

Threats

Threats, issue one script
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PANEL 1: Close on a booking photo of Jim Lafferty, held in a man's left hand with a wedding ring and about to be grabbed by a black Nomex glove belonging to an Atlanta SWAT team member. Lafferty stares directly at us, a mixture of overwhelming fatigue from a knock-down, drag-out fight with a superhero and anger at being restrained. He has dirty blond hair working its way toward a mullet, and a honey of a bruise on his left cheek.

1. EVAN: Here's your man. Jim Lafferty.

PANEL 2: We pull back to see Special Agent Evan Wayne of the FBI's Paranormal Threat Evaluation Section (PTES) standing partially in the path of a projection of the same booking photo he just passed to the SWAT team member. Evan is crisp, clean and upright, wearing a suit and tie that calls out that he definitely is not a local investigator and is, in fact, from the Bureau. His brown hair is neat but not military short, and his eyes say that he's still young and on his way up. The SWAT team audience passes the photo around as Evan talks.

1. EVAN: We've briefed you on Lafferty's light constructs – take them SERIOUSLY. Jim Lafferty is a three-time LOSER, so you CAN'T expect him to go down easy.

2. EVAN: And a solid-light construct can cripple or KILL. Just as good as a gun.

PANEL 3: One of the men passes the photo back to Evan as he flips ahead to an image of a destroyed bank.

1. EVAN: Let me hammer this in. Lafferty did this to a bank in downtown Atlanta last week...

PANEL 4: The image flips to a police car with a massive, crushing dent across its hood, as if someone laid an invisible I-beam across it at an angle.

1. EVAN: And THIS to an Atlanta PD interceptor during his escape.

2. SWAT #1: God.

3. SWAT #2: We have ta take him FAST. Flashbangs and CS, right?

PANEL 5: Evan looks to the SWAT team commander standing off to the side. The commander's a slightly older guy with a little gray at the temples, but still in excellent shape, except for the

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mouth cancer he's probably going to develop from the plug of chaw he's always working on. This is a calm man.

1. SWAT COMMANDER: Agent Wayne has recommended against that approach, and I'm gonna hafta agree. There are FACTORS...which make a blitz apprehension DANGEROUS.

PANEL 6: Evan's features darken a little as he addresses this more directly.

1. EVAN: Lafferty was pepper-sprayed during an attempted arrest in Alabama in 1998. He responded by MINCING his immediate surroundings with blades of solid light.
2. EVAN: He put TWO officers in the hospital that way.

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PANEL 1: SWAT #2 holds his hands out before him, gesturing to make his point – if they can't blitz and can't arrest slowly, what can they do?

1. SWAT #2: So what DO we do? We can't just SHOOT him.
2. SWAT #2: Can we?

PANEL 2: Evan flicks the projector to a whitescreen, leaving him partially bathed in white light.

1. EVAN: Based on a careful analysis of Lafferty's behavior and the output frequency of his solid-light constructs, we believe Lafferty probably has a vulnerability to light in the 540 to 560 nanometer range.

PANEL 3: Evan smiles just a touch as he delivers the punchline, such as it is.

1. EVAN: In other words, we think if you shine intense green light on him, his powers won't work.

PANEL 4: SWAT #3 is incredulous. He's not fond of betting his life on surmises, especially not from an agency he doesn't always trust.

1. SWAT #3: You THINK? You don' KNOW?

PANEL 5: Evan weathers the question somewhat uncomfortably. After all, he won't be stepping out in front of Lafferty. The SWAT guy is frustrated, but figures this is typical.

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1. EVAN: Lafferty hasn't been incarcerated for longer than a few weeks after each conviction. We'll have to test this supposition in the field.

2. SWAT #3: GREAT.

3. EVAN: I know. It – it's a risk, I know.

PANEL 6: We turn to look at the back corner of the SWAT group, where Special Agent Saada Ehsanipour fiddles with the straps on her ballistic vest, making sure it fits snugly. Her curls and ringlets are tied back in a fairly neat ponytail, and her brown eyes are a little hazy and hard to read, though she seems quite serious.

1. EVAN: That's why agent Ehsanipour will be going in WITH you to positively ID Lafferty and make sure we're right about the green light thing. Good enough?

2. EVAN: GOOD.

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PANEL 1: Inside the van delivering the SWAT team to the arrest site, Saada, clad in her vest and FBI jacket, does a final check on her sidearm and flashlight. Around her, the SWAT guys wait with a mixture of excitement and practiced boredom.

1. SWAT #1: So, do y'all have some kinda gizmo ta tell you if these flashlights work? A power reader or something?

PANEL 2: Saada looks up at the men around her and answers carefully.

1. SAADA: No. It's me. I can sense supernatural abilities.

PANEL 3: The SWAT guy is surprised, and says the first thing that comes to mind, something neither he nor his buddies think of as being as harmful as it is, but at which Saada stifles a flinch.

1. SWAT #1: OH.

2. SWAT #1: I didn't know the FBI HIRED muties.

PANEL 4: Coming back with a practiced deadpan picked up in her time in New York, Saada answers as she racks the slide on her gun.

1. SAADA: Oh, the Bureau hires everyone these days. Blacks, women, EVERYONE.

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PANEL 5: She releases the slide and it slips back into place as the van brakes, the deceleration tilting everyone to the side a little.

1. F/X: KA-CHINK!

2. F/X: SQUEEEK.

PANEL 6: Saada stands, flashlight in one hand, gun in the other, dead serious as she can be on the outside but with butterflies fighting their way up from her guts.

1. SAADA: We're here.

PANEL 7: As Saada steps out, SWAT #2 leans in talks to SWAT #1 in a voice just above a whisper. SWAT #1 shrugs, wrinkling his face in annoyance. He didn't know they were working with a mutant.

1. SWAT #2: Good job, genius.

2. SWAT #1: You care what a MUTIE thinks? 'cause I DON'T.

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PANEL 1: We watch from the street as Saada walks across the darkened front lawn of a house in suburban Atlanta. It's nighttime, and the nimbus of a backyard barbecue halos the house, reflecting a little on the grass of the front lawn. SWAT members filter into the front yard from both sides, heading toward either side of the house so they can hit the backyard from both routes at once. Saada's taking the right, from our POV.

PANEL 2: Saada walks between the side of the house and the fence, eyes open and body a little too tense, expecting violence to burst forth from some unseen assailant. The light from the backyard starts to highlight her features now. The tailing SWAT member's hand reaches out, just short of touching her shoulder.

PANEL 3: Saada jerks a bit, looking back at the SWAT officer whose hand nows rests on her shoulder. His other hand is in the "C" that stands for Crisis Entry, an option he's presenting to her.

PANEL 4: Saada slowly shakes her head side to side with obvious annoyance, indicating that she's not pleased that he's trying to change the game plan.

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PANEL 1: Saada holds her right hand up, palm partially open around the flashlight in the “wait” sign, and the SWAT officer removes his hand from her shoulder. The light from the party continues to flicker on her face.

PANEL 2: We watch from the SWAT officer’s position as Saada steps around the back corner of the house and into the yard, where a typical “family and friends” barbecue is in full swing. Lafferty’s dad, a white-haired man with substantial paunch, stands by the grill, turning hot dogs and hamburgers. Other people in t-shirts, shorts and jeans stand around with cans of soda or beers, talking. Leanne Rimes (sp?) blares two clicks too loud from a 1980s vintage boombox. Lafferty is in the middle of the party, the guest of honor. He laughs, happy to be free again, unaware of how soon that’s going to change. His girlfriend, a younger blond in jeans and a tied-off shirt tugs on his arm, having just noticed the black-clad FBI agent walking into the yard.

PANEL 3: Close on Lafferty’s face as he sees Saada and the SWAT team following her and his eyes go wide, adrenalin dumping, saying “fight or run.”

PANEL 4: Back to Saada as she lifts both arms together, points the flashlight at Lafferty and keys her throat mic by tapping the button on her left wrist with her right hand, incidentally aiming her sidearm at Lafferty in the process.

1. SAADA: Positive ID on Lafferty. TAKE HIM.

PANEL 5: Around Lafferty, an armored beast made of pure, yellow light springs into existence. Its rage matches Lafferty’s, and it lunges straight at Saada as...

PANEL 6: ...she flicks on the flashlight, projecting a tight beam of green light toward him, staring straight into the maw of the solid-light beast, adrenalin coursing through her own system.

1. SAADA: Work, work, WORK...

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PANEL 1: Just as Lafferty’s leaping demonic construct is about to sink its talons into Saada, her flashlight beam cuts a clean hole through its midsection. Saada is halfway between a flinch and a solid stance, just about to squeeze off a shot from her handgun at Lafferty.

1. SAADA: WORK, DAMN IT!

PANEL 2: The construct stops dead in its tracks, and stares down at the clean gap in its middle through which the flashlight beam shines. As much as a creation of pure light fueled by an escaped con’s rage can manage, it looks confused.

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PANEL 3: Four more flashlight beams cut through the construct, slicing it to pieces, revealing a confused and panicky Jim Lafferty.

PANEL 4: Saada holds her position as the SWAT team rushes in, yelling and aiming their weapons and attached flashlights at Lafferty. Around him, the crowd drops to the ground at varying speeds, some crying, most staring on in total confusion.

1. SWAT #1: DOWN! DOWN!
2. SWAT #2: DOWN! GET DOWN!
3. SWAT #3: GET YOUR HEAD DOWN ON THE GROUND!

PANEL 5: Saada slumps against the wall of Lafferty's girlfriend's home as the SWAT officers cuff Lafferty in the background, still shining their green flashlight beams on him. Next to him, his girlfriend cries. She's losing him again. Saada breaths out a big, rippling sigh, releasing her terror and tension into the Atlanta night.

1. SAADA: God. Enough.
2. SWAT #3: Jim Lafferty, you are under arrest. I know you heard this last week, but let me remind you that you have the right to remain silent...

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PANEL 1: Close on a cup of coffee. It sits on a pearl saucer, on a musty wood sidetable next to an older lamp and a recent copy of TV guide. The television remote is absent, but the scuff in the dust left by its passing isn't. A wrinkled hand curls its fingers around the cup. It's old, but steady. It belongs to Charles Helley, once known as the Crimson Spirit.

1. CHARLES: I don't think that young man you're working with now would APPRECIATE it if he knew where you spend your free time.

PANEL 2: Charles raises the cup towards his mouth, but stops just short of his lips, smiling at his still unseen companion. He's a thin man who might seem frail, but for his erect posture and his intelligent eyes. His hair is sparse and gray, but present. He's dressed in a wrinkled, light blue shirt and brown slacks. Yellow afternoon sunlight filters through the window behind him, partially silhouetting him and barely lighting up bookshelves filled with old paperbacks that have been leafed through repeatedly.

1. CHARLES: After all, Arlen, the Crimson Spirit IS a dangerous SUPERVILLAIN.

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PANEL 3: We meet Arlen Beck for the first time. He's a traditional FBI agent with a lot of wear and tear; it shows around his eyes and in his gray hair. His suit is still neat, though the jacket's unbuttoned, letting a little paunch show when he sits. He holds his cup of coffee in one hand, balanced on the seat of the ragged chair he occupies. The sunlight and lamp combine to highlight his face and make him squint. The room is warm and dusty, nearly archival.

1. ARLEN: WAS, Charles. He WAS dangerous. Once, long ago. And even then, you never KILLED anyone, or we wouldn't be talking right now.

2. ARLEN: Never even shot anyone.

PANEL 4: Charles leans back in his chair, closes his eyes and lets the past catch up with him for a moment. His left hand falls on the TV guide, pushing it aside a little to reveal a scrap, an old newspaper clipping in a plastic sleeve. We can't yet see what it shows.

1. CHARLES: I never had to, Arlen. That's how it WAS. The whole time you folks were chasing me, from that first bank in Wichita to the reserve in New York -- oh, that was the big time -- I never HAD to hurt ANYONE.

PANEL 5: Close on the clipping in the sleeve. It's a photo from 1955 of a younger, stronger Crimson Spirit, red cape flowing behind him in a Long Island wind, ridiculous mask over his eyes and a bulbous, 1950's scifi gun in his right hand.

1. CHARLES: I just hit 'em with the sleep gas or maybe the terror gas, and they were right out. Not until 1970 did ANYONE take a shot at me. That's just how it WAS.

PANEL 6: Back to the modern world. Charles opens his eyes, his expression stern.

1. CHARLES: Then the Brotherhood showed up. Scum like them made it bad. EVIL. Killing people.

2. ARLEN: There've always been murderers, Charles. That's nothing new.

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PANEL 1: Charles leans in, thrusting his index finger in Arlen's direction, eyes burning.

1. CHARLES: I know that. I KNOW that. But when some madman threatened to blow up New York, or kidnap a bus full of orphans...God knows why. No money in orphans. But EVEN THEN, someone stopped them and NO ONE died.

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PANEL 2: Charles leans back only slightly, as Arlen rubs his chin and ponders something that hasn't really solidified for him yet.

1. ARLEN: Maybe the heroes are just slower these days. Amateurs.
2. CHARLES: They're not slower, Arlen. They're overwhelmed. That's why YOU exist.

PANEL 3: Arlen realizes he's been burning time and gets down to business.

1. ARLEN: Overwhelmed? I'm not sure I believe that...but maybe. Maybe there's something to that.
2. ARLEN: Enough. So what does the Crimson Spirit think about the world today?

PANEL 4: The two continue talking, two friends bantering about a subject that's a little bit uncomfortable in its seriousness.

1. CHARLES: He thinks he's tired, and has a poker game in Union City in half in hour.
2. ARLEN: CHARLES...

PANEL 5: Charles turns his eyes downward, pondering the floor as he lays down the real info, what Arlen was waiting for.

1. CHARLES: I think you're in for a tough time, Arlen. Our country...it's not as popular as it used to be.
2. ARLEN: Now, I don't think --
3. CHARLES: Oh, I KNOW. We've NEVER been popular. But now it's not Laos and El Salvador we're fiddling with. These people now, they have RESOURCES. Heck, I think they're just more MOTIVATED than those little brown guys we used to --

PANEL 6: Arlen coughs into his hand, staring at Charles. The older man's overt racism is a definite point of disagreement between them. Charles squints back at him. He knows Arlen's complaint, but he can't really be bothered to care.

1. ARLEN: <COUGH.>
2. CHARLES: WHAT?

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PANEL 1: Charles drops a sugar cube into his coffee, not bothering to stir it as he fixes Arlen with his gaze to make sure he has his attention.

1. CHARLES: You know I don't get around as much anymore, Arlen. Poker, walks in the morning, the social with the ladies from the retirement home. So I don't hear as much.

2. CHARLES: But what I hear SCARES me, Arlen. One of my friends told me last week that the people running AIM now couldn't tell you where half their old bases are.

PANEL 2: Charles points a little spoon at Arlen, still not stirring. Arlen just listens, intent.

1. CHARLES: I was in an AIM base, once. Wall to wall weapons. Gamma rockets, death rays, weather controllers.

PANEL 3: Close on Charles as he tries to pour his worry into his words.

1. CHARLES: They've lost DEATH RAYS.

PANEL 4: Charles sits back and stares into his coffee, a little bit lost in his fears. Arlen half humors him, but corrects his anachronisms as necessary.

1. CHARLES: ANYONE could have them. The Soviets --

2. ARLEN: Russians. We're friends n--

3. CHARLES: The Libyans --

4. ARLEN: They don't support that any--

5. CHARLES: Anyone.

PANEL 5: Charles quiets down, forcing Arlen to lean in to hear his words. Arlen does so, with great interest.

1. CHARLES: But let me tell you what I know's happening. People find these things, old k-bombs from a HYDRA warehouse somewhere, anything like that...and they find them, and when they do, they SELL them.

2. CHARLES: And some raghead with a poppyfield full of heroin, he can afford a k-bomb, or a transmutation chamber. He'll use it, too.

PANEL 6: More than typically nonplussed by Charles's behavior, Arlen breaks in.

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1. ARLEN: CHARLES.

2. ARLEN: Leaving aside what you do or don't understand about Mid East politics, I'd rather NOT hear you depersonalize people left and right. It's UNHEALTHY.

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PANEL 1: Charles raises an eyebrow and his voice, sloshing his coffee in Arlen's direction. Arlen sits back, stays cool and remembers he's talking to a codger.

1. CHARLES: Do you ALWAYS have to correct me?

2. ARLEN: Only when you're being a RACIST, Charles. How is it you never victimized minorities, way back when?

PANEL 2: Charles waves his hand dismissively in the younger man's face, wrinkling his nose at the foolish question.

1. CHARLES: You go where the MONEY is. Only FOOLS rob the ghetto.

PANEL 3: Arlen considers Charles as the older man drinks his coffee.

1. ARLEN: Remind me never to introduce you to Saada. I don't think it would go well at all.

PANEL 4: Charles grins as he pulls out information Arlen didn't know he had. Arlen, in turn, is surprised at word spreading this fast.

1. CHARLES: Yes, Miss Ehsanipour. I've HEARD about her.

2. ARLEN: You HAVE?

3. CHARLES: Of course. A power sensor. A masterstroke, bringing her in. I hope you didn't have to lower your standards TOO much.

PANEL 5: Arlen puts his coffee cup down on the side table and tries to pull his jacket back together with his left hand.

1. ARLEN: AGENT Ehsanipour made it through the full Bureau qualification procedure. We don't GIVE special considerations. She's a GOOD agent.

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PANEL 6: Arlen stands, bring his other hand to bear on the jacket buttoning problem. Charles cradles his coffee in both hands, smiling at the energy that Arlen still hangs on to, a little wistful..

1. ARLEN: And speaking of Special Agent Ehsanipour, I need to meet her and Agent Wayne in an hour. Thank you for the coffee, Charles.

2. CHARLES: Good luck with that good fight, Arlen.

PANEL 7: Arlen pauses in mid-turn on his way to the door.

1. ARLEN: We try Charles. We try.

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PANEL 1: A Bureau staff car pulls up in front of a lawn of dried, browning grass, next to a high fence topped with razor wire. Another, higher fence is placed four meters inside the outer fence. Inside this, prisoners in orange uniforms loiter in a gravelly field next to dull, gray buildings. Some smoke. A sign attached to the outer fence admonishes us thusly:

DO NOT TALK WITH PRISONERS
DO NOT APPROACH FENCE
DO NOT PICK UP HITCHHIKERS

PANEL 2: Arlen Beck steps out of the car, from the driver's side -- no chauffeur for him. He squints into the midday sunlight, looking at Saada and Evan, who stand by the front gate, just out of view.

1. ARLEN: Are you two ready?

PANEL 3: Arlen strides between Saada and Evan, carrying them in his wake as he walks through the automated visitors' doors. Both Evan and Saada are tired, but doing their best not to show it - - fatigue is a Bureau tradition. Saada has a laptop bag slung over her right shoulder. The sign above the double glass doors declares that this is the West County Detention Facility.

1. SAADA: I think this will be a nice break, actually.

2. EVAN: After yesterday, easily.

3. SAADA: You got to stay with the car yesterday.

PANEL 4: The three stop at the security desk, where two officers in Contra Costa County Prisons uniforms stand by a metal detector and X-ray. All three agents hold their FBI

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identification up to the officers, one of whom checks a sheet and grabs for a desk telephone. Both are bored.

1. EVAN: Agents Beck, Wayne and Ehsanipour here for --
2. OFFICER WITH SHEET: Yeah. Gotcha here.
3. OTHER OFFICER: We'll check your guns here, and Mr. Hawthorne'll come down in a second to get you goin'.

PANEL 5: The three agents pull their sidearms from shoulder holsters, placing them in a bin proffered by one of the officers. As they do this, a young woman in a check shirt walks up behind them, package in hand, eyeing the guns with some dismay.

1. SAADA: THIS is what I like to do before facing dangerous criminals. Disarm.
2. ARLEN: It's regulation, Saada. We can't have a prisoner acquiring a firearm, and we can't guarantee it wouldn't happen.
3. EVAN: Right. MUCH better if they just beat US to death.

PANEL 6: Saada and Evan both kneel at the same time to remove their ankle weapons, bringing their heads close together. Saada's hair falls into her face as she does this. We just see Arlen's legs -- he doesn't bother with a backup piece of any kind. The younger agents do, though -- Evan has a small revolver and Saada has a punch knife, which earns a slight raised eyebrow from Evan.

1. SAADA: That hasn't ever HAPPENED to an agent, has it?
2. EVAN: I have no idea, but it's not like these guys're going to NEED to grab a gun to do some damage.
3. EVAN: Nice KNIFE.
4. SAADA: THANKS. It was a present from a friend.

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PANEL 1: Suitably disarmed, the three walk through the metal detector just in time to be met by Mr. Hawthorne, a distinguished African-american man with some male-pattern balding and a gut restrained by a belt secured a notch too tight. He naturally gravitates toward Arlen, offering him a hand to shake. Arlen does so smoothly; introductions are second nature to him now.

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1. HAWTHORNE: Hi there. You must be agent Beck. I'm Michael Hawthorne. I'm the facility director.

2. ARLEN: Special agent Arlen Beck, with agents Wayne and Ehsanipour. We're here to take a look at your special guests.

3. HAWTHORNE: And we're all set for you.

PANEL 2: The four walk down an institutional hallway. Small windows in the sides look down on the prison yard below, where more men in orange jumpsuits slouch around. Hawthorne walks purposefully down the hall, in that mental limbo between wanting to impress the feds and wanting to show that he's all business and not trying to show off. Saada looks out the window while Evan's eyes stay dead ahead. Arlen pulls a notepad out of his jacket and checks something written on it.

1. HAWTHORNE: Is this a review visit? Those Behavioral Sciences fellows were in here to talk to most of the prisoners on your call list less than a year ago.

2. ARLEN: We're not from the ISU.

3. EVAN: We're the PTES. It's part of the CIRG.

PANEL 3: Hawthorne slides a card through a cardreader connected to a secure door labeled "Special Precaution Area. TRAINED SUPPORT PERSONNEL ONLY." He doesn't look back at the three as he talks and does this.

1. HAWTHORNE: You DO love your acronyms, don't you?

2. EVAN: Sorry. We're part of the Critical Incident Response Group. The one with the CASKU...um, sorry...the abduction section and the HRT. We're the Paranormal Threat Evaluation Section. So PTES.

PANEL 4: Hawthorne stops with the door halfway open and turns to look over his shoulder at Evan, specifically. Saada short circuits this by answering his question. Arlen watches this quietly.

1. HAWTHORNE: So what does that MEAN, exactly?

2. SAADA: It means we catalog and evaluate supernatural occurrences and individuals to determine what threat they pose to the United States.

3. HAWTHORNE: Oh...so like that TV show with the conspiracies?

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PANEL 5: Saada stares and blinks, slightly aghast at this comparison. Evan struggles to keep a smile off his face and not to look at his disgruntled partner.

1. SAADA: Um....
2. EVAN: No. NOTHING like that.

PANEL 6: Picking up a bit on the agents' displeasure, Hawthorne walks them through the door and gestures toward a window coming up on their left (we can't see into it yet). There's a door beside it.

1. HAWTHORNE: Oh. Okay.
2. HAWTHORNE: So your first prisoner interview today is with Peter Van Zante. He's been our guest for six months, since they shipped him out of Pollingwood in Barstow. You know about Peter?

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PANEL 1: The quartet stops before the window. They're on the viewing side of a one-way mirror looking into the special prisoner interview room. Peter Van Zante, the occasional Water Wizard and Aqueduct, sits in a balding wooden chair on the far side of an equally abused wooden table. On the near side are three chairs. Van Zante has special metal bracelets with electronic readouts on both wrists. A tall, strong prisons officer stands behind Peter's right shoulder, posture straight but eyes down on his prisoner.

1. ARLEN: Peter Van Zante, alias Water Wizard, alias Aqueduct. Put up for five years on some fairly standard criminal enterprise stuff, but suspected of murder in several foreign countries.
2. HAWTHORNE: So they ship him to US because he was behavin' himself in the high security facility.

PANEL 2: Close on Evan as he probes the political situation hereabouts. As an up-and-comer, he wants to be on top of that kind of thing, to know who to know.

1. EVAN: You don't LIKE that?

PANEL 3: Leaning on the one-way glass, Hawthorne carefully thinks through his answer, letting it out slowly. In the background, Van Zante squints at the glass, almost as if he senses something.

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1. HAWTHORNE: Officially, I have no opinion. UNOFFICIALLY, we're supposed to handle low risk offenders, and Peter's attitude ALONE says he's NOT low risk.

2. HAWTHORNE: I could do without the added stress.

PANEL 4: Saada walks up to the glass, looking in on Van Zante, who's now looking back at his guard and asking a question. The guard's stance doesn't shift at all, though his eyes are still on Van Zante.

1. SAADA: Have any of your special prisoners ever escaped?

PANEL 5: Close on Hawthorne in front of the window. He takes his job very seriously.

1. HAWTHORNE: NO ONE'S ever escaped, not on MY watch.

PANEL 6: Arlen shoots a look at Saada, which she catches with a bit of a "what?" expression in return, as he talks to Hawthorne. Evan watches the window now. Van Zante's actions have grabbed his attention.

1. ARLEN: Whenever you're ready, Mr. Hawthorne, I think we should start.

PANEL 7: Hawthorne points at the prison guard, BEN RILEY as he turns to leave the trio to their task. Evan's still watching the glass, where it does, indeed, seem as if Peter Van Zante is talking to us.

1. HAWTHORNE: Everything's ready. Just tell Ben there -- that's Ben Riley, he handles our special prisoners -- just tell him when you're done and he'll bring the next one. And, unless I can do anything for you right now --

2. EVAN: Is he talking to US?

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PANEL 1: Hawthorne reaches down to a small button below the window's edge and pushes it, opening up the audio from the room. It's scratchy, but audible. Evan and Saada both lean in, almost unconsciously, for a better listen. Arlen, a little bit more jaded, just stands there.

1. HAWTHORNE: Let's see...

2. VAN ZANTE AUDIO: --ow you're out there. I can FEEL your BLOOD. It's SWIMMING in your veins. I can FEEL it.

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PANEL 2: Close on Hawthorne's hand as he releases the button.

PANEL 3: Evan scratches at his wrist uncomfortably and cranes his neck a little, looking in on Van Zante. Beside him, Hawthorne shakes his head and shrugs a little, mostly ignoring Van Zante.

1. EVAN: Can he DO that? Feel our BLOOD?
2. HAWTHORNE: Don't know. YOU tell ME..

PANEL 4: Close on Saada, being at once clever and confident.

1. SAADA: We will.

PANEL 5: Hawthorne smiles and nods slowly, picking up her meaning.

1. HAWTHORNE: Hah. If you say so.
2. HAWTHORNE: AS I was saying, just ask Ben if you need anything, and tell him when you're done with a prisoner. He'll bring the next one.
3. HAWTHORNE: You have a long list to go through. I won't take up any more of your time.

PANEL 6: Saada pulls her laptop off her shoulder as Evan goes for the doorknob. Arlen watches the prison director as he leaves. In the interview room, Van Zante is quiet, staring intently at the closed door.

1. EVAN: Everyone ready?
2. SAADA: Yes. Let's go.
3. ARLEN: Oh, LET'S.

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PANEL 1: We watch from Ben Riley's position as the door to the room opens, Evan leading. All three agents have their game faces on, stern, a little aggressive, potentially intimidating. They aren't the ISU, they don't have to earn the trust of the prisoners they interview.

1. VAN ZANTE: I KNEW it. You WERE out there.

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PANEL 2: The three agents take their seats. Arlen nods at Ben Riley, Evan stares at Van Zante and Saada sets up her laptop, waiting for it to power up so she can enter the information she'll glean from her scan of Van Zante.

1. VAN ZANTE: You here to TALK to me, ask me what I feel?
2. VAN ZANTE: I'll tell you what. I feel YOU, all the water in your bodies, in your blood, in your lymph...I'm going to pull it right out of you.
3. VAN ZANTE: Make it DANCE.

PANEL 3: That line breaks even Saada's concentration. She shoots a worried glance at Riley, who shakes his head and frowns.

1. RILEY: Don't worry. He CAN'T do anything to you, not with those SHIELD liquid field dynamics sensors on his wrists.

PANEL 4: Close (and this can be a small panel) on Van Zante's hands, now resting together in his lap. The metal bracelets are obviously very high-tech, with a smooth exterior except for an empty socket in each.

1. RILEY: If he tries anything, they'll SHORT his system. I've SEEN it. He pissed himself.

PANEL 5: Saada sits up straighter, hands poised over the keyboard, eyes on Van Zante.

1. SAADA: I'm ready.

PANEL 6: Evan, looking a touch bored, pulls out a little booklet and reads from it. Beside him, Saada waits, watching Van Zante like a predatory bird. Arlen just waits, watching more patiently.

1. EVAN: Peter Van Zante, alias Water Wizard, alias Aqueduct, as you are currently incarcerated for commission of crimes in which supernatural, paranormal or otherworldly abilities were employed, you are subject to capability evaluation by the federal government per the McKee-Bury act, as incorporated in USC 856.11. You are not legally able to decline this examination.
2. EVAN: You have been notified, also per USC 856.11.

PANEL 7: Van Zante sits in the chair, a little bit confused and still angry over the reminder that he did, indeed, piss himself the first and last time he tried to really use his powers.

1. VAN ZANTE: So what? Are you going to ask me your questions now?

2. VAN ZANTE: I really ought to write a BOOK, fan club I've got. EVERYONE wants a piece of me.

PAGE 16

PANEL 1: Evan closes his booklet and lays it on the table. Beside him, Saada continues to watch Van Zante intently, preparing to step into his zone.

1. EVAN: Saada?

2. SAADA: Good to go.

PANEL 2: Trying to follow this, and with some suspicion that something tricky is going down, Van Zante squints at Saada while directing his question to someone else -- either of the men.

1. VAN ZANTE: WHAT? She's going to ask me questions now?

PANEL 3: Saada catches Van Zante's eye with her own and shakes her head only slightly.

1. SAADA: I'm not going to ASK you ANYTHING.

PANEL 4: Same view of Saada, but nothing else is happening around her. It's a frozen moment of time, a Bruckheimer stop-start that stands out from the rest of the page by being completely static. She's using her power, putting her consciousness into Van Zante's capabilities and translating them into concepts and measures she can understand.

PANEL 5: Saada looks down and starts typing. The moment is past. Now she's information dumping.

1. F/X: Klik klik klik klik klik klik klik klik klik...

PANEL 6: A close view of Saada's laptop, probably looking from her POV, or just over her shoulder. Close enough to read the words. On the laptop screen, it says:

SUBJECT: PETER VAN ZANTE, ALIAS WATER WIZARD, ALIAS AQUEDUCT

Subject is able to manipulate liquids of all types, exerting psychokinetic control over the location and action of the subject non-gaseous fluid. Subject can affect up to_

Threats

PANEL 7: Saada, still typing away, nods very slightly, trying not to break the flow of information, since she doesn't retain most of this information for long at all (as you wouldn't, if you'd only read a book once, and kind of fast, at that).

1. F/X: Klik klik klik klik klik klik klik klik klik...

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PANEL 1: Peter leans in a little, but Riley's hand on house shoulder keeps him in the chair. He's straining to see what Saada's doing, but from the other side of a laptop he has no idea what she's typing. Arlen stares at Van Zante, while Evan looks at Saada's entry about Van Zante.

1. VAN ZANTE: What...what's she doing? What's going on? What's she WRITING?

2. F/X: Klik klik klik klik klik klik klik klik klik...

PANEL 2: Saada triumphantly hits "save" for the final time. The information's in place.

1. SAADA: DONE.

PANEL 3: Evan stands, picking up his notebook again. Saada interjects with the name of their next examinee, cutting Evan off. Riley, of course, has already read the submitted prisoner call list and recalls it quite well.

1. EVAN: Okay, thank you officer...Riley. We're DONE with this one. Next we're going to need...

2. SAADA: Lionel...

3. RILEY: Lionel Minnich. I know. I...HAVE read the request sheet.

4. RILEY: Ma'am.

PANEL 4: Riley pulls Van Zante to a stand by the arm, moving him slowly yet forcefully up out of his chair. Van Zante's in shock -- he was expecting a scene from a drama, not the tossout of a twenty dollar hooker when the John's done. He's too surprised to struggle with Riley. The FBI agents are ignoring him, instead leaning in to check out what Saada just wrote.

1. RILEY: Come on, Peter. They're done with your soggy self.

2. VAN ZANTE: Hunh? Um....wha...uh...

Threats

Subject is able to sense matter density of objects within his visual field. Subject observes this as an increasingly bright glow as density increases. Subject can observe skeletons, carried objects and machinery contained within less-dense surrounding objects.

PANEL 4: As Hutson stands under his own power, Evan waves his pen at the convict. Saada, just finished typing, looks up at Evan. He's obviously bored, and she's getting a bit of a headache.

1. EVAN: That's a nice trick. With the eyes, I mean.

2. SAADA: You know, it actually is.

PANEL 5: Bradley Jessop leans avidly forward in his chair, fleshy arms spilling onto the table. He's an overweight man, sweating through his orange prison jumpsuit, glasses almost fogging as he excitedly holds onto his right index finger with his left index finger and thumb, aiming them toward the ceiling. Little sparks fly out of the end of his finger and sizzle onto the table.

1. BRADLEY JESSOP: Waitwaitwait, look. THIS finger shoots lightning. I mean, it DID shoot lightning before...uh...hehehe...before that ONE time at the bank...

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: BRADLEY JESSOP

Subject has magically-based powers enchanted into each of the fingers of both hands. His powers are currently constrained by an outside enchantment, bu_

PANEL 6: Saada looks up from her computer, her train of thought and information flow broken. She's looking more annoyed by the moment, as her headache gets stronger. She doesn't like these "all the reads in a row" jobs, but she has to do them. Jessop sits back, chastized by the pretty lady. He looks like a kid who realizes he's been annoying someone he likes.

1. SAADA: Stop that.

2. BRADLEY JESSOP (quietly): I'm sorry.

PANEL 7: Ruben Ortiz leans back in his chair, tipping it up slightly on the back two legs -- Riley won't let him go back any farther. He's a handsome young man with slicked back hair and his prison orange kept as neatly as one can keep a jumpsuit. His look is intentionally cool, angling down at Saada, trying to catch her eye as she ignores him.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: RUBEN ORTIZ

Subject must consciously decide to make sound; his default state is complete silence, extending as far as subject can reach in all directions. Subject is capable of silencing any sound in this manner, including weapons and voices.

Threats

PANEL 8: Ortiz stands smoothly, keeping his eyes on Saada as Riley grips his arm tightly. Ortiz smiles as he talks to Saada; she just watches him, her head hurting a bit too much for a glare. Evan can do one, though.

1. RUBEN ORTIZ: Hey babe. I'm out in eleven months. I'll see you around.
2. EVAN: WATCH IT, jackass.
3. ARLEN: Cool, it, Evan. He's going nowhere.

PANEL 9: Leon Gordon is a thin man with feathery gill slits lining both sides of his neck and milky membranes covering his eyes. He's bald, thin, and thirty going on a very weathered forty.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: LEON GORDON, ALIAS AMPHIBIMAN

Subject can breath underwater (salt or fresh), and has special membranes covering his eyes which allow him to see properly underwater, in addition to protecting his eyes from gasses (e.g. CS). Subject can grow webbing between his fingers and toes, which lets him swim approximately twice as fast as a conventional swimmer.

1. GORDON: Are...you're the FBI, right? Because...because I want to lodge a COMPLAINT.
2. GORDON: They...they're MISTREATING me. I have special NEEDS, and they won't HELP me out, so I'm SICK all the time...

PANEL 10: Eyes narrowed at Leon's behavior, Riley manages to yank him up from his chair only a little roughly. Leon keeps his increasingly more desparate, milky eyes on the feds, trying to get them to act on his perceived mistreatment. Of course, they can't, but Leon isn't really that clever.

1. GORDON: No, REALLY. They ARE. I've asked for a TANK, some WATER...
2. GORDON: OW! See? Did you see that?

PANEL 11: Tom Cornell, another African-American prisoner, just sits there, eyes closed, kind of bopping to himself as he listens to JayZee coming in on the FM radio. He doesn't care where he is, as long as he has his tunes. Evan doodles as Saada types, and Arlen looks as if he might just be drifting off to sleep.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: THOMAS CORNELL

Subject can receive and "listen to" all forms of radio communication, as well as the audio portion of television broadcasts. Subject is roughly four times as sensitive as a standard FM radio receiver; sensitivities to other bands are comparable. Subject can listen in on

Threats

cellular telephone conversations, and tap into closed-circuit audio if he is sufficiently close to the cable.

PANEL 12: Cornell startles a little, kind of waking up out of his musical reveries as Riley starts to lift him from his seat with the usual arm grip. Evan starts a bit as Saada elbows his arm out from under him, as does Arlen, who really was drifting off.

1. TOM CORNELL: Hmmm? Oh, we done?
2. EVAN: Hunh? What's up?
3. SAADA: Wake up, Evan.

PANEL 13: Ernest Younker is thin but not skeletal, with a mullet and a moustach and lips and hands that want a cigarette they aren't allowed to have. He stares, a little twitchy, wanting this to be over so he can go get that cigarette. Evan's leaning in as much as he can on Saada now, reading as she types.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: ERNEST YOUNKER

Subject can acquire, following approximately fifteen seconds of visual and physical evaluation, perfect knowledge on how to repair any mechanical device invented prior to July 20, 1979. This knowledge is not retained once the object is out of sight, but may be reacquired if object is subsequently evaluated again.

PANEL 14: Younker stands, holding his hands out in a questioning fashion, with a space left between his fingers for an imagined cigarette. None of the agents smoke, and Saada detests it -- this colors her expression as she answers, along with surprise that Younker asked.

1. YOUNKER: Hey...um...you got any smokes?
2. SAADA: NO.
3. YOUNKER: Come on...I...I coop'rated, din't I?
4. RILEY: Let's GO, Ernie.

PANEL 15: Larry Marks, a well-groomed little man with a tattoo just barely creeping past his collar sits politely and smiles at the federal agents, especially Saada. He seems nothing more than mild, though not meek -- just polite and barely edging out of young.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: LAWRENCE MARKS

Threats

Subject is a traditional werewolf, transitioning to a wolfen form from time of exposure to full moonlight until exposure to sunlight. In wolf form, subject retains consciousness and is in control of his actions. Subject is capable of regeneration_

PANEL 16: Saada holds her hand to her head, wincing, as Marks sits there pleasantly. Arlen leans in and whispers to her, a little skeptical about her current entry.

1. ARLEN (whispering): What does that mean, Saada? TRADITIONAL werewolf?
2. SAADA (whispering): PLEASE, sir. It's...I'll fix it LATER.
3. ARLEN (whispering): It's FINE. Don't worry.

PANEL 17: Fred Heald sits in his chair, two hands flat on the table, one more scratching his head and the last cleaning his left ear. He's a bored convict and he knows this interview isn't going to help him out at all. That, and he's kind of dumb.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: FRED HEALD, ALIAS "THE SPIDER"

Subject has four fully functional arms with supporting skeletal and muscular adaptations. The top pair is slightly stronger, but subject is lower right hand dominant_

PANEL 18: Evan looks up at Heald, a definite question on his face. Saada, looking harassed, watches this exchange and stops typing for a moment.

1. EVAN: Why "the spider?"
2. HEALDS: You know...got the extra arms, man. Like a bug.
3. EVAN: Spiders aren't...yeah. Like the bug. Gotcha.

PAGE 20

PANEL 1: Riley leads the fake March Quinlan, in reality a transmogrified Mario Settles, through the door. Settles stares nervously at the trio, much closer to fear than any of the prisoners we've seen so far. Saada continues to wince and hold her head as Evan offers her some Excedrin.

1. SAADA: OW, damn...are we almost DONE? This is killing me.
2. EVAN: Just a couple more. HERE...I got some headache stuff.
3. SAADA: Thanks.

Threats

PANEL 2: Saada dry swallows the pills as Riley plants the terrified Settles in his seat. Riley pays attention to Saada now, and doesn't notice the undue fear displayed by his ward.

1. RILEY: You going to be OKAY, ma'am?
2. SAADA: Yeah...yes, I will. Just...using my power can...HURT, after a while.
3. SAADA: <sigh> Let's finish the last few.

PANEL 3: Saada returns to her keyboard, typing the first few words in after the name (which comes up automatically, not that it mattered for the last two pages, really). She does this while staring at "Quinlan," trying to get into his zone.

TYPING CAPTION: SUBJECT: MARCH QUINLAN
Subject_

PANEL 4: Saada stops typing and leans away from her laptop, really staring at Settles, who tries to push himself back and down into the hard chair, looking small and frightened. Noticing her odd behavior, Evan reaches a hand out to touch her arm.

1. EVAN: Saada? What is it? Are you okay?

PANEL 5: Saada yanks her arm away from the touch, inducing Evan to recoil just a bit. Arlen's eyes go to Evan, bearing a warning he doesn't notice.

1. SAADA: I'm FINE.
2. SAADA: WHO is this?

PANEL 6: Riley looks between Saada and the man he believes to be Quinlan, a little bit confused, but quite willing to humor Saada, who is obviously stressed. Arlen watches all of this very carefully. He doesn't fully understand how Saada's powers work, but he's suspicious that something is wrong.

1. RILEY: Ma'am?
2. SAADA: This man, WHY is he here?
3. RILEY: Um...he's here because he's the fourth to last on your list. He's March Quinlan.

Threats

PANEL 1: Saada stands abruptly, knocking her chair back and over. She's intense, almost angry, her headache exacerbating her desire to figure out what the hell's going on. Evan jumps away from her and Arlen starts to get up himself, wondering what she's up to.

1. SAADA: No, he's NOT. I don't know who this man is, but he ABSOLUTELY is NOT March Quinlan.

PANEL 2: Saada leaps around the table, clipping it with her hip, and grabs Settles' coverall collar with her left hand, twisting it up and lifting him an inch off his rear. Evan chases after, grabbing Saada's shoulder even as Riley tries to stuff Settles back into the chair with one hand and ineffectually block Saada's grab with the other. Settles looks like he's pissing himself. He may be.

1. SAADA: Who are you? WHO ARE YOU? WHERE'S QUINLAN?

2. EVAN: Saada! What the HELL are you DOING?

3. RILEY: Agent...what..?

PANEL 3: Ignoring the others and genuinely angry now, Saada jerks away from Evan and yanks Settles up, forcing Riley to relent to avoid hurting the prisoner. Everyone except Settles is now standing, and tension fills the room.

1. SAADA: WHO?

2. SETTLES: I'm SORRY I'm SORRY I'm not HIM I'm not HIM...

PANEL 4: Riley lets go and steps back, shocked. Evan stands there, looking as if he'd love to draw the gun he doesn't have. Arlen watches, intensely, worry building, as Saada lets Settles go and stands back, fighting back a sneer and a wince.

1. SAADA: I KNOW you're not him. March Quinlan has powers.

2. SAADA: You DON'T.

3. SAADA: Who are you?

PANEL 5: Eyes full of tears, nose dripping snot, Settles collapses into his seat and chokes out his confession. Everyone watches, shocked, but for Saada, who's pissed and showing it.

1. SETTLES (quietly): Settles. Mario Settles. He said...he said he'd KILL me if I said anything and he said it'd change back in a couple days it'll change back it'll change back...

PANEL 6: Riley stares at the fake Quinlan, horrible realization dawning.

Threats

1. RILEY: MARIO? But he doesn't have any powers, and he was paroled...yesterday.
2. RILEY: Oh God DAMN it. Oh NO.

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PANEL 1: Riley yanks his radio out, trying to stay calm but still talking too fast. In the seat below him, Settles whimpers as Saada turns away from him and walks back to where Evan stands mute. Arlen pulls out his cell phone.

1. RILEY: We...uh...we have a problem. March Quinlan has escaped.
2. RILEY: YES, I KNOW I checked him out of his cell, but that wasn't HIM. Just shut up and get me Hawthorne and -- just GET him, because we've had a damn ESCAPE.

PANEL 2: Saada walks by the table and folds her laptop's screen down, putting it to sleep. She's pissed and perplexed. Evan watches Arlen, waiting for the older man's cue. Arlen's dead serious, slipping into crisis mode.

1. SAADA: Damn. I DO not believe this day.
2. ARLEN: John, we've had an incident at WestCat. Yes, in Richmond. I want you to pull together an analysis team and --
3. ARLEN: No, we don't have anything new we can send. Yeah...I'm afraid so.

PANEL 3: At a bus station in the heart of downtown Oakland, a man wearing the face of Mario Settles fingers a prison bracelet and stares at the schedules listing various destinations. He smiles, relishing his freedom.

1. ARLEN VOICE OVER: One of the prisoners walked.

PANEL 4: Close on the hand as Mario relaxes it, letting the bracelet flutter to the pavement.

1. ARLEN VOICE OVER: They're going to need our help.