't figure out how it was mimicking us, how it knew exactly what to replicate. I thought it was just reactive, copying blindly. But then I realized... *it can see.*

She flips the file open to a page filled with eerie close-up photos of small, retractable tendrils extending from cracks in the sidewalk.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

Look here. Hundreds of tiny, retractable appendages, like antennae. And if you zoom in close enough... right here - **Visual receptors.**

The others exchange tense glances.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

If it can see, then it's not just responding passively. It's observing. It's feeling, processing, synthesizing data from the environment. **Which means it has a brain.**

CASS

*And that brain can be destroyed.*

WILLOW

Exactly.

CASS

But even if we find the brain, what makes you think destroying it will kill it?

WILLOW

Even if it doesn't kill it, it will keep it from learning, expanding. If it can't sense it's environment, it can't continue to alchemize it-

AGENT COLE

Alchemize?

WILLOW

(hesitantly)

...I coined a new term for what it's doing. *Bio-alchemy*.

AGENT COLE

Bio-alchemy?

WILLOW

Your initial theory—that it's building structures from an internal nutrient source—it's completely off.

AGENT COLE

Then what's it using?

WILLOW

Everything around it. It's not creating matter; it's transforming it. Which makes it 10 times more dangerous. Rocks, soil, plants—it breaks them down on a molecular level, reconstituting them to build something new.

AGENT COLE

How does that make it more dangerous?

CASS

(leaning forward, catching on)

Because, Cole, if it was just creating matter, our world—our structures—would still be there, underneath. But this... if it's actually transmuting the environment, it's leaving nothing behind.

WILLOW

Exactly. It's not adding to the world—it's erasing it.

(MORE)

WILLOW (CONT'D)  
Every resource, every bit of  
matter, becomes part of it.

Mutt, who's been off to the side most of this conversation,  
joins in.

MUTT  
So... how are we gonna find the  
brain then?

INT. DESCENT PLATFORM - NIGHT

The team sits rigid on seats in the metal descent platform. A  
harness clicks around each of their chests, locking them  
securely to the platform as it SHUDDERS and begins its **slow,**  
**ominous descent.**

WILLOW (V.O.)  
*The veins. When we enter, watch for  
the veins along the walls.*

CLOSE-UP: Thick pulsing tendrils winding through the earth  
around them, faintly bioluminescent.

The platform shakes slightly. The walls of the descent are  
layered with crumbling household furniture: old chairs,  
dressers half-embedded in the earth, and occasional clusters  
of dining tables. It's as if someone has taken an entire  
house and shredded it, embedding fragments into the walls  
like fossils.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
The veins are like pathways, a kind  
of vascular network. They'll guide  
us. Follow them deep enough, and  
they should lead us right to the  
brain.

Halfway down, a sideways HOUSE appears, jutting from the wall  
at an impossible angle. One dim light glows in a crooked  
window, casting a faint, eerie glow onto the surrounding  
walls. Where the chimney should be, a rusted MAILBOX sticks  
out.