

# 10%MAX

Written by

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*Based on the novel by John Selby*

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EXT. FOOTHILLS NORTH OF MORRO BAY - DAY

A solo male TRESPASSER (30s, professional) crouches mostly-hidden on a granite outcrop overlooking a small box canyon in the coastal foothills. He's spying on a newly-built hideaway estate right below him. There are no other houses - this is back-country and the main house, guest cottages, gardens and swimming pool look out of place.

Two black SUVs and a Ford pickup are parked in the circular drive - nothing unusual about that, but why the electric-wire 8-foot security fence, guard house, and those two-dozen SATELLITE DISHES aimed intently up toward the heavens?

The intruder snaps off photos - then glances down to the east at an old ranch-and-vineyards operation spread out way below. He sees nothing moving, so he returns to watching the compound right below him.

INT. RANCH HOUSE KITCHEN - SAME TIME

An elderly woman, MARCI HADLEY (70, tough, kind) is looking right at the intruder through binoculars. She disappears and a moment later an old weather-beaten cowboy, CHRIS HADLEY (72, grumpy old guy, takes shit from nobody) comes and takes a look through the field glasses.

CHRIS

(to Marci)

Now who the hell - never should have sold that land to Jack. I'll go scare the idiot off.

EXT. RANCH - FRONT STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Chris comes stomping fast down the steps of the old ranch-house with 30-30 rifle in hand.

EXT. TRAIL UP THE HILL - CONTINUOUS

Chris is on his horse, heading at a fast lope up a cow path toward the top of the ridge.

INT/EXT. TRAIL UP THE RIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Marci is following Chris through the binoculars as he heads up to the top of the ridge. She watches the wild cowboy on his black horse comes out right behind the intruder. He fires a loud-crack warning shot over the intruder's head - not to kill, just to scare the guy off.

But as Marci watches, with a smooth quick move the intruder pulls out a pistol and fires right at Chris. Hit by the bullet, Chris falls off his horse and rolls out of sight.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

GRETTA HARBIN, America's president for over a year now, is sitting in her office talking with a sincere devoted man of around 35 - CHARLES WATSON.

GRETTA

So then - I am willing to say yes, go ahead. But Charles, you've brought into this room something that perhaps should never enter here.

CHARLES

Isn't that why you keep me around?

GRETTA

But you are asking me to play God.

CHARLES

I'm coming to you with something that someone I trust has brought me. That's really what I do here.

GRETTA

Fine. Go run the experiment. I still question all this but I can agree to their terms. Come right back to me with the evidence - then I'll make the final decision. Absolute secrecy of course. This is seriously crazy but it's so damn logical.

CHARLES

Good. Thank you for trusting me, it's massive. So - how about an elicitor word for this situation?

Gretta has a deeper side to her - she pauses, looks out the window - then back to Charles.

GRETTA

Yes, a particular virtue does come to mind. Let's give this hair-brained idea - you called it the Touch?

CHARLES

That's it. The touch of grace.

GRETTA

L's attach the simple yet exalted virtue of kindness to this project. If it isn't aiming toward an ultimate act of kindness, Charles, absolutely cut it dead ... otherwise, go for it.

Charles doesn't respond, he just quietly nods and walks out.

Gretta taps a console and several TV screens come to life on the wall - showing multiple terrorist atrocities happening around the globe -

In walks HARRY FITZ (54, a careful Chief of Staff). He stands almost at attention but also relaxed.

GRETTA (cont'd)

You're following the news - let's update in ten. For now, one question.

HARRY

Fire.

GRETTA

Would you trust my man Charles with the wellbeing of your country, with your own mind, with our whole world community's optimum next step?

HARRY

Oh - it's Charles again - what now? And that's a seriously obtuse question. More data please.

GRETTA

That you may not have at present, but here's another question.

HARRY

Gretta, not to complain - but we have other things right now to -

GRETTA

(interrupting)

Would you consider it an ethical act of kindness to nudge just one person, or indeed the entire world, slightly in the direction of less violence?

HARRY

But of course.

GRETTA

But - and there's always a but -  
would you do that act of kindness  
without asking permission and without  
anyone ever knowing?

HARRY

(slight edge)

Well you've certainly been talking to  
Charles. I wonder just how influenced  
his ideas are by his sunset smokes?

GRETTA

Don't be so priggish, you drink your  
preferred stuff. I obviously value  
Charles and his flashes. But do me a  
favor - be ready to move him out of  
commission within minutes if I decide  
I've bet on the wrong inspiration.

INT. LECTURE HALL - NYU CAMPUS, NY - DAY

A young professor, JACK HADLEY (35, slender, athletic,  
confident) is giving a psych lecture. He's casual but also  
professional, fully engaging his students.

JACK

What I want you to reflect on over  
Spring Break is that new Chinese fMRI  
research showing in more depth how  
the amygdala registers a fear jolt,  
and instantly overrides the  
prefrontal cortex. Alsoi - before you  
return, no groaning allowed, write me  
three or four pages about a fear  
incident in your own life where this  
happened. You can - ugghh!

Jack bends forward slightly as if a jab of pain has suddenly  
grabbed his innards - then he recovers slightly.

JACK (cont'd)

Sorry, hold on. I think I'm coming  
down with something - I hope it's  
just the flu. I guess I need to head  
home - sorry - enjoy your vacation.

INT. CAR ON CROWDED NY STREET - DAY

Jack is driving fast in city traffic - but he doesn't look  
sick at all. He takes the turnoff for La Guardia Airport.

His cell phone on its magnet on the dash has a photo displayed - it's a young woman - his missing wife, Mahalena.

JACK  
 (to the woman's image)  
 Mahee, is this the right move?

The phone rings. The name on his dashboard: Marci Hadley.

JACK (cont'd)  
 (impatiently)  
 Marci.

INT. HADLEY RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Marci is standing looking out the kitchen window up to where Chris got shot. A police ATV roars into sight up there.

INTERCUT -

MARCI  
 (very upset)  
 I hope I'm not disrupting you.

JACK  
 No, I just faked sick so I could get a jump on things. Can't talk now, I'm almost at the airport.

MARCI  
 You're coming home early?

JACK  
 Europe first, got some business to get done with Teddy.

MARCI  
 Well that's what I'm phoning about.

JACK  
 (tensing)  
 Why - what's up?

MARCI  
 Just terrible - I happened to see a man up there above your new place, Chris went out with his gun to chase the guy away - now Chris is down at the hospital with a bullet hole in his shoulder. The sheriff is running all over trying to find the shooter.

JACK  
Fuck - and what about Chris?

MARCI  
He's a tough old goat - bullet didn't ruin anything serious. But are you doing anything illegal up there?

Somebody honks behind Jack - he drives on.

JACK  
Illegal? Of course not.

MARCI  
What if they get a search warrant?

Jack hesitates, thinking it through.

JACK  
Uhm, I'll phone the woman in charge there to let them in. All they'll find are a few programmer nerds.

MARCI  
I trust you. I just don't trust your wheeler-dealer partner.

JACK  
Marci, Teddy's my friend. He's coming out for Easter by the way. Let the cops in but tell them we want our peace and quiet over the holidays.

MARCI  
Sheriff Walden was just up here asking all sorts of questions.

JACK  
Don't worry. Look, I gotta catch a plane. Phone if Chris gets worse. I should be there day after tomorrow.

He makes a bad lane change, gets honked at, follows the sign to the airport.

EXT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT - RUNWAY - SAME TIME

The back wheels of a big company jet touch down on the runway with a sudden squeal.

INT. JET - CONTINUOUS

In a plush in-flight office, Woody Guthrie is singing gritty Dust Bowl Blues on the jet stereo while MSNBC and Fox News etc, run without sound on multiple wall screens.

TEDDY HAGENBACH (35, inherited wealth, pudgy but tough) is on the phone cutting a deal. On one of the screens we see the phone conversation with a business associate:

TEDDY

Ralph, I've had it on this, I'm not budging. I don't need this and you do. Just sign the agreement. I'll be gone for a couple weeks, talk later. Gotta catch this.

The screen shifts to the face of Charles Watson.

TEDDY (cont'd)

Chuck, there you are. How'd it go? We're all set on my side.

CHARLES

So she listened and gave us the initial green so yeah, we're on. Come grab me in three. Are you picking up your scientist? Oh, I need to take this call. May random acts of kindness abound.

TEDDY

What?

But Charles is gone. Teddy sits staring at the blank screen, then looks at a large portrait of a young woman on the wall - then glances to the news coverage of current carnage. He abruptly turns off Woody Guthrie's dust-bowl blues.

TEDDY (cont'd)

(to himself)

Kindness? Fuck - we go do it.

EXT. SMALL-JET SECTION OF THE AIRPORT - DAY

Jack walks fast over to the company jet and heads up the silver stairs to the open door.

INT. JET - CONTINUOUS

Jack enters Teddy's plush fly-high office.



TEDDY

Hey Jack - on time, good. What's that look on your face?

JACK

Slightly crazy - a guy was snooping around the Touch buildings. Uncle Chris went up to check him off and the snooper shot him. He'll be okay but the snoop got away.

TEDDY

(tensing slightly)

Ah. And hello to you. I'll get Wayne on it. Grab yourself a drink, you look like you need one. Dinner in half an hour, casual dress, got a new chef on board, she's dynamite.

A thin man with thin lips and a slight limp, WAYNE VANGO (40s, ex-SEAL, on top) appears from the front cabin.

TEDDY (cont'd)

(to Wayne)

You heard Jack?

WAYNE

(neutral tone)

Not good. I'll phone Cynthia and get someone on it.

TEDDY

You go out yourself.

WAYNE

But you might need me tomorrow.

TEDDY

Please, please me. And I assume you heard what Charles in Washington reported - it's a go. Meet us in DC when we come back through with live cargo for inspection.

Wayne scowls, shrugs - turns and leaves the plane. The door is closed behind him. Jack pours himself a drink. The plane rumbles slightly as engines rev for takeoff.

Jack takes a comfy strap-in chair - the two men each other as the jet roars for takeoff.

TEDDY (cont'd)  
So we're green, headed to grab  
Charles and then to who knows where,  
he's coordinating all that. He's our  
guy, fifteen DC years - pure gold.

JACK  
What about Ursi?

TEDDY  
Oh - I stopped by her guru's  
monastery yesterday, met with the  
guy. He pushed to come with us to  
California but I politely told him  
he's now peripheral.

They're quiet a moment.

TEDDY (cont'd)  
I assume no news regarding Mahee.

JACK  
No. Nothing. Black hole.

TEDDY  
Jack, she's been missing for a year  
now. She's done for - they don't just  
grab hostages and not do anything for  
a year. Let go, buddy.

JACK  
Tell my heart that.

TEDDY  
Come on, I lost Dianne, you lost  
Mahee, we're equally motivated.

JACK  
What - for you this is revenge?

TEDDY  
Everybody runs on revenge - but no,  
sorry, I'm off key there. Been one  
hell of a day. We'll just do what  
must be done. It was your idea after  
all - well, Ursi's, and your dad's.  
Now we deliver the coup de grace -  
the ultimate act of kindness is what  
Charles just called it.

JACK  
(put down)  
He always has the right words.

A gently-dinging bell rings, three times.

TEDDY

(grinning)

Ah, time for dinner. Surely the world  
is unfolding exactly as it should.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD TO AN OLD MONASTERY - EUROPE - DAY

Flying over the forest between Germany and Switzerland, we're following a curvy road along a rushing stream past woods, meadowlands, small dairy farms ... and now a private side road leads way up to several ancient granite buildings. There's a solid gate, a gatehouse, and a gateman on duty.

Up just beyond the monastery buildings, a young woman exits a rustic cottage: URSULA TRAEGER (36, Swedish, brilliant but also athletic). Smartly dressed, she walks down a foot path toward the stone buildings.

A man named DAMEK (50, slender, alert, maybe mystic) is standing at an overlook above the main buildings. Ursula joins him - they stand looking across the canyon.

DAMEK

(in a stern East  
European accent)

Ursi, you are dressed quite  
inappropriately for Muslim company.  
And you failed to appear at morning  
meditation. Are you in clear space?

She doesn't respond.

DAMEK (cont'd)

Beware of stumbling at the seventh  
tone. We have moved very far very  
rapidly with this. There is a time to  
be soft and a time to be hard. We  
both know what time this is.

URSULA

Damek, are you yourself feeling  
worried or upset this morning?

He turns, looks into her eyes.

DAMEK

If I have a concern, it is because  
I've just learned of a possible  
visitation in the next days.

URSULA

But we're clean, the fMRI machines  
and so forth are all gone.

They both see a sedan pull up in the parking lot below.

DAMEK

So I shall await your return from the  
east before you head to the west.

URSULA

You met with my funder yesterday  
while I was in Basel.

DAMEK

Yes. I have him where I want him for  
now. There is no real fight in him.  
Trust me, go now - keep your heart  
non-attached, adhere with passion to  
our higher goal.

Ursula nods and walks a few steps - then pivots toward him.

URSULA

Damek, have you no comment on what  
happened between us last night?

He hesitates a moment.

DAMEK

You were simply nervous about today.  
I understand and forgive.

She eyes him hotly - then heads down to the awaiting car. He  
watches her get in and drive off - he's not fully pleased.

INT. TEDDY'S JET - BASEL AIRPORT - TWO HOUR LATER

Ursula comes walking fast into the plane - dressed as if on  
her way to Paris or Prague. Jack stands and she comes right  
into his arms for a hug. She only nods to Teddy, no hug. A  
third man in the plane is introduced -

TEDDY

(formally)

Ursula, meet Charles Watson, old-time  
Stanford buddy. We grabbed him in DC.  
As you know, he's been our point-man  
these last two months, he's the  
designated rep of the president.

Charles takes Ursula's hand and kisses it in formal royal  
style - but she pulls her hand back from him, turns away.

INT. JET - SHORT TIME LATER

As the jet climbs for altitude headed east, Teddy, Ursula, Charles and Jack settle comfortably into swivel chairs around a small conference table.

CHARLES

So then - the guys in front are now locked in to my coordinates. This flight is entirely off commercial radar. Where we're headed is not your concern. We get there, we observe your Touch Treatment, we confer with the data analysts - and we return as if we never went. Your treatment must entirely transform the test subject or this project is immediately cancelled - understood?

JACK

So who is this guy?

CHARLES

The subject is a brilliantly-violent war-crimes prisoner. Don't ask why our military is still collecting such specimens. Late last week he was moved to the black-light facility.

URSULA

What's his psychiatric profile? I assume he is adequately extreme to prove our point.

CHARLES

To put it mildly, yes. The man's name is Ahmad Rah. Before his capture he was a brilliant but utterly heartless desert warrior - an ultimate tough nut. He also happens to speak good English from twelve years as an Afghan orphan in a loving home on the outskirts of London.

JACK

Get to the point, Chuck.

CHARLES

When he hit puberty he found an online sponsor who helped him slip back to his homeland where he orchestrated the elimination of what he considered rancid non-believers of various nationalities.

URSULA

And his formal psych evaluation?

CHARLES

Ahmad Rah is a strong healthy young man with plenty of brains, leadership charisma, determination, conviction who kills without compunction - an ultimate terrorist with zero sense of humor. He lost that when his parents and siblings were murdered before his eyes by a stray American drone. You'll receive more on him from the attending psychiatrist.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - BERLIN - DAY

Early spring sunlight illuminates a penthouse apartment in the unified city.

A half-Hopi, half-Irish American woman, AYASHA O'CONNER (former actress, 34, naturally beautiful but with a nasty scar disfiguring her whole left cheek) is pacing a large living room crammed with professional video equipment.

Holding her cell phone, which is ringing a number, Ayasha seems frozen in emotional turmoil. The 212 New York number finally responds - with a recording:

AUTO RESPONSE

(Jack's upbeat voice)

Hello this is Jack Hadley, leave a message, tell me your story, sing me a song - I'll get right back.

Ayasha raises her free hand in a now-habitual gesture to touch the scar that runs all the way from her left eye down across her once-beautiful cheek. Nervous and slightly dizzy, she almost hangs up - then finds her voice.

AYASHA

Jack. This is Ayasha. Yes, long time. I very much need to talk with you - in person. I'm in Berlin but will fly wherever you are, this is urgent.

She clicks off - stares blankly at the Berlin skyline. A man her age, sitting on the sofa (MANFRED HINES) speaks up.

MANFRED

(German accent)

So you got him. You're doing the right thing. We have over 200 grand in that doc, way back to your hubby - and we still have basically nothing.

Ayasha exhales through tense lips.

AYASHA

It's just so goddamned hard. The last time I saw him I was beautiful and on top. Now I'm going to do this to him.

MANFRED

You're a documentarian now, not an actor - you must go for the jugular.

AYASHA

For a German you do use the very worst American terms.

MANFRED

Considering what he's doing - if he's doing it - I think the term is quite appropriate. Now we just need him to reply. Pack your bags.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. HOSPITAL - SAN LUIS OBISPO - DAY

Establishing shot - San Luis Obispo town and hospital.

A paunchy little man in a sheriff uniform, cowboy hat and boots, VERN WALDEN (69, local, clever but not real smart), saunters fast down a corridor into a hospital room. In the bed is Chris Hadley with his shoulder bandaged.

VERN

(raspy smoker's voice)

So just spill it, Chris - what you got going up on that ridge? This ain't Nam, I don't like shootin' on my turf, definitely not when the guy gettin' shot is you.

Chris eyes his old friend disdainfully.

CHRIS

So you ain't caught him yet.

VERN

Not a single lead - so talk straight to me. I always looked the other way in the old days, didn't bother you growin' stuff up there. But you gotta come clean with me right now or I'll bust your ass - that clear?

CHRIS

If I wasn't flat on my back you'd be flat on yours, talkin' that shit.

VERN

Goddammit, you came an inch from being a corpse - what's going on?

CHRIS

I told you - Marci sees some guy up on the ridge, I ride up to kick his ass off, I fire over his head - he wheels around and bam, nails me.

VERN

And you got no idea who or why.

CHRIS

He was shootin' photos of that new vacation place Jack and his buddy built. I disturb him and he pops me.

VERN

One final time - what's Jack up to that attracts sharp-shooters?

CHRIS

Jacky's turned into some weak-bellied professor just like his dad. He lacks the cojones to be up to anything.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TEDDY'S JET - DAY

Jack and Ursula are sitting silently side by side.

URSULA

(to Jack - upset)

Your DC man, I don't think he believes we can work our magic on dear Ahmad. By the way, my period started last night, raw native blood for our ceremony.

(MORE)



URSULA (cont'd)  
Mahee would be proud - oh, I didn't mean to be flippant, sorry.

JACK  
I'm okay. But Mahee was never into blood sacrifice, you know that.

URSULA  
I now realize I hardly knew her at all from those Guatemala dayss.

JACK  
And you just disappeared afterward.

URSULA  
Yes. Of necessity. Otherwise none of this would be happening.

JACK  
Hmm. So is everything set in Cambria with Cynthia and the software?

URSULA  
Everything's now integrated to perfection. Teddy was right - without her help nothing would be ready.

JACK  
This is still your creation, has been ever since Stanford.

Her eyes glisten with sudden emotion.

URSULA  
Ah. Guatemala. Bernardo.

JACK  
I haven't been back down since, well, since Mahee disappeared.

URSULA  
I have not given up hope - she lives!

JACK  
I feel like those people with their antennas aimed at the heavens, listening for any tiny sound of life.

He takes out his phone, brings up Mahee's photo that we saw earlier in his car. They both just look at her a momente.

URSULA  
I dreamed of her. If she was here with us, would we be doing all this?

JACK

Sometimes I feel her presence so strong - she feels so alive!

URSULA

(beat)

Right now we're flying east - she could be right down under this jet - she could be looking up at us. I can only hope she approves our actions during this holy week. (beat) So to be blunt, Jack - are you getting laid these days?

JACK

Laid - hell no. You?

URSULA

Hardly - just my dearly beloved spiritual master - and you know that's entirely different.

JACK

Oh?

URSULA

He is a Wilhelm Reich nut, he works kundalini wonders up my spine, right up through my brain into the wild blue yonder, as I believe you'd put it. But lately, like last night, something has snapped - and you're partly to blame.

JACK

Me?

URSULA

I'm beginning to feel again what it's like to be turned on by a guy just because he turns me on, not because he's my spiritual master who desires to awaken the serpent up and down my you know what.

JACK

Bernardo was a bit the same?

URSULA

With Damek it's been three times a week like clockwork since I entered his inner circle. But last night, well - it didn't work. (beat) Is Teddy listening to this?

JACK

No. He doesn't do that.

URSULA

(whispering)

So hear me out while we're alone. I'm thinking again what we talked about when I came to you nine months ago. I'm thinking we might perhaps work privately with Cynthia to slightly expand the scope of all this.

JACK

(reacting)

Now don't start with that again. We've given a vow to the president's rep - we know our stated limits.

URSULA

But even people like Damek and Teddy, and certainly that Charles guy, they would benefit, you know that - just a slight universal dose of the level-3 Touch would quite permanently tone down chronic male aggression. And only you, me and Cynthia would ever know - we could eradicate planetary violence!

JACK

You're talking like Bernardo.

URSULA

Jack, look to your heart. I feel certain Mahee would advise the same.

JACK

Ursi, when you came to me with all this just two months after Mahee disappeared, you gave me your absolute promise. So - are you now telling me you have software in place to do what you just said?

URSULA

That would of course involve Cynthia when we get to California. Please. Stop and reflect. We'll talk further after the test. Oh, that reminds me.

She stands, reaches into an overhead compartment and drops a small travel pack down into Jack's lap.

URSULA (cont'd)  
 From this point onward I want you and  
 not me or anyone else to be the  
 person pushing the button - certainly  
 not Teddy or Charles.

Reaching into the bag, she tosses Jack a smartphone.

URSULA (cont'd)  
 I've programmed this as our core  
 activation system. Damek insists.  
 Please enter a 7-digit code.

Jack eyes her uncertainly -

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JACK'S RETREAT COMPOUND - CAMBRIA HILLS - DAY

From far above, the new TOUCH buildings are surrounded by  
 hilly open range, rocky bluffs and live-oaks sloping down  
 toward the ocean ten miles to the west.

A Sheriff PICKUP comes roaring up Highway 46 from the coast.  
 It stops at an electric metal gate leading to a mile-long  
 private drive.

INT. TOUCH RETREAT COMPOUND - CALIFORNIA - DAY

Inside the main building in the kitchen nook, CYNTHIA  
 MALINSKI (37, brilliant, dominant) is eating a meal. A  
 'ding' sounds on her phone -

She looks at her screen and sees sheriff Vern huffing and  
 puffing in his pickup, scowling at the electronic gate.

CYNTHIA (V.O.)  
 You are on our surveillance screen.  
 State your business.

VERN  
 Don't mess with me - open this gate.

CYNTHIA  
 This is private land and we value our  
 privacy. I told you that yesterday.

VERN  
 Somebody spies on you, shoots a damn  
 good friend of mine - attempted  
 murder. Now fuck off and open up.

No response - the gate swings open and Vern drives through.

EXT. DRIVEWAY TO THE RETREAT COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

The private road goes over a hill through some of the prettiest countryside in the whole world.

Vern's pickup comes around a turn in the driveway and approaches a tall inner security fence with a formal gatehouse. A GATEKEEPER leans out and shouts to Vern:

GATEKEEPER

Go on around to the right and up to the main house.

VERN

(barking)

Don't tell me what to do. You're the guy who found my buddy down in the dirt. How come you didn't see anybody on video sneakin' around?

GATEKEEPER

No cameras up there. Drive on.

EXT. FRONT OF MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vern's pickup drives up to the main house. Cynthia comes down the front steps. With suspicion, Vern eyes three smaller buildings and the array of satellite dishes.

CYNTHIA

Sheriff, how about a coffee?

VERN

Forget coffee. Just tell me what you do way out here - what's your job?

CYNTHIA

I'll repeat what I told your rather dull accomplice - I'm a computer engineer at work programming a new microwave satellite-communications system. I believe you know Jack.

VERN

Damn right - he flirted with my daughter in high school. So who really runs this place?

CYNTHIA

(being patient)

Jack's partner Theodore owns a major telecommunications company. I'm here working on a research project. There are four programmers working with me, you can meet them if you want. We also have a cook, a housekeeper and six security.

VERN

And just why all the tight security?

CYNTHIA

Last year Jack and Teddy had one of their other research centers broken into. Millions of dollars of secret company documents were stolen.

VERN

And the shooter up on that cliff trying to videotape you - what do you suspect he was up to?

CYNTHIA

Like I said, probably spying for a competing company.

VERN

How many competing companies?

She smiles at him.

CYNTHIA

Somewhere between seventy and eighty.

VERN

Well shit.

EXT/INT. JET HIGH IN THE SKY - DAY

Teddy's company jet is roaring through space.

Jack, Ursula and Charles are sitting around the in-air conference table.

CHARLES

Yesterday when I briefed the president she asked about any negative side-effects.

JACK

With Ursi's 76 subjects the only side effects over four months were increased empathy and cooperation - who knows when we zap a terrorist.

CHARLES

And she's still concerned about the ethics of it all.

URSULA

It's obviously more humane to painlessly zap terrorists than hunt them like mad dogs and kill them.

CHARLES

I could locate zero formal research related to your claims. In fact after your Stanford work seven years ago, there's no record of any scientific activity under your name.

Ursula frowns at him.

URSULA

I am an independent agent. My results will speak for themselves.

CHARLES

I'd like to hear from your own lips how you see the science of it all, just in case she asks me again.

Ursi looks to Jack. He nods, stands up and leaves the room.

URSULA

So - using highly-targeted satellite microwave broadcast, we're generating a permanent slight alteration of key secretion patterns and neural interactions in the mesencephalic, hypothalamic, hippocampal, amygdaloid, striatal and cortical regions of the brain. By broadcasting a highly-complex symphony of Micro-R frequencies via Teddy's satellites we can impact the residents of a single building or small community, even a city if it comes to that - and permanently alter synaptic events - precursor up-take, storage, release, and metabolism, along with post-synaptic 5-HT receptor events, particularly at the 5-H-1B subtype.

CHARLES

Oh. Uhm - are you saying you've been experimenting on human beings?

URSULA

Various private investors have funded seven years of closed-door research in a number of countries - and no subjects have been damaged. We're the good guys, remember? In simple terms that even your president should understand, in just ten minutes using high-intensity settings we can alter a person's brain so that the amygdala no longer fires chemically-coded orders that lead to violent behavior. The treatment seems permanent. Innocent people in a target building will just become more compassionate, cooperative and yes, happy.

CHARLES

(easing up)

Alright then, end of interrogation.

URSULA

Good. Now regarding the ethics of it all - do you believe in God?

He's taken slightly aback.

CHARLES

What - of course I do.

URSULA

Do you believe this God at times speaks to us, offering guidance and wisdom to subtly influence the evolution of our species?

CHARLES

Definitely, that's a basic premise of Christianity. Pray sincerely and it shall surely come to pass.

URSULA

Well then there you have it.

He stares at her a moment.

CHARLES

Do you mean to say you feel that God actively guided your breakthroughs?



URSULA

A power infinitely greater than  
scientific willpower definitely  
intends this technology to emerge,  
and hopefully in the right hands.

CHARLES

(a bit upset)

But this is basically playing God.

URSULA

See it however you wish - but see to  
it that your president grasps the  
larger ethical picture. These are  
extreme times - we are all doing what  
must be done.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SOLITARY AIRSTRIP OUT IN NOWHERE - DAY

Teddy's jet touches down on an isolated air strip atop a  
secluded and seemingly-unpopulated high desert plateau.

AS the plane taxis to a stop, its door hisses open and metal  
stairs appear. Teddy and Charles, Ursi and Jack come walking  
a bit stiffly out into a chilly wind.

Army guys, definitely American, hurry them into an awaiting  
black van. To their left is a big new metal hangar set back  
from the runway, along with an unmarked cargo plane and  
three fighter jets.

Otherwise, nothing but rugged desert and snow-capped  
mountains. No sign of any locals.

EXT. DIRT ROAD UP INTO A CANYON - CONTINUOUS

The black van and several military Jeeps head up through a  
wide canyon. It narrows to a tight natural passage alongside  
a rushing stream - then the canyon opens up into a small  
valley. Numerous army guards - but zero native habitation.

EXT. MILITARY COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

The vehicles arrive at a high-fenced compound sporting  
several brand-new one-story brick buildings.

## INT. MILITARY COMPOUND - AN HOUR LATER

Inside the compound is an immaculate setup with a staff wing, military wing, prisoner wing and science/experiment wing. Our team is eating a meal with the attending military psychiatrist, HARRIET TWINGLE (brisk, determined, cold).

HARRIET

But I have so many questions.

CHARLES

Keep them until we run the test.

## INT. VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The viewing room is comfortable. The far wall of the room is dominated by four large monitor screens. The five occupants slouch down rather nervously into chairs.

HARRIET

(to Ursula)

We've done the installations in accordance with your detailed instructions. Prelims are complete, we'll review them after the test - which is now ready to commence.

The video screens come to life showing four different angles on a small windowless cement cell where TWO PRISONERS, both around 35-40, are sitting on simple beds. They don't know they're on candid camera - they're arguing with each other in Arabic, but audio in the viewing room is off.

HARRIET (cont'd)

All your micro equipment is hidden under the cots. I believe you have an activation box. I must admit I'm not optimistic about the science nor the ethics of doing this but orders are orders - let's just do it.

CHARLES

(anxious)

Wait - how far are we from the broadcast unit?

URSULA

Are you afraid to lose that nasty superior edge of your personality?

CHARLES

Damn right I am, that's how I make my living.