

Necrolepsy

a Kev Dooley incident

EXT. BIG PHARMA LAB - DAY, SUNSET

A modern, uninspired monstrosity of glass, metal, and bleached concrete set amongst carefully manicured landscaping.

BRIAN (30s, m), absentminded, sloppily dressed, jogs past a sign with a modern, geometric, and indecipherable logo.

He pulls up at the front doors and fumbles with his employee badge, he swipes it angrily at a badge reader.

ANNOYED BEEP

A red light winks.

He groans. Tries again.

Same result.

Fuck it. He tries another door.

CLICK

Finally! He yanks the door open and stomps inside.

INT. STERILIZATION HALLWAY - DAY

Severe, high tech vibes, steel and tile. Several hazmat suits line one wall.

Brian frantically throws his bag and belongings in a locker, glancing at the wall clock.

BRIAN
Shit, shit, shit.
She's gonna kill me.

Brian tugs on a lab coat and pats himself down, checking for empty pockets and his badge before rushing through the door.

INT. LAB - FOLLOWING

White, sterile rows of workstations, populated by only one other lab tech, her hands inside an isolation glove box.

CAROLINE (30s, F), her tidy bun completes her orderly appearance as she scowls in concentration.

Next to the box is a tray with several neatly organized bottles of chemicals.

CAROLINE
Late again Bri.
(MORE)

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
I couldn't wait any longer if
we're going to get through three
cultures tonight.

BRIAN
Yeah, yeah. I know. Still
narcolepsy tests, right?

CAROLINE
Yup. New compound though. Data
sheet is over there. Looks
aggressive.

She motions with her head, he looks that direction, scoops up
and scans through the clipboard of papers.

He walks as he reads, oblivious to the fact that his unbuttoned
lab coat is trailing across the counter top.

BRIAN
Oh... This explains the protocols
reminder email.

Caroline glances at the unkempt and sweaty Brian who barely
navigates around a stool as he reads deeper.

CAROLINE
Yeah... that explains it.

BRIAN
Hey, be careful in there. At these
concentrations that stuff will
metabolize fast.

CAROLINE
About that... you gonna glove in
and give me a hand sometime today?

Brian is yanked out of his reading and springs into action.

He tosses the clipboard skittering across the counter where
bumps into the isolation box with an ominous **CLACK**.

He hustles around the counter, opposite Caroline, fiddles with
the box's built-in gloves and finally gets in position to work.

CAROLINE
Easy... Double check the condenser
before I start the reaction.

Brian fiddles with the equipment for a moment and starts to nod
before his face contorts and his eyes go wide.

CAROLINE

Oh for fucks sake. Did you forget
your Claritin again?

Brian answers with a ridiculously loud, unrestrained sneeze, snot flying straight into Caroline's horrified face.

She jerks back, ripping her hands from the gloves.

The box teters over the edge, the clipboard flies to the floor.

Brian pulls the box sideways as he stands, both yanking his hands out and sneezing again.

Caroline lunges for a nearby box of tissues, sending her stool rolling away as she wipes her face.

CAROLINE

Why are you like this?

Brian rushes around to her, tripping over the stool. Almost crashing into the chemicals, he barely catches himself.

He turns to her with a sheepish smile, suddenly unsure exactly how he was going to help.

BRIAN

Oh, you know... genius IQ, too
much weed, therapy by ChatGPT...

Thinking he's moved into charming, Brian props one arm on the isolation box and leans against it.

It immediately slips off the counter under his weight and crashes to the ground at Caroline's feet.

A **CRACK** as the box splits down the center and a **FIZZLE** as the chemicals inside mix in an uncontrolled fashion.

Caroline stares as a cloud of gas envelops her head.

Brian, also frozen, stares, mouth agape.

Caroline looks up, her angry face pulling into a rictus of rage and bared teeth as the whites of her eyes flood with blood.

Brian backs up slowly, raising his hands up in surrender.

A low **GROWL** seeps from Caroline as she advances on him.

Brian has just enough time to loose a shocked, painful **SCREAM** as she lunges at him.

SLAM TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. OLD, SHITTY CAR - DAY

SUPER: One Year Later

ALYX, late 20s, nonbinary, leaning femme. They wear a long sleeve tee under their scrubs and rock out to MOTHER, MOTHER.

Idyllic golden hour light bathes the car's interior as they run their fingers through their purple and blue hair.

A ringing replaces the song.

They fumble one-handed to answer.

ALYX
Hey mom! What's up?

MOM (O.S.)
Just checking on you sweetie.
Need anything before your finals?

Alyx glances at their backpack.

ALYX
Just need the patients to sleep,
so I can study tonight.

The car slows as they flip on a turn signal.

EXT. ROAD TO FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Endless cornfields beside Alyx as they wait for a semi to turn.

Rows of identical warehouses loom across the road.

MOM
I really hate you working way out
there. It's so isolated...

INT. OLD, SHITTY CAR - CONTINUOUS

Alyx rolls their eyes and makes the turn.

ALYX
I know. But I'm fine. Love ya
mom. Gotta go!

MOM
Ok, call if you--

ON THE PHONE

Zero bars. The call dies.

MOTHER, MOTHER resumes.

EXT. SLEEP STUDY FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Alyx parks at a nondescript brick building. In contrast to the pharma lab, this facility feels worn down and barely funded.

INT. OLD, SHITTY CAR - CONTINUOUS

Alyx digs through their bag to retrieve a name badge.

The textbook *Basic Principles of Ophthalmic Surgery* peeks out of their bag.

Badge in hand, they grab their bag.

EXT. SLEEP STUDY FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Bag slung, they hop out of the car and head toward the door.

A rumble of **THUNDER** gives them pause.

They peep the sky: angry clouds roll in to cover the sunset.

INT. SLEEP STUDY FACILITY, LOBBY - EVENING

A tiny, deserted waiting room filled with older furniture.

Over Alyx's head are shiny new maglocks for the exterior door.

On one wall, a window, and on the other side a desk with a bubbly, hyper femme RECEPTIONIST (30s, F).

BUBBLY RECEPTIONIST

Hey Alyx! It's been a crazy day.
Lisa wants to see you ASAP!

ALYX

Crazy, huh? Couldn't sleep or
couldn't wake up?

BUBBLY RECEPTIONIST

Oh, not the patients! Lots of
changes! Lisa will fill you in.

ALYX

Hey, how'd your kid's audition go?
They get the lead?

BUBBLY RECEPTIONIST
 Nope. Ensemble. Probably a better
 fit... Thanks for remembering!

Alyx nods as they pull one side of the double doors. Nothing.
 The receptionist's eyes widen as she remembers her new button.

BUBBLY RECEPTIONIST
 Oh, I got it!

A **CLICK** and it finally opens.

INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of the door, a CONTRACTOR (40s, m),
 screwdriver in hand, stumbles back as Alyx squeezes by.

They notice the contractor as he installs a badge reader.

ALYX
 (to the receptionist)
 Fancy new locks, huh?

BUBBLY RECEPTIONIST
 And more! We went high tech!

INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A perfunctory knock as Alyx slips in and plops into a chair.

ALYX
 Hey, hey! Busy day...

Behind the cramped desk in an office crowded with over stuffed
 bookshelves, sits the site director LISA (40s, F), who holds a
 small camera up to her eye.

Next to her, a TECH INTEGRATOR (30s, M) monitors her progress
 on a tablet.

LISA
 Just a sec...

INTEGRATOR
 Actually we're all done. Thanks
 for your time.

He takes his camera back and exits.

Lisa lets her hair down and straightens her barely office-
 appropriate blouse.

LISA
 Lot's going on. Indeed.

ALYX
The grant went through, huh?

LISA
Yeah, a while ago, but the
integration company suddenly had
an opening for the install.

Which is good, because the study
tonight required some of these
updated systems.

ALYX
Are we clear to run it? I kinda
need the hours.

LISA
The've got to take Dennis's
retinal scan, but said everything
should be ready after that.

Alyx is visibly relieved.

LISA
Speaking of Dennis... he let me
know that, in his words, "He's
getting too damn old for
overnights."

Alyx sits up, suddenly worried about what that means for them.

LISA
So we're looking to make a few
changes. Dennis recommended you
take over the overnight studies.

ALYX
Whoa. For real?

LISA
Absolutely. And I agree. Of course
it'll mean less time studying
during your shift...

Alyx hesitates. Time to study is the reason she took the gig.

ALYX
Uh, yeah, of course.
Ummm... I just don't know if I'm
leadership material, ya know?

LISA
Let's do this, shadow Dennis
tonight and see what you think.

ALYX
Yeah... sounds good.

A **ding** on Lisa's computer grabs her attention and Alyx pushes to their feet to head toward the door. Lisa remembers one last thing.

LISA
Before you go, make sure Dennis knows there's a master control in here in case there's any issues with the new system.

She swivels a shiny new touch panel on her desk toward Alyx.

LISA
Dennis' badge will get you in. I've got a date tonight, but call if you need any help...

Oh shit... my date!

Lisa looks at the time and flies into a frenzy of panicked packing before she bolts to the door.

LISA
I'm gonna be late!

Giggling at the chaos, Alyx follows Lisa out.

By the door they cheerily punch a new oversized red button next to a small touch panel.

INT. BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alyx slips past an integrator packing up his gear and cuts a beeline for a clunky analog time clock on the wall.

DENNIS (60s, m), grandfatherly, cardigan over a tie and slacks, a certain sadness about him, looks up from his clipboard.

A heavy CLUNK as Alyx punches a paper time card.

DENNIS
Oh hey. We're not using that anymore. Use this.

He holds out a replacement badge on a lanyard, points to a kiosk with a digital time readout and a badge reader.

DENNIS
Just hit "Time In" and swipe the badge. You talk to Lisa yet?

Alyx nods as they snag the badge.

A **BEEP** as they clock themselves in.

ALYX
Yeah... You really think I'm
supervisor material?

Pride floods Dennis' eyes and bearing.

DENNIS
You know anyone else that can keep
the other two on task?

They share a chuckle about their coworkers as half of "the other two" barges in:

NOAH (30s, m), their EEG tech who looks like a gym bro stuffed in a too-small lab coat.

NOAH
Can you believe this? The
contractors are leaving without
tying in the networking.

DENNIS
What's not working? I'll have them
get it online before they leave.

Noah crosses to the table and fishes a protein bar out of a basket in the center.

NOAH
Everything works. I just can't
monitor it yet.

DENNIS
You can't monitor the EEGs?

NOAH
No, the new security stuff. Don't
worry. I'll get it running.

Frustrated, Noah waves off Dennis as he unwraps his protein bar and heads back out.

Alyx giggles. Dennis just looks confused.

DENNIS
Is that even his job?

ALYX
He thinks all the tech is his
job... but he's pretty smart...
How bad could it be?

Dennis pushes to his feet with an old man's sigh.

DENNIS
Ready when you are!

Alyx stashes their bag in a cubby hole along the wall. They dig something from the bag and turn, holding it behind their back.

ALYX
Hey, real quick... I know it's
been a tough year for you...

Dennis' posture and demeanor droops, he hates feeling pitied.

ALYX
...I know you don't really want to
talk about losing Janet, but I
also know you had a big Italy trip
planned for your anniversary...

Dennis holds up a hand as his eyes get misty.

ALYX
...anyway, I know you haven't
decided whether or not to do the
trip solo, but I thought you'd
enjoy this if you do...

They produce the hidden item: a small notebook with a stylized map of Italy and the words "Wine Passport" splashed across it.

Dennis lights up, wiping away tears turned happy with one hand while, accepting the notebook with the other.

Alyx holds their arms out.

ALYX
Hug?

Dennis just nods and Alyx wraps him in a friendly hug.

DENNIS
(muffled by Alyx's shoulder)
Thank you.

The hug ends and he stuffs the passport in his back pocket.

DENNIS
We should probably get started...

ALYX
Lead the way!

Dennis strides out with a new spring in his step, Alyx in tow.

INT. NURSES STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Like the center of a wheel, several hallways meet here, giving access to most of the facility from a central location.

The greenish white walls are dingy, but the lighting is bright and everything seems in good repair.

There is a long counter and behind it a cluttered desk with several workstations.

Behind the desk is the second half of "the other two": ZURI (40s, F), a licensed nurse practitioner and a petite, anxious woman who looks like she hasn't slept much lately.

A bright pink hoodie over her scrubs, she's currently engrossed with whatever she's typing on her phone.

Dennis and Alyx come around the corner, mid-conversation, and startle Zuri, who almost drops said phone.

DENNIS

--so feel free to run with that.

ZURI

Oh! Hey! Uh... Is all this new stuff really necessary?

Zuri nervously motions toward freshly installed cameras. Dennis shrugs.

DENNIS

It is if we want to run the study tonight.

ZURI

I just hate the idea of someone watching us...

DENNIS

Can't say I'm a fan. Do you have the patient profiles ready?

Zuri nods and hands over a packet of papers.

Dennis hands them straight to Alyx who scans through quickly.

DENNIS

Got another copy?

ZURI

No, but I can print one out...
Wait, why do they need a copy?

ALYX
Actually... can I have a tablet?

DENNIS
Alyx is shadowing me tonight.
We're gonna see if they like
running these things.

Zuri huffs as she looks through the clutter on the desk to locate a tablet. She finds one and shoves it toward Alyx.

Alyx hands the papers back to Dennis, takes the device, logs in and follows along as Zuri continues.

ZURI
So anyway... We've got Phase 1 of
a narcolepsy med test.

ALYX
Got it. All healthy, no
narcoleptics.

ZURI
Right. And familiar faces mostly.

Dennis skims for the names.

DENNIS
Brody, Lauren, and... Tom.

ALYX
Brody? Ugh. Hey... Can you have
the "can't sleep with a gun" talk
with him this time?

DENNIS
Only if you keep Lauren calm
enough to finish a session.

ALYX
Deal.

ZURI
Ten bucks says she won't make it.

Alyx stifles a chuckle.

ALYX
What won't you bet on?

DENNIS
And the drug?

ZURI

Really promising. Animal trials went well. Stimulates hypocretin production to keep them awake.

DENNIS

(to Alyx)

Which means we need to be on the look out for what as side effects?

ALYX

Ummm... Increased appetite and...

They giggle. Dennis gives a stern look before relenting.

DENNIS

Arousal. But also aggression and impulsivity. Let's bring 'em in.

They head toward the...

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The three aforementioned patients are now waiting in the previously empty room:

* BRODY: 60s, m, oversized, grey hair, cargo pants, and his best fishing shirt. He studies the maglocks and nods his approval.

* LAUREN: Shy and nervous. A 3rd grade teacher in her 30s. She wears a muted multi-colored sweater and sits, reading what could only be the sequel to Brian's trashy romance novel.

* TOM: A tall, lanky middle-aged man with a retreating hairline who could be friendly and thoughtful or the serial killer next door. He chats at the receptionist through her window.

TOM

So you're going to want to rinse the quinoa until there's no suds--

Alyx and Dennis stroll in from the hallway.

DENNIS

Oh good, you're all here.

Brody turns from the locks and moves to the center of the room, ready to take charge. Lauren dog-ears her spot in her book.

BRODY

Looks like y'all are finally getting some decent security around here.

DENNIS

Indeed. There's also been some changes to your study rooms that we'll go over shortly.

Lauren bristles at the thought of changes.

Alyx takes a couple steps forward to set a hand on Lauren's shoulder. Lauren looks up and gets a small smile from Alyx.

TOM

Hey doc! Good to see you. We sleeping or staying awake tonight?

DENNIS

Great to see you Tom. Alyx'll let you know what to expect tonight.

ALYX

Yeah, so tonight is checking to see how a new narcolepsy med works in healthy adults...

Brody puffs up his chest and smiles.

ALYX

This drug is designed to stimulate the production of certain brain chemicals. These help you feel alert, but also may affect your appetite and other... umm...

DENNIS

...other bodily rhythms. So, to answer your question Tom: awake. Now, if you'll all follow me, we'll take you to your rooms.

Dennis turns and leaves, Brody and Tom fall in line.

Lauren stays put and nervously plays with her hair.

ALYX

Hey, how're you feeling tonight?

LAUREN

I'm fine. I just... I was tired for days with the last one...

ALYX

No worries! This is a daily dosage, it should wear off in a few hours.

(MORE)

ALYX (CONT'D)

Just get some good sleep when you
leave and you'll be right as rain.

More hair fidgeting before a heavy sigh.

LAUREN

Ok... well... if you're sure?

Lauren looks for reassurance.

Alyx, all smiles, moves to help her up.

Lauren weakly returns the smile and lets Alyx lead her.

Alyx waves to the receptionist on their way to the doors.

ALYX

I think that means we're good for
the night. Thanks!

BUBBLY RECEPTIONIST

No problem! I'm going to head out.

ALYX

'Kay! Have a good night!

Alyx and Lauren pass through the doors.

As they swing shut, the lock engages with a thick **CLACK**.

INT. PATIENT ATRIUM - NIGHT

The end of the hallway opens to a broad space with several
windowed doors.

Everyone listens as Dennis goes over changes.

DENNIS

So, from this vantage point
there's not much difference other
than these badge readers.

He steps to the nearest door and swipes his badge.

A green light.

The **CLACK** of the releasing lock.

DENNIS

Instead of deadbolts with keys,
these allow the shift supervisor
to quickly open your door if
needed.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)
 All openings are automatically
 logged and require a medical
 reason or the study is
 invalidated.

Lauren looks from the badge reader to Dennis, panic mounting.

DENNIS
 Not to worry. You have an override
 button in your room.
 You can leave at any time.

Lauren nods, but doesn't exactly calm down.

Alyx steps up to escort her to a door marked with the number 3.

ALYX
 I promise, you're completely safe.

Alyx swipes their badge.

A red light.

An **ANRGY NOISE**

They try again. Same result.

ALYX
 Right. Supervisor.
 That's still Dennis.

Dennis steps over, badges the door open.

DENNIS
 (to Tom and Brody)
 While Alyx gets Lauren settled in,
 let's get you two started.
 Brody, you're in 1. Tom take 5.

INT. LAUREN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A tiny, almost motel-like room with a twin bed, a chair, a small desk, and an overflowing snack basket.

There's a door in the back with a picture of a toilet on it.

They enter. Lauren immediately scans for the override button.

Alyx pulls the door shut and motions for Lauren to open it.

Lauren smacks the button, the lock **CLACKS** and she pushes the door open, relief on her face.

ALYX
All good?

Lauren perches on the bed's edge, deep breaths, then she nods.
Alyx motions to an intercom panel with a gooseneck mic.

ALYX
As always, we're just a call away.

LAUREN
Yeah. Ok, ok. Let's do this.

INT. BRODY'S ROOM - SAME

An identical room.

Brody thumbs distractedly through the ridiculous amount of snacks set out for one night.

Dennis clears his throat and gives him a stern look.

DENNIS
I assume we don't need to have the
gun talk again?

Brody scans the room, clocks the camera overhead.

BRODY
Nope! Heard ya loud and clear last
time. No firearms on the premises.

Dennis is visibly relieved.

DENNIS
Great. Get settled. Noah will be
by to hook you up to the EEG and
then Zuri will get your vitals and
administer the meds for tonight.

Dennis leaves as Brody turns his back to the camera, pulls a small revolver from a pocket, and slips it under his pillow.

INT. PATIENT ATRIUM - FOLLOWING

Alyx and Dennis pop out of their respective rooms at the same time. They meet at Tom's door.

DENNIS
It's all you kid. I'll go make
sure Zuri and Noah are ready.

INT. TOM'S ROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom lounges comfortably as Alyx enters.

His shoes are side by side under the chair, his jacket draped over the back.

TOM
Hey there! Did someone get a promotion?

ALYX
Yeah, I suppose I did. Any questions about tonight?

TOM
Nope! I trust ya Doc.

ALYX
Not a doctor!

TOM
Not yet!

Alyx gives a smile and slips from the room.

INT. LISA'S CAR - NIGHT

Cornfields fly by as Lisa races back towards town.

She checks her makeup in her compact's mirror from its uneasy perch on her steering wheel.

She is mid-conversation, game-planning with her best friend about tonight over the phone's connection to the car.

LISA
Sure he booked *Joie de Vivre* but he can be fancy AND a creep. Text me at eight?

LISA'S FRIEND (O.S.)
Obvi. But I got a good feeling. I know you'll send the all clear...

A truck horn **BLARES**.

Lisa slams on her brakes.

A semi **ROARS** across the intersection, inches from Lisa's car.

Shaken, she sheepishly peeps the stop sign in front of her.

INT. BRODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Brody is stretched out on his bed, rubber EEG headband in place, while Zuri preps meds at the desk.

She glances at the camera and then moves to block both Brody and the camera.

She swipes the meds off the cart and puts them in her right pocket. From her left she pulls a different bottle of meds.

This one has the same logo from the pharma lab in the opening.

She drops two pills from the new bottle into a small paper cup, picks up the cup and a tablet, and turns to Brody.

ZURI

You've got water, right?

Brody digs up a water bottle from next to him on the bed and waves it at her.

Zuri hands him the pills and then notes the time he swallows them on her tablet.

ZURI

Make yourself comfortable. I have to lock you in now.

He waves dismissively and Zuri takes her tray out the door.

INT. ATRIUM - NIGHT

Zuri exits Brody's room, closes the door, and heads towards Lauren's. Noah comes out of Tom's.

Alyx and Dennis stand in the middle of the room as they review documents on Alyx's tablet.

NOAH

Everyone has their EEG up and running.

Zuri crosses from Lauren's room to Tom's.

DENNIS

Thanks Noah. Alyx, when Zuri finishes with Tom, make sure all three times are logged here...

Alyx nods as Zuri comes out of Tom's room and pulls the door shut behind her.

ZURI

Well, that's all of them.

Dennis tugs each door to make sure they're locked.

DENNIS

And we're off! Let's head back.

Alyx punches in data as they all head to the nurses' station.

INT. BRODY'S ROOM - SAME

Brody paces, clearly agitated.

He scratches at his EEG headband and checks the snacks again.

He plucks out a candy bar and ruthlessly devours it.

INT. TOM'S ROOM - SAME

Tom is completely unaffected and settles down to sleep.

The lights on his headband wink as nonchalantly as he seems.

INT. LAUREN'S ROOM - SAME

Lauren, still on the edge of the bed, sucks down deep breaths.

She compulsively twirls her hair, which tugs her EEG monitor off kilter with each twist.

INT. NURSE'S STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Zuri and Noah slide behind the desk, wake up their computers and log in, bringing up their specific monitoring programs.

Zuri's shows camera feeds of each patient's room with overlays for heart rate and blood pressure.

Noah's tracks the graph of each patient's brain activity.

Dennis leans back against the counter to flips through his clipboard.

Alyx continues out the other side of the room.

ALYX

Gonna grab my bag. Be right back!

Dennis waves distractedly while Zuri takes off her hoodie, drapes it over her chair and digs her phone out of a pocket.

She brings up a basketball game, a commentator's voice blares:

BASKETBALL COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Sixers up by 12, but there's a lot
of game left...