

END OF DAY

Written by

Andrew Kaberline

OVER BLACK.

...BING-BONG

INT. 175TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Doors open for the incoming A-train. From the platform, a **DEAD-EYED WOMAN** (37) pushes past exiting commuters.

She wears a rain coat, backpack, and a Band-Aid on her neck.

SOME GUY exiting the car nudges her on his way out.

SOME GUY

Let the people off first...
assholes!

She continues in, unfazed.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE BETWEEN 7TH & 8TH AVE - MORNING

A **VAGRANT** finishes off a bottle of booze in a brown bag.

Dead-Eyed Woman walks past him, ducking just before he throws the bottle, still in bag, at the wall.

It's as if *she knew* he was going to throw it.

As she walks, She passes an art installation on the beams above. Each beam features words in block lettering:

OVERSLEPT

SO TIRED.

IF LATE,

GET FIRED.

WHY BOTHER?

WHY THE PAIN?

JUST GO HOME,

DO IT AGAIN.

INT. THE OCULUS - MORNING

An indoor mall. Eerily sterile. A glass skylight above.

Dead-Eyed Woman goes up escalators full of tourists.
She's the only person wearing a coat.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Dead-eyed Woman walks toward an office building, The Oculus behind her - it's odd spokes resembling centipede legs.

A **PICKET LINE** of Sentinel employees walk in an endless loop, blocking the entrance to the building. They chant...

PICKET LINE CAPTAIN
Picket line means!

PICKET LINE EMPLOYEES
Don't. Cross!

Dead-Eyed Woman puts her hood up *milliseconds* before unexpected rain showers.

The underdressed strikers run for cover.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - MORNING

A directory lists some of the building's tenants, including:

Ouros... Floors 23/24
Sentinel Assurance... Floor 25

A **SECURITY GUARD** sits at a desk with live security cam screens. Dead-Eyed Woman flashes a Sentinel ID at him.

She's **AGATHA HILLMAN**.

He passes her through to-

INT. ELEVATOR - MORNING

Agatha rides with two business-casual bros, **TONY** and **JASON**.

JASON
I bench the guy and he scores 40!

TONY
That's why you're in last place.

Jason sniffs, gives Tony a look that says '*This chick reeks.*'

INT. 25TH FLOOR, SENTINEL OFFICES - MORNING

An ID-Reader next to a fogged glass door BEEPS.

Agatha holds the door for the bros, who ignore the gesture.

JASON

I'm gonna send you some trades.

TONY

I'm not gonna help your team get better.

With a hammer from her backpack, Agatha dislodges the reader.

TONY (CONT'D)

What you doing there, Agatha?

She throws a water balloon from the backpack and hits Tony in the chest - liquid splashing his face, making him gag.

JASON

She soaked you, bro!

Next item out of the backpack is a long lighter.

Agatha flicks it near Tony, and...

WOOSH!!!

Ablaze, Tony flops to the floor in agony.

Jason turns his head just in time to meet Agatha's hammer.

Agatha throws her ID on her desk and goes to work.

Fire alarms blare. Panic sets in. **CO-WORKERS** go for the glass door exit, but they're locked in.

Agatha torches the bunch and hammers away, willy-nilly.

The outline of a **SHAPE** appears behind the glass door, getting closer. **WHITE SMOKE** creeps through the door cracks, prompting the first real reaction from Agatha.

INT. CORNER OFFICE - MORNING

Agatha's **BOSS** cowers in the corner. Agatha shuts the door, and slides a desk in front of it.

She lights her own coat - it instantly is engulfed.

BOSS
Stay back!

Agatha hugs Boss, sharing the flames with him.

He's done.

POUNDING on the corner office glass. They're too late.

The fire finally brings Agatha to the ground.

She writhes with involuntary screams.

Her eyes roll back.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - EARLIER SAME MORNING

A room with no natural light. A sunrise alarm clock pulses.

A rail of a man, **PAUL WAITE** (32), sits up in bed.

The clock display reads **8:35am, September 5th.**

PAUL
Shit.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul moves fast with his electric razor.

In the mirror he notices a small irritated circle at the surface of his neck.

A coiled ingrown hair.

Paul tries tweezers to pull some of the strand out, but it just keeps uncoiling, more painful with each tug.

His neck bleeds. He grunts while making one last pull.

Paul holds the curly & newly plucked **SEVEN INCH HAIR.**

PAUL
Huh.

SUPER: END OF DAY

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Paul, now sporting a Band-Aid on his neck, knocks on the door of a second bedroom.

No response.

PAUL

Don't spend all day in there!

He grabs a Tupperware from the fridge, then continues towards the front door.

A ROACH scurries across the welcome mat.

He hovers over the bug with his foot, ready to squish.

The roach doesn't move.

Paul shows mercy, pushing the roach outside with his foot.

INT. 145TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Paul races down the stairs, the train already in the station.

PAUL

Hold the doors!

No one does.

The doors close just before Paul can get there.

(We *might* notice Agatha sitting inside the departing train)

Arrival clock: 12 minutes until the next downtown A-train.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - 12 MINUTES LATER

Paul stands in a tightly packed car. The intercom interrupts-

MTA CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Attention passengers. Due to signal failures, ALL downtown A-trains will suspend service at 42nd street-

A symphony of groans.

PASSENGER

Every. Damn. Time.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE BETWEEN 7TH & 8TH AVE - MORNING

Distracted by the same poem that Agatha read, Paul bumps into the Vagrant from earlier, causing him to drop his brown bag.

It makes a suspicious SHATTERING sound.

VAGRANT
What the fuck, guy!?

PAUL
Sorry, I-

VAGRANT
Sorry ain't gonna buy me a
refill!!!

Sensing a confrontation, Paul takes out his wallet.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Exhaust from the manhole covers cuts through the rain.

Police patrol outside the office building while damp employees and strikers stand around looking up.

Paul follows their gaze to the burnt building facade above.

His silver-haired boss, **CONNOR** (50), approaches.

CONNOR
You're late again.

PAUL
Sorry.

CONNOR
Gotta watch that, kid.

PAUL
What happened?

CONNOR
Some lady on 25 went berserk.

EMTs roll by with gurneys, sheets covering bodies.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, 24TH FLOOR - MORNING

An all-teams meeting, already in progress.

The important people sit at a table in the center of the room. Paul sits around the fringes with the other peons.

The big boss, **BUFFORD** (60), leads-

BUFFORD

In light of this morning's events we're going to have some mandatory safety training, a wellness module-

Groans from the peanut gallery.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)

I know, I know. Otherwise, business as usual. Let's hear from development.

Connor takes the baton.

CONNOR

We're expanding the design team. If you know any able bodies, tell Nevins.

The HR rep, **NEVINS** (30s, so punchable), interjects.

NEVINS

I should note these are emergency hires, not salaried roles.

BUFFORD

That reminds me. I've heard some of you have been questioning our policies. I've even heard the "U Word" thrown around.

Some murmurs.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)

For those dissatisfied at Ouros, I hear there's plenty of new openings at Sentinel.

Managers laugh at the tawdry joke. Like a wave, the peons follow suit.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)

Customer relations?

CONNOR

Retention is robust. What's the current number?

Paul's eyes are open, but he's not awake.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Paperweight?

PAUL
Yeah?

CONNOR
He'll circ the numbers later.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

A cramped bullpen. Customer Support plebes talk through headsets while consulting big Ouros script bibles.

Above, a security camera watches them all.

Paul sits at his desk, over by the window.

He opens Outlook: 98 Unread emails. Red Exclamation Points, everywhere.

STEPH (42, means well) sits down at her desk, next to Paul.

STEPH
Hey PW. I hope you enjoyed your long weekend.

PAUL
It was fine-

STEPH
Mine was a nightmare. You remember we had to put down Noodle-

PAUL
I do-

STEPH
- well, we tried getting a new puppy, and there's so much red tape-

Paul sighs, toggles to his lengthy To-Do tab.

STEPH (CONT'D)
The shop said they wouldn't sell to us because they feared for the dog's safety. Can you believe that?

Paul opens an email: COMPLETE WELLNESS MODULE BY EOD

STEPH (CONT'D)

I said, just because my Bentley has a behavioral disorder doesn't mean he can't take care of a dog-

Paul puts on headphones, launches the wellness module.

PAUL

Sorry Steph, I gotta-

STEPH

I'll catch you up later!

Steph turns to the next deskmate to continue her trauma dump.

VIDEO ON SCREEN

The Ouros Ouroboros logo crossfades into Bufford over muzak.

BUFFORD

At Ouros, we must hold ourselves accountable to nurture and maintain a workplace environment where every employee feels safe, respected, and comfortable raising concerns.

LATER

Paul has reached the quiz part of the module.

Stock images of a person with their head in their hands.

QUIZ NARRATOR (V.O.)

Yuki saw Kwame sleeping at his desk. Yuki should report this to HR or Kwame's manager.

A TRUE or FALSE button appears. Paul clicks TRUE.

A terrible "CHEERING" sound effect plays.

TEXT ON SCREEN: QUIZ, 3% COMPLETE!

Paul takes a deep breath, and clicks to question 2.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

A crowd gathers at the behest of a **FIRE MARSHAL**.

FIRE MARSHAL

In the case of an active shooter it's imperative to remain calm.

UNSEEN EMPLOYEE (O.S.)
Yeah, no shit.

Some snickering from the crowd.

Nearby in their office, Bufford, talks loudly on a call.

<p>FIRE MARSHAL In any emergency situation the elevators will be shut off. So head for the stairs.</p>	<p>BUFFORD No, that's not going to work... Bullshit... I need an answer today...</p>
--	--

FIRE MARSHAL (CONT'D)
Does everyone know where the stairs
are located on this floor?

Nevins, always eager, walks right in front of the Marshal.

NEVINS
Fresh pots!

A few people wander off. Paul follows.

INT. BREAK OUT KITCHENETTE - DAY

The person in line ahead of Paul pours their coffee.

Passive-aggressive Post-Its litter the kitchen area, such as:

- Please remove old food from the fridge
- Please rinse the sponge after use
- Please **do not** microwave fish

Paul's turn.

The pot's Empty.

He looks at the Post-It next to the coffeemaker:

- Please refill empty pots after use

Paul empties the used coffee filter to start the next brew.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - DAY

Paul's keystrokes are interrupted by a disruptive noise.

Outside, a **WINDOW WASHER** uses a pressure washer to clean debris from the 25th floor above. He notices Paul staring.

WINDOW WASHER
(Muffled)
The fuck you lookin at?

BRRRING! Paul is saved by his desk phone.

PAUL
Paul Waite.

CUSTOMER SERVICE (V.O.)
Paperweight! Got one for you!

PAUL
Does the customer want to cancel?

CUSTOMER SERVICE(V.O.)
Naw, but she's PISSED! Forwarding!

PAUL
If she doesn't want to cancel-

The call's patched in. The woman on the line, **MAXINE**, shouts.

MAXINE (O.S.)
The app is down!

PAUL
Hi ma'am. Paul Waite, customer retention specialist. Which app are you referring to?

MAXINE (O.S.)
YOUR APP!

PAUL
Ouros operates a number of apps. Do you know which one you're using?

MAXINE (O.S.)
NO!

PAUL
Ok. What are you trying to do?

MAXINE (O.S.)
USE THE FUCKING APP!!!

PAUL
I understand, but to what end?

MAXINE (O.S.)
Credit card charges keep failing.
I've got a line out the door!

PAUL
 Ok. So I think you're using
 Registr. You'll want to talk to
 Frank in Systems-

MAXINE (O.S.)
 Don't transfer me again!

PAUL
 If I don't transfer you, I'll have
 to put you on hold.

MAXINE (O.S.)
 Fine.

Bluff Called.

Paul puts Maxine on hold and dials Frank. No Answer. He looks
 at his employee roster to find Frank's desk.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

Paul walks the floor - A labyrinth of entry-level employees.

PAUL
 (repeating to himself)
 Eighteen Four One Two-

A group of SLOW WALKERS walk in a horizontal line, blocking
 the whole fucking hall.

Paul cuts in through a pod of desks, and is bumped by an
 EMPLOYEE who rolls backwards in their chair without looking.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Sorry!

Paul rounds a corner, but stops as a HERD OF PEOPLE argue
 over who's rightfully booked the nearby conference room.

Paul squeezes by, passes more desks, and sees 18-412.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Frank?

A female employee, **JILL** rises over the partition.

JILL
 Jill, 18-412B. Frank's 18-412A.

Paul hustles down a hall to a mirrored layout of his bullpen.

18-412A - He's made it!

PAUL
Frank?

FRANK, turns in his chair.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I need a remote Registr restart.

Nevins manifests out of nowhere, startling Paul.

NEVINS
Fresh pots!

FRANK
Yeah, gimme five minutes.

Frank follows Nevins like he's the goddamn Pied Piper.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, PAUL'S DESK - MINUTES LATER

Out of breath, Paul returns, takes Maxine off hold.

PAUL
Hi, Maxine-

The line's dead. All for naught.

INT. BREAK OUT KITCHENETTE - DAY

Only one PERSON stands between Paul and his coffee.

They pour, stop, fill a second cup, then leave.

Paul lifts the coffee pot.

Empty.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - LUNCH TIME

Employees sit and talk over each other while chewing.

Paul opens his Tupperware to unveil beautiful HOMEMADE SUSHI.
The cafe chef, **DERON** (20s, handsome) lurches behind him.

DERON
What's today's special?

Paul smiles, and offers up the Tupperware.

DERON (CONT'D)
Shut up. You made these?

Deron eats a piece of sushi. Paul beams as delight washes over Deron's face.

DERON (CONT'D)
You gotta teach me how to cook.

PAUL
I'd love that.

Paul's cell buzzes. He shoots up.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Sorry, gotta take this. Here.

Paul hands the remaining sushi to Deron.

DERON
You're too good for this world,
Paul.

INT. 24TH FLOOR HUDDLE ROOMS - DAY

Paul walks by small glass offices meant for personal calls. No empties. They're all occupied by people napping or crying.

INT. 23RD FLOOR, OUROS SERVER ROOM - DAY

A floor with rows of servers housed behind glass walls. A sustained hum permeates the whole floor.

Elevator opens. Paul key-cards his way into the glass room.

He dials his phone. He's bouncy. The **HIRING MANAGER** on the other end picks up.

PAUL
Hi, it's Paul Waite here just
returning your call.

HIRING MANAGER (V.O.)
Hi Paul! So... it's good news.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, CONNOR'S CORNER OFFICE - DAY

Paul hands Connor an envelope.

CONNOR
Very official.

Connor uses a LETTER OPENER, reads the letter. Paul waits.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
"Please accept this letter of
resignation." I don't accept it.

Connor throws the letter in the bin.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
You don't want that job. Trust me.

PAUL
I haven't told you what it is-

CONNOR
Paperweight, you hold everything
down. Without you, this place...

Connor motions with his fingers as to say "would float away."

PAUL
Then promote me.

CONNOR
They're freezing promotions until
after the quarter. Gotta make that
number look good.

PAUL
Next quarter then? I'm already
basically managing customer support-

CONNOR
Customer support is dying. Chat
bots work harder and cost less.

Paul sits back in his chair, in his head. Connor sighs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Let's wait a year or two, get some
benchmarks for you to hit, then we
can discuss a proper raise. Ok?

PAUL
I'm terrified I'm going to spend my
whole life in this office.

CONNOR
Woah, I'm not asking you to stay
here forever. I was thinking more
like another ten years.

Paul sinks in his chair.

EXT. PARK - QUITTING TIME

As he walks home through a park, Paul passes a tunnel where a number of **HOMELESS PEOPLE** congregate to stay dry.

EXT. HARLEM, PAUL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Paul climbs the wet stoop to his modest apartment building.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Once inside, Paul's mackerel tabby **AMOEBIA (3)** makes a dash for the open door.

PAUL
Not so fast-

Paul scoops up the cat. The living room is dark, quiet.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(to Meba)
Where's your aunt?

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Paul turns on the light. His sister, **MEG (28, gangly)** shoots up in bed, disoriented.

PAUL
You leave your room today?

Meg pulls the comforter over her head. Paul pulls the comforter back off.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Up. Take a shower. I'll cook.

MEG
Can we eat in here?

PAUL
No, ma'am.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Paul plates risotto while blending a boiled chicken and gravy mixture. He's a totally different, energized person.

Paul does his best David Attenborough while pouring the mixture into Amoeba's bowl.

PAUL

The majestic house cat. Abandons hunting in exchange for sustenance provided by an overworked human.

He lowers the bowl to the ground.

PAUL (CONT'D)

The human, of course, is happy to oblige.

Amoeba digs in.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Tastes good, don't it?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DINNER TIME

Paul and a wet-haired Meg eat while playing Scrabble.

MEG

Ten out the gate.

Meg plays **T R A V E L**. Paul gives her a look.

MEG (CONT'D)

What?

PAUL

Just surprised *you* played *that*.

MEG

Stop, you sound like Mom and Dad.

Paul digs into the tile bag.

MEG (CONT'D)

Did you hear about that job yet?

Paul tenses.

PAUL

Any day now.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Amoeba sleeps in-between Paul's legs.

Paul sets his alarm for 7:00. Lights out. He drifts to sleep.

TIME LAPSE

As the day turns over, **Amoeba suddenly vanishes.**

The sunrise clock jumps to morning, pulses, waking Paul.

8:35am, September 5th.

PAUL

Shit!

Paul's too panicked by the time to notice the date.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul shaves quickly.

He removes the Band-Aid.

His wound is deep, but it's not actively bleeding.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Paul goes to leave, when he hears a CRUNCH under his shoe.

He lifts it to see the smushed roach he just murdered.

Paul just feels *awful* about this.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MORNING

Another crowded train. The intercom interrupts-

MTA CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Attention passengers. Due to signal failures, ALL downtown A-trains will suspend service at 42nd street-

Same groans.

PASSENGER

Every. Damn. Time.

PAUL

Truly!

INT. PORT AUTHORITY TRANSFER CORRIDOR - MORNING

Paul sees the Vagrant coming.

He tries to move, but the Vagrant initiates contact.

SMASH!!!

VAGRANT
What the fuck, guy!?

PAUL
Sorry, you ran this con on me
yesterday. Good luck though!

Paul continues on, leaving the Vagrant stunned.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ENTRANCE - MORNING

Another rainy day. Paul stops, puzzled by the same burnt building and hubbub.

CONNOR
You're late again.

PAUL
Sorry. My alarm didn't go off.

CONNOR
Gotta watch that, kid.

PAUL
Yeah, I know.

EMTs roll with the gurneys.

CONNOR
Some lady on 25 went berserk.

PAUL
Another one?

CONNOR
Another one, what?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, 24TH FLOOR - MORNING

The same all-teams meeting - already in progress.

BUFFORD
For those dissatisfied at Ouros, I
hear there's plenty of new openings
at Sentinel.

The same wave of laughter. Paul can't believe it.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)
Customer relations?

CONNOR
Retention is robust. What's the-

Paul stands, cuts him off. Maybe a little too loud.

PAUL
Fifty-two million, eight hundred
thousand, seven hundred and twelve.

The room turns to stare at Paul. Death by embarrassment.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

Paul walks out of the meeting, leaving the room silent.

CONNOR
...It's a great number.

INT. EMPLOYEE BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul looks in the mirror. He's having a mild panic attack.
His neck wound pulses, almost like it's gasping for air.
He touches it softly with one finger, and blood pops out.

PAUL
Jesus!

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul rushes to his desk, holding a paper towel to his neck.

STEPH
Hey PW. I hope you enjoyed your
long weekend.

Paul finds a new Band-Aid, puts it on his neck.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Mine was a nightmare. You remember
we had to put down Noodle-

He looks at Outlook. Same 98 unread emails.

STEPH (CONT'D)
-well, we tried getting a new
puppy, and there's so much red tape-

He gets the Wellness Module email, again.

INT. BREAK OUT KITCHENETTE - MORNING

Paul stands in line for coffee, biting his nails.

He notices the SAME GUY is ahead of him as yesterday. The guy fills his cup, then turns to leave.

PAUL
You're supposed to refill empty
pots after use.

GUY
I've already got a cup, thanks!

INT. PAUL'S DESK - DAY

With sounds of window washing in the background, Paul sits with his hand on his headset, waiting for...

BRRRING!

CUSTOMER SERVICE (V.O.)
Paperweight! Got one for you!

PAUL
Go ahead.

The call's patched in. MAXINE shouts from her end.

MAXINE (V.O.)
The app is down!

PAUL
This is Paul Waite, customer
retention specialist. We spoke
yesterday.

MAXINE (V.O.)
No...

PAUL
Yes. You were having trouble with
the Registr app?

MAXINE (V.O.)
I'm having trouble now! The credit
card charges keep failing. I've got
a line out the door!

Paul can't deal with this.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - LUNCH TIME

Paul opens his Tupperware. Sushi again.

DERON
What's today's special?

Paul attempts to put on a good face. The attempt fails **hard**.

DERON (CONT'D)
Woah, woah - Paul, you ok?

Deron puts an empathetic hand to Paul's. His cell rings.

PAUL
Sorry.

He answers.

HIRING MANAGER (V.O.)
Hi Paul! So... it's good news.

INT. 24TH FLOOR HUDDLE ROOMS - DAY

Paul sits in a huddle room. He's somewhere between hyperventilating and sobbing.

This wakes a **NAPPER** in the next room. He pounds the wall.

NAPPER
QUIET!

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

Paul turns off his computer and grabs his things.

Connor pops out of his office.

CONNOR
Day's not done, Paperweight.

PAUL
Going Home. Not feeling well.

Steph butts in from her desk-

STEPH
If he leaves, he has to mark it as PTO. A full day!

CONNOR
I know the rules, Steph.

Paul doesn't hear the threat. He's gone.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

As Paul steps inside, Amoeba makes another dash for the open door, but Paul is ready and scoops up the cat.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Paul flips the light switch repeatedly until Meg wakes up.

MEG
What time is it?

PAUL
Time to get up and feed Meba.

MEG
You alright?

PAUL
Just peachy. I'm gonna lie down.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - DAY

Paul crashes into bed. Amoeba jumps up onto Paul's legs.
He falls asleep.

TIME LAPSE

As the day rolls, Amoeba vanishes.

Paul shoots up awake.

He checks the alarm clock and is horrified.

8:35am, September 5th.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

At the front door, Paul remembers to grab an umbrella.

He looks at the welcome mat before stepping, but there's no roach to be found.

A change to the routine!

EXT. OUTSIDE OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Same burnt office fiasco stops Paul in the crosswalk.

The traffic light changes.

Cars honk until Paul moves.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, 24TH FLOOR - MORNING

BUFFORD

For those dissatisfied at Ouros, I hear there's plenty of new openings at Sentinel.

Everyone laughs. Paul's had enough. He exits.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)

Customer relations?

CONNOR

Retention is robust. What's the current number?

Connor turns, but finds Paul absent.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Paperweight?

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Paul opens the door anticipating Meba's escape attempt, but instead finds the cat on Meg's lap.

She's on the couch working on her laptop, looking chipper.

PAUL

What are you doing?

MEG

Hey! Applying for jobs. It's insane how many places list a position as remote, then in the description say you have to come in twice a week. What a waste of everyone's time.

Paul stands stunned.

MEG (CONT'D)

You ok?

PAUL
Yeah, you just seem different.

MEG
You know. Good days and bad.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DINNER TIME

Risotto and Scrabble.

Paul nurses a cup of coffee.

MEG
Thirteen out the gate.

Meg starts the game placing **V, A, R, L, E, T** on the board.

PAUL
Varlet?

MEG
It means, like, rascal.

Paul processes this welcomed change.

MEG (CONT'D)
You want to challenge?

PAUL
No, I trust you.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

The sunrise alarm clock reads 11:59pm, September 5th.

Paul sits, Amoeba on his lap, nervously killing time.

The clock strikes midnight, but then skips right to

8:35am, September 5th.

Amoeba is gone. The clock pulses. Sunlight.

PAUL
Well... that's that.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - DAY

Paul's tired eyes watch the Window Washer.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

At a full sprint, Paul tries to juke and escape down a platform, but Lurker leaps and clips Paul's feet.

Paul trips down the stairs, crashing to the platform below.

He's dazed, likely concussed.

Onlookers take note.

LURKER
(to onlookers)
He's fine!

Lurker pulls a groggy Paul to the platform edge.

The arrival sign goes from "1 minute" to "Now Arriving."

LURKER (CONT'D)
(Whispering to Paul)
We're breaking the chain...

Lurker hugs Paul tight.

The train comes around the bend.

Lurker tries to drop them backwards onto the tracks, but all the onlookers SNAP into action and pull Paul back to safety.

The momentum sends the Lurker flying into the train's path.

The train wins.

The onlookers return to their lives, bored by the carnage.

Paul goes into a state of shock and faints.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - ANOTHER MORNING

Paul wakes in serious pain.

The clock reads September 5th, of course.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul looks in the mirror. His face houses a large BUMP and BRUISES from his tumble.

He wipes away bits of the Lurker's splatter from his face.

INT. PORT AUTHORITY TRANSFER CORRIDOR - MORNING

Paul's alert while walking down the corridor.

A blood-red STAIN is on the ground where the Vagrant was stabbed - but his body is not present.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Meg holds an ICE PACK to Paul's head.

PAUL

What would you do if you were living the same day over and over?

MEG

Whatever the hell I wanted.

PAUL

No, this isn't a good scenario.

MEG

Why not?

INT. NUTRITION OFFICE LOBBY - DAY

Paul waits on a plush couch. **THE HIRING MANAGER**, approaches.

HIRING MANAGER

Paul? We weren't expecting you.

PAUL

Sorry, I just- I'm really excited to start working here.

HIRING MANAGER

Oh, we haven't made an offer for the position yet-

PAUL

Yeah, but you are going to hire me.

HIRING MANAGER

Love the enthusiasm, but how about you go home and wait for a call-

PAUL

No! I need to be helpful. Today!

HIRING MANAGER

It would be helpful if you left.

EXT. PARK - ANOTHER MORNING

Lugging a cooler, Paul approaches the homeless people under the tunnel. He starts handing out SANDWICHES.

HOMELESS MAN
This peanut butter?

PAUL
Yeah.

The Homeless Man hands it back to Paul. It just crushes him.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - ANOTHER EVENING

Risotto. Scrabble. Meg starts with the word **A L T E R**.

MEG
You don't know why any of this is happening?

PAUL
No clue.

MEG
Huh. How did Bill Murray break the cycle in *Groundhog Day*?

PAUL
By becoming a selfless person.

MEG
You're already selfless.

PAUL
Gee, thanks.

Meg has an idea.

MEG
Have you tried becoming an asshole?

INT. BREAK OUT KITCHENETTE - ANOTHER MORNING

It's Paul's turn at the coffee pot.

He pours his cup, notes the line of people behind him.

Paul makes a meal out of slowly pouring the rest of the pot of coffee down the drain.

He doesn't refill the coffee pot even though the note tells him to do so. He just walks out of there sipping his cup.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Paul wakes up and excitedly checks the alarm clock.

September 5th.

Hey, it was worth a shot.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul is running the Wellness Module. He's at the quiz.

QUIZ NARRATOR

Yuki saw Kwame sleeping at his desk-

Paul speed-runs it, hitting the correct answers in a flurry - the cheering sound effect re-starting with each click.

He sits back in his chair, looks at his inbox again.

0 Unread Emails. No red exclamations. No To-Do flags.

He watches the other employees drone on.

INT. PAUL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Paul works like a machine, prepping sandwiches.

Meg stumbles in, surprised by the sight of Paul.

MEG

Why aren't you at work?

Paul picks up a specific sandwich and tosses it to her.

PAUL

Want to try something new today?

EXT. HARLEM, PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Paul throws open an umbrella and holds the door.

Meg gingerly follows. She clings to Paul's arm.

Paul moves them down the stoop, one step at a time.

Meg resists with her whole body.

MEG
Too fast.

A **NEIGHBOR** passes on the sidewalk. He slows to watch them.
Now with an audience, Meg stops moving.

PAUL
You can do this.

Paul gently tugs Meg down the steps.

MEG
STOP! LET GO, YOU FUCK!!!

Meg throws elbows at Paul, heads back inside.

PAUL
It's ok.

(to Neighbor)
She's ok.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul's bruising and bump have faded.

The neck wound, however, is still there.

Paul tries to get a closer look, and the wound starts sucking again, causing some pain.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Paul throws sandwiches to the crowd of Homeless People.

PAUL
Ham and Cheese for Charlie... Mozz
on Ciabatta for Lewis...

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Another Risotto, Another Scrabble.

MEG
Five out the gate.

Meg plays the word **A L I V E**.

Paul's face drops.

MEG (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

PAUL
You've played that before.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paul lays in bed with Amoeba at his legs.

TIME LAPSE

Paul remains in bed.

A few more days pass, Meba coming and going as we lapse.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Paul watches the Homeless population eat his sandwiches.

It's an inspiring sight, but today Paul's face is sullen.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Another Risotto, Another Scrabble.

MEG
Six out the gate.

Meg plays **L, A, T, E, R**.

Paul stares at it.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Same morning. Same EMTs. Same damp crowd.

CONNOR
You're late again.

Paul goes right past him.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Gotta watch that, kid.

He focuses on the building disappearing into the fog above.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - MORNING

FIRE MARSHAL
Does everyone know where the stairs
are on this floor?

Paul raises his hand.

PAUL
I don't.

INT. 24TH FLOOR STAIRWELL - MORNING

Paul climbs a dark stairwell with a bigger shaft than most open stairwells.

At each new landing, motion sensor lights flick on, tracking Paul's movement.

INT. TOP OF STAIRWELL - MORNING

A sweaty mess, Paul reaches a door to the ROOF. Paul pushes the bar, but it doesn't budge. It's locked.

SECURITY GUARD (O.C.)
HEY!

Guard is a few flights down and climbing. Paul throws a tantrum, tries to bulldoze his way to the roof.

He runs out of steam, as the Guard wraps him up.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, 24TH FLOOR - MORNING

Paul's head keeps bobbing and catching.

BUFFORD
For those dissatisfied at Ouros, I
hear there's plenty of new openings
at Sentinel.

The same wave of laughter.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)
Customer relations?

Paul's heavy eyelids close.

CONNOR
Retention is robust. What's the-

Bufford BANGS on the table. Paul raises, alert.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
He'll circ the numbers later.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul sits in his chair, arms crossed, hunched over his desk.

STEPH
Well, we tried getting a new puppy,
and there's so much red tape-

He's exhausted, fading.

STEPH (CONT'D)
The shop said they wouldn't sell to
us because they feared for the
dog's safety. Can you believe that?

He can't fight it off any longer.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I said, just because my Bentley has-

Paul falls asleep.

TIME LAPSE

The light changes. Steph's gone.

Actually, everyone is gone except for Paul.

Empty floor. Silent, except for the humming lights.

He stirs and takes a bit to realize where he is.

Paul looks out the window at the city morning.

He checks his phone. September 6th-

The day has rolled over.

He lets out a celebratory cry - the kind of noise you'd never
make if other people were around to hear it.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Paul comes through the revolving doors like a bullet, bumping
into people as he sprints through the picket line.

PAUL
Sorry!

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Meg finds Paul making an unhealthy amount of pancakes.

PAUL
You're up!

MEG
You didn't come home last night...

Paul plates a shortstack in front of Meg.

PAUL
Say when!

He pours syrup over the pancakes as Meg stares at him.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Meg hangs out on the couch binging quality TV.

JEFF PROBST (V.O.)
...Worth playing for?...

Paul goes to recent calls on his phone. Redials.

PAUL
Hi! It's Paul Waite, returning your call from yesterday.

HIRING MANAGER (V.O.)
Hi Paul! So... it's good news.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Takeout and Boggle.

Paul's smiling. Meg looks at him.

MEG
What?

PAUL
I just realized I never have to go to Ouros ever again.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paul gets into bed and Amoeba joins him.

TIME LAPSE

We go to morning. Amoeba, again, has vanished.

Paul wakes up and looks at the clock-

8:35am, September 5th

PAUL

No...

INT. A-TRAIN - MORNING

MTA CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Attention passengers. Due to signal failures, ALL downtown A-trains will suspend service at 42nd street-

PASSENGER

Every. Damn. Time.

Paul sobs. He tries to stifle, but it doesn't work.

PASSENGER (CONT'D)

Hey man, it's not that bad.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Paul looks up at the same burnt facade.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul sits in his chair, despondent.

STEPH

Well, we tried getting a new puppy, and there's so much red tape-

Paul turns to look at Steph as she talks at him.

STEPH (CONT'D)

The shop said they wouldn't sell to us because they feared for the-

PAUL

I fell asleep. Here.

STEPH (CONT'D)

...the dog's safety. What's that?

PAUL (CONT'D)
And I woke up here?

Paul hurries away.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Paul rests against the wall, let's his body fall asleep.

TIME LAPSE

Paul rises and looks at his phone, **September 6th-**

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Another totally empty bullpen.

CONNOR
Same clothes you wore yesterday.

Paul tightens up. *How long has Connor been standing there?*

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Steph told me you said you've been
sleeping in the office.

PAUL
Well, you know how she is.

Connor sits on Paul's desk, gets in his business.

CONNOR
Take the day off, Paperweight.
You've earned it.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - MORNING

The elevator opens, out comes Paul as Nevins trickles in.

NEVINS
Paperweight! Enjoy your day off!

Paul hesitates, but continues into the revolving door.

As he spins, Paul clocks Nevins, the Security Guard, and other lobby folks *pausing* to stare at him.

Paul rides the door all the way back into the lobby.

The lobby folk stutter step, continue their paths.

Paul joins Nevins as he waits for the elevator. He notices the elevator call button isn't lit, and hits it.

NEVINS (CONT'D)
Silly me. I'm useless without my coffee!

PAUL
Yeah.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul sits at his desk - ponders next steps. A mechanical sound gets his attention.

The security camera above is pointed right at Paul. He stares back at it.

After a moment, it moves back to it's usual position.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - LUNCH TIME

Paul plops two turkey sandwiches on the counter.

DERON
One crappy sandwich wasn't enough?

PAUL
You're right.

Paul throws a few bags of chips and candy bars onto his pile.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - QUITTING TIME

Paul clacks away, looking busy. Really, he's just typing random words into a blank Word doc.

Steph sits at her desk. No one else is left on the floor. A game of chicken.

Steph blinks first, grabs her bag.

STEPH
Well, goodnight.

PAUL
Yeah, you too.

The moment Steph's out the door, Paul stops typing.

Victorious and alone.

INT. LOBBY - MINUTES LATER

Steph steps out of the elevator. On her way out, she looks at the Security Guard, shakes her head.

He sighs, looks to his security cam panel.

BLACK & WHITE CAM FOOTAGE POV

Paul rolls his chair to the camera, puts tape over the lens.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Steph exits the building, walking through the strikers.

PICKET LINE CAPTAIN
What do we want?

PICKET LINE EMPLOYEES
A contract!

PICKET LINE CAPTAIN
When do we want it?

PICKET LINE EMPLOYEES
Now!

The captain checks their watch, blows a whistle. The picketers drop their signs, disperse chanting...

PICKET LINE EMPLOYEES (CONT'D)
We'll be back! We'll be back!

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - NIGHT

Paul's at his desk, shirt open, playing music from his cell.

He takes a bite of the turkey sandwich. Not great. He walks it down the hallway to...

THE KITCHENETTE

He removes the soggy lettuce, throws the sandwich in the microwave. In the distance, his phone starts ringing.

As Paul walk backs to his desk, he doesn't see as a **FIGURE** enters the kitchenette behind him.

AT PAUL'S DESK

Paul looks at the phone. Preps, then answers it.

PAUL
(on phone)
Hey, sorry. I'm working late.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Meg looks through cupboards while Amoeba meows.

MEG
It's beyond late.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

PAUL
There was a server crash today, um,
I've gotta clean up. They booked me
a hotel.

MEG
You're not coming home at all?

PAUL
Slow your breathing.

Amoeba mimics a chewing motion in Meg's direction.

MEG
Something's wrong with Meba! She's
doing this thing with her mouth!

PAUL
Making chews? She's just hungry.
There's food under the sink.

Paul hears the microwave BEEP in the work kitchenette.

MEG
Do I give her dry or wet?

PAUL
It doesn't matter.

MEG
Of course it matters!

Sounds of the microwave OPENING and CLOSING.

Paul's not alone.

He hangs up, and creeps down the hall.

An emaciated ONE-ARMED MAN (who we'll know as **SHIPMAN**) leaves
the kitchen with the sandwich and slinks into the stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Paul looks below as Shipman circles the drain down the stairs, the lights going on/off with each new floor.

Paul moves, causing lights to flick ON at his level. Shipman swiftly looks up. Paul clings to a dark area of the wall.

Shipman resumes walking, reaches the bottom and exits.

INT. BASEMENT, MAIL ROOM - NIGHT

The stairwell door opens. Paul's shoes on the cement floor echo in the dark basement.

A sliver of LIGHT escapes from behind a FILING CABINET against a wall.

The light flicks off.

Paul takes a CANDY BAR from his pocket, tears the wrapper.

He leaves the candy bar, then clomps back to the elevator. Paul hits a call button, but doesn't get in.

He slips off his shoes and creeps back towards the cabinet.

The elevator leaves with a DING.

A moment.

The light behind the cabinet flicks on again.

The cabinet screeches to the side, and Shipman crawls out of a hole in the wall - approaches the candy bar.

PAUL

H-Hello?

With lightning speed, the Man shoots up, drawing a SCISSOR HALF from his belt, bringing it to Paul's neck.

Up close, Shipman has bloodshot eyes, thin hair, yellow skin.

Shipman's blade pokes the wound on Paul's neck.

SHIPMAN

You're uncorked.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

On hands and knees, Paul enters a chaotic living space in the guts of what was formerly an employee locker room.

There's a standing shower, lockers, toilets, a hot plate. A PAPER-CUTTER BLADE hangs on the wall, putting Paul on edge.

Paul opens a door at end of the room, but it leads to plaster- It's a forgotten piece of architecture.

Paul offers his (wrong) hand.

PAUL

Paul.

Shipman twists his one arm awkwardly to meet Paul's.

SHIPMAN

Shipman.

Shipman washes his hand in the toilet.

PAUL

How long have you lived here?

SHIPMAN

I don't believe in time.

Shipman feels around Paul's neck wound. Surveying.

PAUL

Oh, ok.

SHIPMAN

Fresh out of the loop?

PAUL

Yes! **Yes**, how did you...?

Shipman's prodding fingers dig too deep. Paul flinches.

SHIPMAN

If the uncorked don't leave the building, the uncorked don't loop.

PAUL

Uncorked?

Shipman shows off his arm - a brutal case of amateur surgery.

SHIPMAN

My arm, your neck. It tried my neck, too.

Shipman points to a cauterized wound on his neck.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
The Mouth uncorks us to feed.

PAUL
The Mouth?

SHIPMAN
The Mouth...

No comprehension.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
(Aggressive)
THE. MOUTH.

PAUL
I don't, I don't know.

Shipman opens a locker, pulls out a marked-up **Ouros Managers Handbook** - with hashmarks written over the ouroboros logo.

Shipman places an ERASER between two of the hashes.

SHIPMAN
You!

He puts a STAPLE REMOVER between hashes on the opposite side.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
The. Mouth.

Shipman hands Paul a SIX-SIDED DIE... this is a BOARD GAME.

Paul rolls - moves his eraser to the left. Shipman rolls - moves the staple remover towards the eraser.

Paul rolls a SIX, putting distance between the tokens.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
You think you're running away, but-

Shipman rolls and changes direction to the right.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
It's always getting closer, see?

The staple remover catches the eraser in its jaws.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
It finds you. Feeds. Back to Start.

PAUL
How do I win?

Shipman moves Paul's eraser to the center of the oval.

SHIPMAN
Starve it. 9 to 5, be normal.
That's when it feeds. After hours,
don't be seen.

PAUL
I'm sorry, what-

SHIPMAN
Don't interrupt! At home, you get
rest, nutrients. Here, time's
stuck. The Mouth will go hungry. It
will notice you. It'll start
pushing. Don't poke it.

He points to the candy bar wrapper.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
You pay, you can stay.

PAUL
Got it-

SHIPMAN
But don't fuck up *my* game.

Shipman provides Paul with an emergency blanket,

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Sleep.

Shipman keeps watch at the tunnel, sharpening the paper
cutter blade to pass the time. Paul curls up, uneasy.

MORNING

Paul wakes up to Shipman taking a shower, completely nude.

No curtain, no shame. Cauterized spots litter his body.

Shipman catches Paul peeping. Paul shuts his eyes quickly,
pretending to be asleep.

LATER THAT MORNING

Shipman rifles through a locker full of work clothes.

It's a mix of styles through the years. Shipman finds
something that is roughly Paul's size.

He starts taking off Paul's clothes for him.

PAUL
Thanks. I got it.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul approaches his desk. He's startled by the presence of CONNOR, sitting in his chair.

CONNOR
Nice outfit. Is it new?

Paul takes way too long to respond.

PAUL
Sure is.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - MORNING

Deron unlocks the coiling grille to the cafe.

PAUL
I have a favor to ask.

Deron hangs his keys on a rack near the counter.

DERON
Sure man, what do you need?

Paul follows Deron behind the counter to his kitchen. There's a prep station, and a pantry FULL of food.

PAUL
For you to buy me some things.

Paul hands him a list and his credit card.

DERON
Are you in trouble?

Paul laughs this off.

PAUL
No. What do you mean?

DERON
If you needed a place to stay-

PAUL
Just the stuff on the list. Please.

INT. EMPLOYEE RESTROOM - MORNING

Paul brushes his teeth in front of the mirror. Shopping bags line the counter next to him.

Paul feels the neck wound moving and drops his toothbrush.

The "chewing" hurts Paul much more than previous days.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Paul walks in late to a meeting. Attendees are there, doing nothing.

A half-beat later, they all spring to life.

CONNOR

So you can see we're gaining traction in the market this quarter. Next slide.

The slide on the Powerpoint has a pie chart, but no values.

It's like a default image. A phony.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Here you can see the results of our A/B testing with the latest project. Next slide.

PAUL

Wait, sorry. What are we looking at there?

FRANK

The results of the A/B testing of our latest project.

PAUL

Which project?

NEVINS

Our latest project.

Paul looks around expecting to see confused faces, but everyone else understands.

PAUL

Thanks for clearing that up.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Paul eats his lunch and makes a call-

PAUL
Hey, I'm sorry. Things here are
still a mess.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Meg's at the window, watching a man outside round a corner
and walk across the street. It's the **NEIGHBOR** from earlier.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

PAUL
Meg?
MEG
He's doing it again.

PAUL
Who's doing what?

MEG
This guy keeps walking around the
block, nonstop.

PAUL
Ok.

MEG
It's not normal.

Paul sighs. He's not going to have this conversation.

PAUL
Look, if you need anything, I'm
just a phone call away.

MEG
Right. Right. Ok.

Meg hangs up on Paul. The Neighbor turns and looks directly
towards her.

BACK TO THE SERVER ROOM

PAUL
Hello?

Paul prepares to redial when Connor cop-knocks on the server
glass, beckons him with his pointer finger.

INT. CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul sits like he's in the principal's office.

CONNOR

We have spaces designated for personal calls, you know?

PAUL

Won't happen again.

Some silence.

CONNOR

Your sister, she's disabled, right? Mentally?

PAUL

Well, no. She has a panic disorder.

CONNOR

In work terms, she's a disabled?

PAUL

It's kind of a gray area-

CONNOR

I ask because Ouros is piloting a work-from-home program. One or two days a week. Those providing care for a disabled are eligible.

After silence from Paul, Connor keeps pitching.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

There's more money, too. A stipend.

PAUL

I don't know...

CONNOR

Really? I don't see the downside.

Paul is already up to leave.

PAUL

I'll get back to you.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - QUITTING TIME

Deron's closing checklist. Muscle memory has him reach for the keys, but they're not on the rack.

DERON

Shit.

He closes the coiling grille without locking it, looks around to make sure no one saw this deed, bails.

HOURS LATER

The coiling grille is up. A light behind the counter cuts through the darkness. Sounds of food prep.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - EVENING

Paul and Shipman ravenously eat hot meals in silence (except for their mouth sounds).

The wound on Paul's neck snaps into action, gasping **hard**.

Paul drops his plate. **SEETHING PAIN**.

SHIPMAN

I told you, be normal!

PAUL

I was!

Shipman hovers over Paul, then puts a finger in the wound.

The lips suckle his finger. Instantly, Paul's pain subsides.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna die in here...

SHIPMAN

You're the Mouth's greatest asset.
If you die, it'll bring you back.

PAUL

But, in the loop, I've seen
people... not come back.

SHIPMAN

They have no value. They're not
people.

PAUL

How do you know all this?

Shipman pulls his finger from the wound. The lips speed up, pain returns.

PAUL (CONT'D)

God dammit-

Annoyed, Shipman guides Paul's finger in the wound as a replacement. The lips slow, pain fades. Shipman throws the Ouros Managers Handbook to Paul.

SHIPMAN

It's all in there. Someone gave it to me. Now i'm giving it to you.

Paul makes a face that says, "Homework. *Great.*" He opens it, sees handwritten notes scrawled all over the interiors.

PAUL

Does it talk about "the chain"?

SHIPMAN

Where did you hear that?

PAUL

Someone, found me, in the loop.

Shipman takes a long sigh.

SHIPMAN

You're an email, ok? If you're not the right person to ask, the Mouth doesn't know to start a new thread. It loops someone in. You're CC'd. It works, but it's messy.

PAUL

So it stopped feeding on you, and went to me-

SHIPMAN

Different board. Don't bother with this chain-

PAUL

But, in theory, couldn't we work our way up the chain to the start?

SHIPMAN

You know how old the building is? How many bodies it's controlled and discarded? Drop it. Promise?

The wound lips stop moving altogether. The pain is gone.

PAUL

Promise.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Meg lays in bed, half asleep. Yowling from outside.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

The dark room is cut by light from the OPEN FRONT DOOR.

Meg pokes her head into the empty hallway.

MEG

Meba!?

Meg closes and locks the door quickly. She goes room by room turning on lights, beckoning Meba.

MEG (CONT'D)

Psst-psst-psst.

INT. 25TH FLOOR, SENTINEL OFFICES - MORNING

Paul steps over caution tape where the door used to be. The ID sensor still lays broken on the ground.

He takes in the empty space. Walls charred, office supplies melted, blood stains and burnt skin caked into the carpets.

He's drawn to the only desk still in good condition. He lifts a work ID from it - Agatha's face stares back at Paul.

Suddenly, a stampede of employees emerge from EVERYWHERE.

Instinctually, Paul covers up for protection, pockets the ID.

The employees furiously attempt to look busy. One types on a keyboard connected to a melted monitor. Most wear signs of ash, dirt, or blood.

TONY (O.C.)

Can I help you?

Paul turns to see Tony, covered head to toe in burns.

PAUL

Yeah. Where did you all come from?

TONY

A big meeting.

PAUL

All of you?

TONY
Yes. Can I help you?

PAUL
I was supposed to meet someone for
lunch. Agatha Hillman?

TONY
No one named Agatha has ever worked
at Sentinel.

PAUL
You just know that, for certain?

TONY
I do.

PAUL
My mistake.

Paul leaves. The second he's in the elevator, all the
employees drop dead.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

Paul is reading a LinkedIn profile: Agatha Hillman, Claims
and Coverage Associate, Sentinel Assurance.

He adjusts his search terms: Agatha Hillman + Sentinel + News

The results bring articles about the fire, the most egregious
from the NY Post: Massacre on Wall St! Worker burns down
start up.

Paul tries to open the link, but a pop-up box appears:
WELLNESS MODULE UPDATE - NEEDS COMPLETION BY END OF DAY.

There are two buttons; GO NOW and SNOOZE.

Paul hits SNOOZE, tries to read the article, but the pop-up
comes right back with SNOOZE grayed out this time.

He relents, hits GO NOW. On screen, The Ouros logo crossfades
into Bufford staring at the camera.

There's muzak, but it's sloooow. At a certain point it stops.

Bufford stares back at Paul in silence.

Eventually, Bufford's voice is heard, though his mouth
doesn't move in the video-

BUFFORD

If a man is behind bars...
everything he desires is outside...

The video abruptly ends and the quiz section begins.

The stock image person looks like they auditioned for the role of Paul.

QUIZ NARRATOR

Pail did not see the sun today.
Pail should go outside and
synthesize. True or False?

Connor bursts out his office.

CONNOR

Paul! In here, now!

INT. CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul finds Connor looking out his window at the strikers.

PAUL

What's up?

CONNOR

Look at them. They're fighting an employer they claim mistreats them, but if they *win* their prize is to go right back under their thumb.

PAUL

I don't think that's the prize.

CONNOR

Why am I getting calls about you from Sentinel people?

PAUL

Oh, I just. I was curious...

CONNOR

Are you some kind of sick fuck all of the sudden?

Paul's stunned.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

It's getting harder and harder to go to bat for you, Paperweight.

PAUL
I'm sorry.

CONNOR
Sorry don't cut it. Thin ice, OK?

INT. PAUL'S DESK - DAY

Paul feels Steph crowding his personal space. She reaches towards his neck, mouth pursed.

PAUL
What are you doing?

STEPH
There's a hair on your neck.

He feels around and finds a NEW ingrown hair sticking out.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I can get it!

Paul pushes her away.

PAUL
No thanks-

She returns to her desk all smiles.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - LUNCH TIME

The coiling grille on the cafe is down. A sign reads: CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Paul reads with concern. Frank and Jill chat.

JILL
Budget cuts?

FRANK
I heard the guy was stealing food.

JILL
Oh wow. That's so sad.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Paul waits. **A DELIVERY GUY** pushes through the strikers with a bag of food. He looks through the glass into the lobby.

Paul waves, but the Delivery Guy somehow doesn't see him.

He takes out his phone and dials. Seconds later, Paul's phone rings. He answers it.

DELIVERY GUY
Hi. Your delivery is here.

PAUL
Yeah. I'm right in front of you.

Paul walks up to the lobby window, still waving.

DELIVERY GUY
I don't see you.

Paul pounds on the glass at the Guy's face. He reacts.

PAUL
Come inside.

DELIVERY GUY
Not allowed. You come out here.

PAUL
No, you come in!

The Security Guard enters the argument.

SECURITY GUARD
That guy's not allowed in here.

PAUL
Since when?

Security Guard waddles back to his station.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey, I'm asking you a question!

Paul turns back to the window to see the Delivery Guy is gone. He's left the food right outside the window.

INT. BREAK OUT KITCHENETTE - AFTERNOON

Nevins stirs sugar into his 12th cup of the day. Paul comes in on a mission.

NEVINS
Paperweight!

PAUL
Are the pots... fresh?

NEVINS
You know it!

Paul pours himself a cup and takes sips. After a moment, Nevins finishes his calibrations, leaves.

Paul tosses his coffee in the sink, raids the fridge.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

Paul hands Shipman a bag lunch that says STEPH. Ship gives an incredulous look.

PAUL
What?

Shipman takes out an apple, some chips, and a PB&J. He hands one half on the sandwich to Paul.

They eat silently, until Paul's wound attempts to feed.

Paul puts a finger in the lips, but he's in rough shape.

He puts down the sandwich.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Not hungry.

Shipman quickly takes the second half of the sandwich.

SHIPMAN
You'll regret that.

Paul's cell phone rings, and he instinctually picks it up.

PAUL
Hey-

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

MEG
Meba is gone!

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

PAUL
What do you mean, gone?

MEG
The neighbor took her.

SHIPMAN
Who are you talking to?

PAUL
(to Shipman)
My sister.

MEG
The door was open, and he saw me-

PAUL
(to Meg)
Why would someone take Meba?

MEG
The door- you don't listen to me.
Why don't you listen to me!?

Shipman snatches the phone and smashes it against the wall.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - SAME TIME

PAUL
What the fuck!?

SHIPMAN
You can't talk to her.

PAUL
Oh yeah? Joke's on you. I'll just
call her from my work phone.

SHIPMAN
What's her number?

The *Jeopardy* theme plays in Paul's head.

PAUL
FUCK!

SHIPMAN
I had someone. It was my weakness.
The Mouth targeted them.

PAUL
My sister isn't well.

SHIPMAN
If you get out, she'll be there.
Just as she was.

PAUL
You don't know that.

SHIPMAN
I do. I was out, for a time.

Paul can't formulate a response he's so flabbergasted.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)

We made a deal. The Mouth changed
it's mind. You can't reason with
something that has no empathy.

PAUL

I'm tired of just sitting here
being passive. We should try to
fight it.

SHIPMAN

NO!

This sudden aggression surprises Paul.

PAUL

I'm sorry, I just-

Shipman rushes Paul, gets in his face.

SHIPMAN

We're gonna put in our time and
chip away at The Mouth. It's hard,
but we'll get out eventually. It
only works if we want to work.

Shipman pushes the remaining sandwich towards Paul.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)

EAT.

Paul complies.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - MORNING

A *Lip Smacking* sound gets Paul's attention. Steph is
glaring at him, making chews. She rises.

PAUL

Steph?

Paul rolls back in his chair. Steph snaps, tackles Paul.

Paul squirms, using his hands to create distance from her
face, but Steph just keeps coming for his neck.

Paul puts his hand over her mouth, and Steph sinks her teeth
into it. He throws her off of him, stands up.

PAUL (CONT'D)

The fuck is wrong with you!?

Steph looks up at Paul. Her eyes start bleeding, roll back.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey! Help, somebody help!

Steph seizes on the floor until a few employees break from their work to drag Steph away to the elevator bank.

Silence. The customer service team goes about their day.

PAUL (CONT'D)
This doesn't bother anyone!?

No responses. Speechless, Paul watches the door. After a moment, another **YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WOMAN** enters.

She nonchalantly takes a seat at Steph's desk.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Who're you?

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WOMAN
Paul, it's me. Steph.

Horrific news, but Paul sticks to the plan.

PAUL
Right, silly me. I'm useless
without my coffee.

Almost as if Paul said his name three times...

NEVINS
Fresh pots!

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

Paul watches Shipman happily eat pouches of coffee grounds.

PAUL
A woman attacked me at work today.

SHIPMAN
That's great!

Shipman's energy changes. He hugs Paul, rises.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
We're close, I can feel it.

PAUL
My boss threatened to fire me.

SHIPMAN

It's an empty threat. Can't fire you without cause.

PAUL

If I was the Mouth, I'd just have security throw my ass out. Done.

SHIPMAN

You wouldn't know, but it takes a lot of energy to manage the uncorked. Going all out of the ordinary, it's too much. Might literally kill it.

PAUL

Is that what happened with Steph? Is she dead?

SHIPMAN

It's probably used your body before to keep another uncorked in line, you just don't remember. Think about that next time you want to be selfish and fly off the handle.

The shaming works. Paul does think about it.

INT. CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul knocks on Connor's office door. Nevins is inside too.

CONNOR

Sit down.

He does. Connor takes a big breath in.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I always knew this day would come.

Paul stops breathing altogether.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I'll just get to it, Ouros can't afford to keep you.

PAUL

You're firing me?

NEVINS

Not fired, no! You're going to agree to a mutual dissolution of your contract.

Nevins slides a contract to Paul.

CONNOR

I really fought for you to get a hefty severance.

NEVIN

He sure did. Just sign there.

PAUL

No. I don't consent to this.

CONNOR

Take the money, kid. You don't have to work for a year if you don't feel like it. Hey, you could still take the Nutrition job.

PAUL

I'm sure they've filled it.

The speaker from Connor's desk phone comes to life.

HIRING MANAGER (V.O.)

Hi Paul! Good news, the job is still yours if you want it. We are adding 10% to our initial offer.

PAUL

Has she been there this whole time?

CONNOR

This is a win-win. Ouros saves money, and you get your dream job.

PAUL

No. This is where I want to be.

CONNOR

I was hoping it wouldn't come to this, but, we can't afford to keep you *and* customer service.

PAUL

That doesn't make any sense. You told me they were dying anyway-

CONNOR

Either you sign, or all those people lose their livelihoods.

Paul thinks on this.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

Paul leaves Connor's office and is met by the shocked faces of the gathered customer service team.

For a moment, no one moves. Then,

The customer service team throws themselves at Paul's feet. They grab him, pray, cry, wail, show photos of their families - a most loud and desperate call for Paul's mercy.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

Near his desk, Paul presses his head against the window.

He watches as the wave of former customer service reps crashes into the strikers, unsure of where to go next.

INT. MAIL ROOM BASEMENT - NIGHT

Paul knocks on the cabinet. After a few moments, Shipman moves it to the side. Paul tries to enter.

PAUL

What a day-

Shipman stops him.

SHIPMAN

Pay?

Paul huffs and puffs.

PAUL

Can you just be decent one-

Shipman pulls the cabinet closed without a second thought.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Great. What am I supposed to do!?

SHIPMAN

(muffled)

Hide.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

A light flicks on as Paul scurries to a corner under the stairs, makes himself small.

LATER

A light above flicks ON, waking Paul. He looks up to see *something* moving to the 23rd floor landing.

Something falls from there all the way to the floor.

SPLAT.

Lights OFF. Once Paul deems it safe, he crawls over, sees a sticky white substance on the floor - like a squished bug.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Another all-teams meeting.

BUFFORD

Ouros will be on track to surpass our quarter goal, However, it will take one last layoff.

Murmors all around.

BUFFORD (CONT'D)

We're laying off *the building*.

Paul perks up.

NEVINS

We're selling off the remainder of our lease here. We're looking for a smaller space in midtown, but until that happens everyone will be working from home effective immediately!

The room responds with cheers to this news, except Paul.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, BULLPEN - MORNING

Employees chat while putting their personal effects in boxes.

SECURITY GUARD

This way. Everybody out.

People head for the elevator bay. Paul's stuck.

Paul speed walks toward the bathroom to hide. His hand's on the door, but the Security Guard shuts it.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

Hold it.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, ELEVATOR BAY - MOMENTS LATER

The elevator doors open, and people fill the cabin.

Paul holds the elevator door open for others.

Security Guard takes Paul by the shoulders and they enter, the last people on the very crowded elevator.

Security Guard leans over Paul to hit the Lobby button.

They're face to face. No room to maneuver.

A *ding* signals the elevator doors closing.

At the last possible moment, Paul dives out the elevator.

PAUL

Excuse me-

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

With no real plan, Paul runs down the hallway.

The usual group of slow walkers stand in their line - a roadblock looking directly at Paul.

Paul cuts through the pod, rolls a chair backwards into the Security Guard's path, tripping him.

The door to the conference room is open!

Paul quietly hides in the room behind a trash can.

Security Guard arrives unsure of which way Paul went. He decides to backtrack.

The coast is clear!

Paul sneaks out and rounds the corner, slows his pace.

Maybe he's safe.

From behind desk 18-412B, Jill's head juts up.

JILL

He's over here!

Paul cuts through the hallway. Security Guard is already there coming at full speed from the opposite end.

A collision is inevitable.

In a desperate display, Paul goes low and squirms through the Security Guard's open legs.

Paul reaches the mirrored layout and turns. Nevins appears with a steaming tumbler of coffee.

NEVINS

Fresh pots-

Paul bulldozes past him, throwing hot coffee right in Nevins' face, bringing him to the ground in pain.

INT. ELEVATOR BANK - SECONDS LATER

The full circle around the floor is complete.

Paul hits the call button and the doors open. He hits the button for 25 - But doesn't get in the elevator.

Instead, Paul goes for the stairwell.

Security Guard arrives as the elevator closes. He looks up to see the destination - speaks into his walkie:

SECURITY GUARD

He's going up!

He heads to the stairwell...

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

... *Just* in time to see the motion sensor light on the 23rd floor landing flick OFF.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - DAY

Security Guard swipes his ID and enters the glass door to the server room. He listens for movement.

Paul hides behind one of the hulking server panels.

Security Guard comes down a row of panels, prompting Paul to move in the opposite direction to stay hidden.

DING from the elevator. It's moving. He radios:

SECURITY GUARD

Could be him in the elevator.
Enable emergency protocol.

Security Guard heads back to the stairs.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

Connor stands at the Guard station, Bufford flanking him.

The rest of the lobby is filled with masses of droning employees - silently, patiently, awaiting instructions.

Connor flips an override switch on the security console.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - SAME TIME

The floor goes dark. The persistent humming drops out.

A blinking red back-up light comes on.

Finally, Paul is alone and safe.

He takes a moment to appreciate the quiet, stares at his reflection in the glass windows.

The reflection slowly fades, the result of **White Smoke** creeping in from the depths of the server rows.

In the distance he hears..... squelch..... squelch.....

The end of the room is dark, briefly caked in red.

There is *something* there.

Stationary... shiny... slippery.

Paul looks on, really squints. Then-

The something's **BULBOUS HEAD TILTS UP**

All Paul can quickly tell about this creature is it's a biped, excess skin making its frame undefinable.

It moves toward him - lumbering. Pinky-sized slugs leak from its pores. They race towards Paul, lost in a wave of smoke.

Paul tries the server room doors. **THEY'RE LOCKED.**

His keycard doesn't work.

Emergency Protocol.

A Slug crawls across Paul's hand, but he bats it away.

The squelching is louder, closer.

Paul won't turn around and look at the creature. He stays fixated on the door, fighting to pull it open.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

The walkie makes a static noise.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
Elevators are clear.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - SAME TIME

Paul yanks the door - unaware that cutting through the smoke is the blurry creature, only a few feet behind him.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
End emergency protocol.

Connor flips the console switch again.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - SAME TIME

The regular lights shoot on - The door opens!

Paul escapes to the stairs without getting a clean look at the narrowly avoided creature.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

Security Guard stalks the floor.

SECURITY GUARD
We're gonna need you to come out,
Paperweight.

In the distance a door closes. The bathroom door.

INT. EMPLOYEE BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Security Guard enters quietly.

It appears empty. The door closed on all three stalls.

Security Guard pushes door number one as forceful as possible. Nada.

FIRE MARSHAL
This could be much easier.

He pushes door number two. Nada. We know how this goes.

FIRE MARSHAL (CONT'D)
Last chance.

He flings open door three.

Empty again.

Security Guard looks around. *Did I miss something?*

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Connor and Bufford wait impatiently.

One of the wobbly workers bleeds from their eyes. They drop to the floor, exhausted. They convulse, then stop moving.

Elevator dings. Security Guard steps out, shakes his head.

BUFFORD
FUCK. Go home!

The workers regain control of their bodies, shuffle out the building. Connor looks to Bufford.

CONNOR
What do you want to do?

Security Guard picks up the collapsed worker's body, tosses it out on the street.

INT. APARTMENT, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Loud knocking gets a sheepish Meg to leave her bedroom.

Meg looks under the doorframe - a little bit of White Smoke bleeds inside. She looks through the peephole...

...and sees the cute face of Amoeba staring back!

Without thinking, Meg opens the door. The **NEIGHBOR**, very smiley, stands holding her beloved cat.

NEIGHBOR
I believe this belongs to you.

He pushes Meba forward. Meg is unsure what to make of this.

Meba gets wiggly and Meg takes her from the Neighbor.

MEG
How did you know this was *my* cat?

NEIGHBOR
She was pawing at your door.

MEG
Oh... Do you live in this building?

NEIGHBOR
No.

MEG
But you were in the hall.

NEIGHBOR
Right.

Meg won't make any sudden movements and Neighbor won't leave.

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)
Could I see your place?

MEG
Sorry. Good night.

Meg shuts the door on the Neighbor, locks it.

After a pause, Meg looks back out the peephole...

The Neighbor stands there, blankly waiting.

INT. EMPLOYEE BATHROOM - NIGHT

An empty bathroom. Inside, it's quiet, but outside there is a bunch of ruckus going on. Commotion.

Above a stall, a panel in the ceiling slides over.

Paul drops down.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, BULLPEN - NIGHT

Deron pushes over partitions, rips computers off desks, breaks mugs.

Paul creeps up on the commotion, is spotted.

DERON
PAUL!

An alcohol-fueled hug and kiss on the forehead for Paul!

DERON (CONT'D)
Would you believe these FASCISTS
terminated me, but forgot to revoke
my ID card?

PAUL
You shouldn't be here, man.

DERON
No, but - Hey, neither should you!
They're not paying you overtime,
right? Right!?

Paul doesn't answer.

DERON (CONT'D)
Watch this!

INT. 24TH FLOOR, CONNOR'S CORNER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

An office chair comes hurtling through the glass window.
Deron screams in victory, then runs off-

PAUL
What now?

- and returns with another office chair.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I can't-

DERON
Yes you can, Paul.

PAUL
That's my boss's office.

DERON
This guy makes lots of money for
doing absolutely nothing that
contributes to society?

PAUL
Pretty much.

Deron rolls the chair to Paul.

Paul lives a little, and hurls the chair through the other
glass door to the office.

DERON
YES! LET'S FUCKING GOOOO!

Deron holds Paul's face.

DERON (CONT'D)
Paul! You feel fucking great, yeah?

PAUL
Yeah.

Caught up in the adrenaline, Deron kisses Paul.
Passionate kissing.

DERON
Come home with me.

PAUL
I can't. I want to.

DERON
Fine.

Deron leads Paul into Connor's office, while quickly undressing down to nothing.

Deron sits on Connor's desk.

Paul is a bit shy, so Deron guides Paul's hands to his groin.

DERON (CONT'D)
Here.

They kiss deeply and Paul gives in, pumps away.

Deron kisses Paul's neck, near the ingrown hair.

PAUL
Careful.

Deron's kisses turn into neck suckling. Paul moans.

The suckling turns into small bites.

Deron sees the ingrown hair. His eyes dilate.

Deron BITES HARD, scratches at Paul's neck like a madman.

Paul pushes Deron off, his naked body flying over the desk.

He tries to come back over the desk, but Paul thinks fast, grabs Connor's letter opener and spikes it through Deron's hand, keeping him pinned.

Paul sprints out the office-

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

Paul runs, but blood gushes to the floor each time he steps. The bite took A LOT of Paul's neck. He realizes it's dire. Behind in the distance, Deron screams.

INT. BASEMENT, MAIL ROOM - NIGHT

A bloody mess, Paul tries to move the cabinet, but can't. He bangs on it with all his remaining strength.

PAUL
OPEN UP!

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - CONTINUOUS

Shipman drags a wailing Paul inside.

SHIPMAN
Did it follow you?

Paul can't answer, he's too busy writhing.

Shipman finds a first aid kit, throws a gauze pad at Paul.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Clean!

He turns on his hot plate, washes his hand in the toilet.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Steady. More pain is coming.

Shipman takes the scissor half from his belt and lays it on the hot plate.

PAUL
I met-

SHIPMAN
Quiet.

PAUL
-I met the Mouth.

This gets Shipman's attention. He grabs rubbing alcohol.

SHIPMAN
No you didn't.

He removes the cap with his mouth. Pours it...

PAUL
Behind the servers-AHHHH!

...directly onto Paul's neck. Shipman places a doorstop in Paul's mouth.

SHIPMAN
BITE.

Paul's eyes widen at the sight of the red-hot scissor half.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Ready?

Muffled protests from Paul are disregarded.

Shipman applies the instrument to Paul's neck.

The heat **RIPS** through Paul's flesh, killing tissue.

The pain travels quickly. His body is telling him it's dying.

Paul stiffens.

After a few excruciating seconds, the bleeding stops.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Done! Paul? Paul?

Mercifully, Paul passes out.

CUT TO BLACK.

HOLD ON BLACK.

SHIPMAN (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
Wake up.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - ??????????????????????

In the dark, Paul lays in an identical position, passed out.

Lights flick on.

Time has passed, and it has **NOT** been kind to Paul.

Ingrown hair coils spread across his neck like polkadots, waiting to be uncorked as potential valves.

He's lost a lot of weight and most of his hair.

A stain under his shirt near his navel is a putrid yellow.

SHIPMAN

Your turn.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - NIGHT

Time *also* has not been kind to the building.

Fluorescent lights buzz in intense spurts, carpet patterns seem fuzzy, smoke wisps by the windows.

Paul clings to the wall, giving passage to a desk phone that drags itself across the floor by its cord.

He spots a line of ANTS walking up and over a partition and into a desk drawer.

He opens the drawer and finds an old APPLE.

Paul shakes off the ants and puts it in an Ouros tote bag.

The paper-cutter half is holstered in his belt.

INT. BREAK OUT KITCHENETTE - NIGHT

Paul passes by the kitchen but stops when he spots a wrapped TURKEY SANDWICH next to the coffee maker.

This is too good to be true.

Paul takes a step forward, then another. He's like Indiana Jones, anticipating a booby trap.

Motivated by hunger, Paul takes two quick steps-

The linoleum floor instantly turns to dense and deep **MUSH**.

Paul's sinking quickly.

He leans back and submerges his arms. He's reaching around and is able to pull up the paper cutter half from his belt.

With small backstrokes, Paul moves towards the edges of the mush puddle and jams the blade into the floor.

He pulls himself out and takes a breath.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

Shipman cuts the apple down the middle.

Him and Paul (still covered in mush) eat their apple halves.

PAUL
This is the last of it.

SHIPMAN
The Mouth needs us to feed-

PAUL
It's starving us out, Ship-

SHIPMAN
The Mouth wants you to live.

PAUL
It wants me to give up.

Shipman's done arguing. He stands up, tugs at Paul's shirt.

SHIPMAN
You stink.

LATER

In the shower, Shipman washes the mush from Paul's body.

Paul's against the wall, hunched over - in real pain.

Shipman inspects Paul's navel, which leaks a yellowish puss while mimicking feeding.

Shipman digs his finger in like he's getting peanut butter out of a jar.

Paul winces through the whole thing.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Dark and filthy apartment.

Meba licks the remnants from one of many takeout boxes.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

Meg's bedroom door nudges open. The coast is clear.

She sprints from her room to the front door.

She opens it slightly, revealing two **POLICE OFFICERS**.

OFFICER ONE
Meg Waite?

MEG
Do you have news on my brother?

OFFICER TWO
Could we step inside, ma'am?

Meg pushes her anxieties deep inside and opens the door.

The Officers enter and take stock of the living room.

MEG
So, is Paul still missing?

OFFICER ONE
He was never missing. You just haven't seen him.

Officer Two flips open his notepad, writing.

OFFICER ONE (CONT'D)
Maybe you should sit down.

MEG
I'm fine.

Officer Two scribbles more.

OFFICER ONE
We talked to Paul just yesterday,
at his office.

MEG
I don't understand.

OFFICER ONE
Your brother is an adult. We can't
force him to talk to you.

MEG
I'm not asking you to force him-

OFFICER TWO
On the phone, you mentioned an
intruder might have gained entry to
your apartment?

Meg toughens up.

MEG
I *know* he did. I hear him at night.

OFFICER ONE
Has anyone else seen this intruder?

Officer Two readies his pen to record notes.

Meg opens the door.

MEG

Thank you for your assistance.

The officers take the hint and leave.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

Paul's playing the board game by himself.

Agatha's ID is on the board in addition to his eraser.

The cabinet moves, letting light in. Shipman returns with a handful of granola bars from the tote.

PAUL

Where the hell did you find those?

SHIPMAN

Vending Machine. 8th floor.

PAUL

Next time we should go together.

SHIPMAN

Too risky.

PAUL

Yeah, but-

Shipman is already rolled over, ready to sleep.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Meg sleeps the day away in bed.

Her dresser is against her door, keeping unwanted people out.

Meba breaks the silence with persistent yowls.

The yowl turns to a growl.

Meg sits up.

The cat assumes an offensive position, starring daggers at a spot in the wall.

Meg puts her ear against the wall.

She doesn't hear anything.... WAIT!

There is the slightest sound of someone breathing.

Meba pounces at the wall, and the clatter sends whatever was breathing into motion behind the walls.

INT. 24TH FLOOR - NIGHT

Yet again, Paul's searching for food in a barren wasteland.

He tiptoes past a slow-moving herd of office chairs, moving of their own accord, looking to bump into Paul.

Paul rounds the corner and gets goosebumps.

It's freezing.

Cold air comes from over by his old desk.

Outside, the Window Washer stands on his platform, looking back at Paul. He pushes the window and the panel opens in.

More cold, but fresh, air comes rushing in at Paul.

The Window Washer smiles, beckons Paul to join him.

Gently, an unseen force lifts Paul off the ground.

He hovers towards the window.

EXT. 24TH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The Window Washer watches Paul float by him.

A blissful sensation overtakes Paul's body as it goes from vertical to horizontal.

Paul starts a descent towards the ground.

Not a free fall, but a slow euphoric ride.

Paul passes through refreshing clouds of smoke and fog.

Just a few more stories-

He looks into other buildings and sees supportive faces staring back at him.

The street is so close.

He slows down even more - to really savor the final moments.

Paul braces for impact, when-

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

Paul snaps awake to a new reality.

He's in the revolving door in the lobby.

His foot hovers an inch above the ground.

This next step would take him **outside**.

Instinctually, he stops and holds his foot in the air.

Horrified, he stumbles back through the revolving door.

INT. MAIL ROOM - NIGHT

Paul attempts to pull the cabinet when-

DING! The elevator arrives.

Paul pulls the blade from his belt, readies himself for whoever is coming.

The doors open and Shipman steps off.

They're shocked to see each other.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

The duo are in their "lights out" sleep time.

PAUL
You weren't here.

Shipman shushes him.

They speak in whispers.

SHIPMAN
Was looking for you. Felt funny.

PAUL
What does that mean, felt funny?

SHIPMAN
You were in trouble?

PAUL
I mean, yeah-

SHIPMAN
So good thing I felt funny.

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - DAY

The empty office building.

Outside, White Smoke creeps up all the way to the 24th floor windows, and keeps climbing up.

Paul's desk phone rings, rings, rings.

INT. APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Sitting on her bed, Meg is on the other end of the call.

She get's Paul's work voicemail - BEEP

MEG

It's me again... I keep having this dream. We're little. We're playing dentist and patient - is that a thing we actually did? I don't know. Anyway, your hand is in my mouth and you're turning my teeth around - one by one - until they're all backwards-

Click. The line is picked up.

PAUL (V.O.)

Meg...

MEG

Paul! It's good to hear you-

PAUL (V.O.)

You need to stop.

MEG

Stop what?

INT. 24TH FLOOR BULLPEN - SAME TIME

The phone is off the hook.

Paul and Meg's voices can be heard through the speaker, but no one is there.

PAUL (V.O.)

Pulling me down.

MEG (V.O.)
That's not-

INT. APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Back with a broken Meg as she talks to her "brother."

PAUL (V.O.)
Don't call me anymore.

Meba meows, and Meg hears it come through the other end of the call - inside the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She steps into the hallway,

PAUL (V.O.)
You're dead weight and I can't have
any of that right now-

Meg puts her head against her brother's bedroom door.

A muffled voice in his room speaks at the same time as-

PAUL (V.O.)
You understand? Meg?

Meg hangs up the call.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Shipman throws on his tote, prepares to go scavenge.

PAUL
It's my turn.

SHIPMAN
Too dangerous for you now.

PAUL
I can do it.

Shipman doesn't even respond. He crawls out the hole.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Shipman goes round in his ascension - the automatic lights noting each new floor.

At the bottom of the stairs, Paul lurks in the shadows.
Shipman reaches the 23rd floor, and exits.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Paul wedges open the stairwell door enough for him to peek.

Shipman stands, shirtless in the glass-paneled server room.

Bufford kneels, sucking Shipman's navel. Connor stands behind caressing Shipman's amputated arm with his mouth.

Shipman leans his head back - between euphoric and painful.

Paul watches, unsure of what to make of it.

Connor puts a hand on Shipman's cheek, turning it slightly.

Shipman's gaze finds Paul.

Paul lets go of the door and books it back down the stairs.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - NIGHT

Shipman enters the hole. Paul pretends to be asleep.

The lights flip on.

SHIPMAN
I need your help.

PAUL
What's going on?

SHIPMAN
Lots of food on 23. Too much for me
to carry.

Paul gets up and grabs his paper cutter blade.

SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Don't need that.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

At each landing Shipman uses his peripheries to make sure Paul's still following him.

At the 23rd floor landing, Shipman hangs back.

SHIPMAN

Go ahead.

There's no point in arguing.

Paul takes the lead, marches towards his demise.

Shipman takes the scissor half from his belt.

Paul makes a break for the next floor up.

Shipman pursues.

Shipman catches Paul on a landing and trips him.

With the scissor half raised, Shipman dives down at Paul.

Paul *barely* moves out of the blade's trajectory.

Shipman keeps coming.

Stab.

Miss.

Stab.

Miss.

Shipman winds up, but this time Paul catches Shipman's fist with his hands.

Paul manages to wrestle possession of the scissor half.

He **slices** Shipman's good arm.

An opening.

Paul goes for a killing blow, but Shipman swats him away.

In the impact, the scissor half goes flying over the railing.

Paul shoots his fingers up and into Shipman's eyes.

Shipman retreats to the railing, but has nowhere left to go.

Paul keeps pushing his fingers **DEEPER**.

The momentum is too much.

Shipman flips over the railing.

His body is a brick that **SHATTERS** when it hits the ground.

A SHORT DESCENT LATER

Paul arrives and looks over the mush that used to be Shipman.
He takes the scissor half.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

The lights are off, but the space is brightly lit by the all-encompassing swirling smoke outside.

At the security panels, Paul turns on the monitor of live security cam footage boxes.

Paul goes from box to box.

Connor's on the 18th floor, Bufford's on the 17th.

They're making their way down, looking for Paul.

INT. MEG'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The kitchen table is in front of Paul's bedroom door, stopping anyone from getting in or out.

Meg sits, kitchen knife in hand, eyes on the door.

No one moves, not even Meba.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

The security camera hiccups.

Two boxes switch to a view of Paul's apartment HALLWAY and KITCHEN.

PAUL

What?

ON KITCHEN SCREEN

A cupboard opens in complete silence.

Arms emerge from it, then a head, then legs.

The Neighbor steps out from the cramped cupboard.

ON HALLWAY SCREEN

Meg doesn't move.

She can't hear the Neighbor creeping up behind her.

INT. APARTMENT, HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The Neighbor takes slow steps forward.

Meg is totally oblivious.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

All Paul can do is watch.

PAUL
Turn around, Meg!

INT. APARTMENT, HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The Neighbor is RIGHT BEHIND Meg.

He lifts his hand, and his palm OPENS from the middle.

A barbed tongue-like organ slips out the palm and LICKS the nape of Meg's neck.

MEG
Fuck!

She's so startled, she throws the knife forward.

The barbs sink into her neck, drawing blood.

Meba gets closer to the ground, wiggles her butt.

MEG (CONT'D)
No, no, no-

Meba springs up, clawing the Neighbor's slithering organ.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

Paul watches Meba wrestle with the Neighbor, until-

That camera boxes shut off.

INT. APARTMENT, HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Meba scratches all over the Neighbor, giving Meg an opportunity to flee.

!YOOOOOOOOWWWLLLLLLLLLL!

Meba is thrown down the hallway, and scampers away.

EXT. HARLEM, APARTMENT STOOP - NIGHT

While fleeing the apartment building, Meg's mind takes over and stops her from descending the stoop stairs.

She has to move.

Meg goes down the steps one foot and step at a time.

Each step is hurried but inefficient.

She doesn't even realize, she's made it to the bottom.

She's outside.

No time to revel in it.

Meg feels as other people on the street turn to watch her.

SMOKE fills the area, making it hard to see.

Her phone rings.

MEG

Paul?

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

The intercom creaks on overhead.

The audio from the phone call-

MEG (V.O.)

Paul?

PAUL

Meg!? Can you hear me?

Another voice comes on the call-

NOT PAUL (V.O.)

Yes, it's me.

PAUL

What!?

MEG (V.O.)

I'm in trouble.

NOT PAUL (V.O.)
What do you see?

MEG (V.O.)
Just a bunch of smoke-

NOT PAUL (V.O.)
Walk into it. Trust me.

PAUL
NO! MEG DON'T LISTEN TO IT!

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - SAME TIME

The smoke becomes denser the more that Meg walks.

MEG
I can't see anything.

PAUL (V.O.)
I'm close. Keep walking.

She clings to the phone and tries to control her breathing.

INT. LOBBY - SAME TIME

The elevator dings.

Paul crouches behind the lobby desk.

PAUL (V.O.)
Wave your arms. I'll find you!

Paul catches a glimpse of Bufford and Connor flanking The Mouth, as they exit and disappear into the smoke.

Paul doesn't know what to do.

He can see the outline of a female body, just a few feet outside the building!

PAUL
Meg!

He runs to the lobby window, pounds on it.

The figure steps up to the window- It is Meg!

They've never been so happy to see each other. But Paul's glee quickly changes-

In the distance behind Meg - the outline of the creature.

Off Paul's reaction, Meg turns around to see it.
Like a moth to a flame, she takes a step forward.

MEG
What is that?

PAUL
No, stay away, Meg!

For a moment, Meg disappears completely.

Then, **CRACK!**

Her body is flung at the glass.

A barbed organ lifts Meg, slams her again.

It's now or never.

Paul wields his scissor half, and-

EXT. THE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

- Runs outside into the smoke, wildly swinging his weapon, a man possessed.

PAUL
Meg!

He tries to follow her screams.

He's spinning, directionless, hopelessly running out of time.

An outline ahead - the creature!

Paul runs full-speed towards it, scissors-first.

He closes his eyes, yells.

The scissor half drives deep into flesh.

Something unleashes in Paul. He stabs again.

And again.

Faster, quicker cuts.

He slices side to side, making a mess of the flesh.

The frenzy keeps going, until-

MEG

Paul...

He opens his eyes.

Paul holds Meg, the recipient of the scissor stab.

He pulls the scissors out from what's left of her torso.

Meg drops to the ground.

PAUL

I'm sorry, I didn't- I didn't-

She can't hear. She's gone.

Without any fanfare, the smoke evaporates all around.

Not only is Paul outside, but he's not even in FiDi.

The Smoke has dropped him outside his apartment in Harlem.

He's lost the game.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Paul sees the chaos Meg was living in.

After a moment, Meba comes out from hiding and makes a dash for the open door.

Paul scoops her up.

He holds his cat tight.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul gets into bed, still holding Meba close.

There's nothing left to do.

He bawls himself to sleep.

TIME LAPSE

Paul wakes with the sunrise alarm clock.

Meba is no longer there.

He turns to look at the clock, but he already knows.

8:35am, September 5th

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The living room shows no signs of the previous chaos.

Paul swings open the door to Meg's room.

None of her stuff remains. It's like she was never there.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul looks at himself in the mirror.

He picks up the tweezers, lifts his shirt.

He pulls at a long ingrown hair coil from around his puss-filled belly button.

The hair resists, but Paul keeps pulling. He knows the drill.

The hair comes free, and is about a foot long.

The belly button immediately feeds.

INT. A-TRAIN - MORNING

Paul rides in the same crowded subway car as always.

However, this time there is a bubble of space around him.

The other riders avoid him, maybe due to his ragged appearance and oversized clothes, thinking he is homeless.

The overhead intercom interrupts-

MTA CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
Attention passengers. Due to signal failures, ALL downtown A-trains...

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ENTRANCE - MORNING

Paul watches a familiar sight in front of him-
Burnt facade, firefighters cleaning the mess.

CONNOR
You're late again.

PAUL
Yeah. Gotta watch it.

INT. 24TH FLOOR, PAUL'S DESK - DAY

BRRRING!

Paul answers his desk phone.

PAUL
Paul Waite.

CUSTOMER SERVICE (V.O.)
Paperweight! Got a client who needs retaining.

No response.

CUSTOMER SERVICE (V.O.)
Helloooo...

PAUL
Transfer her through.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Paul, spoon in hand, goes to town on a jar of peanut butter.

Meba tries to get in on the action.

He pushes her away. She continues her pursuit of the food.

Paul pulls another spoon from the drawer, puts a dollop of PB on it, lays it on the table for Meba.

They eat in silence. Dead eyed, mouths agape.

INT. PAUL'S DESK - DAY

Paul watches the window washer work outside.

Nevins makes his rounds - his face burnt from the previous collision with Paul.

NEVINS
Fresh pots!

Paul shoots up.

PAUL
Hey! Come here.

Nevins breaks his path.

NEVINS

What's going on Paperweight-

Paul takes the coffee out of Nevins' hands and sits down.

NEVINS (CONT'D)

Oh, so that is actually mine-

Paul drinks from the mug. Nevins stares in disbelief.

PAUL

Fresh pots. Go. Tell the people.

Nevins takes the advice, not totally sure what just happened.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul looks in the mirror while plucking all the long ingrown hairs from his neck.

His face is fuller, his eyes less sunken.

INT. EMPLOYEE CAFE - LUNCH TIME

Paul opens his Tupperware to reveal the homemade sushi.

DERON

What's today's special?

Paul slams the Tupperware shut, protects his food.

An awkward silence. Deron leaves him alone.

INT. 145TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Paul half-heartedly races down the stairs, knowing he will miss the train.

As it starts moving, Paul catches a glimpse of Agatha in the departing train.

Or, he *thinks* it might be her. It moves too fast to be sure.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ENTRANCE - MORNING

Same scene of the building on fire and the clean-up crew.

CONNOR

You're late again.

Paul doesn't listen. He's focused on the EMTs and the gurney.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Gotta watch that, kid.

Paul approaches the gurney, and rips the sheet off.

The body is grotesque, but It's Agatha.

The EMT puts the sheet back, and continues their route.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Paul clicks off the blender.

Meba makes chews.

He fills her bowl, goes to place it on the ground, but stops.

He holds the bowl above Meba's head.

Meba paws at it, meowing for her food.

Paul toys with her.

Meba growls, as fearsome as a house-cat can.

Paul lifts the bowl higher, watching for a reaction.

Meba goes nuts.

Paul hovers the bowl over the trash bin.

Meba goes quiet, but attentive - ready to pounce.

Paul doesn't give in.

Meba changes tactics. She brushes up against Paul's leg, purring. Flirting.

Paul finally puts the bowl on the floor.

Meba drops the act and devours her dinner.

EXT. UPTOWN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

The night sky of the city instantly changes to morning.

INT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MORNING

An unfamiliar alarm clock beeps, reads 8:25am, September 5th.

A **MAN** is passed out next to the clock. A hand reaches over him to turn it off. The hand belongs to Agatha.

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A **YOUNG BOY** sits in his bed, tossing and turning, fighting his covers - but still asleep.

In the door frame, Agatha watches. She tiptoes over, pulls the covers up, quickly settling the child.

She watches this little mound rise and fall as it breathes.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Agatha stands over the kitchen sink, pouring kerosene down funnels into water balloons.

Occasionally, she grabs at a half-eaten cake on the counter.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Agatha stands in the shower wearing the familiar coat. She closes her eyes and pours the remaining kerosene over herself, producing some coughs.

INT. 17TH SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Agatha sits on one of the wooden benches, in real discomfort.

She ugly cries, but tries to do it silently as not to disturb an **OLDER WOMAN** sitting next to her.

The Older Woman doesn't look over, but puts a hand on Agatha's back, gives a quick supportive rub.

The train arrives. Agatha stands, steels herself. Game face.

Doors open, she pushes forward.

SOME GUY

Let the people off first...
assholes!

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MORNING

Agatha sits at the end of the car. The train stops. The doors don't open. A change. Agatha turns to watch.

PAUL (O.S.)
I'm here. You have to let me in!

The doors finally open, and Paul spills in.

Agatha turns back around, not realizing the new guy across the train is staring at her.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE BETWEEN 7TH & 8TH - MORNING

Agatha reaches the spot where the Vagrant would normally be.

She fixates on the bloody stain on the ground.

PAUL
He died.

Agatha is taken back by Paul.

INT. THE OCULUS - MORNING

Amongst tourists, Agatha and Paul walk the 2nd level circle.

They try not to draw attention.

PAUL
The building doesn't burn down. We
all just go back to work.

Agatha thinks deeply for a moment.

AGATHA
Do I survive?

Paul hesitates.

PAUL
Not sure. They're mum on details.

She stops walking. Paul stops too.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What do you have in there?

Agatha unzips her backpack to show the water balloons and lighter. Paul lifts one of the balloons, a little puzzled.

AGATHA
Kerosene. It's all I had at home.

PAUL
You had water balloons at home?

AGATHA

From my son's birthday party.

Paul notices prying eyes from some of the surrounding people.

Above them, white smoke blows outside the central skylight.

PAUL

I think I know how to kill it. But
we gotta do it together, and we
gotta do it now.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - MORNING

Through the revolving doors, Agatha enters followed by Paul.

They take their turns showing IDs to the Security Guard, who takes a little longer than usual to wave them through.

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

The elevator opens and Paul rushes off, leading Agatha towards the hole.

A **MAIL ROOM** employee is there just doing his job.

MAIL ROOM

Can I help you?

AGATHA

I got it.

Agatha takes her hammer and brutally whacks the employee in the temple, killing him with ease.

Paul is a little shellshocked.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Paul? What now?

Paul pushes the filing cabinet out of the way.

PAUL

Follow me.

Paul scurries through the hole, and Agatha follows.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - CONTINUOUS

Agatha crawls through the dark hole.

She can't see much ahead.

AGATHA

Paul?

PAUL (O.C.)

Keep going!

Agatha continues crawling and makes it into the room.

The lights flip on.

Disoriented and still on all fours, Agatha looks up-

But Paul's foot pushes her head into the floor.

He stands holding the paper cutter blade.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Sorry about this.

Paul hacks at Agatha's legs, making deep unclean cuts.

It's quickly a bloody mess.

Agatha tries to roll but Paul applies more pressure while continuing to slice.

INT. STAIRWELL - MORNING

Paul struggles to pull Agatha up the stairs.

With each landing the lights flick on, revealing the blood trail Agatha leaves in her wake.

She's not conscious.

INT. 23RD FLOOR SERVER ROOM - MORNING

Paul uses Agatha to prop the server door open.

He takes her hammer and dislodges the ID card reader.

He throws balloons haphazardly at the walls outside the server room.

Finally, Paul flicks the long lighter.

Suddenly, the floor is full of flames.

Paul pulls the server door shut, with him and Agatha inside.

Sprinklers go off.

The door locks.

The red emergency light comes on and the whirring goes off.

Employees haul ass through the stairwell doors. They bang against the glass walls, but no force or fire can penetrate.

The Security Guard blasts a fire extinguisher.

Connor and Bufford push to the front of the room.

PAUL

STOP!

Paul breaks a balloon over Agatha and his own head.

He holds the long lighter, threatening immolation.

BUFFORD

That room is fire proof.

SECURITY GUARD

Not from the inside.

CONNOR

Look.

Slugs crawl across Agatha's legs, burrowing into her skin.

White Smoke fogs some of the glass.

Down the dark hall, The Mouth begins its lumbering march.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Come out now and maybe you can be forgiven.

The smoke makes things less visible.

Paul waits, lighter and balloon in hand.

Out of NO WHERE, the Mouth grabs Paul's arm.

He drops the lighter.

He's in terrible pain, but Paul manages to throw a balloon at The Mouth - who in turn, makes wet staccato cries.

It releases Paul's arm.

The Mouth's ribs extend to the ground, like legs. Its head opens down the center, revealing a horrifying mouth.

It looks a bit like the Oculus.

Paul scurries to the lighter, but the Mouth sticks a rib/leg through Paul's ankle like a spike, trapping him.

The lighter bounces away.

The Mouth wraps around Paul's Neck with a barbed-appendage.

Paul pulls, almost ripping his ankle clean off the bone.

HE'S GOT THE LIGHTER!

Paul flashes fire at the Mouth.

INSTANTLY it goes from scary stalwart to cowardly prey - retracting to its normal form, releasing Paul's ankle.

The Mouth rushes past Paul, ramming itself against the door.

Now it's Paul's turn to make the imposing walk down the hall.

He flicks the lighter over the grounded Mouth and Agatha.

	BUFFORD	SECURITY GUARD
STOP!		Woah, woah, woah!

Connor steps forward to the glass. He's focused.

CONNOR
You don't want this.

Paul confidently throws more balloons at The Mouth, who squeals in anger.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Enough!

Paul stops chucking, and comes back to the bargaining table.

PAUL
I'm out of the loop. Off the board-

CONNOR
The chain must continue.

PAUL
And it will. Keep her alive. In the hole.

CONNOR
She won't regenerate.

PAUL

Who cares? You have an unlimited resource, but you're not getting the full value out of them. Churn and burn.

CONNOR

The timeline will be too messy to manage.

PAUL

I can hold it down.

INT. LOBBY - MORNING

The elevator dings. Paul steps into a completely full lobby.

The employees leave a narrow row for Paul to walk.

He moves through them, still wearing the backpack with the balloons and holding the lighter - just in case.

Paul is through the revolving doors and back outside.

He watches the employees get in line for the elevators.

Everyone's back to normal.

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT, PAUL'S ROOM - DAY

Exhausted, smelly, covered in blood - Paul doesn't care.

He falls into bed.

Amoeba hops up beside him, starts licking the blood.

Paul doesn't bat her away, he's already asleep.

TIME LAPSE

The day turns over, but for once Amoeba remains in bed.

The alarm clock light pulses, waking Paul.

8:35am, September 6th.

No big celebration. Paul sits up.

Something deep inside overwhelms him. He jerks, hunches over.

Yellow puss stains his shirt, which Paul fights to take off.

The puss spills out from his belly button.

Paul's jaw clenches. He screams.

A slug slowly passes through the belly button, and falls to the ground.

Once it's free. It wiggles for a moment, then dies.

It's over.

Meba trots over and grabs the slug in her mouth.

PAUL
No! Drop it!

Paul holds Meba's face, and takes the slug from her.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul takes a hard look at his reflection in the mirror.

He feels his cauterized neck wound scar.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MORNING

Paul stands in a packed car - different faces than usual.

The train comes to a stop. The intercom interrupts-

MTA CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
42nd street Port Authority. Next
Step 34th street Penn Station.

A seat opens up.

Paul snatches it, spreads out.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Oculus in the background, Paul approaches the building.

No chaos, no burnt facade.

The Picket Line walks their endless loop, does their chants:

PICKET LINE CAPTAIN
Picket line means!

PICKET LINE EMPLOYEES
Don't. Cross!

Paul crosses right through the center of the picket line.

INT. ALL VERTICALS MEETING - MORNING

The meeting's not started.

The usual offenders sit at the big table while the peons float in and sit in the cheap seats.

Paul enters.

Connor pulls out an empty chair at the big table.

Paul takes his new seat.

BUFFORD
Alright, let's get started.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - END OF DAY

The picketers lower their signs and break their ranks.

Paul exits the building, and heads for the subway with the Oculus stalking in the background.

TIME LAPSE

The days get shorter.

The Union dwindles.

The cold comes.

The Union is gone.

INT. APARTMENT, PAUL'S ROOM - MORNING

The alarm clock light pulses, waking Paul.

It reads 8:35am, December 6th.

He's not alone.

Face down in bed next to him is Deron.

INT. APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - MORNING

A totally empty room.

Paul sits on the floor with Meba in his lap, lost in thought.

Deron joins Paul on the floor. He's got a scar on his previously-impaed hand.

DERON
What're you thinking about?

PAUL
What to do with this room.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

An interview in progress. Connor leads, but Paul and Nevins are also on his side of the table.

They interview **SIDNEY** (25), who we know as the Lurker.

SIDNEY
- It's not the same program, but I'm willing to take a course on my own time. I'm a quick learner.

NEVINS
We love that.

Paul gives Sidney a closer look.

CONNOR
Well, I think we've covered everything. You'll hear from us soon.

SIDNEY
Looking forward to it!

NEVINS
I'll walk you out.

Nevins leads Sidney from the room.

CONNOR
What do you think?

PAUL
I think you should hire her.

INT. PAUL'S JUNIOR OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Paul sits behind a nice desk. There's room for growth.

He's flipping through a fresh Ouros managers handbook. He looks at the cover, draws hash marks over the ouroboros.

He then opens it, starts making notes in the margins.

Nevins stop by. They don't actually knock-

NEVINS

Knock, Knock! Still on for lunch?

PAUL

Yeah, I'll meet you outside.

Paul pulls a cooler out from under his desk.

INT. BASEMENT - LUNCH TIME

Ding! The elevator opens revealing Paul with his cooler.

He rounds the corner to the mail room, where various employees do their jobs.

Paul nods to the Mail Room Manager, who whistles loudly. The workforce stops what they're doing, all head to the elevator.

Alone, Paul moves the filing cabinet.

INT. SHIPMAN'S HOLE - CONTINUOUS

The state of the hole is bleak. Employees packed in limited space - some close to death.

Most stop what they're doing and come for their handouts.

PAUL

PB&J for Frank... Turkey and Swiss
for Jill...

The only one not in line is Agatha, who sits in the corner. Paul offers her a sandwich, but she refuses.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You'll regret that.

He takes a bite of her sandwich, overplays how good it is.

Agatha caves, going to town on the sandwich.

Paul looks at his handiwork, sincerely proud he's holding everything down.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Tastes good, don't it?

THE END