Spike Train

INT. STONE-WALLED ROOM - NO DEFINITE TIME

A naked DEAD MAN, wrists tied, dangling from the ceiling.

A few feet away, AGENT, clean-cut, young-faced, stares
defiantly at the body. Bleary-eyed, tense, disturbed.

Behind him, a MAN IN A DARK SUIT waits patiently.

                    AGENT
          Do we have any leads? Anything?

                    SUIT
          No.
              (beat)
          OK. There's a shot in the dark. I
          could call Washington. They've got
          those guys in the basement.

                    AGENT
          Ah God. The ones who read minds?

                    SUIT
          They've solved fifteen murders,
          including two serial killers. But
          if you don't think it's worth it...

A short silence.

                    AGENT
          Pack up the body. Tell them we'll
          be there in two hours.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - TWO HOURS LATER

A labyrinth of tall steel shelves, stuffed with wires,
computer parts, and discarded technology.

THREE MEN with white coats and wild, unkempt hair play poker
around a small table. Electrodes stick to their temples.
Wires run from their heads to laptop computers.

                    JACK HIGH
          Ready to play, gentlemen?

                    PAIR OF THREES
          You got nothing. Jack high.

                    ACES OVER SEVENS
          I concur. I see Jack, eight -

                    PAIR OF THREES
          Five, ten, deuce.

                         JACK HIGH
              You're right. It's a flush.

PAIR OF THREES grins at JACK HIGH, showing off a cascade of
numbers on his laptop. ACES OVER SEVENS frowns perpetually.

                         PAIR OF THREES
              You're lying, baby.

                         JACK HIGH
              Put up or shut up. I know you've
              got a lousy pair of threes. And
              he's face cards over sevens.

                         PAIR OF THREES
              Aces over sevens. Don't get lazy.

                         ACES OVER SEVENS
              I'm not revealing anything until we
              start the bid.

                         AGENT (O.S.)
              Excuse me?

Agent walks into the light. A LAB TECH follows him, wheeling
a gurney. A white sheet covers a human-sized lump.

                         PAIR OF THREES
              Oh, yeah, they said you was coming.

                         AGENT
              I'm Agent-

                         JACK HIGH
              Uh! Um-

Jack High indicates a sign on the wall. Large block letters
read: BEYOND THIS POINT - NO NAMES.

                         PAIR OF THREES
              I been working with them two years
              now and I don't even know their
              names. Ain't that right, smiley?

He jabs Aces Over Sevens on the arm, who recoils.

                         AGENT
              All right. I need information out
              of this man.

Agent whips away the sheet. It is the dead man.

The three technicians rip the electrodes off their heads and
whisk the gurney into the center of the room.

                    JACK HIGH
          I'll run control from my station.

Aces Over Sevens pours a bottle of thick, honey-colored
liquid over the dead man's forehead, and Pair of Threes
attaches electrodes and wires.

Agent follows Jack High into an adjacent room.

JACK HIGH'S STATION

is little more than a closet with a computer, microphone, and
TV monitor. On the monitor, the other two men prep the body.

                    JACK HIGH
               (into the microphone)
          We're ready in here.

                    ACES OVER SEVENS (O.S.)
          There's no information about the
          victim. What are we looking for?

                    AGENT
          This case is highly classified.
          Can I...ask him a few questions?

                    PAIR OF THREES (O.S.)
          What does this look like, a goddamn
          Ouija board?

                    ACES OVER SEVENS (O.S.)
          We stimulate the subject's neurons
          electrically and search for
          recurrent network patterns. Or a
          single neural path, a spike train.

                    PAIR OF THREES (O.S.)
          He's ready. Juice him up.

IN THE LAB

Aces Over Sevens flips a circuit breaker. The dead man's
eyelids flutter rapidly. The laptops flood with numbers.

                    ACES OVER SEVENS
          I've got a possible map. Active
          hippocampus. He's full of fresh,
          highly intense memories.

                    PAIR OF THREES
          Guy was tortured to death. This is
          a mess. Hey, little help here?

IN JACK HIGH'S STATION

Jack High wheels on Agent.

                    JACK HIGH
          Agent, his neural paths are
          deteriorating. Give us anything.

                    AGENT
          Like what?

                    JACK HIGH
          Numbers and colors are easiest,
          letters and words are harder. What
          piece of information would help you
          crack this case? Maybe an intense
          thought from the moment he died.

Agent thinks quickly.

                    AGENT
          Look for a series of three letters
          followed by at most four numbers.

                    JACK HIGH
          You hear that, gentlemen?

IN THE LAB

Pair of Threes studies his computer, shaking his head.

                    PAIR OF THREES
          Isolating letters is gonna take too-

                    ACES OVER SEVENS
          Wait. Wait. Look at the third
          octant. We've got two competing
          language centers.

                    PAIR OF THREES
          Son of a bitch was bilingual.

IN JACK'S STATION

Jack High types furiously at his keyboard.

                    JACK HIGH
          I see it! The other alphabet is
          Cyrillic or Arabic. I'm filtering
          it. Somebody find the sequence.

                    PAIR OF THREES (O.S.)
          I got it! Roman letters. P, H, L-

                         JACK HIGH
               One-five-seven-three-got it! P-H-L
               one-five-seven-three!

Agent is already dialing his cell phone.

                         AGENT
               We got it. Flight to Philadelphia,
               fifteen seventy three. Stop the
               flight. Good. Detain the
               passengers. You're looking for two
               Middle-Eastern men. They will
               likely be carrying liquid
               explosives. I'll be there soon.

He shuts the phone. Jack High's victory smile fades.

IN THE LAB

Aces Over Sevens continues to map the brain.

                         ACES OVER SEVENS
               We're losing cohesion. Clouds. He
               was thinking about clouds.

Agent strides in and motions to the lab tech. The tech tears
the body free of the electrodes and rolls it out of the room.

                         PAIR OF THREES
               This ain't no serial killer victim.
               He was interrogated.

Jack High bursts into the room from his station.

                         JACK HIGH
               Stop! Who is this man? How did he
               die? Did your people do this?

But Agent walks steadily out of the room, never looking back,
leaving the three men stunned in his wake.

FLASHBACK - STONE-WALLED ROOM

Agent looks up into the dead man's face one last time. He
swallows, and the emotion dies on his face.

He walks out into a bright office corridor. A sign reads:

PRISONER DETENTION CELL 47
BEYOND THIS POINT - NO NAMES.

                                        FADE TO BLACK.