

UNDERGROUND
"Pilot"

Teaser:

Begin with TEXT CRAWL with VOICE-OVER [read by Amy Lee], superimposed over SERIES OF SHOTS depicting scenes of death and disease, and jack-booted repression:

2017: A global catastrophic outbreak of Tolliver's Disease killed over a billion people. In areas with high population density, the infection rate approached 70%. Worldwide, systems of government began to falter or fail.

2026: Stock markets and investment systems all over the world crashed, in what would be referred to as the Grand Slam, brought on by political instability coupled with the devastating effects of the TD pandemic.

2028: Political chaos in the US caused that year's elections to fail to return a majority vote for any of the five parties' candidates. Congress elected a President from among the candidates with the most votes. The presidency went to Walter Burris, an inoffensive Centrist Democrat, and the vice-presidency went to Archconservative Martin Patterson, leaving the executive branch virtually paralyzed by the conflicting politics.

2029: Most of America was placed under martial law, as authorities tried to prevent a final collapse into anarchy. The abdication of federal authority was formalized by the Local Powers Act, in which congress granted extraordinary emergency powers to governors, mayors, and even private institutions.

2030: President Burris was assassinated by a rocket attack while making a speech in Cincinnati. Vice-President Patterson was immediately sworn in, and declared martial law in the area. Federal troops were ordered to comb the city, house to house, until the "nest of traitors" was exposed. It was determined that a revolutionary cult calling itself the "Army of Satanic Order" had been responsible for the assassination, and a block of tenements in downtown Cincinnati where they were said to be hiding was reduced to rubble by the military. President Patterson enacted an executive order calling for the apprehension and investigation of individuals with a history of involvement with the "occult," no matter how remote the connection. The Patterson administration demonstrated a brutal ability to maintain order and keep things moving smoothly.

2032: The US economy was recovering from the Grand Slam, and Patterson was easily re-elected...too easily, some say. After the elections, Congress ratified a bill to eliminate the 22nd amendment to the Constitution that limits the number of terms a President can serve.

2037: President Patterson and the Congress created an extraordinary body called the National Emergency Resource Coordinating Commission, or NERCC, to oversee all matters of commerce and production deemed essential in the Commission's own view to the prosperity and security of the United States. Adam Hammond, a high-profile corporate CEO was made head of the organization. NERCC used its emergency powers to destroy any dissent through censorship, confiscation, internment or jack-booted force, and slowly began taking over everything, one office at a time.

2039: A TD vaccine was developed, and the US government began making plans to distribute the vaccine world-wide.

2041: Today. President Patterson has been re-elected...to no one's surprise. It is whispered that there may never be another election. The first mass-trials of the new TD vaccine are beginning, as entire cities are being inoculated. And the world waits to see what will happen next...

DISSOLVE TO A SERIES OF EXT. SHOTS of what is revealed to be a WASTE MANAGEMENT COMPLEX in the early morning, as workers appear to be just arriving. ZOOM IN and DISSOLVE TO internal shot of a lobby area where five people are all seated quietly, waiting, looking bored and/or uncomfortable. The camera PANS slowly around the lobby, and as the camera focuses on each of the five HEROES (SABRA, JACK, JAUN, NILES, and JOHN), DISSOLVE TO A BRIEF MONTAGE depicting events related to the individual's recent past events:

[Sabra (KC)]: Father was a rich aristocrat-type, and was summarily executed for speaking out against the gov't, his assets seized, and accounts confiscated. Sabra was dumped out of her old life and reassigned to Waste Management.

[Jack (Phil)]: Jack's anti-terrorist office is one of the last gov't "security-related" offices to be taken over by NERCC. Many employees were kept on, providing they sucked up enough. Since Jack was a bit of a heel anyway, he was "downsized" in favor of a particularly annoying suck-up coworker, and reassigned to Waste Management.

[Niles (SQ)]: Niles had been hiding his occult book collection ever since the crack-down after the Pres was assassinated, but was recently found out, and his livelihood burned to the ground. He was fortunate not to be executed on the spot. Now jobless, he was reassigned to Waste Management.

[John (McN)]: The space program had been set back so many times since the Grand Slam that most astronauts had nearly forgotten what it was like to go into space. But recently, the space program had reactivated, and John had spent a year or so training for a new mission, when it was suddenly cancelled for "security reasons" (read NERCC takeover) and nearly the entire space program scrapped, leaving only some automated satellite missions. John was not only out of work, but was sure he'd never see space again. He was later reassigned to Waste Management.

[Juan (Chris)]: Juan was only ever good at the combat stuff, and loved his SWAT job. But the NERCCs came in to take over all SWAT-type functions of police work, and Juan was dropped down to beat-cop status. Then NERCC's role expanded, while the "regular" police were downsized, which, combined with Juan's over-eager tendencies, resulted in his being let go. In a desperate attempt to keep his job, he petitioned to be accepted into the NERCC ranks, but was flatly denied for reasons unknown, and later reassigned to Waste Management.

Act 1:Introduction:

A few beats pass, as Heroes twiddle their thumbs or whatever. A stern-looking young woman, MYALEI, walks into the room and bids them all to follow her; she directs them to separate small, sparsely-furnished, windowless offices that could just as easily be used for interrogations. Myalei seats herself opposite the Hero, introduces herself, and begins explaining about the resistance movement, its organization and goals, the part the heroes are being asked to play in the movement, and the beleived true nature of the TD vaccine and the anti-agent the resistance has developed; the camera INTERCUTS between Myalei's dialogue, and individual Heroes' responses, as if she were giving the same speech to them all individually at the same time (although she would actually be doing so one at a time). Some items of discussion include:

- ◊Resistance movement began around the time the Local Powers Act was enacted.
- ◊Resistance movement is a cell-type organization, with limited contact between cells. Myalei has no idea how many there are, except that they are many, and have been responsible for a number of important gov't setbacks.
- ◊The overall goal of the resistance movement is to restore the US Constitution, and the gov't it established.
- ◊(Known generally to all) The gov't is planning to introduce the newly developed TD vaccine to the public, worldwide. It is believed by the resistance movement that the TD vaccine is actually somehow meant to make the people more compliant to the gov't, although details of its actual nature are yet to be fully revealed, and may not have any effect on the disease itself (which is also believed to have been some kind of biological warfare agent all along).
- ◊The more immediate goal of the resistance movement, as they don't believe full implementation of the TD vaccine can be stopped, is to mass-produce the anti-agent. Mass trials in the city have been announced to happen within the month, so their time is limited. The resistance have developed an anti-agent, however it has not been fully tested, and they haven't got the raw materials to mass-produce it at present.
- ◊Heroes are to be the "above-ground" operatives for this cell, maintaining a proper face for the gov't in public, while working against it in the shadows. Heroes were specifically chosen for this job, due to their past records and known "maverick" dispositions. Their reassignment to WM was engineered by the resistance.
- ◊The workers at Waste Management are generally unaware of the resistance operating out of the building, and all measures should be taken to see that it remains so.
- ◊When asked, Myalei says that she has already been administered the anti-agent, and has suffered no ill effect, although whether or not it will counter-act the TD vaccine is yet to be determined. They could test it, if they could get a sample of the vaccine to "guinea pig" someone with.

It became obvious that the disease was inert...that it was, in effect, dying. And he couldn't help to conclude that not only was it man-made, but it was designed specifically to die out after a specific amount of time had passed...which would have it die out right about now, just before the TD vaccine goes into global distribution. This got his curiosity up, and he looked further into the matter to find that the vaccine they were developing had nothing to do with the disease, but rather directly targets the host's mental state...areas that govern emotions, creativity or self-initiative. His conscience would not allow him to stand idly by while this happened, so he made contact with the Resistance, and has been assisting their development of the anti-agent. However, his superiors had recently begun to appear to suspect him, and he had to disappear quickly. Before he left, however, he had managed to discover the location of the warehouse where the vaccine is being stored, ready for the upcoming mass trials...his last act of defiance.

CUT TO WM the next day, as Foreman Bob gripes out the Heroes for being AWOL, to which Myalei must come to the rescue. She then calls them into her office and explains that due to the information gained from Dr. Valee, it is decided that she should meet with the local Resistance cell coordinator, a man known only to her as SPARTACUS, to pass Dr. Valee's story up the chain-of-command. Due to increased NERCC activity of late, and sensitivity of the mission, the Heroes are tasked to provide security for the meeting.

CUT TO EXT. ABANDONED POWER STATION as the Heroes arrive in a black SUV, and SLOW-MOTION shot as the Heroes disperse to their defensive positions, fully armed and armored, donning night vision goggles.

CUT TO Myalei, John and Niles in an open area in the middle of the plant complex, as Myalei enquires as to the others' readiness, via communicator.

CUT TO Jack, in a sniping position in a crane overlooking the central open area, as he declares he is "in position."

CUT TO Juan, set up on a nearby overhead catwalk, observing a high-tech datapad that sequentially displays images from several remote infrared cameras he has set up, as he declares he is "in position."

CUT TO Sabra, sniping from a dark corner on an upper level, as she declares she is "in position."

CUT TO Brick, sniping from another corner opposite Sabra, as he declares he is "in position."

CUT BACK TO the central area, as a vehicle approaches some distance off, and stops. The silhouetted occupants disembark. The two groups exchange a challenge-and-password, and the unidentified group approaches. Myalei shines a flashlight on the central figure who identifies himself as Spartacus (the others with him being his bodyguards), and accepts the data-disk from Myalei. Spartacus barely gets out a word of thanks and encouragement before the nearby SHADOWS COME ALIVE with movement, as the black-robed and hooded SHADOW MEN reveal their ambush; their robes flow with a nonexistent wind, their silhouettes blur and blend with the shadows, and their movement is somehow inhuman.

The Heroes spring into action. In the open area, Myalei and John open up with their firearms, while Niles attempts a spell or two. He tosses a handful of gravel from the ground into the air, that nearly illuminate the area except that a nearby Shadow Man startles him and interrupts his incantation. Spartacus runs for his vehicle, as his bodyguards cover the retreat. As the Heroes destroy some of the the Shadow Men, their bodies crumble into burning cinders.

CUT TO the snipers, as they attempt to locate the attackers, who don't appear on their night vision equipment at all. Jack shoots a barrel near the scene, which erupts into flame, illuminating the area just enough to pick out some targets, and the snipers begin firing, felling several Shadow Men.

CUT BACK TO the open area, as Niles attempts to banish the creatures with a spell, as he identifies them as common demon thugs; the Shadow Men nearby momentarily recoil, but do not flee, to Niles' amazement and confusion. Spartacus reaches his vehicle and speeds away, as the last of his bodyguards fall.

CUT BACK TO the snipers, as a Shadow Man sneaks behind each of them and attacks. Jack shoots over his shoulder into the creature's face and kills it. Juan tussles momentarily with his attacker, and shoves his rifle-barrel into its gut and fires off a burst, destroying it. Sabra fires her SMG at her attacker to no avail, and drops her gun in favor of her paired sai.

CUT BACK TO the open area as Niles engulfs a Shadow Man in flame with a word. He, Myalei and John begin a fighting retreat to their SUV, and call for the others to follow. Niles is the first to reach the vehicle, and jumps into the driver's seat. As he starts the SUV, he spots a Shadow Man in the rear-view mirror, and holding a crystal, shoots burning light from his eyes that reflects off the mirror and sears the creature in two, consuming the crystal.

CUT BACK TO the snipers as they abandon their positions. Jack slides down a pre-prepared wire to the open area. Sabra flips down from her perch, after Brick's assault rifle finishes off her attacker from across the way.

CUT TO the SUV, already in motion as the Heroes pile in. A Shadow Man bars their escape and is struck, vaulted onto the hood of the vehicle, to be finished off with a burst of gunfire through an open side window. The vehicle speeds from the scene in a cloud of dust and cinders. BLACKOUT.

Act 4:Confrontation:

WIPE TO a scene of drab-clothed people sitting attentively on stone benches in an open square, in front of a giant video screen featuring HAMMOND, the director of NERCC, prattling on about the evils of emotion. Abruptly CUT TO Sabra in bed, as she starts awake, apparently having been dreaming. She reaches to her nightstand and marks a piece of paper with a pen, already marked several times, indicating that the dream is a recurring one. The paper indicates some other recurring dreams as well, the meanings of which have not yet been revealed.

CUT TO INT. DANCE CLUB the following evening, a busy two-level establishment with the usual drinking and dancing to techno music on the lower level, and the Heroes playing pool and darts on the upper level, more-or-less by themselves. The Heroes' dialogue reveals that this is one of the few "recreational" establishments that remains, not only in the city, but the entire country, as NERCC's iron fist slowly abolishes all manner of "subversive" entertainment. Between pool-shots, Myalei discreetly informs the other Heroes that Resistance higher-ups have cleared them to hit the warehouse that Dr. Valee informed them of, to see what they can find, and in specific, try to get a sample of the vaccine for testing. Dr. Valee also had asked that if they meet up with the Shadow Men again, that they attempt to capture one alive for study.

Some time passes, and a waitress bringing drinks brushes past Sabra. INSERT split-second scene of people running and screaming from the dance floor, away from an unidentified threat. BACK TO SCENE, Sabra warns the others, who are as yet unaware of her psychic abilities. She is too late, however, as a HIGH ANGLE shot reveals Shadow Men creeping on the ceiling amidst the black-light and strobes, and the Heroes suddenly find themselves surrounded by the shadowy creatures. A melee ensues, and eventually spills over the railing to the dance floor below, sending the occupants screaming in panic. Sabra and John had managed to sneak in sai and pistol, respectively, past club security, and use them accordingly. The others set about defending themselves with pool cues. Niles takes a swig of alcohol, and with magical assistance, breathes fire on one of the Shadow Men, engulfing him in flame. Jack makes a fighting retreat to the door, in an attempt to reach his vehicle for a firearm, dispatching an attacker with a pool-cue "javelin" on his way. Myalei rips down a curtain and wraps up one of the attackers, with Sabra's help, as the last of them succumb to the Heroes' defense. The Heroes then take advantage of the confusion below, and in the parking lot, to spirit the captured creature away to their SUV.

CUT TO a white examination room at HQ, as the Heroes and their Resistance comrades gawk at the captured creature laid out on an examination table. For the first time, we DISCOVER the creature as it truly appears...and it is definitely *not* human. Dr. Valee identifies several cybernetic implants, one of which Niles deduces that, due to runic inscriptions on the device, must have thwarted his banishment attempt. The group's dialogue reveals that these demons are commonly summoned by dark magick, and are little but mindless soldiers, and that the cybernetic implants suggest their master must be well-funded and connected. They realize that the government that so strictly persecuted any sort of occult activity has obviously been dabbling in it themselves in secret. Before they get too far into their study, for no apparent reason, the creature spasms a bit, and crumbles to dust and cinders, startling everyone.

Act 5: Misdirection:

CUT TO HQ "war room," as the Heroes and other Resistance members gather around and begin to plan the warehouse mission. The Heroes' dialogue becomes a VOICE-OVER as a SERIES OF SHOTS depicts the WAREHOUSE DOCKS as described, and the execution of their plans, each describing their own part of the mission.

Through the dialogue, we learn that the warehouse Dr. Valee spoke of is on "the bay." The vaccine there is in the process of being shipped out to the ends of the earth, by sea, land and air, with an end-of-the-month deadline. The pier is very active day and night, with the loading and such. Security at the operation is pretty tight...everything is fenced off and check-pointed, with guards constantly roaming about. The weakest point in security is on the water, where someone might be able to slip by boat patrols and swim up to a ship and board, under cover of darkness.

They decide to steal a boat for their approach, and Sabra suggests a good marina for the grab, and in particular, a boat owned by a former family rival. Under cover of darkness, Jack and Juan sneak into the marina and steal the boat. Then they pick up the others on their way. Everyone but Myalei jumps out, equipped with swimming gear, at a bouy near the path of one of the container ships, and they all swim up to it to board. Without stopping Myalei continues to evade bay patrol boats, and will circle around to pick them back up when they've finished. END VOICE-OVER and SERIES OF SHOTS, with the Heroes at the bow of the CONTAINER SHIP, as they use magnetic hand-holds to quietly climb up the side.

CUT TO THE DECK, as the Heroes slink over the side-rails. SLOW-MOTION shot as Sabra stands, in her wetsuit, and flips the water off her hair, continuing as the camera pans over slightly to reveal John removing his face-mask a bit too noisily (abruptly END SLOW-MOTION), as a patrol boat's spotlight briefly silhouettes them both, to the amazement of the CREWMAN who happens to have been walking his patrol. The three pause for a beat, surprised, until Sabra begins to seductively unzip her suit. Camera focuses on the crewman, whose attention is held fast, as Jack emerges silently from the shadows behind him and shoots him in the temple with a silenced pistol. Jack and Juan slip over to a nearby container marked as containing the vaccine, and cut the lock with bolt-cutters, as the others discreetly slip the crewman's body over the side. Their objective achieved, the Heroes slip back over the side and into the water. As planned, Myalei arrives with the stolen boat as the rest swim back to the bouy, box of vaccinations in hand. As the camera focuses on the Heroes' boat motoring away in the foreground, the container ship can be seen in the background coming to life, as the alert is sounded.

Act 6: Demolition:

CUT TO INT. HQ WAR ROOM, as the Heroes present the vaccine samples to Abbey and Dr. Valee, who then ask for a volunteer to test the anti-agent. After some worried looks and grumbling, John steps forward first to volunteer. Clearly expecting to be injected with the vaccine, John is surprised when Abbey merely takes a blood sample from him.

CUT TO INT. HQ MEDICAL AREA, as some time has passed, and Abbey and Dr. Valee demonstrate the results of the test, as shown on a high-tech microscope display...the anti-agent is a success, having completely blocked the delivery of the vaccine. Suddenly, Seth bursts in to announce a finding that everyone *must* see.

CUT TO INT. HQ COMPUTER AREA, as Seth shows everyone images hacked from the dockyard surveillance cameras of a man that Myalei immediately recognizes as KELLER, #3 on the Resistance's most-wanted list. Niles also recognizes him as an occult-figure, such as himself, who sold-out many of his colleagues to the gov't during the crackdown (and is likely responsible for summoning the Shadow Men). Data the Resistance has gathered suggest that Keller is now head of vaccine distribution. Myalei tells Seth to inform "command" of the sighting, authorizing him to use a land-line (reserved for emergencies only, as it is less secure but faster).

CUT TO INT. HQ WAR ROOM-LATER, as Myalei enters with news that Command has requested they take out Keller *immediately*. Seth produces a large high-tech datapad, on which he lays out the information gleaned from the dockyard sighting, past experience with Keller, and surveillance since the sighting; he shows a full architectural work-up of the building serving as Keller's distribution headquarters, and satellite-generated 3-D images of the surrounding area. He believes Keller will be on the 48th floor (of 60), and the elevator will be heavily secured with guards and electronics (not unusual for this time-period). Their best approach will be from the outside. Gus adds that he can try to slap together some needed equipment, to which one of the Heroes asks if he can make them fly. Gus stares wide-eyed for a beat...

CUT TO THERMAL BINOCULAR POV of SKYSCRAPER ROOF, as a platoon of NERCC troops stands on the helipad, as if waiting for something. The Heroes' VOICES announce their disappointment at the turn of events, and carries over to...

CUT TO EXT. ROOF OF NEIGHBORING SKYSCRAPER-NIGHT, as the Heroes deploy some makeshift collapsible, black hang-gliders, armed to the teeth with guns and explosives. "Dispatch" informs the Heroes that scanner traffic indicates that a NERCC transport helicopter is inbound. Believing that Keller is leaving on the chopper, they resign themselves to a less-than-quiet landing, and exchange quips as they prepare to take off quickly. As Sabra looks over the target building, INSERT BRIEF IMAGE of the skyscraper exploding near the upper levels. BACK TO SCENE, as Sabra shakes off the vision and warns the others to be careful. The Heroes exchange thumbs-up signs of readiness...

CUT TO EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOF, over the shoulders of the NERCC thugs, as several black-winged gliders silently materialize out of the shadow of the night sky, and the camera TRACKS the Heroes as they land in the darkness just beyond the helipad lights as the NERCCs joke back and forth about why their chopper has not yet arrived. The camera remains still, as the Heroes, barely visible in the darkness, rise up and open fire.

The firefight is frantic and quick, and includes event such as Juan opening up with both SMGs and mowing down several, and Niles freezing one NERCC's head, which breaks apart like glass as he falls to the ground. The team hurries about, dragging the bodies off the helipad and setting up rappelling gear for their descent down the side of the building. John answers a NERCC's radio to convince the chopper that all is well, and moves out on the helipad to direct them to land. As it does, John and Sabra take out the pilot and copilot and get in. With the air secured, temporarily at least, Jack, Juan and Niles descend.

CUT TO EXT. SKYSCRAPER SIDE, as the three rappel down, while the helicopter provides cover, and place some small explosive charges on the glass outside their target office. They bound out of the way, to either side, and detonate the charges, completely shattering the glass.

CUT TO INT. KELLER'S OFFICE, as the three swing in and disconnect from their climbing ropes, guns out and satchel charges at the ready. As they step in, we see a swivel office-chair swing around to reveal Keller, with a smile on his face and a remote detonator in his hand. Juan reacts immediately by tossing in a satchel charge. Keller demands the Heroes lower their weapons, and declares that he had been expecting them, and that his masters intended that they follow him here, and that the entire floor is *already* wired to explode (so the satchel charge won't make any difference).

CUT TO HELICOPTER, as "Dispatch" informs John and Sabra that another chopper is on its way to the area, and that, as he puts it, every NERCC in the city is headed toward the building. They dive the chopper in an attempt to escape between the downtown buildings.

CUT BACK TO INT. KELLER'S OFFICE, as he explains that the vaccine is simply a mind-control drug to make the citizenry more docile and compliant. They can't possibly stop the vaccine from being distributed, as they will be framed for the "terrorist bombing" of the distribution center, which will be used as an excuse to step up distribution plans. Of course, the Heroes could tell everyone the truth, but after the vaccine is administered, no one will believe them. A little frustrated, Niles speaks a word of power, intending to freeze Keller's hand, but Keller responds with a word of his own to cancel the effect, and accuses him of "not playing along." CUT TO Jack's POV, as he takes advantage of the distraction and quickly sights in and shoots the detonator out of Keller's hand. CUT BACK, as Keller looks surprised, but more amused than angry, and informs the Heroes that the detonator he was holding was only a decoy anyway, and that the explosives are actually on a timer...which should be going off any second now. Then, "in case they try to escape," he waves his other hand, says something in an arcane language, and several Shadow Men appear surrounding the Heroes. The Heroes look at each other, nod, and in a SLOW-MOTION SEQUENCE, bolt for the shattered window, as the Shadow Men grab at them in a vain attempt to catch them, and jump. CUT TO EXT. SKYSCRAPER SIDE, as the Heroes deploy their jump-suits while falling away, and the skyscraper floor erupts behind them in a fireball.

Tag:

CUT TO EXT. ALLEYWAY, in sight of the burning skyscraper, as the Heroes parachute to the ground, and the background begins to increasingly light up with the red-and-blue police and emergency vehicle lights. The Heroes ditch their parachuting gear, and bolt into the alleyway, turn a corner, and duck into a special dumpster.

CUT TO HELICOPTER, as John and Sabra attempt to lose their pursuers in the downtown buildings, finally succeeding by expertly turning a corner, after cutting out the helicopter's running lights, and proceeding out of the city in another direction after their pursuers shoot past them.

CUT TO INT. WASTE MANAGEMENT-DAYS LATER, as the Heroes and Maylei join the rest of the WM employees in taking their first dose of the vaccine. They watch in barely-hidden horror as the people around them seem to become more docile and listless as they watch. Even Foreman Bob, who releases the Heroes to go home for the rest of the day, is a pale shadow of the lively, sarcastic person he once was.

CUT TO EXT. SUBWAY STATION, as the Heroes are taking public transportation home, gazing in amazement at the zombie-like crowd, as a Mayalei's VOICE-OVER explains that the battle has been lost, but the war is just beginning.

CUT TO EXT. SOUP LINE, in a SLOW-MOTION shot, as the line parts to make way for the Heroes to walk through, while the VOICE-OVER finishes.

THE END.