

INT. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL - TOXICOLOGY LAB - DAY

Orange gas fills a huge glass cage of fifty WHITE LAB RATS. All the rats drop like flies, all except one.

PULL BACK. Fifty SCIENTISTS in full HAZMAT gear fill a huge, high-tech, glass-walled toxicology lab. They quietly observe all the rats in the glass cage die, all except that one rat.

Suddenly, the lab's air-tight, glass security doors slam shut and lock. Piercing alarms and flashing red lights send the scientists into a panic. They try, but can't open the doors.

DR. SAM ROLAND(50), a handsome, stout, grey-bearded scientist un.masks. He walks with a limp but it doesn't slow him down.

DR. ROLAND

Everybody stay calm. This could be another drill. We don't know for sure that we've been compromised. Just stay calm. Where's Julia?

In a panic, scientists try to smash the glass doors open. Unsuccessful, some rip off their masks and burst into tears. Dr. Roland quickly and calmly scours the lab.

DR. ROLAND (CONT'D)

Has anybody seen Julia? Julia???

The scientists are overcome with fear. Dr Roland stops cold and stares at the locked rat cage. A soft female voice comes over the squealing intercom system. Everyone looks up.

JULIA (O.S.)

I'm sorry it's come to this everyone. It won't take long. You're helping save mankind.

Dr. Roland turns and looks up at Julia in the overhead glass observatory. He zooms in on her determined, goggled eyes.

DR. ROLAND

Save mankind? Your death soliloquy. Julia. This is a drill, right?

JULIA

No, Dr. Roland, this is not a drill. This is real. Very real.

Orange gas fills the lower lab. They all drop like flies...

...all except Roland. He runs like hell. He bolts into the walk-in cooler and slams the door shut behind him.

INT. WALK-IN COOLER - NEAR DARK

The dimly-lit walk-in cooler is lined with sacrificed rodents hanging from an automated hook system like a dry cleaners, racks of test tubes and shelves of containers of small animal body parts. Roland peeks out the tiny window in the door.

DR. ROLAND

(gasping) Oh my god, Julia! What have you done? You know very well the vaccine isn't ready!

DR. ROLAND (CONT'D)

(panting) How could you, Julia? How could you? How could you?

A YOUNG BLOND SCIENTIST with blood running from her eyes slams her body up against the cooler door with amazing force. Dr. Roland turns, presses his back against the cooler door, pulls a hypodermic needle from his lab coat pocket and injects himself.

DR. ROLAND (CONT'D)

(barely audible) How could you...

He slides down the locked, steel door and curls up in the fetal position. The cooler is cold and scary. We hear another scientist slam up against the door. He hallucinates the dead animals on hooks coming back to life and passes out cold.

EXT. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL - DAY

CAPTION 1 : SEVEN DAYS EARLIER

CAPTION 2 : LOS MEXICO CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

A convoy of bullet-proof land rovers pull through the heavily guarded gates of the huge CDC compound. The gates slam shut.

Heavily-armed GUARDS barricade a small group of PROTESTERS. They yell and wave signs:

"VACCINES KILL" and "WE'RE NOT GUINEA PIGS".

INT. CDC TOXICOLOGY LAB - SECURITY CORRIDOR - DAY

Two heavily-armed CDC GUARDS accompany six suited men down a long corridor to a HIGH SECURITY door. Each suit holds his thumb to a scanner. Their identity and clearance level are displayed. A guard nods. His name tag reads HARRIS.

GUARD 1

On green, please remain completely still for your full body scan.

A light turns green. They enter a small vestibule. Robot arms scan their body and atomize them with disinfectant. Detailed health assays with their weights, heights, toxicology screens and days-left-to-live flash in mid-air on a hologram screen.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

Apply all your personal protective equipment before you enter the high risk zone. You must keep on all parts of your gear until you come back through decontamination. Under no circumstances should you ever bypass decontamination. Never. Ever. Have a good day, sirs.

One of the more distinguished suits, DR. HENRY ALFORD (65), a stately, bald, African-American man with an enormous thick moustache and a very deep voice mocks the guard.

DR. ALFORD

Never. Ever. Ha! We know the drill. Hell, we came up with the drill.

They gown, glove and mask up and file into the high security test area. Dr. Roland greets them with obvious anxiety.

DR. ROLAND

Hello, gentlemen. Right this way. If you will, please remain behind the yellow line at all times.

INT. CDC TOXICOLOGY LAB - OVERHEAD OBSERVATORY - DAY

Dr. Roland leads the gowned suits into a glass-walled observatory area overlooking the huge lab.

Below, FIFTY SCIENTISTS in full HAZMAT protective gear are busy at work with various animal experiments. It looks like a beehive. Carefully constructed chaos.

DR. ROLAND

As you can see, we are all very busy trying to come up with the correct formula for the vaccine.

DR. ALFORD

When will it be ready? You told us last week you were close, Roland.

Dr. Roland becomes even more nervous. He wrings his hands.

DR. ROLAND

We are getting closer by the day.

DR. ALFORD

We don't have days, Roland. We are at the brink of a world disaster. If you can't do the job, we'll find someone who can. We don't need another "Atlanta" on our hands.

Dr. Alford starts towards the door. The others follow him.

DR. ROLAND

No, no. We'll have it by Friday. I'm absolutely sure of it.

Dr. Alford begins to take off his mask. CDC GUARD 2 stops him just in time. They exchange a very serious glance. He keeps on his mask and barks angrily at Dr. Roland.

DR. ALFORD

Find the vaccine, Roland, before we all die. Ebola was like the sniffles compared to this monster.

Dr. Alford turns back and stares Dr. Roland in the eyes.

DR. ALFORD (CONT'D)

Took everybody I ever cared about. Don't mess this up, Roland. Make that vaccine work by Friday or else, it's me and you.

The gowned suits EXIT. Dr. Roland sits down and observes the scientists busy at work below him. The experiment appears to explode and catches fire. Another scientist abruptly puts it out with an extinguisher. Dr. Roland slumps.

DR. ROLAND

What the hell are we going to do?

An ASIAN SCIENTIST rips her protective suit. An alarm sounds. Two scientists in suits labelled "BIOHAZARD CONTAINMENT" zip her up in a clear, heavy-duty plastic bag, fill it with gas and take her away kicking and screaming.

ASIAN SCIENTIST

I'm not infected. I'm not sick.  
(Cough) No. No. Don't test on me!  
I'm not a guinea pig! Nooooooo....

Dr. Roland hangs his head.

INT. DR. ROLAND'S HOME - NIGHT

Dr. Roland raises his head from the quaint dinner table set for two at the focal point of a modest, 1940's deco row home.

On TV, ANGRY PROTESTERS clamor in the adjoining carpeted den.

Traditionally dressed East Indian NORA ROLAND(54), whisks over to the small table and pokes a hole in a brown-in-bag. She is graceful and quiet with an air of confidence.

They take turns inhaling the delicious aroma from the steamy, roasted, curry chicken dish. Nora takes pride in her dish.

DR. ROLAND

Perfection. I could eat your  
chicken every day, Nora.

Nora smiles and laughs in a shy, almost embarrassed way.

NORA

We almost do, Sammy. It's all I  
know how to cook. Thank god for  
these roasting bags. 350 for one  
hour and it comes out perfect every  
time. And it's so good for you.

Chanting from ANGRY PROTESTERS on TV distracts Dr. Roland.

DR. ROLAND

What are we going to do, Nora?

Nora opens the roasting bag and serves him a juicy breast.

NORA

Oh Sammy, you always come up with something. Enjoy your guinea pig.

Dr. Roland's head jerks. He looks her in the eye.

DR. ROLAND

What did you say?

NORA

I said, enjoy your chicken dear.

Dr. Roland rubs his eyes. Nora sits down and serves herself. She stops short of eating her first bite and looks up.

NORA (CONT'D)

Do you want to say grace again?

DR. ROLAND

Not tonight, Nora. I don't need another fight with you.

NORA

I saw the protesters are back.

They both stop chewing. The TV blares ANGRY PROTESTERS in front of the CDC. Dr. Roland sinks.

PROTESTERS ON TV (V.O.)

We're not guinea pigs. We're not guinea pigs. We're not guinea pigs.

Dr. Roland grabs the remote and changes channels. The vaccine story is on every channel. He switches it off.

DR. ROLAND

That damned vaccine..

NORA

I thought you were close. You've been working on this for ten years.

DR. ROLAND

I know, I know. We are close, but it has some side effects.

NORA

Side effects?

Roland has trouble swallowing his food. He sweats profusely. Nora wipes his brow with her napkin.

NORA (CONT'D)

What kind of side effects?

DR. ROLAND

Well. The subjects we have injected so far have exhibited an extremely psychotic brain function that becomes progressively worse and worse and at the same time, they become increasingly aggressive and fast. They are fast as lightning.

INT. CDC TOXICOLOGY LAB - ANIMAL EXPERIMENT ROOM - DAY

A cage full of lightning-fast zombie rats throw themselves up against the cage walls and commit suicide.

INT. DR. ROLAND'S HOME - NIGHT

Nora serves Dr. Roland a spoon full of potato salad.

NORA

The crazier they get the faster they get? How do you test intelligence on a rat? Wait. You are testing on rats right? I didn't think it was ready for human testing.

DR. ROLAND

I know. It's not. But we are getting so much pressure from above, we have no choice. We're going to start using inmates from Laurel Highlands.

Nora drops her fork.

NORA

Prisoners from the state Penn? Sam! That's inhumane!

DR. ROLAND

Well, they'll be in shackles until we get them into their cages.

NORA

Cages? You're treating them like lab rats! Sam, this has got to stop. It's...it's just downright wrong.

DR. ROLAND

They'll sign waivers, Nora. They'll give up their rights in hopes to lessen their sentence.

Nora picks up her fork and begins to eat again.

NORA

Oh you mean, they will get less time if they help you find a cure? That seems like a fair trade-off to you? And what if they become zombies too? Then what?

DR. ROLAND

Well, that's yet to be seen. Unfortunately, from what I can tell, none of them are ever going to make it out of that lab. Alive that is.

Nora stands up and glances at the photos on the wall. In one, she accepts the Nobel Peace Prize. In another, the Pulitzer. They hang beside a framed photo of the couple at a young man's graduation, obviously their son.

NORA

Is he one of them?

Dr. Roland looks up at her, anguished and ashamed.

DR. ROLAND

Yes.

Nora stands up with her plate.

NORA

I think I'm going to be sick.

DR. ROLAND

Nora..

NORA

No, Sam, No. Don't Nora me. You claim to be this big, hot shot humanitarian helping the world overcome diseases and plagues, but you can't even save your own son from a bogus prison sentence. You just choose to leave him in there to rot for 4 years now and you haven't done one thing to help him. And you of all people know he's innocent.

NORA (CONT'D)

Now you are going to use him like a guinea pig? And for what? To prove that you are the one who can save the world? How could you, Sam? How could you?

Dr. Roland takes the serving spoon from the potato salad and starts to serve himself another helping, Nora abruptly takes the potato salad from the table. Dr. Roland hangs his head.

INT. CDC TOXICOLOGY LAB - DAY

Dr. Roland injects a fat, white lab rat. The rat squeals and has several violent seizures. A second injection stops them.

DR. ROLAND (V.O.)

We know how to stop the seizures.  
But how do we...?

He dabs his damp forehead with gauze. A beautiful young, blonde scientist, DINA(24) in full lab gear approaches Dr. Roland with a bubbling beaker of red liquid.

DINA

I think I have something that will sustain brain function, Dr. Roland. Would you like to see the results from the latest titration?

DR. ROLAND

Dina, always take your findings to Julia, the lead scientist. Ask her to run the titers and put the reports on my desk. Good work.

A tiny woman, Dina bubbles just like the beaker in her hand.

DINA

Thanks Dr. Roland.

Dina skips off with her bubbling beaker. JEREMY KIPPS (41), frail, pale man with a bad comb-over, approaches Dr. Roland with a test tube of red fluid. His nerdy voice is annoying.

JEREMY

I don't get the same results as Dina with this batch, Dr. Roland. Not sure what she did, but I don't think she followed the exact protocol. Should I duplicate the experiment again?

Dr. Roland handles Jeremy with kid gloves.

DR. ROLAND

No, I don't think we have time, Jeremy. Let's see what Julia says about the titer results and we can hold yours in case this one doesn't produce antibodies.

Jeremy drops his shoulders and walks away like a sulking kid. An alarm sounds and red lights flash over each of the doors. Everyone looks around at each other as Dr. Roland steps up.

DR. ROLAND (CONT'D)

Okay, everybody, time for our monthly evacuation drill. I know many of you are new so here's how this goes. End your experiments and line up so we can do a head count. If you are unable to end your experiment, at the very least extinguish all flames and put your samples in the freezer until we come back inside the lab. Every sample must be fully contained at all times no matter what! Any questions? Let's do this!

Everyone calmly follows protocol and lines up. Dr. Roland does a head count and they all file out the door. Jeremy's experiment continues to bubble and overheats. Smoke fills the lab. It becomes dark and scary. The animals become panicky.