

"Reducer Ep. 3"

by

Blake Thaggard

"REDUCER EP. 3"

FADE IN:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

The distant, distinct SIREN of emergency vehicles is in the background as we see a city street in chaos. Throngs of people move back and forth, many of them holding up smartphones with lights on, indicating they're taking video of something off-camera, down another street. Others are worming their way off the sidewalk and into nearby buildings and cafes, all with patrons transfixed either by the street outside or television screens on the walls.

The foreground never moves, however- a dirty and dingy bus stop, consisting of a modern glass façade and a long bench with a single occupant: LEAH, a woman in her 30s, in a sleek black leather jacket, with oversized sunglasses on her face. She's got her hands deep in her pockets, expression unreadable.

The cracked holographic banner projected on the glass façade behind her is playing a shampoo advertisement before it cuts itself off, sharply, to an image of two MEN IN BLACK, in slick black suits, and the words BREAKING NEWS dominating the lower part of their screen. Behind them is a circular logo mimicking the American Eagle, but it is a similarly impassive raven.

MAN IN BLACK 1:

This is a national service
interruption, brought to you by the
National Bureau of Disaster Incidence.

MAN IN BLACK 2:

In lieu of a weekly update, we are
bringing you this breaking news
directly in the hopes that citizens of
the nation will take these threats
with all urgency and caution.

MAN IN BLACK 1:

Incidents of microdisasters have been
on the rise recently, but today marks
an unprecedented occurrence and a
national tragedy.

MAN IN BLACK 2:

Approximately forty-five
microdisasters have taken place in

fort-five distinct locations around the country. The NBDI is looking into the potential of a correlated attack.

MAN IN BLACK 1:

In accordance with the Microdisaster Transparency Act of 2041, we are required to inform you that microdisasters are a phenomena involving mass loss of life in the sprawl of our modern society.

There is a long pause as both men in black stare into the camera, voices remaining impassive and cold.

MAN IN BLACK 2:

In accordance with the aforementioned act, we are required to inform you that there has been no evidence supplementing the NBDI's official position that microdisasters are not disconnected incidents, but rather the work of urban terrorist.

MAN IN BLACK 1:

We are required to repeat that the NBDI's objective is to locate and prevent microdisasters before they occur, and perform investigation after they occur to determine the cause of such incidents.

MAN IN BLACK 2:

It is with deep sorrow that we bring you this news, and the solemn promise that the NBDI will be investigating these matters to the best of our abilities.

Leah turns her head, a frown pulling on her face as the completely unfeeling men in black deliver this 'sad' news update. She presses a finger to the commpiece in her ear. We hear distorted, modulated WHITE NOISE, like an empty phone line. Leah removes her fingers, and the noise stops. Looking back and forth at the crowd still holding up their smartphone cameras up to whatever is off-screen, she stands, walking off in the opposite direction.

EXT. VAN - NIGHT

We see Leah open a pair of double doors in the foreground and

takes a step up onto something. She pauses for a moment, glancing over her shoulder - the distantly setting sun is visible between an otherwise dark, oppressive skyline of a multitude of skyscrapers. On the street behind her, we see a cadre of emergency vehicles fly past the parking lot she's in. Turning back, Leah climbs inside, and drags the doors shut behind her.

There's a moment of complete darkness before she switches on a portable lantern bolted to the ceiling. Inside the back of the van is a pile of stacked folders and files poking out of them, we see a large diagram of a building on the wall and an open case of money on the floor, only a few wrapped stacks of bills remaining. Several cans of gasoline are visible in the passenger seat as she takes a seat, letting out a relieved sigh as Leah leans against the side of the van.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - MINUTES LATER

Leah has the radio playing some very soft CLASSICAL MUSIC as she looks through an open folder on her lap. The leather jacket is on the back of the driver's seat. Her sunglasses, commpiece, a fork, and an open can of corn sit on the stack of folders next to her. We see darkness out the front windshield- it is clearly nighttime.

Leah flips over a few files in the folder, and pauses to take a bite of corn from the can. As she sets it down, her eye catches the commpiece sitting next to it. A frown creasing her face, she picks it up, holding it up to her ear as she presses the button. WHITE NOISE again ensues for a long moment before she sets it back down.

Her eyes move from the commpiece to the folder in her lap, which we now see from her perspective. The top of the folder is labelled 'NBDI', and the file she's looking at is a print-out of a mugshot. It's of a DISHEVELLED MAN in his 30s, patchy scruff of a beard looking wild and a dangerous, hollow look in his eyes. In scrappy, barely-legible cursive, we see a name scribbled over his head - SETH DOYLE. And above that, an address- 4952 Rosewood, D block, cell 704.

INT. ROSEWOOD PENITENTIARY

We follow the forms of three figures moving down a cell block with haste, panning rapidly across solid metal cell doors, each embossed with a number and a retractable eye-slit, but nothing else. Two of the forms are PRISON GUARDS garbed in cutting-edge carbon fiber armor, but the one in between them

is wriggling uncontrollably as he's been carried between them. His jumpsuit is a faded rose-red, and the cuffs on his wrists look very technological, with a red light visible on both, held together tightly but with no visible chain between them. As they pass through a security checkpoint, he gets forcibly rotated as a scanning laser passes over them. Now we can see him clearly - it is SETH DOYLE, but clean-shaved and looking a lot more collected and smug than in his mugshot. He waves at the scanner.

DOYLE

Hiya. Believe me now, huh?

GUARD 1

Quiet.

DOYLE

(grinning)

Hey, no sore losers here. You know you'd be feeling pretty hot in my position. I called it, you know, you all thought I was-

Doyle turns to smirk at guard 2. Instead, his arm gets grabbed even roughed by guard 1, who places a hand on the back of his neck to keep him still and facing forward for the scanner. Despite the obvious pain of his position, Doyle sticks his tongue out and winks at the scanner as it passes over his face.

INT. ROSEWOOD ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

The trio enters an elevator, with a strange metallic plate overhead and on the floor. Doyle is still wriggling around, but he seems to go somewhat limp as he sees the plate. The guards each grab one of his arms, and guard 1 waves a security fob over the cuffs, enticing a BEEP out of them and causing the red light to go off. The cuffs separate, as though some invisible force holding them together has relented.

DOYLE

If I promise to play nice, do you mind not-

Each guard brings one of his arms up to the ceiling so that the cuffs press against the metal plate. Guard 1 waves the fob before them again...and Doyle stiffens as the red light turns back on and they release his arms. The cuffs have been magnetically attached to the metallic plate on the ceiling for the duration of the elevator ride.

DOYLE

Cool. Very comfortable. First thing I'm doing when I'm out is seeing a chiropractor.

Guard 2 lets out a sharp, single laugh. Guard 1 silences him with a look. Doyle frowns, looking between them, then grins again.

DOYLE

What, don't think I'm at least getting a reduced sentence?

GUARD 2

(clicking his tongue)
Nobody likes a know-it-all.

DOYLE

Hell's that mean? They know I knew-that's a good thing. Now they wanna talk to me, make a deal.

GUARD 2

Yeah, okay.

GUARD 1

Quiet.

DOYLE

(frustrated)
I was right, I called all of this years ago. Forty terrorist attacks at once? This is exactly what I was talking about.

Neither of the guards react to him. He tries to rattle his cuffs uselessly, clearly desperate for the validation.

DOYLE

The Feds and I are on the same page now! They know I was right, they know I was just trying to tell the truth, s-so there's no real reason for me to be here now. Right? Come on! Agh, it's like talking to a pair of brick walls-

He gets interrupted by the ding of the elevator. Leah, hair smoothed back and in a doctor's coat, steps inside. The guards look at each other. Doyle stops his ranting and stares.

GUARD 1

Doctor, perhaps it's better-

Leah presses a button on the panel, ignoring the guard as the elevator doors slide shut. Tucking her hands in her pockets, she stares up at the ceiling. Guard 1, taken aback, shrugs his shoulders, shifting closer to Doyle to make room and to make sure he doesn't try anything. Doyle struggles to grin at Leah over his shoulder.

DOYLE

Hey doc. What are they saying about me out there?

LEAH

(softly)

Oh, so much.

DOYLE

(shocked)

Wait, seriously?

LEAH

Of course. The NBDI didn't want you blowing the lid on their investigations that early, but they knew all along you were on the right track.

GUARD 2

(pointing at Doyle)

Are you...are you joking? This guy?

LEAH

No, certainly no joke. Mister Doyle here was imprisoned to keep him quiet. Now him being quiet doesn't matter. The public is giving new credence to his claims regardless, and to the NBDI's official position: microdisasters aren't accidents.

DOYLE

(smiling wide)

I knew it! So they want me to talk now!

LEAH

Not at all. They want you silent now.

The guards look at each other, raising eyebrows.

DOYLE
(put-off)
S-Silent? Why?

Guard 1 steps close to Leah, lowering his voice.

GUARD 1
Ah, Doctor, I'm going to have to ask
you to refrain from speaking to the
prisoner...

LEAH
Because now everyone knows you had the
right idea when you blew the whistle.
The public's going to want you out of
here. The Feds-

DOYLE
-know I was right!!

LEAH
Which makes you a far bigger security
threat than before.

GUARD 1
I'm going to have to insist-

Guard 1 backs up, hand going to his holster...only to find it empty. A BANG ensues, and guard 2, bullet hole in his cheek, slumps back against the wall, leaving a smear of blood as falls out of view and hits the ground.

Leah turns the gun on guard 1, but he knocks away her arm and pins it with his own against the wall. With a fierce blow to her face, the back of her head bounces off the wall, and the gun falls out of her pinned arm.

The guard grabs her collar, shoving her sideways against the elevator panel, but as he does so, the blade of a knife pops right out of the back of his palm, causing him to grunt in pain.

The knife, held by Leah's other hand, gets yanked out, and thrust at his abdomen- the guard manages to deflect it with an armored bracer, and Doyle has to twist awkwardly out of the way to not get accidentally gutted. The guard charges into Leah with his good arm, slamming her back into the elevator panel and pinning her there.

His stabbed hand reaches for a cuff on his belt, but drops it to the ground with a clatter as he's forced to instead grab

her knife-wielding hand thrusting again at his belly, struggling to keep it from inching closer as a result of the blood spilling down his fingers. At the same time, Leah's face, determined and icy, starts to grow red, then purple as the guard continues to put pressure on her.

Doyle, shocked at this turn of events, is too stunned to take any action other than to gape at Leah.

DOYLE

Who- the fuck are you?!

LEAH

(choking)

Prrr....out.

DOYLE

What?!

Leah wavers a bit, head starting to loll. The guard seizes the advantage, letting out a fierce cry and throwing Leah's hand backward. The knife flies out of her grip, and her wrist snaps on the edge of the elevator's doorframe. The guard takes his weight off her, and she stumbles onto the floor by her side, gasping for her air and barely functional as he looks behind him for his gun.

At that moment, the lights in the elevator go off, and the hum of its movement halts. There's a GRUNT of exertion, the CLINK of something metallic hitting the wall, and a CLATTER of something small and mechanical sliding across the floor.

The red emergency lights flicker on after a moment. The guard drops onto one knee by the corner, where his gun was...but his hand closes instead around the magnetic cuff he had dropped, a solid few feet where it had been a moment ago.

In slow motion, he turns to look up at Doyle, eyes widening. Doyle, panicked, lifts one of his feet up, revealing the handgun behind his shoe- in one deft movement, he slides it across the floor with another CLATTER. Guard 1 makes one last, desperate lunge as it slides, spinning, into Leah's waiting hand-

With another BANG, the guard's dive ends at Doyle's feet, a hole directly above his eyebrow. Leah, catching her breath, pushes herself to her feet, holding one wrist as she eyes the bodies. Doyle is staring at them, too, briefly, before the pair look at each other. Leah blinks at him, impassively, before dragging her eyes down and searching the guard at his feet.

LEAH
Big risk.

DOYLE
A-Always liked high rolling.

LEAH
You had no reason to think I wasn't
here to kill you.

DOYLE
You're a lady? Not a bomb? Must mean
you care about SOMEONE in this
elevator being not dead.

LEAH
Fair enough.

Leah stands, holding the security fob that she waves before the cuffs. They BEEP, and Doyle lets his arms fall to his sides, with a relieved sigh and a roll of his shoulders. Leah collects guard 2's ammo, reloads the gun, grabs her knife, and shrugs the coat off.

DOYLE
Whew. Appreciate the rescue.

LEAH
I don't do rescues. Consider it a long-form interrogation.

DOYLE
(sighing)
I don't think I've met a person in the
last six years that's been happy to
see me.

Leah crouches down on the floor, running a finger along the seam of the magnetic plate.

LEAH
Electromagnetic. There'll be a way to
get this off, for maintenance...

She retracts her finger suddenly as the metallic plate hisses and pops out. Glancing up, she notes that Doyle is on one knee by the elevator panel, having already removed its faceplate and started fiddling with all manner of wires on the inside.

LEAH

Handy guy.

DOYLE

Years of experience.

With a grunt, she lifts the plate out of the floor. Along with it comes an enormous battery and exposed machinery and wiring on the back. Some are plugged into the cavity in the elevator floor it leaves, and those she rips out easily. The bottom of the cavity is actually open to the elevator shaft, and a cold chill starts seeping out of it as Leah reaches her hand down into the abyss. We see her blindly opening a panel on the outer bottom of the elevator and ripping out even more wires. Behind her, Doyle scoffs.

DOYLE

You know we're about a foot from my floor? With all the guards? Talk about cutting it close.

LEAH

Intentional. This electromagnetic plate is fancy and all, but you'd be shocked-

DOYLE

-how much it fucks with your run-of-the-mill ferromagnetic outer elevator doors. Huh. By why not stop on another floor?

LEAH

So we don't trip failsafes. And the fall won't kill us.

DOYLE

What f-

Leah yanks her wire-laden hand back inside as the elevator screeches, lurches, and plummets approximately twenty feet. She, Doyle, the bodies, and everything in the elevator is lifted off the ground, into the ceiling, and drops back into the ground, roughly. Doyle has to push guard 1's body off of him, and he spits out a tooth and a bit of blood.

DOYLE

Fuck! A little warning?!

Leah is already back on her feet, gritting her teeth as she slices the sleeves off her labcoat, tying it around her

broken wrist.

LEAH

I'll go first. Stay behind me, don't wander off. There's a hole in the corner of the elevator shaft, it leads into the prison's sewer.

DOYLE

How the hell do you know that, Shawshank?

LEAH

Because I crawled up and opened it myself a week ago- quit your whining. I wasn't kidding when I said the NBDI wants your head.

Leah lowers herself into the elevator cavity. Doyle crouches by its edge and looks down into it.

DOYLE

And you aren't okay with that, because...you want me to go public?

Leah pokes her head out of the cavity, blinking. Doyle blinks back.

DOYLE

About the NBDI? Looking for government-sanctioned terrorists? Maybe a whole network of them?

Leah looks Doyle dead in the eye as we close in on them.

LEAH

I'm part of the network. We reduce population centers. The government sanctioned us and forgot about us. The network's gone dark on me- and they reduced a lot of people before they did. That says to me, they saw it coming, and they got their work done ahead of time. If any group knows something, it's the NBDI.

She grabs Doyle's shoulder.

LEAH

You got imprisoned for exposing the NBDI investigating my network. You're

getting freed so you can help me
investigate the NDBI right back.

Leah vanishes down the hole again. Doyle is momentarily
paralyzed before.

DOYLE

Well...trying to be a good guy never
got me anywhere. So...

with a dejected shake of his head, he follows.

Black screen.

DOYLE

What the hell?

FADE OUT.