

THE VT INITIATIVE

By

Kyle Patrick Paquet

Copyright (c) 2010 Kyle Paquet

FADE IN:

EXT. ROOFTOP, NIGHT

CLOSE:

A fine, antique brass watch. Richly detailed with silver scrollwork around the face, it currently reads 11:58 PM.

We briefly see the eyes of the watchholder, dark, blazing green, flicking forward, away from the watch.

The watch snaps shut.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY, NIGHT

A MAN (mid-forties, thin hair, large wire-rimmed glasses) walks at a somewhat brisk pace through the alley (he is obviously spooked). He carries a leather briefcase, wears a three-piece suit -- a paper pusher, probably upper middle class by the quality of the suit.

Briefly, almost a single seconds' worth of movement passes behind the man in the form of a fluid-moving shadow.

The man stops, looks over his shoulder. Seeing him closer, he is trembling.

After a good long look, he has convinced himself he is probably not being followed. He turns, and finds himself

STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF A SHOTGUN.

The briefcase drops from the man's hand, breaking open and spilling the contents out to flutter in the breeze.

MAN

Please...

Down the barrel of the gun, attached to the sawn-off pistol grip, we now see the WATCHHOLDER.

Ensnconced in a black trenchcoat and his face shadowed by a black fedora, all we can make out is his bright green eyes.

MAN

Please, my wallet's in my back pocket. I've only got about thirty on me...

(CONTINUED)

The Watchholder remains as firmly planted as a statue. After a pause:

WATCHHOLDER
Are you Leonard Quincey Orwell?

ORWELL
Yes. How do you know my --

WATCHHOLDER
Show me your left arm.

ORWELL
My left --

WATCHHOLDER
Your left arm.

Still trembling, Orwell takes off his jacket, unbuttons the cuff on his left sleeve, rolls it up. When he holds up the arm, we see that it is lined with black, inflamed veins.

ORWELL
Okay, now you've seen --

Without any pause, the Watchholder SHOTS Orwell in the leg, the kneecap shattering into bloody fragments.

Orwell goes down onto his knees, a scream of agony issuing forth, only to be cut off when the Watchholder puts a gloved hand over his mouth. A foot on his back, the Watchholder pins Orwell to the ground.

The Watchholder draws something from within his coat: an EMPTY SYRINGE. The Watchholder prepares it, leans down.

ORWELL
What... what are you...?

The Watchholder sticks the syringe into Orwell's neck, draws some blood. Orwell gasps at the added pain.

When finished, the Watchholder pulls a device from his coat; almost like a calculator, but instead of a screen, it has two LED lights (red and green) and a two-digit analog counter.

The Watchholder injects the blood into a port on the side of the device, pushes a key. After a while, the machine replies with a "CLICK" as the green light turns on and the counter slides to "03". The Watchholder grunts, replaces the syringe and the device. He once more pulls out his shotgun, pumps it. He approaches the prone Orwell.

ORWELL

What... what are you doing?

WATCHHOLDER

A favor.

He levels the shotgun, SHOOTS Orwell in the head.

With a bowed head and a sigh, the Watchholder holsters his shotgun.

He now takes a small box from his coat. He pours the contents of the box over Orwell's corpse; a fine, silver powder. He lights a match, tosses it onto the body. It lights up in a brilliant red magnesium fire, quickly cremating the body.

The Watchholder slips away, his silhouette now bathed in bloody red.

SMASH TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT

Very sparse, small. One room, almost like a hotel.

As the door closes, the Watchholder walks in. He removes his hat, coat. Throws them onto the bed.

INT. BATHROOM

The Watchholder, now removed of his stealth attire, is now dressed in a black tank-top and black dress slacks.

We didn't realize before how YOUNG he is.

He washes his face with cold water, runs his hand through his almost buzz cut hair. He looks at himself in the mirror, looking haggard, tired.

INT. APARTMENT, MAIN ROOM

The Watchholder sits at a small desk, typing on a laptop computer.

CLOSE: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

The cursor forms short, concise sentences in plain courier font;

(CONTINUED)

"...target was in symptomatic stage of VT, and was determined by instruments to be three days from metastasis."

The Watchholder stops typing for a moment, rubs his eyes. He glances at his open watch: 4:25 AM. The Watchholder sighs.

CLOSE: COFFEE POT

The coffee drips into the pot. Thick, like dark brown blood. The Watchholder stares at it, strangely intently.

CLOSE: STYROFOAM CUP

The Watchholder pours the coffee into the small cup. Gulps it black.

He is staring at the bottom of the cup, when suddenly a CELLPHONE on the desk RINGS.

He leans over, picks it up; caller ID simply reads "59"

WATCHHOLDER

Hello?

VOICE

Hi, Twenty-Seven. Got another call for you, this time you're not gonna get away with passing it off as a solo op.

WATCHHOLDER

Where, when?

VOICE

Apartment in the same neighborhood as Orwell. Monastery says the "when" doesn't matter this time.

WATCHHOLDER

I'll be there in ten minutes.

VOICE

Bring your pocketbook.

Click.

The Watchholder (we now find that he is called "TWENTY-SEVEN") puts the phone down on the table.

He collects his coat, hat, weapon harness.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, NIGHT

A blue, unremarkable sedan pulls up into the parking lot, next to a police car.

Twenty-Seven steps out of the car. He approaches the police car, by which are standing two figures.

CLOSE: TWENTY-SEVEN'S HAND

Held between the fore and index fingers is a large wad of high-denomination bills. It is taken by a second hand;

this hand belongs to the patrolman to whom the police car belongs. He pockets the money with zero hesitation.

The second figure is dressed identically to Twenty-Seven, through he is taller, more heavily muscular in build, and his hair is not as close-cropped; he wears no hat.

This is FIFTY-NINE.

FIFTY-NINE

(sarcastic)

Twelve seconds late. Shame on you
for being less than your
effortlessly punctual self,
Twenty-Seven.

TWENTY-SEVEN

(partially ignoring

Fifty-Nine, to patrolman)

What do we have, here?

PATROLMAN

Disturbance on the sixth floor,
apartment 02. Floor's mostly
uninhabited, couple in apartment 10
called in complaining about noises
from down the hall. Loud banging,
yelling.

Twenty-Seven looks up toward the sixth floor.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Barred windows.

PATROLMAN

They're pretty much standard in
this neighborhood. Not exactly
Pleasantville, if you catch my
meaning.

(CONTINUED)

FIFTY-NINE

Lucky for us.

The Patrolman looks slightly confused, but says nothing.

TWENTY-SEVEN

This will go on the report in the usual manner, yes?

PATROLMAN

Rowdy teenagers, bit of underage drinking. No case opened, no additional investigation required.

Twenty-Seven nods.

TWENTY-SEVEN

We'll inform you if the situation changes.

PATROLMAN

(nods)

Always a pleasure, Brother
Twenty-Seven. Fifty-Nine.

Fifty-Nine nods. The Patrolman enters his car, starts it, leaves.

INT. ELEVATOR

The two Watchholders stand, tense, terse.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Four calls to the same neighborhood in the past three days.
(turns to Fifty-Nine)
You find that odd?

FIFTY-NINE

(slight smile)

Must be something in the water.

Twenty-Seven shoots him a brief look; "don't even joke like that."

Fifty-Nine shrugs dismissively.

FIFTY-NINE

Should at least prove to be more exciting.

MEDIUM: A DOOR

(CONTINUED)

Wood splinters as it is KICKED in. Fifty-Nine and Twenty-Seven step in almost casually. They survey the room.

It is incredibly shabby, paint peeling, water stains seeping through the walls. Objects are littered about, thrown, torn up.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Charming.

FIFTY-NINE

Looks like my college dorm.

TWENTY-SEVEN

You never went to college.

They realize now that a faint sound can be made out; voices. They make their way into another section of the apartment (the apartment seems to be relatively large). This section is lit by a faint, flickering glow. Twenty-Seven makes his way over to the source: a small TV.

Playing on the TV is a CNN news report. The headline:

"CDC Cites Outbreak as Deadly New Pathogen".

Twenty-Seven shuts off the TV with the end of his gun. Looks pointedly at Fifty-Nine.

TWENTY-SEVEN

How long do you really think we can keep all this covered up?

FIFTY-NINE

We always do. It'll just be another Swine Flu, or Bird Flu, or whatever. They'll never find VT, because VT doesn't exist. We leave the politics up to the Abbot.

TWENTY-SEVEN

And we take care of the gritty stuff.

Fifty-Nine gives him a look;

FIFTY-NINE

Careful what you say, Twenty-Seven.

Twenty-Seven shrugs.

Fifty-Nine FALLS, SUDDENLY PULLED OFF HIS FEET.

Twenty-Seven cocks his shotgun.

(CONTINUED)

Wrapped around Fifty-Nine's leg is a CORD OF SINEW AND SKIN.

Fifty-Nine draws a .50 caliber DESERT EAGLE, shoots the cord, breaking it in half.

An INHUMAN SHRIEK OF PAIN issues forth as the cord retracts around the corner.

We now see that the cord was in fact a tongue; attached to the head of something that was once human, but has since been converted to a creature ugly as sin, and just about as deadly.

It comes around the corner, its movements JERKY, hunched, its clothing in tatters, fingers extended into barbs, mouth split into horrid mandibles.

Its feet drag as it TWITCHES toward the Watchholders, its now-useless tongue lolling out the side of its split face. It raises a claw to shove into the prone Fifty-Nine's gut, but its arm from the elbow down is suddenly BLOWN off, blackish pus weeping from the fresh wound.

It screams at Twenty-Seven, holding his freshly-smoking shotgun. It starts toward Twenty-Seven, but a LARGE KNIFE is suddenly shoved through its jaw, through the top of its head.

It slumps to the floor, landing with a dull THUD.

Fifty-Nine inspects his combat knife;

FIFTY-NINE

Crap. Bent the tip.

(sheathes knife)

Never be quite as sharp again.

Twenty-Seven rolls the creature over with his boot.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Stage three of metastasis. They haven't been dead very long.

FIFTY-NINE

Well, now we know that they're metastasized. You thinking torch the place? Rowdy, doped-up teenagers started a fire, never got out? Explains the bodies, such as they may be.

TWENTY-SEVEN

No, at this stage of resilience
it'll be too big a risk. The last
thing we need is a flaming
Malignancy running through the
streets.

FIFTY-NINE

I hear that.

TWENTY-SEVEN

We search the place, make sure
nothing's moving. Then we clean up.

FIFTY-NINE

(smiles)

Sounds good to me.

BRIEF MONTAGE:

The two Watchholders opening cabinets, doors.

At the end: Fifty-Nine kicks open the door to the bathroom:
the light is on, and we see ANOTHER of the Malignancy seen
earlier, gnawing on what looks to be a regular,
untransformed human being, his throat slashed open.

The Malignancy turns toward Fifty-Nine, SHRIEKING

before Fifty-Nine puts a SLUG IN ITS CHEST, blowing a hole
through it and throwing it backwards. Unbelievably, it
continues to writhe, until Fifty-Nine STOMPS on its chest
and puts another round in its head.

He contemplates the dead Malignancy for a moment, then
smiles. Turns to the dead body, puts a bullet in its temple.

INT. KITCHEN

The two Watchholders meet up in the kitchen.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Anything?

FIFTY-NINE

Yeah, got it taken care of. You?

TWENTY-SEVEN

Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

FIFTY-NINE

Not too many places to hide, place
like this.

Twenty-Seven has not heard this sentence. He turns to face a small closet, overlooked by both of them. He starts cautiously toward it, weapon drawn.

Fifty-Nine is other occupied; he has noticed a folder lying on the counter. He flips it open, revealing the face of LEONARD ORWELL.

FIFTY-NINE

Lookie here.

He holds the photo up for Twenty-Seven to see.

FIFTY-NINE

Picture of a friend.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Shh!

He gestures for him to come over. Fifty-Nine draws his own weapon.

Slowly, Twenty-Seven unlatches the door, swings it open --
BANG.

The .22 slug RIPS through Fifty-Nine's right shoulder, causing to stagger back. He returns fire with the gun he holds in his left hand, but Twenty-Seven is suddenly there, knocks his gunhand to the side.

TWENTY-SEVEN

WAIT!

They both look toward the closet;

Crouched in the corner, holding a just-fired rimfire rifle, is a TEENAGE GIRL, no more than SIXTEEN.

GIRL

Who are you...?

With the light now on her, we see her EYES: one BROWN, the other BRIGHT GREEN.

INT. APARTMENT, MAIN ROOM -- LATER

The girl sits, cross-legged, on the couch that has remained mostly untouched. Her abdomen bulges with PREGNANCY.

CLOSE: THE VT-DEVICE

A strange result: the counter reads zero, both green and red lights flash.

The two Watchholders stand on the other side of the room, out of earshot of the girl.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Positive and negative readings. The girl is immune.

FIFTY-NINE

You saw her eyes, didn't you?

TWENTY-SEVEN

Yes, I saw her eyes, Fifty-Nine. I'll take care of this.

Fifty-Nine crosses his arms.

Twenty-Seven walks over, sits down on the couch that the girl occupies.

TWENTY-SEVEN

You're very lucky to be alive.

GIRL

(distantly)

They're not.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Were they your family?

A pause.

GIRL

Foster family.

TWENTY-SEVEN

I'm sorry.

GIRL

Shouldn't be. You didn't kill them.

(a thought)

Did you?

(CONTINUED)

TWENTY-SEVEN

No... not really. What's your name?

GIRL

(pause)

Lucia.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Patron Saint of Sight. My name is Brother Twenty-Seven.

LUCIA

That's a weird name.

TWENTY-SEVEN

I didn't choose it, it's kind of a given name.

LUCIA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean weird.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Yeah, you did, and I agree. It's weird, but it's not bad to be named by number.

LUCIA

But not really good.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Like Lucia. That's a good name.

LUCIA

And pretty.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Guys don't need pretty names, so I'm okay with mine.

Lucia smiles.

TWENTY-SEVEN

My partner Fifty-Nine and I, we're here to clean all this up, keep it a secret. Get rid of this plague that did this to your family.

Lucia nods.

TWENTY-SEVEN

And to make sure this doesn't happen again, we have to know everything we can about what

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TWENTY-SEVEN (cont'd)
happened. So we're gonna have to
ask some questions.

FIFTY-NINE
(O.S.)
First off...

Orwell's folder SLAPS onto the bloodstained coffee table
next to the couch.

FIFTY-NINE
...is this man your baby's father?

Twenty-Seven shoots him a sharp look; "What're you *doing*?
What's wrong with you?"

LUCIA
(quietly)
Yes.

Twenty-Seven looks at Lucia, whose odd eyes are now full of
unshed tears.

LUCIA
It happened so fast... I guess I
should be thankful I don't remember
most of it. The police couldn't
catch him, but I described him.
They said he was a registered
offender. What I asked was, if they
knew he'd done it before, why would
they give him a chance to do it
again?
(humorless smile)
They couldn't really answer that
for me.

The previously unshed tears have now broken free a little, a
single tear trailing down her face. Twenty-Seven puts a
comforting hand on hers.

FIFTY-NINE
(relieved)
Well, that ties up a few loose
ends. Now we know Orwell's
connection.

Twenty-Seven's eyes widen in disgust of his callousness.

TWENTY-SEVEN
(teeth clenched)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TWENTY-SEVEN (cont'd)
Fifty-Nine, get on the horn with
the Monastery. Tell them the
situation's changed.

Fifty-Nine nods, draws his phone, exits to the next room.

LUCIA
(to Twenty-Seven)
You're a monk?

TWENTY-SEVEN
Not strictly speaking, but the
closest thing you can liken out
organization to is a monastic
order. It was established a long
time ago, for the purpose of
eliminating this virus.

LUCIA
How long ago?

TWENTY-SEVEN
I don't know. Centuries.

LUCIA
If you've been at it so long, why
haven't you destroyed it?

TWENTY-SEVEN
(sighs)
I try not to think of it that way.

Fifty-Nine enters now, gestures for Twenty-Seven to follow
him.

INT. ADJOINING ROOM

We can see Lucia behind them in the open doorway. They speak
with their backs to her.

FIFTY-NINE
I talked to the Monastery.

TWENTY-SEVEN
And?

FIFTY-NINE
And they said that the situation
has not changed. This is still
classified as a standard sweep and
burn.

(CONTINUED)

It takes a little while for this to sink in. Twenty-Seven's eyes widen, and he looks back at Lucia.

TWENTY-SEVEN

That can't be right. Did you tell them about Lucia?

FIFTY-NINE

Oh, I told them all about her.

A pause.

TWENTY-SEVEN

You told them... *everything*.

FIFTY-NINE

I did. Any reason I shouldn't have?

TWENTY-SEVEN

Fifty-Nine, that girl is immune.

FIFTY-NINE

Don't give me that. You saw her eyes yourself. That's a clear indication of a present infection.

TWENTY-SEVEN

But its dormant. The risk of infection --

FIFTY-NINE

(cutting him off)
Still exists.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Is minuscule. If we went around killing every survivor, we wouldn't have half our numbers at the Monastery, including you and I.

FIFTY-NINE

And what about the baby? You gonna gamble that it's immune, too?

Twenty-Seven clenches his jaw, looks away.

FIFTY-NINE

I've known you for six years, Twenty-Seven. In all that time, you've never once hesitated to do what's necessary. To do the right thing.

Twenty-Seven looks at him.

(CONTINUED)

FIFTY-NINE

Can I trust you to do the right thing?

Twenty-Seven nods.

TWENTY-SEVEN

You can trust me.

FIFTY-NINE

Good.

They both exit to the main room.

INT. APARTMENT, MAIN ROOM

They enter, stand before Lucia; judge and jury and executioner, called to try an innocent girl, and ultimately issue and unfit sentence.

LUCIA

What was that about? What's wrong?

TWENTY-SEVEN

Nothing's wrong, Lucia.

FIFTY-NINE

(smiling)

It's gonna be fine.

Twenty-Seven pulls out his shotgun, pumps it.

Lucia cradles her abdomen protectively.

LUCIA

What're you doing?

Twenty-Seven levels the gun.

Lucia closes her eyes.

TWENTY-SEVEN

(quietly)

A favor.

SMASH TO BLACK

BANG.

The gunshot reverberates in the dark, within which we are left for a while more before we

(CONTINUED)

FADE IN:

COMPUTER SCREEN

Glowing softly as the cursor dances across it, painting words:

"Case File: 6402B

Presiding Personnel: Brothers Fifty-Nine and Twenty-Seven

Mission Subject: Two (2) cases of mid-stage metastasis and one (1) case of partial immunity.

Notes: Partially immune subject was apparently in seventh month of pregnancy resulting from direct contact with infected individual Leonard Orwell (see case file 6402A). Connections with other close proximity cases are implied, and may require further investigation.

Status of Malignancies: TERMINATED

Status of Partially Immune Individual:"

The cursor blinks for a bit, as if the writer is hesitant to continue. Then:

"UNKNOWN"

"Personal note: Twenty-Seven was my partner. I considered us close, and I feel personally betrayed. I have requested to take up the case to bring him back in. I will show him that he cannot hide.

End report."

MEDIUM: FIFTY-NINE

Sitting at a desk very similar to Twenty-Seven's before. He wears a brace on his leg. He finishes typing the report, rubs his eyes.

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

His cellphone -- identical to Twenty-Seven's -- rings. The caller ID indicates an unknown number.

Fifty-Nine stands from the desk and, with the aid of a cane, walks to the end table which the phone lies on. He picks up.

FIFTY-NINE

Hello?

(CONTINUED)

TWENTY-SEVEN

(V.O.)

Hi, Fifty-Nine.

FIFTY-NINE

Twenty-Seven? Where are you?

TWENTY-SEVEN

I think you know exactly where I am.

EXT. PHONEBOOTH, NIGHT

Twenty-Seven stands in the phonebooth, his fedora now shadowing his face once more.

FIFTY-NINE

(V.O.)

Regale me.

TWENTY-SEVEN

I'm someplace you currently aren't, and someplace the Monastery can't find us.

FIFTY-NINE

How enlightening. What number is this that you're calling from?

TWENTY-SEVEN

Payphone. Couldn't keep my cell, you would've found us by now.

FIFTY-NINE

Yeah, I knew you were too smart for that.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Flattery, huh?

FIFTY-NINE

Yeah, I'm going to compliment you until you turn yourself in. But seriously, Twenty-Seven. You have to come back. You're only making it worse on yourself.

TWENTY-SEVEN

I'm beyond worse, Fifty-Nine. I'm into worst, now.

(CONTINUED)

FIFTY-NINE

If you turn yourself in, I promise
I'll make them go easy on you.

TWENTY-SEVEN

Don't kid yourself. I shot you, and
you're the vengeful type. I can't
begrudge you that.

FIFTY-NINE

Fair enough, but you know I'm gonna
find you.

TWENTY-SEVEN

I have no doubt. And when you do,
I'll shoot out your other leg.

FIFTY-NINE

I look forward to it. See you,
Twenty-Seven.

TWENTY-SEVEN

See you, Fifty-Nine.

Twenty-Seven hangs up.

He exits the phone booth. It is raining.

Standing beneath a rather garishly green umbrella is Lucia.

Twenty-Seven walks over to her.

LUCIA

How'd he take it?

TWENTY-SEVEN

He seems to be coping quite well.

LUCIA

Glad to hear it.

TWENTY-SEVEN

I may have saved you from death,
Lucia, but if the Monastery gets
their hands on you, they'll do
worse. They'll try to figure you
out, they'll cut on you and the
baby. And I'll die before that
happens.

LUCIA

So, what do we do?

(CONTINUED)

TWENTY-SEVEN

I have a lot of experience with being invisible. But the tough part comes in being invisible to the other invisible ones.

A pause.

LUCIA

You know, you don't have to do this. You can still walk away, disappear, forget about me.

TWENTY-SEVEN

No. I can't.

Twenty-Seven takes Lucia by the arm, and together they disappear into the rain.

THE END?