

THE ABERRATIONIST

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OW #183424

FADE IN:

INT. DARK BUNKER - DAY

A MAN WEARING A WELDING HEAD SHIELD AND LAB COAT, surrounded by darkness... His face can't be seen through the visor's glass... Flowing silver hair protrudes out of his helmet...

The helmet lights up with an orange glow... Sparks are flying around him... He's creating something...

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- His gloved hands pull a long, thick steel wire out of a spool

-- He feeds the long crooked wire into a machine fitted with a guidewheel, which sucks it into its narrow passageway, and pumps it out on the other end as a long straightened needle

-- He slices the needle using a cutter, dividing it into two long needles

-- He repeats the process at another end, making one needle that's just a few inches long

-- He feeds one end of the short needle into a machine with grinding and overhead wheels that revolve in opposite directions

-- Sparks fly as the two rotating wheels bear down on its tip, grinding it to a point

-- He repeats the process with the other tip of the needle, feeding it into the rotating wheels, and generating more sparks as it's ground to a point as well

-- He feeds the needle into a pressing machine, which spins around, and shapes the steel into a corkscrew spiral

-- A stamping machine punctures a hole in the center to create a make it one with two corkscrew heads, now a double-spiral needle

-- He holds it in the open palm of his gloved hand... then clutches it tightly... It's ready

CUT TO BLACK.

SFX: HEART BEATING LOUDLY ON BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTOR'S DEN - NIGHT

THE CAPTIVE WOMAN, 40's, cries... Her face is covered in bruises and cuts... Her breathing is so heavy, it almost crushes her chest with each contraction...

She's tied to a surgery bed, placed in the center of a damp, dark room with bloodstained walls... Her clothes are shredded and burnt...

She fixates on something in a corner of the room... Someone is approaching her...

THE CAPTOR's face can't be seen in the dark... Only his hand, which emerges out of the shadows holding a dental gag...

He wears the same lab coat as the man with the face shield... Same flowing silver hair... It must be him...

His walk towards her is slow, methodical...

His flip flops brush by blood stained surgical tools scattered on the ground... Must have been torture devices that she endured earlier...

He sits on the edge of her bed...

He lodges the gag into her mouth, expanding it...

He brings out a match... lights it...

And THROWS IT IN...

She lets out a distinctive LONG, PIERCING SCREAM...

DR. NERO (V.O.)  
(furious)  
God damn it, Arthur, you're sick!

INT. THERAPY AT DR. NERO'S OFFICE - DAY

ARTHUR HALLORAN, mid to late 40's, sits dejected... The shirt collar under his stonewashed denim trench coat is loose... Bloodshot eyes, puffy bags, disheveled hair... A portrait of insomnia...

DR. NERO (O.S.)  
I'm tired of handling you with kid  
gloves.

A blister pack of orange pills is SMACKED DOWN on the table in front of him, joining an assortment of papers and other medicine...

The psychiatrist, DR. NERO, 20's, sits at the other end of the table, opposite Arthur...

This is unlike any therapist ever seen before... A flannel shirt with cut-off sleeves and denim jeans wrap snugly around his fairly muscular build... An impressive fire-breathing dragon tattoo is scrawled across his right arm...

He's visibly upset... The sun-shaped tattoo circling his right eye adds another layer to his intensity...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
You and I both know these dreams  
are symptoms of something much  
deeper, so why are you resisting  
treatment?

ARTHUR  
That's not how I feel. I don't feel  
sick. I don't need treatment. I  
need answers.

DR. NERO  
Look at you. You look like you  
haven't slept in days.

ARTHUR  
I have slept. I've dreamt too.

DR. NERO  
Yeah, I know. The recurring dreams  
of a woman being tortured by a man  
with no face. I'm trying to help  
you with that. Why else do you  
think you're here?

This makes Arthur react, as if a sudden realization just dawned on him...

ARTHUR  
No.

DR. NERO  
What?

ARTHUR

They're not recurring. They're new.

DR. NERO

I don't follow. You said it's the same woman, same faceless guy torturing her, and the same method of torture every time.

ARTHUR

Same method. But new... session.

DR. NERO

How can you tell?

ARTHUR

The bruises and scars remain. I see the new ones added to her body. It's not the same dream every time. It's him, doing it to her all over again. I can see it.

Dr. Nero chuckles... then pinches the bridge of his nose, nursing a migraine...

He gets up and stands a few steps away from Arthur, giving him his back...

DR. NERO

Do you know what I see, Arthur?

Arthur can see his arms moving, but can't tell exactly what he is doing...

TISHHH

Sound of a match being struck...

A tiny swirl of grey smoke, similar to that of a struck match, ascends above Dr. Nero and vanishes in an instant...

He turns around to reveal a lit cigarette hanging from his mouth, but no match...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

I see a man who enjoys watching others suffer.

ARTHUR

No.

DR. NERO  
No? You tell me, how else am I  
supposed to rationalize your  
stubborn refusal to take your  
medication?

He takes a strong drag of his cigarette...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
Sounds to me like you wanna see  
that woman get tortured.

ARTHUR  
Well, you're wrong.

DR. NERO  
Come on, you can be honest with me.  
You enjoy seeing the blood drip  
down her body, don't you?

ARTHUR  
No. I don't.

DR. NERO  
It doesn't turn you on when she  
screams and begs for her life?

ARTHUR  
Stop.

DR. NERO  
Maybe you just enjoy watching her  
tied up and helpless?

ARTHUR  
Shut the fuck up.

DR. NERO  
Or is it her last breath that  
you're waiting to see?

Arthur FLIPS THE TABLE, sending its contents crashing to the  
floor, and pulls him by his flannel shirt's collar...

Dr. Nero shows his hands, no intention of fighting back...

ARTHUR  
I don't wanna see anyone in pain,  
you understand? I'm not that  
person. That's not me. I don't care  
how you rationalize it.

Dr. Nero slowly grabs Arthur's clinched fists and releases  
himself from their grip...

DR. NERO

Then why say no to the cure? Help me understand.

Arthur steps back... He paces around the office a bit...

ARTHUR

I took your pills before. Didn't work. Tell you the truth, part of me believes...

Arthur shakes his head, deciding against it...

DR. NERO

Tell me.

ARTHUR

Part of me believes that... they're not dreams... I... I think it's really happening.

DR. NERO

You think this woman is being tortured in real life?

ARTHUR

I worry that if I keep taking the medication, the dreams might stop. And then I'll never be able to find her.

DR. NERO

Find her? Do you know this woman? Have you seen her before?

ARTHUR

I don't think I have.

Dr. Nero sighs...

DR. NERO

Mmm. So how are you planning to find her then?

ARTHUR

I don't know. But those dreams are the only lead I have. I'm not throwing that away.

DR. NERO

Lead?

Dr. Nero laughs...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
Arthur, can't you see what's going  
on here?

Arthur can't...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
Remind me again what it is you do  
for a living.

ARTHUR  
You know what I do.

DR. NERO  
Right, you're a PI. You don't find  
it odd that you're treating these  
dreams like they're one of your  
cases?

ARTHUR  
I'm not insane. I know it's not a  
case.

DR. NERO  
I'm not saying you're insane, I'm  
saying your job is stressful. You  
have to look for evidence in  
everything and suspect everyone.  
And that is now seeping into your  
personal life and affecting your  
health.

He takes another drag and crosses his legs...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
OK, let's suppose she's real. Let's  
suppose she is being tortured. So  
what?

ARTHUR  
(incredulous)  
So what?

DR. NERO  
What's it to you? Why are you  
involved? You say you don't know  
her. She's not a relative or a  
friend or an acquaintance. So why  
have you made yourself in charge of  
rescuing her?

Arthur is listening...



DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Perhaps you don't know this, but no one expects you to solve every puzzle that comes your way. You're entitled to a simple, healthy life just like us. It's unfair for you to take more burden than your own.

His hands become more animated as he elaborates, more authoritative...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

And it can be that way for you. You can have a life with no fears. No frustrations. No feeling of helplessness or guilt. You can be you again. All you have to do...

He takes an orange pill from the mess on the floor and holds it up for Arthur to see...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Is take this pill. That's all you have to do. You're not the first to take it, and you won't be the last. Hell, I take it as well. We could all use a little orange pill.

Arthur takes the pill from his hand, eyeballing it... then eyeballs Dr. Nero...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

I know you're not the listening kind, so I'll just start at the end.

He reclines in his seat and points at the pill in Arthur's hand...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

If you don't take that pill, the dreams will get worse. You think they're bad now? I guarantee you, they will fester, and snowball, and mutate in your subconscious until they reach levels of depravity that you never thought were humanly possible. Don't say I didn't warn you.

He takes another drag and blows out... Swirls of grey smoke form around his face...

Arthur puts the pill in his coat's pocket... He turns around and heads to the door... stops... then turns back around...

Swirls of grey smoke now fill the entire room... An unusual amount that is impossible for one cigarette to emit...

Dr. Nero sits in the center of it all, unfazed... The cigarette still in his hand...

Arthur seems suspicious...

ARTHUR

Can I bum one of your matches? I'm all out.

DR. NERO

Hmm? No, I use a lighter.

He rubs his nose and clears his throat...

Then takes one last drag and puts out the cigarette in the ashtray...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

I didn't know you smoked.

They share a blank stare...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Listen, Arthur. I know I'm only your psychiatrist, but I truly, genuinely care about your wellbeing.

Arthur gives a half-hearted nod, not particularly convinced...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

I don't want you thinking that it's all about the job for me. It's not. Things can seem overwhelming at times. I get it. Just know that you have a supportive voice here for you. You're not alone.

RONNIE (V.O.)

What a load o' horse shit.

INT. DINER - DAY

RONNIE BROOT, 50's, a burly man of large physical stature, five o'clock shadow, sits at a table, squeezing an obscene amount of ketchup on his hearty meal...

He wears a crumpled trench coat, very old school detective style, in contrast to the denim trench coat of Arthur, who sits opposite him but without a plate...

The diner has only three other patrons, all men... One sits at the table behind Ronnie, his face tilted down as he reads a newspaper... Another sits behind Arthur, facing away... And one sits on the stool, also facing away from Arthur as he eats his meal...

RONNIE

The only thing that head cruncher will support is your neck, so he can open your mouth wide and stuff more poison down your throat.

ARTHUR

He was so adamant on me taking that pill. Something felt off.

A small smirk flashes on Ronnie's face, before his mouth opens to plow in more food...

RONNIE

It's how they get ya. Once you're in that cycle of addiction, you're never gonna get out. Just another money making scheme.

ARTHUR

I need to figure out what those dreams mean. I feel... stuck. Even when I'm awake, it's all I can think about.

RONNIE

What you need is a good case. Something to sink your teeth into. Then, you won't have time to go to all those sessions and talk about your feelings and crap. Speaking of which, we might have a new one.

Ronnie stops stuffing his face with food and reaches in his coat's pocket...

He brings out an overstuffed wallet and fishes around for something...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

This old guy, Mr. Siggy, wants us to meet him today. Nothing major, just some surveillance work. Thinks his wife is messing around.

(MORE)

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I took down his number. Hold on,  
it's in here somewhere...

Something falls out of the wallet and lands on the table,  
close to Arthur...

Ronnie tries grabbing it first but Arthur is too quick for  
him...

It's a drum-shaped wooden cutout with tiny tassels around  
it... In the center of the cutout are three carvings of tree  
tops next to each other, and a moon above them...

Arthur holds it for Ronnie to see...

ARTHUR

What is it?

RONNIE

Nothing. Give it back.

ARTHUR

(no chance)

What is it?

Ronnie's patience is quickly running thin...

RONNIE

It's not for you. And I want it  
back.

ARTHUR

You'll get it back. After you tell  
me what it is.

He eyes Arthur for a moment... then SWIPES at it but misses  
again, as Arthur quickly pulls it back beyond his reach...

RONNIE

Fine. Since you wanna know so  
badly. It's a map.

ARTHUR

I don't see any coordinates.

RONNIE

You see those three tree tops in  
the center? That's a visual guide.  
When you see them in front of you,  
then you've arrived at your  
destination.

ARTHUR

Destination of what?

Ronnie brings out a cigarette and a yellow lighter, the latter decorated with a funny cartoon image of a surprised blonde bombshell doing the 'o' face...

He looks left and right, then hunches all the way under the table until his face is out of Arthur's view...

Arthur looks in front... A 'NO SMOKING' sign on the wall... It must have been blocked from view when Ronnie was sitting up straight...

TICK TICK TICK

Sound of a lighter being struck several times...

TISSSSS

The lighter must have ignited...

Ronnie sits up straight again, the cigarette hanging from his mouth is now lit...

He places the lighter on the table, next to the wallet...

RONNIE

A while back, before you and I became partners, I was working this case. I met this weird guy. I think he was Native American or from one of those weird tribes or something, I don't know.

He rubs his chin...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, he told me he came from a long line of Shamans, and that he wants to hire me to track down some ancient items that belong to his ancestors. I told him, that's not exactly what I do but he persisted.

ARTHUR

Items like what? Drums?

RONNIE

That's what I asked. Figured it was some voodoo stuff. You know, like some head dress or shit like that. But then he told me they were stones.

ARTHUR

Stones?

RONNIE

He said they were a small group of stones with ancient runes written on them.

He takes a moment to collect his thoughts, dragging the hell out of that cigarette...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

And then... he told me exactly where I would find them. He said to look for a small group of rocks near some river bank.

He scratches his forehead...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

See now, this really fucked with my head. Why would this loon pay me to find something and then tell me exactly where to find it? But I figured, hey, none of my business. As long as he pays.

He taps his cigarette, flicking the ashes into his plate of finished food...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Then he just says... 'don't look at the water'. That's all. Didn't know what to make of it at the time. Anyway, so I drove to that river bank and sure enough, I found the stones with the letters on them.

He stares at Arthur...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Arthur, I...

He is overcome with emotion by now, the tough guy exterior is gone...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna lie to you. What I'm about to tell you is something I haven't told another soul. It still haunts me from time to time.

He takes a violent drag of that cigarette, almost in a trance... The swirls of grey smoke now increasing around him...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I picked up the stones and then,  
for some reason, for some god damn  
reason, I decided to peak down at  
the river... and I... I didn't see  
me.

ARTHUR

You didn't see your reflection?

RONNIE

I don't know. I saw my face... but  
it was like a different me...  
staring back. I'll never forget it.  
The other me looked... lost...  
scared... helpless.

ARTHUR

What did you do then?

RONNIE

I shook myself out of it. A couple  
of smacks across the head. Then I  
went back to the guy and handed him  
the stones. He took one look at me  
and said... 'why did you look in  
the water?'

ARTHUR

He knew.

RONNIE

But how? It's like he was seeing it  
on my face. I couldn't even speak.  
Ever since that day, I've been  
asking myself... who was that in  
the water? Is he me from another  
time? Is he the real me and I'm  
just... just...

He snaps himself out of it, taking another drag to restore  
his tough demeanor... He waves the cloud of smoke around him,  
making it dissipate...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, he gave me that drum map  
thing over there and told me if I  
ever needed help, I should use it  
to find him. That's where he'll be.

Arthur inspects the cutout again...

ARTHUR

Where exactly? In the woods?

RONNIE

I don't know. I never cared to find out... Now give it back.

Arthur eyes the cutout... then Ronnie... and stuffs it in his coat's pocket...

ARTHUR

I think I'll hold on to it for now.

Ronnie POUNDS the table, causing the plate to RATTLE...

RONNIE

God, damn it! Why are you doing this?

ARTHUR

I'll give it back later, don't worry. I may need it.

RONNIE

Need it for what?

ARTHUR

Answers.

RONNIE

Answers? There's no answers there, you fucking moron! Haven't you been listening?

Arthur doesn't offer a reply...

Ronnie is furious now...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

You wanna do this to yourself, fine. But let me tell you, that thing you just put in your pocket? That's not an answer. That's a fucking straightjacket. Pills and pudding at the psych ward. It's a downward spiral from which you don't come back up.

A pissed off Ronnie gets up, collecting his wallet and lighter, and fixing his coat...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

When you start believing things like this, things that don't follow a logical pattern, then you stop seeing evidence.

(MORE)



RONNIE (CONT'D)  
And when you can't see evidence,  
then you're useless as a PI.

He tosses the cigarette onto his plate...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
And I don't have useless partners.  
Let's go.

ARTHUR  
Where are we going?

RONNIE  
Mr. Siggy's house. It's a long way  
out in a crappy part of the city.  
I'll fill you in on the way.

Arthur gets up...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
But we gotta pass by my place  
first. There's something I gotta  
do.

He shoots a quick 'drop dead' look at his partner and heads  
out...

Arthur cautiously stares at him walking away...

INT. RONNIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Arthur and Ronnie enter the living room...

There's a sofa and an old timey TV set...

The TV is on, showing what looks like a close-up still of a  
Sheriff's boots with spurs...

RONNIE  
It'll only take a minute. Be right  
back.

Ronnie disappears into another room, leaving Arthur standing  
alone...

Arthur looks at the TV...

TV SCREEN SHOWING SCENE FROM A WESTERN MOVIE, SHERIFF'S BOOTS  
WITH SPURS WALKING FORWARD

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff's boots with spurs walking forward...

THE SHERIFF, clear protagonist with rugged good looks, walks towards the office with an unmistakable swagger... A pair of unlocked handcuffs hang from his finger...

He stops...

Standing at the office door in front of him is 'HONEYCOMB' BILL, clear antagonist with scruffy beard and a face whose features are buried under an unreasonable amount of soot, which accentuates the madness in his eyes...

A deputy sheriff's badge is fixed on his shirt - just above the shotgun he's pointing directly at the Sheriff...

HONEYCOMB BILL  
(spittle flies wildly)  
Best not come any closer or you  
fixin' to get you's comeuppance.

THE SHERIFF  
(Hollywood western flair)  
You sure you wanna be pointin' that  
thing at me, deputy?

HONEYCOMB BILL  
I ain't no deputy no mo'. I's back  
to bein' good ol' Honeycomb Bill.

THE SHERIFF  
That so? And here I thought we was  
partners in crime fightin'.

HONEYCOMB BILL  
Ain't no partnerin' in our line o'  
work. Figured you done know that  
already, seein' as how you keep  
brushin' my objectin' aside.

The Sheriff's hand hover on the revolver sticking out of his holster, ready in case...

THE SHERIFF  
Aww, that it? I hurt your feelings  
by doin' my job? Well, I apologize.  
Now step aside, Honeycomb. I need  
to get back into my office.

HONEYCOMB BILL  
Oh, you ain't hear? There's a new  
sheriff in town.

THE SHERIFF

That so?

HONEYCOMB BILL

See, them's people need a man they can trust. One who'll have they's backs, not some doggone coward who sets murderers loose.

He points with his shotgun at the handcuffs hanging from The Sheriff's finger...

THE SHERIFF

He had a fair trial. A judge done proclaimed him innocent. You know I had to set him free.

HONEYCOMB BILL

What I know is he killed them girls, judge or no judge.

THE SHERIFF

What you know ain't law in this country. I ain't keepin' no abidin' citizens in my jail cell.

HONEYCOMB BILL

Well, it ain't your jail no mo'.

THE SHERIFF

Says who? You?

HONEYCOMB BILL

Yeah, says me... and says them.

FOUR MEN WITH SHOTGUNS, all dressed as lawmen, all wearing masks, come out from behind Honeycomb, taking their positions around him...

The Sheriff looks broken by this...

He stares at the ground, his hand still poised on his revolver...

HONEYCOMB BILL (CONT'D)

Yeah, you in a bad box now, huh?

THE SHERIFF

Wow, boys. And here I thought you all was my rock. Didn't know you'd make a fool outta me.

## ONE OF THE LAWMEN

We ain't gotta do it this way,  
 Sheriff. You can just turn round  
 and go far from here. No one's  
 fixin' to follow ya outta town.

## THE SHERIFF

You willin' to take his lead and be  
 in good conscience with it?

## HONEYCOMB BILL

They follow men who can keep they's  
 women safe, not set murderin' scum  
 loose on 'em as you gone an' done.

## THE SHERIFF

You know, Honeycomb, I always known  
 you's mean enough to steal a coin  
 off a dead man's eyes, didn't know  
 you's also crooked as a dog's hind  
 legs.

Honeycomb grins...

## THE SHERIFF (CONT'D)

I suppose I shoulda had an inclin'  
 when I first laid eyes on that  
 sheep ugly puss o' yours.

His grin becomes a wide smile, revealing an atrocious set of  
 yellow disfigured teeth and gum with a sequence of holes in  
 them, resembling a honeycomb...

## HONEYCOMB BILL

You heard the man, no killin'  
 necessary. You leave town and we  
 all square.

The Sheriff spits on the ground...

## THE SHERIFF

'fraid I can't do that.

## HONEYCOMB BILL

Well, then... We gon' settle our  
 differences like men, or we gon'  
 argy till the sun go down?

The Sheriff readies himself for the standoff, fingers  
 twitching over his revolver's handle...

He looks around at the five shotgun barrels staring down at  
 him...

A drop of sweat rolls down his forehead...

He reaches...

BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG

All the shotguns have smoke coming out of them...

His revolver falls on the ground, no smoke...

He collapses...

He lies on his back, blood covering his chest and seeping out of the corner of his mouth as he catches his last breaths...

He can hear BOOT SPURS APPROACHING... A shadow grows over him...

It's Honeycomb... He hovers over him with his shotgun pointed down, ready for the kill...

HONEYCOMB BILL (CONT'D)  
Any last words?

THE SHERIFF  
Yeah...

The Sheriff lifts his bloodstained hand, pointing his finger at the TV viewer...

MATCH CUT TO:

BACK TO TV SCREEN, NOW SHOWING THE SHERIFF LYING ON THE GROUND WITH HIS BLOODSTAINED FINGER POINTED TOWARDS THE VIEWER

The movie's title screen pops up next to him: 'DON'T TRUST YOUR PARTNER'...

Arthur is still standing, watching with intrigue...

The TV show's title screen scrolls to: 'Starring Oscar Dixon'...

THE SHERIFF  
Don't trust your partner... Do you hear me? I'm talking to you...  
Arthu-

Arthur GASPS...

POW

The screen CRACKS and the TV falls to the floor, the sudden implosion causing Arthur to react and fall down as well...

He stares at the TV's corpse in disbelief...

Ronnie appears...

RONNIE  
What happened?

ARTHUR  
It just... blew up.

RONNIE  
(no biggie)  
Must have been something wrong with the power source. I've been having issues with that lately.

ARTHUR  
I didn't touch it or anything. It just imploded.

RONNIE  
Yeah, it was pretty old.

Arthur is still in disbelief...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
Leave it for now, we gotta go.

Ronnie vacates...

Arthur, still sitting on the floor, looks to his side to see the wooden cutout is lying next to him... It must have flown out of his pocket...

He holds it up in front of him, examining it deeply...

THE CARVINGS OF THE THREE TREE TOPS WITH THE MOON ABOVE THEM

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Three tree tops, identical to the carvings, stand high above the woods, the large moon hovering above them...

THE SHAMAN, early 20's, sits alone in front of a burning campfire, the orange and red glow reflected in his eyeglasses... He doesn't have the features of a Native American or an indigenous Amazonian...

He wears a cap and a black T-shirt with a large Amazonian sun symbol emblazoned across... His face is that of an overly confident young man, yet his basic combo of T-shirt, casual sports pants, and gaming socks make him seem non-threatening...

He stares at something in front with a knowing smirk...

It's Arthur... He stands a few steps away, staring back at him with the drum-shaped cutout in hand...

His heavy breaths form clouds of condensed air... It must have been a long walk in the cold woods...

He cautiously approaches The Shaman...

SHAMAN

Why are you here, Arthur?

ARTHUR

I need to know if you can help me.

SHAMAN

You refused everyone else's help.  
Why want mine?

ARTHUR

No one offered to help me.

SHAMAN

Oh?

The Shaman points at Arthur's coat pocket...

Arthur digs in and brings something out...

It's the orange pill...

ARTHUR

This doesn't help me. It helps  
them.

SHAMAN

Then why do you still have it?

Arthur throws the pill away...

The Shaman gestures for Arthur to sit in front of him...  
Arthur obliges...

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

What makes you think you need help?

ARTHUR

I'm stuck. I need to know why I'm dreaming about someone. I don't think I'm crazy. I tried therapy.

The Shaman waves his hand in dismissal...

SHAMAN

Pfft. Therapy. Modern solutions only work on modern problems. It didn't work because your problem isn't modern. It's eternal. Loss is eternal.

ARTHUR

Loss of what?

SHAMAN

Someone very near to you.

ARTHUR

My partner?

SHAMAN

Make no mistake. Your trust will be betrayed.

ARTHUR

'Don't trust your partner'... Was it you on the TV?

The Shaman eyes Arthur, his knowing smirk growing larger...

He brings out a small, unidentifiable tree leaf...

SHAMAN

Take this... Go on.

Arthur examines it...

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

What does it smell like?

Arthur takes a whiff...

ARTHUR

It doesn't smell like anything.

The Shaman is about to come down with a case of the giggles... He bottles it...

SHAMAN

What does it taste like?



Arthur takes a bite and chews...

ARTHUR  
(leaf in mouth)  
Doesn't taste like anything.

The Shaman breaks out in a fit of laughter... He wraps his hand around his mouth, trying to stifle it down...

He's inconsolable as Arthur just idly stands there...

Arthur spits it out...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
What's so fucking funny?

He finally gets a grip on himself...

SHAMAN  
(stuffing down the chuckles)  
I'm sorry... I'm sorry... It's just... It's just that we've come a long way since the days of my ancestors... We're not what they used to be, you know?

ARTHUR  
No, I don't know. What did they used to be?

SHAMAN  
Committed, for one thing. They didn't take shortcuts, which is more than what I can say about us today.

Arthur throws away the remainder of the leaf in anger...

ARTHUR  
What the fuck are you talking about? Are you gonna help me or not?

SHAMAN  
So, you really didn't taste anything at all?

Arthur turns and starts heading back, he's heard enough...

SHAMAN (CONT'D)  
The woman in your dreams.

This stops Arthur in his tracks... He turns back around, approaching the Shaman again...

SHAMAN (CONT'D)  
That's what you want to know, isn't it?

ARTHUR  
You've seen her?

SHAMAN  
Yeah, I saw.

ARTHUR  
So, it's not just in my head. It's real.

The Shaman doesn't offer a response, only the same smirk...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
How do I find her? Can you help me?

SHAMAN  
It's a long, long way. And at the end, you'll find only betrayal.

ARTHUR  
I don't care. I just wanna find her.

SHAMAN  
You have to take the first step.

ARTHUR  
What's the first step?

SHAMAN  
There's nothing wrong with you.

Arthur stares blankly...

SHAMAN (CONT'D)  
Say it.

ARTHUR  
There's nothing wrong with me.

SHAMAN  
Again.

ARTHUR  
There's nothing wrong with me.

The Shaman gestures for him to repeat...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
 There's nothing wrong with me...  
 There's nothing wrong with me...  
 There's nothing wrong with me...

It dawns on Arthur...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
 (genuine)  
 There's nothing wrong with me.

SHAMAN  
 Do you believe it?

ARTHUR  
 Yes. I do. I believe it.

The Shaman brings out a rolled piece of paper and throws it at Arthur's feet...

Arthur unrolls it to discover a small stick of charcoal inside... and something scribbled on the paper...

AN UNUSUAL AND DISTINCTIVE SPIRAL SYMBOL

SHAMAN  
 Go to where you sleep. Draw this on the ground and walk along. Oh, and uh... you must go in as you came into this life. No earthly belongings.

He points at Arthur's clothes then scratches his cheek, not clear if he's embarrassed or just trying to stifle more laughter...

Arthur gets up and starts walking away, still examining the paper and charcoal stick in his hand...

He turns around...

ARTHUR  
 Will you still be here if-

The campfire is dead... A silhouette of the Shaman can be seen in the dark... He's not moving at all...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
 Hey. Can you hear me?

No response... An eerie silence now fills the place...

Arthur walks away...

INT. ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Arthur stands naked at a corner, holding the stick of charcoal, now nearly depleted...

The distinctive spiral symbol is now drawn across the floor...

He throws the charcoal away and starts walking along its lines... His feet stay carefully within the drawing as he moves...

He reaches the center of the spiral... His body starts swinging left and right, losing balance...

He's foaming at the mouth... His eyes flutter wildly...

He collapses...

CUT TO BLACK.

SFX: HEART BEATING LESS LOUDLY THAN BEFORE ON BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTOR'S DEN - NIGHT

Arthur opens his eyes...

He's lying naked on a surgery bed...

Someone is in front of him... Flowing silver hair... It's The Captor, sitting at the edge of the bed, facing away from him...

This jolts Arthur... He tries moving but discovers his hands and feet are shackled to the bed...

The Captor slowly turns his head around, looking over his shoulder, down at Arthur... His face can now clearly be seen...

He's a man in his 60's or 70's, a bushy salt and pepper beard, his old yet sharp eyes staring down at Arthur...

He moves aside, revealing the Captive Woman, tied to another surgery bed directly opposite Arthur's...

This sends Arthur into a frenzy of KICKING AND PULLING, trying to set himself loose but to no avail... The shackles are doing their job...

The Captor brings out an unlit match and hovers it near her mouth... then opts to strike it against her body, running it across her leg...

The match doesn't light up... but her leg does, erupting in flames...

She lets out a LONG, PIERCING SCREAM, identical to the previous one...

Arthur is about to explode, his face turning deep red in anger as he furiously attempts to break free...

He looks possessed as he tries...

And tries...

And tries...

CLINK... The sound of shackles breaking free...

He lunges forward...

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. SIGGY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Bloodstained hands hold a knife... They're Arthur's...

He looks around the bedroom in bewilderment...

On the floor is a short, old man with white horseshoe hair, lying face down... A large stab wound is in the center of his blood-soaked back...

RONNIE (O.S.)  
Holy fuck! Oh, Jesus!

Arthur turns around... It's Ronnie, standing at the door behind him...

Ronnie immediately pulls out his gun, aiming steadily at Arthur...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
What the fuck did you do?

ARTHUR  
Ronnie... No! It wasn't me! I swear, I just got here!

RONNIE

What the fuck are you talking about? You killed Mr. Siggy!

ARTHUR

I don't even know who this is! I just got here, I don't know how!

RONNIE

Drop the knife, Arthur!

ARTHUR

You gotta believe me, Ronnie! I didn't do it!

RONNIE

Drop the knife or I swear I'm gonna shoot! Don't test me!

Arthur is on the brink of tears...

ARTHUR

Help me. I think I'm losing it.

Ronnie calms down a bit...

RONNIE

Drop it, then we talk.

Arthur throws the knife away...

Ronnie approaches, gun still pointed straight ahead...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Show me your hands.

He swiftly brings out a pair of handcuffs and slaps them on Arthur's wrists...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Let's go.

He pushes Arthur forward towards the door...

Arthur looks over his shoulder, taking one last look at the corpse lying in the pool of blood... He still can't see his face...

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - DAY

Arthur is pushed into the backseat...

Ronnie gets in the driver's side... His window is down...

The car is not moving yet...

ARTHUR

Ronnie, you have to believe me. I didn't do anything.

RONNIE

Shut the fuck up.

ARTHUR

I don't even know how I got here.

RONNIE

Oh, you don't? So you weren't with me when we went to see Mr. Siggy?

ARTHUR

No... Yes... I don't know.

A furious Ronnie sharply turns around, looking straight at him...

RONNIE

Stop fucking lying! You were with me the whole day, man. We came here together. I stayed downstairs while you went up with him...

ARTHUR

No...

RONNIE

Yes, you did, he said he needed to get some papers from up there, and you said you'd go with him.

ARTHUR

No, no, no...

RONNIE

What? You expect me to believe you don't remember any of that? I saw it with my own eyes.

ARTHUR

Why would I kill him? I've never met him before in my life.

RONNIE

I don't know, man. I'm only going by my eyes and ears.

ARTHUR

I don't remember any of that...  
What are you gonna do?

RONNIE

I'm handing you over to my cop  
buddies downtown. They'll know what  
to do with you... God, Arthur, what  
have you done?

Arthur tries moving his handcuffed hands around,  
uncomfortable...

ARTHUR

I don't know why I can't remember  
anything... Why are you walking  
around with handcuffs?

RONNIE

It's those fucking pills. I told  
you they're bad news, didn't I? But  
you didn't listen. You kept on  
taking them.

Arthur notices a swirl of smoke coming from beside Ronnie...  
He looks at the passenger's seat...

It's a set of matches... A lit cigarette sits in the car's  
open ashtray...

Ronnie picks it up and takes a quick puff...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

This is what happens when you don't  
trust your partner.

This triggers Arthur, who looks extremely suspicious now...

ARTHUR

Ronnie... Where's your lighter?

Ronnie throws the cigarette outside through the window...

RONNIE

What fuckin' lighter?

Arthur's eyes widen...

Ronnie turns the ignition on...

Arthur lunges from behind, wrapping his handcuffed wrists  
tightly around his neck...



Ronnie struggles to break free, his feet inadvertently pushing the gas pedal down...

Arthur's face is buried in the back of Ronnie's seat, eyes squeezed shut as he keeps the pressure on his neck...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

You fucking headcase, you'll kill  
us both!

Ronnie's knee keeps brushing up against the steering wheel in the frenzy, causing both of them to sway left and right inside the car as it zigzags...

Ronnie is down to his last breath, his face now shuffled red...

He clasps onto Arthur's wrists with both hands and places his foot on the steering wheel for support...

TIRES SCREECH

Both of their bodies swerve sharply to the right...

Arthur not letting go...

Ronnie not letting up...

CRASH

They both tumble around inside the car as it rolls over several times...

GLASS SHATTERS

Shards fly, attacking them from all angles as they continue to roll...

EXT. GRITTY CITY STREET - DAY

Ronnie's car is upside down, surrounded by shattered glass and debris in the middle of the empty street...

Arthur crawls out from the backseat window at the passenger's side... He's covered in blood... Handcuffs are still on...

He turns around to see the total wreckage behind him...

The roof on the driver's side is completely dented inwards... Ronnie must have been crushed inside...

He looks around the area... No cars or pedestrians anywhere...

Nearby are old, decrepit buildings with alleyways between them...

He limps towards the nearest one...

Something falls from his pocket...

It's the drum-shaped cutout...

He stops and leans over to pick it up...

BANG

A bullet flies over his head, missing him and grazing the asphalt...

He falls down but quickly gets back on his feet and starts limp-running towards the alleyway, the cutout still clinched in his hand...

As he goes, he looks to the right to see a SNIPER RIFLE protruding from one of the apartments' rooftops...

THE SNIPER, his face covered under a yellow balaclava and goggles, sits behind it, his finger poised on the trigger...

He pulls...

BANG

Another bullet misses the mark, hitting the ground behind Arthur as he disappears into the alleyway...

EXT. GRITTY CITY ALLEYWAY - DAY

Arthur limp-runs into the alleyway, finding cover behind a dumpster located just behind the entrance... He stops to catch his breath...

He looks down to see the cutout is still firmly clinched in his fist... He shoves it in his pocket... then desperately tries to break free from the handcuffs...

The alleyway in front of him is between two old, decrepit buildings, each one affixed with steel fire escape stairs...

CLANK CLANK CLANK

The sound of boots running on metal...

He looks up at the top of the stairs...

It's ANOTHER SNIPER, also wearing a yellow balaclava and goggles, with an all-black outfit and military tactical boots... He sits down and sets his sniper rifle squarely on Arthur...

Arthur quickly jumps inside the dumpster...

BANG

The bullet hits the building wall...

BANG

Another bullet shot, this one piercing the dumpster...

BANG BANG

Three bullet holes are now in the side of the dumpster...

BEAT.

Arthur comes flying out of the dumpster and lands on its other side, now facing the alleyway entrance from where he came...

He glues his back to the dumpster and his left shoulder to the wall...

BANG BANG

Both shots graze the part of the wall just over his head, the tight angle covering him from bullet range...

He's in excruciating pain as he tries to hold his limp leg, the handcuffs getting in the way...

He stretches his leg forward, his shoe reaching the edge of the entrance...

BANG

A bullet from outside the alleyway hits the ground, just in front of his shoe, as he reflexively pulls his leg back...

He looks up over the dumpster behind him...

CLANK CLANK CLANK CLANK

The alleyway sniper is now climbing down the fire escape stairs...

Arthur's breath quickens... Drops of sweat are pouring down his face... He nervously looks around for a solution...

A steel trash can lid sits at the opposite wall, just a few steps away from him...

CLANK CLANK CLANK CLANK

The sniper is getting closer to the ground...

Arthur takes a deep breath... then lunges at the opposite wall, swiftly taking the lid with him as he rushes back through the alley...

The sniper, still on the stairs, is momentarily taken aback, but quickly adjusts his rifle, pointing at Arthur who runs away from him while holding the lid for cover...

BANG

The bullet pierces the edge of the lid but Arthur is still going...

BANG BANG

More bullets absorbed by the lid...

Arthur is about to reach the end of the alleyway...

The Sniper measures his next shot...

BANG

The lid comes flying off of Arthur's grip as he stumbles to the ground, scrambling on his handcuffed hands and knees until he hides behind another dumpster...

He looks down at his hand to see fresh blood on the handcuffs... The bullet grazed one of his fingers...

He looks in front of him to see the path has been sealed with bricks... A dead end...

BANG

Another bullet hits just to his left... He can't go back or forward... Trapped...

He looks up over the dumpster to see the sniper has now descended from the stairs and is rushing in his direction, rifle pointed directly at him...

Arthur rests his head against the dumpster and squeezes his eyes shut... It's all over now...

He can hear the sniper's FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING...

GETTING CLOSER...

CLOSER...

He must be right behind the dumpster by now...

WHOOSH

Sound of a flying arrow...

THUD

The sniper falls face first on the ground, sliding to the side of the dumpster and into Arthur's view...

The end of an arrow protrudes from his neck... He's dead...

Arthur looks on in bewilderment... He stands up and looks at the alleyway entrance behind him...

There's no one there...

The second sniper from the rooftops runs into the alley, handgun pointing at Arthur...

BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG

Arthur cowers behind the dumpster again, hiding from the onslaught of bullets...

WHOOSH

Sound of a flying arrow again...

The shooting stops...

Sound of BOOTS WITH SPURS APPROACHING, SLOWLY...

Arthur can see someone's shadow emerging beside the dumpster...

He looks at the ground, holding his arms over his head...

He squeezes his eyes shut again... This is it...

CLINK

A tag holding two keys is thrown on the floor...

Sound of BOOTS WITH SPURS WALKING AWAY...

Arthur opens his eyes, still staring at the ground, too scared to look up...

He stands up and looks around to see that there's no one in the alleyway except for the two snipers' lifeless bodies...

He picks up the tagged keys, examining them...

The smaller key is the same color as the handcuffs... He tries it...

CLICK

He's free...

He inspects the other key, which looks like a normal door key... He grabs the tag... Something is written on the label...

'1392'

He flips the tag to see an engraving...

'SAMSON HOTEL'

EXT. GRITTY CITY STREET - DAY

Arthur emerges from the alleyway's entrance, heading back to the site of the car crash...

He stops in his tracks, shocked...

The car is gone... Only the shattered glass and debris remain...

He looks around in confusion...

Something at the top of the decrepit building catches his attention...

A sign that reads: 'SAMSON HOTEL'...

INT. SAMSON HOTEL - ROOM 1392 - DAY

The hotel room door opens inwardly, pushed from the outside...

A silhouette of a man standing in the door frame...

He flicks the light switch on... It's Arthur...

The sign on the opened door next to him reads '1392'... He locks the door and walks in...

The room is littered with old-timey film reels, an assortment of photographs, crumpled papers, and cardboard boxes...

On the walls are maps with locations circled and connected in red marker... Pinned onto them are photos of headshot silhouettes surrounded by question marks...

This room is the template of a conspiracy theorist's den...

At the end is an open door, flickering white lights coming from inside...

He walks towards it...

INT. SAMSON HOTEL - ROOM 1392 - DARK ROOM - DAY

Arthur enters...

There is nothing here except for a large screen and a director's chair...

The screen has a black and white still frame of Arthur dressed in a military airman uniform...

MAN IN THE DARK (O.S.)  
(deep, raspy voice)  
Getting any sleep lately?

Arthur looks behind him to see a projector with two fitted reels emitting light from a small balcony above... There are no stairs that lead to that balcony...

Next to the projector sits THE MAN IN THE DARK, his face and body hidden in the shadows, only his outline can be seen...

He puffs on what must be a Cuban cigar... The orange and red glow of its thick, round tip reflecting in his eyeglasses...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)  
Sit down, Arthur. You've earned  
some answers to your questions.

Arthur sits down on the director's chair...

CLICK

The Man in the Dark presses a button on the old projector...

The reels start rolling...

A black and white film plays...

ON PROJECTOR SCREEN

Arthur, dressed in his military uniform, stares at the camera... His demeanor is different... He seems relaxed, confident...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Face the camera and state your name as it should be pronounced, followed by your rank and organization.

ARTHUR

Arthur Halloran, Captain, Aurora Airborne, Elite Operations Airforce Unit.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You wake up and see your uncle next to you in bed. You're both naked. You realize that he has drugged and raped you the night before. Your first impulse is to take legal action against him, correct or false?

Arthur laughs... He looks to his side...

ARTHUR

Is he serious?

RONNIE (O.S.)

Yeah, I know, it sounds kooky. Just answer the questions, Cap. And keep it genuine. Won't work otherwise.

He looks in the direction of the camera again...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Correct or false?

BEAT.

ARTHUR

False.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What's your course of action?

ARTHUR

Hide it from others. Pretend it never happened and move on.



INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You're walking in a deserted town. You find a decapitated body in your path. The severed head is placed on the corpse's abdomen with a ribbon wrapped around it. The words 'do not open, leave town' is carved on the forehead in blood. Your first impulse is to leave town, correct or false?

ARTHUR

Jesus... False.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What's your course of action?

ARTHUR

Unwrap the ribbon to see if there's a more sinister gift placed inside the head.

He chuckles, amused by his own remarks...

He brings out a cigarette pack, about to take one out...

Ronnie's hand comes in view, swiping the pack away from him...

RONNIE (O.S.)

You can't do that during the test.

Arthur is disappointed... He starts to grow visibly impatient, tapping his fingers on the table...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Tensions rise between males and females, escalating to a worldwide gender war. Females defect from all facets of society and mobilize an army to remove all men from positions of power.

He stops tapping...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Your government retaliates by assigning you the task of killing all the women in your country, including your relatives and friends. You carry out your duty without protest, correct or false?

ARTHUR

Correct.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Final question...

ARTHUR

Good.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You wake up from a dream to find your whole life was a lie. You are not who you thought you were. No one is your friend. You're all alone with no hope of being happy ever again. Your first impulse is to kill yourself, correct or false?

BEAT.

ARTHUR

False.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What's your course of action?

ARTHUR

I... I'm not sure...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What's your course of action?

BEAT.

ARTHUR

I'd kill whoever made me believe that lie... then I'd kill myself.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

End of session. I think we got what we need here.

Arthur extends an open palm...

Ronnie's hand swoops into view again, handing him the cigarette pack... He pulls one out and taps it against the box...

The film freezes on a still of Arthur with a cigarette dangling from his mouth, searching his outfit for a light...

BACK TO DARK ROOM

The projector reel stops rolling...

Arthur stands up from the chair, turning to face the balcony...

ARTHUR

Who was that? Was that really me?

MAN IN THE DARK

There's more.

CLICK

He presses another button...

The still frame on the projector screen is replaced by a black and white one of a woman in a blue naval officer uniform and facing the camera...

It's the Captive Woman from Arthur's dreams...

The second reel starts rolling...

ON PROJECTOR SCREEN

Staring in front of her, she shares the same confident demeanor as Arthur displayed in his interview, though she is more reserved, centered...

What you'd expect from an experienced military officer...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Face the camera and state your name as it should be pronounced, followed by your rank and organization.

CAPTIVE WOMAN

Gloria Devereaux, Lieutenant Colonel, McKenna Special Fleet, Elite Operations Naval Forces.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You wake up to see your best friend and your father lying next to you in bed. He's naked with a knife in his hand and she's soaked in blood. You realize that he raped both of you and murdered her last night.

(MORE)

INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Your first impulse is to take the  
 knife and murder him, correct or  
 false?

CAPTIVE WOMAN  
 False.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
 What's your course of action?

BEAT.

CAPTIVE WOMAN  
 I'd take the knife away from him  
 and tell him to explain what  
 happened. If it sounds reasonable,  
 I'd dispose of the body and keep it  
 a secret to help him avoid  
 prosecution.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
 A virus is set loose, infecting  
 children and making them develop a  
 secret craving for human flesh,  
 which they then carry to adults.  
 The only way to be immune against  
 it is to preemptively eat an  
 infected child.

He lets it sink in for a moment, but she's unfazed...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 You suspect your neighbor's five  
 year old daughter has been  
 infected, but her mother insists  
 she is fine. You tell her that you  
 believe her, correct or false?

CAPTIVE WOMAN  
 Correct.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
 Tensions rise betwee-

CAPTIVE WOMAN  
 But then I'd kidnap the daughter,  
 eat her, and tell the mother that I  
 saw someone from the neighborhood  
 take her away.

A paper full of numbers and blocks of text comes into view,  
 thrown on the table...

The interviewer's hand quickly crosses out a section with a pen and scribbles something indecipherable...

He then slides the paper to the right side, where Ronnie's hand comes into view to take it away...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Tensions rise between males and females, escalating to a worldwide gender war. Females mobilize an army to remove all men from positions of power.

He pauses, perhaps gauging her reaction...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The male government offers you the chance to escape death by becoming a spy and killing your female relatives and friends. You carry out your duty without protest, correct or false?

CAPTIVE WOMAN

Correct.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You wake up from a dream to find your whole life was a lie. You are not who you thought you were. No one is your friend. You're all alone with no hope of being happy ever again. Your first impulse is to kill yourself, correct or false?

BEAT.

CAPTIVE WOMAN

False.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What's your course of action?

BEAT.

CAPTIVE WOMAN

I'd live the lie... until it becomes the truth.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

End of session.

RONNIE (O.S.)

We're all good here?

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
Yep. Ready for assessment.

The film freezes on a still shot of her looking into the camera, still full of poise...

BACK TO DARK ROOM

The second projector reel stops rolling...

ARTHUR  
Her! I know her! I've seen her  
before. In my sleep.

MAN IN THE DARK  
You've seen her when you're awake  
too. She was another volunteer. You  
both signed consent forms to be  
test subjects. Shame they didn't  
tell you they were for unauthorized  
experiments.

ARTHUR  
What happened? Tell me everything.  
I won't leave until you do.

The Man in the Dark gets comfortable, his outline shifting as he crosses his legs...

MAN IN THE DARK  
What you've just seen is called the  
Preliminary Mental Stamina test.  
Jokingly referred to in certain  
closed circles as brain PMS.

The round cigar tip glows again as he takes another puff...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)  
They do these to determine your  
ability to absorb shock and  
maintain perspective. Grade you on  
things like loyalty, curiosity,  
sacrifice. The higher the score,  
the more risks they took with the  
test subject. You and her scored  
the highest.

ARTHUR  
Who am I? Am I Arthur Halloran or  
am I someone else?

MAN IN THE DARK

Oh, you're Arthur Halloran, alright. But you're not what you think you are. You're a high ranking military airman, not some unknown PI working boring cases in a quiet part of town. That's just the storyline they gave you.

ARTHUR

Who?

MAN IN THE DARK

You know who. Don't tell me you never had suspicions? That partner of yours alone is a walking red flag.

ARTHUR

That was him in the film, wasn't it? How's he involved?

MAN IN THE DARK

He was the assigned liaison of all test subjects. He reported to your seniors. Basically, he was there to keep an eye on you.

ARTHUR

Tell me about these experiments. What are they? What exactly did they do to me?

MAN IN THE DARK

Genetic editing.

CLICK

He presses a button in the dark...

An image of a double helix DNA projects on the screen...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)

Any regular DNA will have this double helix shape. Your manipulated DNA looks like this...

An image of a spiral-shaped DNA, identical to the symbol Arthur drew on the floor...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)

This structure means the brain and body are impervious against all external factors.

(MORE)

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)

You'd survive extreme weather,  
hunger, fatigue. Your mind would  
carry out complex calculations  
immaculately and within seconds.

ARTHUR

They wanted to make the perfect  
human being.

MAN IN THE DARK

The perfect soldier, more like it.  
But as I said, all of you were  
failures. Your DNA changed but your  
strength remained the same. On top  
of which, all of you suffered  
extreme psychological trauma and  
exhibited irrational behavior.

ARTHUR

They covered it up. Made us believe  
we're someone else.

MAN IN THE DARK

Only way of making sure you kept  
your mouths shut.

CLICK

The image on the screen goes back to the still frame of the  
Captive Woman...

Arthur walks towards it...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)

It wasn't hard. Once they replaced  
your memories, all they had to do  
was to keep you taking little  
orange pills. But you're not one  
for modern medicine, are you,  
Arthur?

Arthur points at the screen...

ARTHUR

Is it the reason why I'm having  
those dreams? Of her being  
tortured?

BEAT.

MAN IN THE DARK

Part of the experiments explored  
using dreams as communication  
mediums between the test subjects.

(MORE)



MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)  
They'd be able to deliver cryptic  
messages to each other.

ARTHUR  
So, she is reaching out to me.

MAN IN THE DARK  
Had the tests been successful. As  
far as the records show, you were  
both failures.

ARTHUR  
If the records are wrong?

MAN IN THE DARK  
If they're wrong, then... you  
dreaming of her being tortured,  
means she's trying to tell you that  
she's in trouble.

ARTHUR  
How do I find her? Where is she?

Another round glow in the dark, another puff...

MAN IN THE DARK  
I think it's time you go now. You  
are being followed by your partner,  
remember?

ARTHUR  
My partner's dead. I saw him get  
crushed inside the car.

MAN IN THE DARK  
And you recall seeing his body? Or  
the car even?

BEAT.

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)  
They'll be coming for you. Be  
careful.

His outline shifts as he stands up...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)  
And beware their mind tricks.  
They'll try to make you believe  
their version of the truth is the  
only one. They'll have an answer  
for everything. And I mean,  
everything.

ARTHUR

If you're not gonna help me find her, then why are you telling me all this? What do you want from me?

MAN IN THE DARK

I want you to be angry. They stole your life away from you. They stole her life away too. They took advantage of your loyalty and put you through hell.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Someone must be knocking on the hotel room door...

MAN IN THE DARK (CONT'D)

I want you to embrace the fire burning inside you.

The round tip glows... Then flies in the air... lands...

WHOOSH

Flames erupt, forming a line across the entire balcony...

Arthur runs towards the dark room door from where he came...

INT. SAMSON HOTEL - ROOM 1392 - DAY

Arthur emerges from the dark room's door to find the entire room is now engulfed in flames... The furniture, the boxes, and everything else is burning, the flames reaching as high as the ceiling...

The locked door is being pulled forcefully from the outside...

RONNIE (O.S.)

Open up, Arthur! I know you're in there!

Arthur looks around for a way out of this inferno...

At one end of the room, curtains are being consumed by the fire... They collapse to the ground, revealing a window...

Arthur rushes towards it...

PONK PONK PONK

The door is being kicked from the outside...

Arthur tries opening the window... It's stuck...

He peeks through it... then takes a few steps back, giving himself enough room for momentum...

PLOW

The door comes crashing down...

Ronnie enters, his arm shielding his face from the flames and smoke... His other arm holding a gun...

He can see Arthur charging towards the window...

BANG

CRASH

Ronnie shoots as Arthur rockets through the window, shattering the glass and disappearing outside...

EXT. SAMSON HOTEL - FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

Ronnie sticks his head out the shattered window, looking down...

Right below is Arthur, lying on the fire escape stairs... He holds his bleeding right shoulder as he struggles to get back on his feet...

Ronnie points his gun in his direction...

BANG-PEW

The bullet ricochets off of the steel stairs, missing Arthur by an inch...

Arthur, still holding his injured shoulder, runs down the fire escape...

Ronnie climbs out of the window, landing with both feet on the stairs...

He chases Arthur down, the weight of his burly feet making the steel CLANK HEAVILY with each flight...

He points his gun at the flight of stairs below, aiming for Arthur who is still ahead...

BANG-PEW

Another bullet ricochets off of the steel, hitting the railing as Arthur continues to descend...

Ronnie picks up the pace, closing in on Arthur as he reaches the next flight of stairs...

Instead of taking the next flight, Arthur stops, turns around and dives in through an open window adjacent to the stairs, disappearing back into the hotel...

INT. SAMSON HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY

Arthur trips on the window sill as he climbs down, landing face first on a bed with a lumpy blanket... The lumps start moving... There's someone under there...

GUY UNDER BLANKET (O.S.)  
(funny nasal voice)  
Hey! What the fuck!

Arthur scrambles on the bed, smearing blood on the blanket as he continues to run outside the bedroom...

BANG

Ronnie shoots another bullet as he pops in from the window, this one striking the bedroom door frame as Arthur escapes...

Ronnie plops down right on the guy hidden under the lumpy blanket...

GUY UNDER BLANKET (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(in extreme pain)  
Oh, good god!

He gets up and follows Arthur out to the hallway...

INT. SAMSON HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

A HOTEL SERVER is crouched down, his face buried inside the storage compartment of a trolley carrying dishes, pots, cutlery, and other room service items...

A hotel room door is directly behind him...

The door opens violently, bumping into his backside and sending both him and the trolley's contents CRASHING down to the floor...

Arthur emerges from behind the door, running as fast as he can into the hallway...

Ronnie appears, just a few steps away from him, his gun again at the ready...

BANG

He misses again as Arthur takes a sharp left turn, pushing himself into a door labeled 'Emergency Exit'...

Ronnie chases...

INT. SAMSON HOTEL - EMERGENCY STAIRCASE - DAY

Arthur runs up the stairs...

Ronnie comes through the door...

BANG

Another missed shot as Arthur makes a quick turn on the next flight of stairs...

He keeps going up and up...

Ronnie follows after him...

He's closing in... His gun is now squarely aimed at Arthur's back, finger on the trigger...

But Arthur disappears through the last remaining door at the end of the stairs... Must be the top floor...

EXT. SAMSON HOTEL - ROOFTOPS - DAY

Arthur emerges out of the door, continuing his run forward...

There's nothing here but an empty rooftop...

He stops at the ledge... End of the road...

He looks around for a miracle...

Ronnie comes out of the door...

A cocky smirk... He's got him now...

He approaches him slowly, gun still pointed forward...

RONNIE

End of the line, you psycho fuck.

He pulls the trigger...

CLACK

Out of bullets...

CLACK CLACK CLACK

Still out of bullets...

He throws the gun away... and stares at a weak and bloodied Arthur, holding his injured arm and trying to maintain his balance...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
Fuck it, I'll just pummel you to  
death with my bare hands.

He throws away his coat and rolls up his shirt's sleeves...

Arthur is at the very end of the ledge by now...

He peeks down at the abyss below him...

Nothing there but a steep fall over asphalt road...

Ronnie starts walking towards Arthur, his frightening mass signaling impending doom...

BLINDING LIGHT

Ronnie covers his eyes with his arms...

Arthur turns around to see...

It's the big sun in the clear sky, shining brightly behind Arthur... Only Ronnie seems to be affected by it...

This is Arthur's chance... He yells out a defiant BATTLE CRY...

Then LUNGES towards Ronnie, grabbing him by the collar and spinning him around until he's the one near the ledge...

With all his might, he pushes him forward... then lets him go, throwing him over the ledge... He disappears...

Arthur steps forward and peeks down...

Ronnie's hands grasp onto the outer part of the ledge, hanging for dear life...

ARTHUR  
You wanna pummel me to death,  
Ronnie?

He STOMPS on one of his hands...

Ronnie SCREAMS in pain, but his hand still holds on...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
You fucking snake, I trusted you!

He STOMPS again, this time with venom...

CRACK

One of his fingers must be broken...

Ronnie SCREAMS in agony... He now hangs on with only the other hand...

RONNIE  
No... Stop...

ARTHUR  
You lied to me! You took my life away! Now, I'm gonna take yours!

Another STOMP... Blood spurts out...

Ronnie still holds on... but his fingers are now losing their grip, leaving a trail of blood behind as they slide further and further away...

RONNIE  
Don't...

Arthur stops...

He grabs Ronnie's hand, taking it off of the ledge... Now, the only thing stopping him from falling is Arthur's right hand...

He leans closer to Ronnie...

ARTHUR  
Tell me about the experiments. What did you do to me?

His injured arm is wobbling, but he's too far gone in the moment to notice...

RONNIE  
What experiments?

ARTHUR  
Don't lie! I swear, I'm gonna drop you if you don't tell me!

Ronnie doesn't answer...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Last chance... You know I mean it.

Ronnie laughs...

RONNIE

Fuck it, I tried... Go ahead... I hope you stay trapped in this hell forever, you sick fuck.

ARTHUR

You couldn't feel my pain, now you're gonna feel my wrath.

With all his might, he pushes Ronnie's hand away, falling onto his back from the momentum...

Ronnie GASPS and disappears from view...

Arthur lies on his back, finally able to catch his breath...

He looks over to the ledge...

Nothing there now except for Ronnie's bloody finger trails...

CAR HORNS and other COMMOTION noises swell up... There must be a scene down there by now...

He musters the strength to stand up and starts heading back towards the rooftop door...

He notices Ronnie's discarded gun...

He picks it up, hides it in his coat's pocket, then continues forward...

He shuts the door behind him...

CUT TO BLACK.

SFX: BARELY AUDIBLE AND SLOW HEART BEATING OVER BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTOR'S DEN - NIGHT

Arthur's eyes are wide open... He's again shackled to the surgery bed, except this time it's vertical...

ARTHUR

What? No... No, I'm awake... I'm awake! I'm awake! You can't do this!



He tries PULLING AND KICKING again, his whole body struggling to break free...

In front of him is The Captor, standing in the middle of a circle of lit candles...

He stares at Arthur with his hands clasped in front, an authoritative stance...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Hey... Hey! I see you. I know all about you now, you understand? I'm coming for you. I swear, I'm gonna find you and I'm gonna kill you! You hear me?

The Captor steps aside, revealing an upright surgery bed covered entirely by a blanket... There's an oddly shaped lump under it...

Arthur stops fighting... His eyes hang on the spectacle in front of him, dreading what's about to come...

The Captor pulls the curtain down...

It's the Captive Woman... Three of her limbs have been severed... Only her right leg remains... The ends at her severed extremities have been sewn shut...

Her head nods up and down, face covered in dried tears... She seems delirious...

Arthur breaks into tears...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

No... No...

The Captor pulls out a hacksaw from behind the bed and proceeds to place it on her last remaining limb...

He looks at Arthur with intent...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Don't! Don't!

He PRESSES the saw into her thigh, the metal digging deep into her flesh...

She starts shaking wildly as he SAWS her leg off...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Stop! Please! Please, don't!

Arthur starts violently smacking the back of his head into the bed...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
 (peak frustration)  
 What do you want, what do you want,  
 what do you want, what do you want?

The SAWING STOPS... The Captor steps back...

Her right leg has disappeared and the severed end is sewn shut... She's now a quadruple amputee, somehow still hanging on the vertical bed without being shackled to it...

Blood starts pouring from the side of her mouth...

Arthur lowers his head, defeated...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
 Why don't you take me instead?  
 Please, just take me. Let her go  
 and take me. Please.

The candle light flames grow higher, as high as her bed...

Arthur squeezes his eyes shut... He knows what's coming...

She lets out the same LONG, PIERCING SCREAM...

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. NERO'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Luxury interiors accentuate the prestige of this spacious bedroom...

The main piece, a very high platform round bed surrounded by bedskirt ruffles, takes center stage... Below it is a lush rug, sitting atop the glossy flooring... And hanging on the wall are two sconces that light up the room...

On the wall, right above the headstand, hangs a large decorative piece depicting the spiral shape of the galaxy...

On one of the nightstands is what looks like a virtual assistant device, its circular eye-shaped LED display lights glowing orange...

A mirror protrudes from the other nightstand, which also holds an assortment of men's face care products...

Futuristic looking plant pods hang from the ceiling...

Despite the minimal design, everything here gleams and sparkles... This bedroom belongs to the rich...

On one side of the room is the bathroom's door... It's closed...

The sound of a TOILET FLUSH... Someone must be in there...

The door opens... It's Dr. Nero, wearing a satin dragon-embroidered kimono that hangs loose like a cape, and a pair of black boxers and fluffy slippers... He has a wireless Bluetooth device fitted in his ear...

He taps it...

DR. NERO

Yeah, I'm back... Well, we went over that before, didn't we?

He goes over to the mirror nightstand and applies some face cream...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

You're only feeling that way because you resent how the other women at work look at him...

He inspects his eye's sun-shaped tattoo, running his finger along it, almost as if he's trying to rub it away...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Of course, it's the same thing... It's all connected... It's still about you and him, isn't it? That's right... Mhmm...

He gives up trying to rub it away, disappointed... He sits on the bed...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Yup... Exactly... See? You know it, already. You just had to say it to yourself out loud...

He takes off his slippers and climbs into the bed, resting his back against the headboard...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Well, now it's all clear... Of course... My pleasure... Oh, please...

He lets out a fake, friendly laugh...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
OK, so what about the dreams?  
You're still having those?

He listens attentively to this one... A smile slowly forms on his face...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
Great! That's very encouraging news. This means we're on course towards full recovery. Just make sure you don't stop taking your medication, otherwise, all this progress was for nothing...

He puts his finger on the earbud, ready to disconnect...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
We may need to change the dosage, depending on a few other factors... I'll let you know tomorrow... Yeah, same time... Alright, you too... Take care... Bye.

He taps the earbud and takes it out, placing it on the nightstand...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
Helia, check missed calls.

The virtual assistant's eyes become blue... A feminine voice emanates from it...

HELIA  
You have one missed call. Caller ID: Unknown.

This catches his attention... He puts the earbuds back on...

DR. NERO  
Helia, call back last missed call number.

HELIA  
Now calling Unknown...

BEAT.

DR. NERO  
Yeah, it's me... Mmm... Mmm... No... No, he isn't... Yeah... OK, understood.

He takes out the buds and throws them on the nightstand, not very happy...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Shit.

He rubs his chin, pondering something... until he decides to get ready for sleep, pulling the covers over him and resting his head on the pillow...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Helia, lights off.

The room goes dark... Everything is pitch black, save for Helia's orange eyes...

BEAT.

Faint sound of FABRIC RUFFLING...

The bed CREAKS...

A QUICK GASP...

Helia's eyes turn red in the dark...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

(softly)

Helia... Lights on...

The lights turn on again...

Arthur sits on top of Dr. Nero, Ronnie's gun lodged firmly in his throat...

Dr. Nero slowly shows his hands, no intentions of fighting back...

HELIA

Doctor, are you feeling well? I'm sensing an increase in your heart rate.

Dr. Nero seems tempted to say something...

Arthur nods no to him, pushing the gun further into his skin...

DR. NERO

I'm... fine.

HELIA

I'm also detecting an increase in blood pressure and higher perspiration levels. Are you in danger?

A perspiring Dr. Nero gulps...

HELIA (CONT'D)

Say the code word and I will contact the authorities.

DR. NERO

No, I'm fine... I'm just having a bad reaction to something I ate. I'll be OK. No need for alarm.

Helia's eyes turn orange again...

ARTHUR

(whispers)  
Turn it off.

DR. NERO

(whispers)  
I can't.

Arthur looks dead serious on pulling the trigger...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

It's connected to a security system. If I turn it off, the police will come.

Arthur looks around...

ARTHUR

Cameras?

DR. NERO

No.

ARTHUR

Get up. Slowly.

He gets out of the bed, Arthur's gun pointed to the back of his head...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Move.

He tries to put on his slippers but Arthur pushes him forward, causing him to go on barefoot...

DR. NERO  
Where are we going?

ARTHUR  
The car outside is yours?

DR. NERO  
Yes.

ARTHUR  
Then we're going for a ride.

Arthur brings car keys out of his pocket and hands it to him...

CLACK

Arthur hears a weird sound behind him... He turns around... and looks down...

Helia is now right by his shoes... She must have jumped off the nightstand... She now has wheels and her LED eyes are pulsing red...

HELIA  
My motion sensors detect unfamiliar movement. It's now 1:46am, peak intrusion time. I've activated motion security mode.

ARTHUR  
What now?

DR. NERO  
It's a failsafe mechanism against home intruders. Don't make any sudden movements or it will alert the security team.

ARTHUR  
I hate your fucking house.

They walk slowly, heading towards the bedroom door...

Helia follows them, eyes still pulsing red...

INT. DR. NERO'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Another room with glossy flooring, futuristic furniture, and minimalist design...

At the end of it, next to the front door, are glass panels... The front yard and gate can be seen through them...

Dr. Nero, drenched in sweat, emerges very slowly out of the bedroom...

Followed by Arthur, also perspiring, his gun still lodged to the head of his hostage...

Then Helia, in very slow pursuit of them...

In the middle of a chic sofa set is a table with a champagne bottle, surrounded by a couple of glasses... They appear to be used, left overs from an earlier celebration...

Pinned under the sofa set is a large round floor rug, part of it covering the area in their path...

Dr. Nero's bare feet are leaving a trail of sweat on the shiny floor...

They keep taking gentle footsteps, moving forward towards the house's front door...

Dr. Nero walks on the part covered by the floor rug...

ARTHUR

That's it. Keep going.

They're very close to the door now...

Dr. Nero's sweaty foot steps on the glossy tile area again...

It's slippery...

He falls, clutching part of the rug as he goes down and dragging Arthur with him...

DR. NERO

Ah!

ARTHUR

Shit!

The force of his pull moves the rug, causing the table to jerk...

CRASH

The champagne glasses come hurtling down to the ground...

Helia stops wheeling along, its eyes now blinking bright red...



HELIA  
Security team has been alerted.  
Arrival will be within two minutes.  
All exits have been sealed.

ARTHUR  
Fuck!

Arthur runs to the front door... It's locked...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Where's the key?

DR. NERO  
That won't work now. Everything  
will stay locked until the security  
team opens it from the outside.

ARTHUR  
Are you fucking kidding me?

DR. NERO  
I'm sorry, Arthur.

Arthur looks around in disarray...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
Please stop now. Just stop. It's  
all over.

Arthur shoots a 'drop dead' look at him...

HELIA  
Arrival will be within one minute.

Arthur runs over to Helia and delivers a kick from hell...  
She hits the wall and smashes to pieces...

DR. NERO  
That won't stop them from coming.  
You know that.

Arthur looks around the room in frustration...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
If you stop now, nothing will  
happen. No harm was done.

He points the gun again at Dr. Nero, who reacts by looking  
away, eyes squeezed shut...

Arthur puts the gun in his pocket and runs over to the sofa  
set... He lifts up the table and walks in Dr. Nero's  
direction...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
What are you...

Holding the table high above his head, he rushes towards him...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)  
No! No, don't!

Arthur throws the table forward with all his might, sending it flying over Dr. Nero's head and straight into the glass panel...

CRASH

Shards of glass fly everywhere... There's now a big hole next to the front door...

The HOME SECURITY ALARM GOES OFF...

ARTHUR  
I found a small glitch in your security system, doc.

He takes out the gun again and drags him by the arm...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Let's go. You're driving.

They head towards the front yard...

INT. DR. NERO'S CAR - NIGHT

Dr. Nero enters from the driver's side and sits behind the wheel...

Arthur jumps in the seat behind him, immediately pointing the gun again at his head...

They can still hear the HOME SECURITY ALARM...

ARTHUR  
Go! Go!

Dr. Nero turns on the ignition and accelerates...

DR. NERO  
Where?

ARTHUR  
Anywhere, just go!

Dr. Nero obliges...

Arthur inspects the street through the back window...

The HOME SECURITY ALARM FADES as they get further away from the house...

DR. NERO  
How did you know where I live?

ARTHUR  
I'm supposed to act like a PI,  
remember? Maybe, I just play the  
part too well by now... OK, I think  
we're far enough.

The alarm can no longer be heard...

He hunches over to the side of Dr. Nero's headrest, close enough to keep an eye on him while the gun stays aimed at his head...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Now, take me to your bosses.

DR. NERO  
What? I can't do that!

ARTHUR  
You're taking me there or you're  
dying in this car.

DR. NERO  
I can't! I can't do that!

ARTHUR  
Shut the fuck up and go there!

DR. NERO  
Do you know who these people are?  
Do you know what kind of security  
they have? Weapons? We'll both be  
pulverized the second they see us!  
It's like walking into a suicide!

ARTHUR  
(loses it)  
I don't care!

His outburst brings the conversation to a halt...

Dr. Nero looks at him through the rear view mirror... He can see he's visibly drained...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

(gloomy)

I don't care anymore, OK? I don't care if they kill me, I don't care if I kill them. I just need this to play out. You understand me?

Arthur takes his gun away, resting his neck on the back seat as Dr. Nero keeps driving...

BEAT.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I was awake for the last one.

DR. NERO

What?

ARTHUR

The dreams. I was awake for the last one.

DR. NERO

That's not possible.

ARTHUR

Why? Cause it didn't happen to your other guinea pigs?

DR. NERO

That's right. We kept extensive files on each one of you. Contact between subjects was limited to dreams.

ARTHUR

Oh, I remember those files. They all burned to a nice crisp. Right before Ronnie followed them to hell.

Arthur seems exhausted...

DR. NERO

Look, Arthur. I know I'm the last person you'd believe right now, but I have to tell you, I'm not like Ronnie. I don't have any military training. I don't like violence.

ARTHUR

You don't have to like it to be on the receiving end of it.

DR. NERO

And I really am your therapist. I can still help you. I want to. I've been where you are right now. Like I said before, I take the orange pill too.

ARTHUR

You had the dreams?

DR. NERO

No, but I was a test subject too. One of the earlier experiments, not the DNA ones you were given. They put me under so much pressure that I tried to carve my own eyes out.

He points to his sun-shaped face tattoo...

DR. NERO (CONT'D)

Why do you think I have this? It reminds me every day of the lowest point of my life.

ARTHUR

And yet, you help them destroy more lives.

Dr. Nero seems hurt by this...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

If you're not gonna take me to them, then you're pretty much useless to me. Pull over to the side of the road here so I can finish you and be on my way.

Dr. Nero doesn't have a response... He's back to sweating profusely...

Arthur takes out his gun again, lodging it against the side of his driver's head...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I said pull over.

He obliges... The car stops...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Bye, doc.

Dr. Nero starts frantically looking left, right, up, down... Any and all directions, as if trying to find something... He's hyperventilating...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

His hand is about to reach to the back of his neck, but he stops himself midway...

DR. NERO

Look... Look... I can't take you there, but... but I can give you the next best thing.

ARTHUR

And what's that?

DR. NERO

I can take you to The Aberrationists.

ARTHUR

The what?

DR. NERO

It's what the other test subjects call themselves. They've banded together and have been hiding in a cave way out in the canyons. A place they call Devil's Jacket.

ARTHUR

They're all together?

DR. NERO

Some of them are... The woman... The one from your dreams, she's there too.

This captures Arthur's attention...

ARTHUR

You know how to get there?

DR. NERO

Yeah, but it'll take a few hours.

ARTHUR

Alright. Go. And don't get any ideas behind the wheel. I already survived a car crash once and I can do it again.

DR. NERO

I'll do it if you promise to let me go.

ARTHUR  
(fat chance)  
Sure.

DR. NERO  
You give me your word? I mean it,  
Arthur. I have a family to take  
care of.

ARTHUR  
You live alone.

DR. NERO  
My mom and little sister. I provide  
for them. Plus, many of my clients  
are prone to suicide... They need  
me...

ARTHUR  
Yeah. Fine.

Dr. Nero turns the ignition on and accelerates...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Oh, and doc...

Arthur rests again on the backseat...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Just for the record, today is the  
lowest point of your life.

Dr. Nero drives on, a nervous, gulping wreck...

EXT/INT. DESERT CANYON/DR. NERO'S CAR - DAWN

Dr. Nero's car speeds along a dirt road in the desert...

A formation of canyon rocks are up ahead...

IN THE CAR

Dr. Nero and Arthur are still wide awake...

DR. NERO  
OK, we're almost there.

WHOOSH

The sound of a flying arrow...

POW

A tire blows out...

Dr. Nero suddenly loses control of the wheel...

TIRES SCREECH

He tries to maintain balance as the car makes hard lefts and rights, skidding all the way...

The rising dust covers the entire windshield...

The car finally comes to a halt...

They step out...

IN THE DESERT

The car has stopped on the sand, having taken a hard turn from the main dirt road...

Arthur inspects one of the rear tires... It's been deflated by an arrow...

CLIPPITY CLOP CLIPPITY CLOP

Sound of horse's hooves... Quite a few of them... They're approaching...

He turns and looks, trying to make out the figures through the rising clouds of dust...

FOUR COWBOYS ON HORSES emerge... They are ALEXANDRIA, CHICAGO, NEW YORK, and LONDON, all men with fit physiques... They wear red bandit masks that cover their faces, cowboy hats, and bullet belts...

Two of them pull their horses to the left, the other two pull to the right, clearing a path in the middle...

Through the settling dust, the outline of another man on a horse comes through between the four horses...

The dust finally settles...

Unlike the others, this one's face is covered by a red embroidered scarf... He wears a brick hat and a bandolier bullet belt that forms an X across his chest...

He climbs down from his majestic Arabian horse... The other four behind him follow suit...

He walks towards Arthur and Dr. Nero with a familiar unmistakable swagger...



ARTHUR

I know you... You're that actor...

The man lowers his scarf... It's Oscar Dixon, the TV Sheriff...

OSCAR

Name's Oscar Dixon. Just Oscar will do.

He points to his men behind him...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

This here is London... New York... Chicago... and Alexandria.

The four men wave, timid yet friendly...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Pardon the odd names, but we ain't accustomed to trustin' outsiders. So, I reckon you got my message after all, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Don't trust your partner. Yeah. A bit too late though.

OSCAR

Now, you're here.

Oscar walks to Dr. Nero, who is still wearing nothing but his kimono and boxers, shivering in the cold with his bare feet pressing against the sand...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Now, Arthur, I trust. This scum, on the other hand, not so much.

He WHISTLES...

His four men ready their rifles, pointing it at Dr. Nero...

DR. NERO

No! Arthur, please!

OSCAR

(to Arthur)

Gimme one good reason not to kill this conspirin' son of a bitch.

ARTHUR

I gave him my word I'd let him go.

OSCAR

Well... Now, that you gone an' done  
such a silly thing as that, I  
suppose we can't have you not bein'  
a man o' your word.

He gives a nod, gesturing for him to go...

Dr. Nero starts rushing back to the car...

ARTHUR

No.

He stops in his tracks...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

The car stays here.

DR. NERO

What? You gave me your word!

ARTHUR

I gave you my word that you can go.  
I didn't say how. The car stays.

DR. NERO

How am I supposed to go home?

ARTHUR

Walk.

DR. NERO

Walk?! We're in the middle of the  
desert! It's miles away! I don't  
have any shoes on! I don't even  
have water! I won't make it!

ARTHUR

I told you, didn't I? Today is the  
lowest point of your life.

Dr. Nero looks around... No sympathy here...

Dejected, he starts walking away in the direction from which  
he came...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Oh and doc...

Dr. Nero turns around...

CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK

Arthur pulls the trigger several times... The gun was not loaded...

He throws it to the ground...

Oscar smirks...

Dr. Nero continues his trek, walking away...

OSCAR

Now that we took care o' that little business, whaddaya say you come with us to Devil's Jacket for the real deal? It's high time the ones who wronged you get their comeuppance.

ARTHUR

I'm looking for a woman. She's one of you. Gloria.

OSCAR

Gloria was her slave name. Her free name is Ember.

ARTHUR

Ember...

OSCAR

And she was with us, up until yesterday. She gone an' disappeared.

ARTHUR

Someone took her?

OSCAR

Ember ain't the sort to walk out on family, so yeah, I reckon they took her.

ARTHUR

She's been reaching out to me in my dreams.

OSCAR

Yep, she can do that.

ARTHUR

And now she's no longer waiting for me to sleep. I dream of her while I'm awake. She must be in real danger.

Oscar hops back on his horse...

OSCAR  
Jump on back then, we ain't got no  
more time to waste.

Arthur climbs behind him...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Git!

Oscar's horse NEIGHS and starts galloping at full speed...

His men follow him, their horses leaving whirls of dust  
behind them...

Arthur looks back...

Dr. Nero is far away by now, about to disappear into the  
horizon... Nothing behind him but his trail of foot prints in  
the sand...

EXT. DEVIL'S JACKET - DAY

The Aberrationists ride along a canyon on horseback, climbing  
up a path surrounded by rock formations...

Arthur still rides with Oscar...

OSCAR  
We just about there now. How you  
holdin' up back there?

ARTHUR  
I'm fine.

OSCAR  
You ever been hoss ridin' before?

ARTHUR  
Can't remember.

OSCAR  
Not one for risk takin', is ya?

ARTHUR  
Actually, I'm a jet fighter  
pilot... I think.

OSCAR  
Ah, daredevil! Oh, that oughta come  
in handy.

(MORE)

OSCAR (CONT'D)

If you're plannin' on stayin' in Devil's Jacket, you gonna need to learn how to ride a hoss, and they can be mean sons o' bitches sometimes. You liable to chew gravel your first way round.

ARTHUR

Why horses?

OSCAR

No tech. That's how they find ya, you know.

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

OSCAR

Pardon my scientific babblin', but each one of us so-called subjects had our innards branded with some thing-a-ma-bob that trigger some beamin' signals whenever we come in close contact with some electric-ahhly doohickey.

ARTHUR

A tracking device.

OSCAR

That be it. Best thing to do is keep outta society's modern ways and you'll be safe. No phones, no cars, no way o' gettin' caught. That's why we came all the way out here.

They reach a cave opening...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Wooooah, easy, girl.

They dismount and tie their horses to hitching posts just outside the cave...

INT. DEVIL'S JACKET - SECRET CAVE - DAY

A few logs burn in a small camp fire inside the cave...

The Aberrationists and Arthur sit around it...

Arthur puts his hands out closer to the timid flames, enjoying the warmth...

ARTHUR

Do you know who took her?

OSCAR

Yeah. So do you.

ARTHUR

How can I find her?

OSCAR

There's only one way to find our kind. You know what they call us, don't ya?

ARTHUR

The Aberrationists.

OSCAR

Yeah, that's one of 'em. They called us many names. Aberrationists. Rebels. Outlaws. Defects. Even mutants. But we don't pay no mind to who we are in their eyes, because we know what we are.

ARTHUR

Victims.

OSCAR

Victims? Nah. Far from it. We're the next best thing.

He throws another log on the fire, the rising flame prompting Arthur to lean back...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Yeah, they treated us like guinea pigs. But what they ain't know is that long after they done slicin' and dicin' ya, you develop a sort o' skill beyond your regular powers. And that's what we all are here, people who have special powers.

ARTHUR

What, you mean... like... superheroes?

The men laugh...

So does Oscar, who rubs his neck, a little embarrassed at the assumption...

OSCAR

Well, now, I don't know 'bout all that. Let's just say... we ain't your average folk and leave it there. Now, get up. Time to start your training.

Oscar stands up and walks towards a saddle bag behind him...

ARTHUR

Training for what?

CRACK

A bullwhip comes flying out of the saddle bag, hitting Arthur's shoes...

Arthur jumps up...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Hey! What the fuck are you doing?

OSCAR

Training ya to be a free man.

CRACK

Arthur dodges the whip at the last split second...

He starts backing off...

The other Aberrationists are all standing at the cave's opening by now, blocking Arthur from escaping...

Oscar shows off his skills, spinning the whip in circles over his head and delivering figure eights to his left and right...

CRACK CRACK CRACK

The sound of the thunderous whip slicing the air...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Boy, I reckon, by the time we're done, you gonna find my touch 'bout as gentle as a plate of sweet fried cornmeal cake!

CRACK

This one lands on Arthur's shoulder... He yells out in pain...

Arthur starts backing off, going in a circle around the fire...

ARTHUR  
Wait! Wait!

OSCAR  
We already done all the waitin' on you, boy! Now, be a real man and take that coat off!

CRACK

This one lands on his shoe...

Arthur starts hopping around...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
I said take it off! Git! Git!

ARTHUR  
OK, OK, I'll take it off!

He quickly slides out of his denim trench coat, throwing it away...

OSCAR  
The shirt too.

ARTHUR  
No... Please...

OSCAR  
Ain't no pleasin' me 'til you standin' there without your shirt on! Now, git!

CRACK

He slices one in the air... A warning shot...

Arthur removes his shirt, now bare chested...

CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK

Oscar goes on a frenzy, delivering blow after blow to Arthur's exposed upper body...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Now... never... ever... make... me... wait... on... you ass... again!



Arthur wraps his arms around himself, falling to the ground and crying out in pain...

ARTHUR

Stop! God, please, stop!

Red, fresh whiplashes are now visible across his arm, chest, and shoulders...

Oscar stops...

OSCAR

Boy, whach'yu cryin' 'bout?

Arthur's eyes are closed... He's in severe pain...

ARTHUR

Please, stop...

OSCAR

Stop? Stop what?

ARTHUR

Stop... hurting me...

OSCAR

But I ain't hurt ya none.

Arthur is still crying, eyes closed... He's bleeding all over...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Oh, you don't believe me? Open your eyes and see for yourself.

Oscar smirks...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Go 'head. Give your arm a feel. See if it stings any.

He steps back, giving Arthur some space...

The whip and his arms are behind his back, his front exposed... He's done whipping him...

Arthur opens his eyes...

He looks down at his hands and arms, all covered in lashes and fresh blood...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Go on.

Arthur rubs his hands along his scarred arms... No reaction...

ARTHUR  
I don't feel anything...

OSCAR  
'Course, you don't, you bally mouth  
breathin' city slicker!

The Aberrationists laugh...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
You been shot, maimed, wounded. You  
been bleedin' like a stuck hog for  
damn near two days now, you ain't  
never thought why you still  
standin'?

CRACK

Oscar delivers a blow right across Arthur's face...

Arthur doesn't react...

A large diagonal lash grows visibly red, stretching from his  
left ear to his right cheek...

He touches it, smudging the blood... Nothing...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Ding your brain! Now, that's just  
downright dumb!

He throws the bullwhip away, sharing in the laughter with his  
men...

Arthur stands back up and touches the rest of his body...  
Also nothing... He's perfectly fine...

ARTHUR  
Why can't I feel any pain?

Oscar's expression takes a sharp turn... He's dead serious,  
grim even...

OSCAR  
Cause... you been sliced.. and you  
been diced... and now you got  
yourself a special kinda power.

He points at Arthur's lashed out body...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

That there is punishment for your lazy ass. Had you been here sooner, maybe Ember wouldn't have been taken from us. Now, go bring her back.

ARTHUR

Where can I find her?

OSCAR

Like I done told ya. Only one way to find our kind, and that's to be our kind. Now that you are, it's time to earn your redemption.

The Aberrationists step aside from the cave's opening, revealing a heavy snowstorm now raging outside...

Oscar holds out the discarded shirt and coat, presenting them to Arthur...

Arthur takes them... then looks to the outside... The weather is crazy...

He throws the clothes away...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Now, you're catchin' on.

Oscar WHISTLES...

He gets handed a stick, similar to the charcoal that Arthur used before, but this one is dripping white ink...

He starts carving something on Arthur's bare chest...

Arthur doesn't even flinch...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Arthur Halloran was your slave name. Today, you a free man. Today...

Oscar stands back, admiring his work...

A large white unusual spiral with flames is now carved across Arthur's upper body...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

You're Wildfire.

He carves a couple of lines under each one of Arthur's eyes... A warrior's face paint...

EXT. DEVIL'S JACKET - SECRET CAVE - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Arthur and The Aberrationists emerge out of the cave...

The wind is now violent...

OSCAR  
Can you feel her presence?

ARTHUR  
She's close.

Arthur looks into the horizon... Near zero visibility...

He notices something...

In the distance, a faint light flickers at the top of a snow covered mountain... It twinkles on and off, like a shiny reflection in a mirror...

Oscar holds the lead rope of his Arabian horse, bringing her to Arthur...

OSCAR  
You gonna be needin' a hoss you can trust. Take mine. Devil May Care will get you there. She's one of us.

Arthur takes the lead from him and pats her...

He climbs up confidently... A flawless mount...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Looks like you two done bonded already.

Arthur makes a clicking sound... Devil May Care canters forward...

EXT. SNOW COVERED CANYONS - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Arthur rides Devil May Care, galloping at full speed as they climb up the rocky path...

Up ahead in the distance, the light still flickers on the top of the mountain, which now appears closer...

ARTHUR  
Hiyah! Hiyah!

Devil May Care picks up speed...

The violent winds and snowfall fail to deter her forward charge, the hooves leaving a trail of deep prints behind in the thick snow...

EXT. SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Arthur, still riding Devil May Care, finally arrives at the base of the mountain...

He looks around...

There's a path that runs along the mountain's side...

He makes a clicking sound, diverting his horse's direction towards it... She starts trotting upwards...

EXT. SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Devil May care still trots along the path to the mountain's side...

A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND AND SNOW attacks, pushing her back...

She NEIGHS...

Arthur shields his eyes from the impact...

Undeterred, he tries to look into the distance...

The mountain ridge is straight ahead...

ARTHUR  
HIYAH! GO! GO!

Devil May Care gallops forward at full speed...

EXT. SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Devil May Care gallops furiously along the mountain ridge...

In the distance up ahead, the light still flickers... Nothing else is visible in this weather, just endless snow terrain...

The flickering light grows bigger...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
(echo, playful)  
Allllll that glitters is-

Her LAUGH ECHOES in the surrounding white...

Arthur looks around... He can hear her voice but doesn't know where it's coming from...

In the distance, the light still flickers... The only guide amid this zero visibility...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
 (echo, adventurous)  
 Speeed is your frieeend,  
 wooohooooo!

Arthur and his horse continue their charge towards the flickering light, gaining speed...

The light is big by now...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
 (echo, sincere)  
 It doesn't matter. You're still my  
 partner.

Arthur keeps going... His eyes fixed on the impending extremely large light... He's in a trance...

He keeps getting closer...

And closer...

And closer...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
 (echo, terrified)  
 Look out!

An image of the Captive Woman standing, her face and body burnt down to the bones, suddenly appears mere inches in front of him...

He REACTS, pulling the rein to sharp lefts and rights....

Devil May Care NEIGHS and tumbles over, sending Arthur flying into the sky...

THUD

EXT. SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY (SNOW)

The storm is no more, replaced by quiet snow...

Arthur lies on his back, eyes squeezed shut... He's awake, but his eyes are closed on purpose...

ARTHUR  
 (on the brink of crying)  
 God, please... Not again...  
 Please... No more nightmares...

He feels the gentle snow falling on his face...

The SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW... Whoever this is,  
 they're right by Arthur...

He opens his eyes...

EMBER, 40's, the face of a sweet, pure, caring woman... She  
 looks almost angelic with her braided pigtails against the  
 backdrop of the snow, softly descending behind her...

She's crouching by his side... She wears a deerskin halter  
 top and skirt, both torn and decorated with tassels, along  
 with low heel Moccasin boots... Clothes that have resemblance  
 to native tribal wear...

EMBER  
 No more nightmares.

She extends her open hand, willing to pull him up...

He takes her hand, they both rise...

He stares at her, enchanted, mesmerized...

ARTHUR  
 It's you... It's really you...

EMBER  
 You came for me. I knew you would.

ARTHUR  
 I...

Lost for words, he gives up on trying to verbalize his  
 emotions and... simply hugs her...

EXT. DEVIL'S JACKET - DAY

The snow has completely stopped falling now, whatever remains  
 of it is on the ground...

Oscar and the Aberrationists are hanging out by the entrance  
 of the cave... Each one just lazing around, biding time...

Oscar toys with his bullwhip, throwing it left and right,  
 bored... He chews on a wheat straw, dangling from his mouth  
 like a cigarette...

He hears the sound of HOOVESTEPS IN SNOW, APPROACHING...

He smiles... The Aberrationists come alive...

OSCAR

Well, looky here, fellas. Seems our boy done reeled in the woman o' his dreams.

ARTHUR

(pats Devil May Care)

Thanks to your horse. You can have her back now.

OSCAR

Oh, she ain't mine no mo'. Once Devil May Care bonds with you, she stays bondin' till she say otherwise. Ain't that right, little Devil?

Devil May Care SNORTS...

Arthur and Ember dismount... He ties the horse to the hitching post...

The Aberrationists go inside the cave, except for Alexandria, who hangs back...

Arthur holds Ember's hands as they go inside the cave as well..

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Just like my daddy used to say, a good ass whoopin' always brings us closer together!

He gets up and gives Alexandria a friendly tap on the shoulder before going in the cave...

Alexandria still hangs behind... He looks out into the horizon, almost as if he's searching for something... then joins everyone inside...

INT. DEVIL'S JACKET - SECRET CAVE - NIGHT

The campfire burns gently, lighting just enough to see everyone asleep on their makeshift hay beds...

Arthur and Ember lie down on beds next to each other, still awake...



ARTHUR

I'm too scared to sleep. Scared to dream.

EMBER

Why not? The nightmares are over.

ARTHUR

I know. I'm just not used to believing that yet.

She gets up and heads to a spot in the cave...

She picks up Arthur's shirt and denim coat that he discarded earlier...

With her other hand, she picks up one of the burning logs and heads out...

EMBER

Come.

He follows her outside...

Alexandria watches them as they go, but still pretends to be asleep...

EXT. DEVIL'S JACKET - NIGHT

Ember emerges out of the cave with Arthur's old clothes and the burning log, rushing towards the edge of the canyon...

Arthur follows her...

She drops the clothes near the edge and extends the log to Arthur...

He's hesitant...

EMBER

You have to get rid of him.

ARTHUR

Who?

EMBER

Mammon.

ARTHUR

Who's Mammon?

EMBER

You've seen him before. You know  
him too well.

ARTHUR

He's the one who held you captive?

She points at the clothes...

EMBER

This is the last link between you  
two. You won't get rid of him until  
you get rid of them.

Arthur takes the burning log and stands over his clothes...

EMBER (CONT'D)

You don't need them, do you?

ARTHUR

(decisive)

No.

He throws the log down...

WHOOSH

The clothes catch fire, spreading slowly from the shirt to  
the coat...

She embraces him as they both watch the flames grow...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I feel lighter.

EMBER

They were weighing heavy on you.  
Now, you're free of that burden.  
Now, it's just Arthur.

ARTHUR

And Ember.

They share a kiss...

Arthur hears a RUSTLING sound from somewhere...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?

He looks at the cave... Nothing there...

Ember holds his hand and gently brings him down to the  
ground...

EMBER  
Let's go to sleep.

ARTHUR  
Here?

EMBER  
Why not here?

ARTHUR  
You're sure you don't want a comfortable bed?

EMBER  
Do you feel uncomfortable?

ARTHUR  
No... actually, I feel fine.

EMBER  
That's cause you're finally home.

She rests on his chest and closes her eyes...

Arthur closes his... He smiles...

EXT. DEVIL'S JACKET - CANYON VALLEY - DAY

Most of the snow has melted, making way for the lush greenery and clear blue skies of springtime...

Arthur and Ember ride Devil May Care, enjoying a calm walk amid the beautiful flowers...

Arthur now has a full grown beard... A lot of time must have passed...

Devil May Care canters...

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Ember walks towards the edge of a mountain at sunrise with spring in her steps, Arthur a few feet behind her

-- Arthur and Ember laze amid the flowers and shades of the trees

-- Nearby, Devil May Care drinks from a lake

-- Ember stands on the very edge of the mountain, opening her arm as if embracing the large rising sun

-- Arthur and Ember ride Devil May Care, who now gallops across the flower field

-- Arthur, still lazing amid the flowers, picks one and offers it to Ember, who twirls it as she enjoys the scent

-- Ember, still on the mountain edge, turns around and smiles, the large sun is her backdrop

-- Arthur stands behind her on the mountain edge, smiling back

-- Devil May Care lies down on the grass near the lake, sound asleep

-- Close by, Ember rests on Arthur's chest as they nap near the lake

-- Devil's Jacket at dusk, the purple and orange sky hovering over its canyon landscape

EXT. DEVIL'S JACKET - LAKE - DUSK

The lake and its surrounding greenery look serene at dusk...

Ember's and Arthur's clothes lie at the edge of the wet ground surrounding the water...

Ember, nude, comes running across the grass...

She JUMPS in the lake...

SPLASH

She emerges back to the surface, laughing...

EMBER

Come on!

Arthur's turn... He comes in nude, charging towards the lake...

And JUMPS IN...

SPLASH

The impact causes her to cover her eyes as he disappears underwater...

She opens her eyes, looking for him in the disturbed ripples...

BEAT.

He comes up from behind her, grabbing her and pulling her down into the water with him...

They both emerge back to the surface, laughing...

OSCAR (O.S.)  
Well, looky what we have here!

Oscar and The Aberrationists show up, riding their horses... except Alexandria is missing...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
You know, I ain't gone fishin' in donkey's years but I don't ever recollect seein' no fishies that darn big!

EMBER  
This feels so good!

ARTHUR  
The water's perfect!

OSCAR  
I bet. You two sure are cutting a swell in them fine waters.

They both gesture for him to join in the fun...

<p>ARTHUR Come on! Come on! Do it! You know you want to! Come on, come on!</p>	<p>EMBER Jump in! What are you waiting for? Come on! It's amazing! Come, come, come, come!</p>
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OSCAR  
Oh, you, you want me in there? You sure? You sure, now? You positive you want me to jump in? You ready for me? Hope you are, cause Imma giddy on down...

He jumps down from his horse...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Giddy on up...

He starts running in their direction...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
AND GIDDY ON INNNNN!

He JUMPS IN, right between the two...

HUGE SPLASH

The impact sends both of them flying, sinking into the water...

Oscar emerges first, spitting water out into the sky like a fountain...

Arthur and Ember rise back up to the surface, and immediately commence throwing handfuls of water at him...

The three laugh, having a blast...

Someone WHISTLES...

They look up to see it's the Aberrationists... who turn and ride back to where they came from...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

I gotta go. Something's up.

Oscar gets out of the water and mounts his horse, who gallops behind them...

EMBER

Time to get out.

Ember gets out of the water and puts her clothes back on...

Arthur follows, picking up his pants, which are just on the edge of the wet ground...

Ember looks at his pants... then looks at him...

EMBER (CONT'D)

Don't forget to pull, Arthur.

She gives him a half smile, then breaks their eye contact by looking at the ground...

Arthur seems confused but just chuckles in response...

ARTHUR

Okay...

She starts walking away...

He puts his pants back on and is about to walk towards Ember and Oscar... but he SLIPS and falls back into the lake...

UNDERWATER

He tries to swim back up but can't...

Through the water above him, he can see the distorted reflection of Ember, extending her hand down in his direction...

He tries to reach... in vain...

His eyes close as he falls deeper and deeper...

EXT. SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Arthur opens his eyes...

He's riding Devil May Care, who gallops furiously along the mountain ridge...

This seems familiar... Arthur is confused...

Just like before, a light flickers up ahead in the distance...

Nothing else is visible in this weather, just endless snow terrain...

The flickering light grows bigger...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
(echo, playful)  
Allllll that glitters is-

Her LAUGH ECHOES in the surrounding white... Deja vu...

In the distance, the light still flickers... The only guide amid this zero visibility...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
(echo, adventurous)  
Speeed is your frieeend,  
woooohooooo!

Arthur snaps himself out of it, controlling his horse as they charge towards the flickering light, gaining speed...

The light is big by now...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
(echo, sincere)  
It doesn't matter. You're still my  
partner.

Arthur keeps going... His eyes fixed on the impending extremely large light... He's fearful of what may come...

He keeps getting closer...

And closer...

And closer...

CAPTIVE WOMAN (V.O.)  
(echo, terrified)  
Look out!

An image of the Captive Woman standing, her face and body burnt down to the bones, suddenly appears mere inches in front of him...

This time, he confidently pulls the rein back, stopping short of hitting her...

Devil May Care turns around full circle before facing Ember's direction again...

Ember is not here...

ARTHUR  
Emb-

Devil May Care NEIGHS, catching him off guard... and THROWS him off of her back, sending him flying into the sky...

THUD

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTOR'S DEN - NIGHT

Arthur opens his eyes...

He immediately sits up to find himself trapped inside an animal cage with no door or lock, only bars all around... The cage's ceiling is so low, he only has enough space to crouch inside...

CLANKITY CLANK

The sound of cutlery... It's coming from behind him...

He turns... His eyes widen, horrified...

The Captor sits at a fine dining table, napkin tucked into his shirt, knife and fork in hand...

The Captive Woman's quadruple amputated body is laid on the table, served as food... Most of it has already been eaten, bones sticking out...



Her head had been severed and put on a spike to the side, her wide open eyes and mouth with protruding tongue facing Arthur...

He digs his knife and fork into what remains of her stomach, slicing off a part... then eats it, his eyes not breaking contact with Arthur's all the way...

Her blood drips from the side of his mouth...

Arthur loses it...

ARTHUR  
(top of his lungs)  
NOOO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

He shakes the cage with all his might...

Tears start streaming down his cheeks...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! WHY? WHY?

He curls up in the fetal position, shivering on the floor...

The Captor calmly puts down the knife and fork and wipes his mouth with the napkin...

He gets up, bringing out a small metal trash can, and throws her severed head and spike into it...

Arthur doesn't move...

The Captor puts the trash can down and walks away, disappearing into the shadows...

Arthur, now alone, stays lying down in the fetal position, eyes gazing blankly...

BEAT.

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY (SNOW STORM)

Arthur lies in the fetal position, eyes gazing blankly...

Visibility is still near impossible...

Devil May Care lies dead a few feet away from him...

Oscar and The Aberrationists show up, their four horses treading through the snow... Alexandria is missing...

Oscar's face is covered with the scarf to protect him from the weather... He lowers it...

OSCAR  
(sympathetic)  
Hey.

ARTHUR  
She's gone. She's really gone.

OSCAR  
I know. I stopped sensin' her presence on the way up here. Figured as much. Might have been my fault too.

He looks at his men, heartbroken...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Alexandria turned out to be a spy. That's how they knew when and where to take her. I took care of him then came here to find you.

ARTHUR  
It's over. It's all over.

OSCAR  
Not exactly.

ARTHUR  
She's dead.

OSCAR  
Yeah, so you can't save her no more. But what's the next best thing?

Arthur looks at him, puzzled...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
Vengeance. You can avenge her. Before I sent him to meet his maker, Alexandria spilled the beans on where his masters were hidin' out.

He points into the distance up ahead...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

About one klick yonder. They're all there, Arthur. Every last one of 'em. And they're comin' at us as we speak. A whole army of 'em.

ARTHUR

We'll fail. Just like we always do.

OSCAR

Oh, we would fail. By ourselves. But not with them.

He nods in the direction behind Arthur, who looks over his shoulder...

He stands up, staring ahead...

In the white horizon, MANY MASKED MEN ON HORSES APPROACH...

Their numbers are a force to be reckoned with, stretching from one side of the ridge to the other...

They stop just short of Arthur...

They all have their faces covered and are bare chested, the spiral shape and flames painted across their upper bodies...

They hold an assortment of weapons from spears, swords, and muskets to rifles, machine guns, and handheld grenade launchers...

Oscar and The Aberrationists' horses move to the front of the new men, facing Arthur...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

That's right. All of 'em. Every single one who's ever been wronged by those cowards.

He points into the distance behind Arthur...

Arthur turns around...

A SILHOUETTE OF SOLDIERS AND TANKS...

The enemy is approaching...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Ember has earned her vengeance. If today ain't the day for that, I don't know what is.

He's handed a borduna, a sword-shaped wooden baton engraved with Amazonian symbols...

He tosses it over to Arthur, who catches it mid-air...

OSCAR (CONT'D)  
 (forceful)  
 Now, you tell these men who you  
 are!

Arthur holds the borduna with a fierce grip...

He looks at the small army of men in front of him...

ARTHUR  
 I am Wildfire... the same one  
 burning with indignation in all of  
 you... A proud aberration in the  
 machine... that lured us in as  
 heroes and spat us out as  
 victims... We are the last  
 remaining sparks of a once glowing  
 Ember whose wrath they are about to  
 feel!

His men CHEER...

He points at the incoming army, who are about to close in on them...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
 Don't be afraid of them... They may  
 threaten... and they may attack...  
 and they may kill... but they'll  
 never take more than the flesh off  
 our bones... and we'll take away  
 everything they ever stood for...  
 because we're not here to win or  
 lose... we are only in for  
 vengeance... and we are only out...  
 FOR BLOOD!

Arthur, Oscar, The Aberrationists and the new men SHOUT A THUNDEROUS BATTLE CRY as they all charge forward, right into the other incoming army...

Arthur holds up his borduna high like a sword, ready to strike whatever comes near him...

Behind him, Oscar is on his horse, spinning his bullwhip in the air in circles...

And behind him are The Aberrationists, their rifles pointed forward...

The two armies are about to clash, getting closer...

And closer...

And closer...

WHOOSH

A bomb comes out of nowhere, landing in between the two charging armies...

BOOM

The explosion sends piles of snow flying into the sky and landing over everyone and everything...

A large cloud of grey smoke emerges, quickly growing larger and larger until it envelops all view...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A thick cloud of grey smoke...

The smoke dissipates...

Arthur emerges...

He's standing, confused... No weapon in his hand...

He looks around... It's the same place where he met the Shaman... but there's no one else here but him...

It's extremely dark...

A bright light shines on him from above...

He looks up...

A SPACE SHIP WITH SEVERAL MULTICOLORED BLINKING LIGHTS HOVERS ABOVE, LIGHTING THE NIGHT SKY

Its door opens, revealing blinding white light inside...

The silhouette of a mysterious figure emerges from inside...

Arthur struggles to make out its features but its shape implies that it isn't human...

Stairs descend from the door, reaching all the way to Arthur's feet...

The mysterious figure disappears back into the ship, leaving the open door and stairs... An invitation...

Arthur starts going up the ladder...

The light at the spaceship's open door is extremely bright... It gets more blinding as he nears it...

He shields his eyes with his arms as he walks in...

COMPLETE BLINDING LIGHT

INT. CAPTOR'S DEN - NIGHT

Arthur stops shielding his eyes with his arms...

He's standing in the middle of the room... It's the same room but the walls are now covered in black curtains...

In front of him is a TV and a desk...

To his side, there is A TEENAGE GIRL lying in an open casket...

It's the Captive Woman but much younger... The nameplate reads 'Amber G. Reynolds'... Her body is whole again, dressed in burial clothes...

He tries to move towards her but can't... His feet are stuck to the floor...

THE CAPTOR (O.S.)

What's the last stage of grief, Mr. Halloran?

The Captor emerges from behind him...

ARTHUR

You!

He tries lunging at him but can't... His legs are still frozen...

He starts hitting his legs in frustration... They won't budge...

He slowly approaches the stuck Arthur, whose now angrily swiping at him...

THE CAPTOR

My, oh my, oh my, oh my! The imagination on you!

(MORE)

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)  
Government assassins, rogue spies,  
secret genetic experiments,  
underground societies, rebel  
warriors. Wow, just wow... Alien  
encounters!

He laughs...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)  
(mocking spooky voice)  
Spirits of the dead, wooooo!

He crosses his arms, staring in admiration at Arthur, who  
has stopped trying to break free by now...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)  
You're quite the protagonist,  
aren't you, Mr. Halloran? I suppose  
I shouldn't find it too surprising.  
A man of your credentials. Award-  
winning screenwriter. Celebrated  
novelist. Prolific author. The  
world is yours to rewrite, isn't  
it?

ARTHUR  
Whatever you think you're doing, it  
won't work on me. I know your mind  
games too well by now.

THE CAPTOR  
You just weren't content with the  
stories we gave you, were you? You  
had to go and make up your own. You  
had to give it that trademark oomph  
that people loved you for. I bet  
you thought it was all solid gold  
stuff too.

He starts circling Arthur...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)  
But you see, there's a small flaw  
in this story of yours. A minutia  
of a detail that even a seasoned  
writer of your caliber managed to  
miss.

He stops circling, facing him again...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

Tell me, Mr. Halloran, throughout all your running, all the places you've been, all the people you've met in this saga of yours, how many faces have you actually seen?

Arthur is attentive, his eyes not breaking contact with his nemesis...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

And I don't mean passing glances. I don't mean hairdos and green eyes. I mean protruding jawlines, foreheads with wrinkles and pockmarks, the different shades of red freckles on a cheek, the sheen of sweat on an upper lip. Real, deep, anatomically complex human faces. How many of those have you seen? I'll show you how many.

He brings out a simple one-button clicker from his lab coat and presses it once...

CLICK

The TV turns on, showing a still image of him when he first revealed his face to Arthur... The image is taken from Arthur's point of view...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

You've seen mine...

CLICK

Another Arthur-POV image, this time of Ronnie at the diner...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

Your so-called partner's...

CLICK

A still image of Dr. Nero at his office, also from Arthur's POV...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

And your so-called therapist's.

ARTHUR

You planted a camera in my eyes. So what?



THE CAPTOR

Maybe one or two more, but that's it. You have not seen more faces than that and it's impossible for you to ever see more. Do you know why?

He leans in extremely close, enough to be able to whisper in Arthur's ears...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Because it costs a lot of money to design facial features in a simulation.

He steps back, registering Arthur's reaction...

Arthur breaks into laughter...

ARTHUR

Oh, please! Is that the best you can do? I'm in a simulation?

THE CAPTOR

(sudden uproarious fury)

Money, Mr. Halloran, that I simply refuse to spend more on you!

His demeanor has changed... He's livid...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

If you only knew, if you had the tiniest idea of the hell you've put me through! I'm fighting for more than just solvency here. I'm fighting for my life!

He composes himself, somehow bottling his rage again...

THE CAPTOR (CONT'D)

I realize you're still fuzzy on the details, so let me explain to you who I am and what I do. My name is Nicholas Vun Brown. And no, I'm not a scientist or a doctor in some government experiment.

The Captor is now NICHOLAS VUN BROWN... He points to his lab coat...

VUN BROWN

This, I only wore for your benefit. What I am is a believer.

(MORE)

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

I believe in the healing power that lies dormant within the entrepreneurial spirit, waiting to be awakened.

He rests against the table...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

A year ago, you were admitted into our care, the world's first ever psychiatric facility that heals its residents with Cerebral Imaging Simulator Therapy. Do you have any recollection of what that is?

Arthur just offers more 'drop dead' stares...

CLICK

A still image of the spiral-shaped needle...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

What we do is insert this extremely thin needle into the upper cervical area of the spine. This gives us access to the resident's brainstem and nervous system. We call this process 'going spiral'.

CLICK

The TV displays a still image of their simulator at work... A computer screen filled with unintelligible sequences of numbers, letters, diagrams, and lines of code...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Once our resident has gone spiral, we load up the operating system that allows for the simulator to commence.

His hands become more animated, feeling the rush of his own presentation...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

What makes our simulator unique is that we don't create your world. We just give the ingredients for your mind to create it. In other words, we give you the brush and the palette, and you paint the scene.

He takes out a little orange pill, the same one Arthur threw away...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

To ensure that our residents don't simulate things that agitate them, we give them this.

Arthur laughs, incredulous...

ARTHUR

There it is, right on cue. You didn't seriously think I was gonna fall for that?

VUN BROWN

This pill guarantees that you will only be able to simulate happy thoughts.

ARTHUR

You'll come up with any excuse to put that poison in my body, won't you? I took your stupid pill, do I look happy to you?

VUN BROWN

No! You look like a miserable fool!

He throws the pill away in frustration...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

For some reason, it didn't "take" with you. I'm mystified as to how that happened, because I've seen you swallow this pill with my own eyes.

CLICK

A still image of Arthur sleeping on a bed, hooked to many wires in what looks like a cryochamber... The long spiral needle dug deep into the back of his neck...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Not only that, but as soon as you went spiral, the only storyline you managed to simulate was the exact event that triggered your trauma. Which is why I did something that was never attempted before. The inter-spiral.

CLICK

A wide image showing a larger cryochamber with Arthur in the middle, Ronnie to his right and Dr. Nero to his left, all of them sleeping on beds and hooked to spiral needles that stretch out of the same platform...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
 Three simulations rolling at the same time, sharing one mind as the host simulator.

CLICK

Close ups on Ronnie and Dr. Nero...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
 These two were our oldest residents, both healed by the spiral. Out of the goodness of their hearts, they agreed to help me heal you.

ARTHUR  
 They have a funny definition for the word 'heal'.

VUN BROWN  
 They became part of your storyline and you became part of theirs. But then we discovered that since you're the host, no matter what, you still had control over the outcome of the storyline and the characters in your world...

He takes a moment to take in the magnitude of what he's about to say, almost resisting laughter...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
 And you've been scaring the living bejesus out of them!

He gives in and laughs...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
 Your sick, convoluted mind found a way to pervert their personalities. You made one a backstabber and the other a conspirator! They're supposed to be there to help you, and you ended up killing both!

ARTHUR  
 Whoever they are, whatever they are, they deserved it and more.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

That fake doctor of yours has been lying to my face since I met him, so pardon me for not believing a fucking word you say.

VUN BROWN

So don't believe him. See if you can believe Kevin.

ARTHUR

Who the fuck is Kevin?

CLICK

A still image appears of Dr. Nero sitting on a sofa... His hair is wet and a towel is wrapped around his shoulder... He no longer has any of his tattoos... Just an innocent face...

Tissues are in his hands... He appears to be crying...

VUN BROWN

That's Kevin. At least he was, before you rebranded him as the evil Dr. Nero.

CLICK

The still image turns out to be part of a video recording... It plays...

ON TV SCREEN

Kevin cries, wrapping the towel more snugly around his shoulders...

KEVIN

(sobbing uncontrollably)  
I... I don't know why he's so mean to me... All I ever did was try to help him but he's just been so vicious... so cruel...

He blows his nose...

KEVIN (CONT'D)

He made me walk barefoot across the desert... without any water! He made me die of thirst! He just kept bullying and bullying my character... He covered him in these awful tattoos and made him look like a convict... then he treated him like one...

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
He just wanted to help... I just  
wanted to help...

He breaks down, burying his face in his hands and crying even  
louder...

CLICK

The TV changes to a video of Ronnie sitting on the same  
sofa... His hair is wet and a towel is wrapped around his  
shoulder, but only half snug...

He holds a hot cup of coffee... He's quiet but seems pissed  
off...

BEAT.

RONNIE  
What was he like? He was a piece of  
shit, just like he was out here.

He takes a sip...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
I've known people like him my whole  
life. I worked as a bouncer for  
years, so I've seen his kind up  
close. They think their money and  
fame give them some high ground  
over you. Always looking down at  
you with their noses.

He rubs his hand along the mug, taking in the warmth...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
So yeah, he made me out as some  
backstabbing traitor, out to kill  
him or something. I'm not really  
sure why I was trying to kill him,  
but truth be told, I didn't mind it  
one bit.

He laughs...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
I don't care if he gets better or  
not. I only said yes to all this  
cause I was curious. I wanted to  
see what's going on in his mind.  
Did he at least feel guilty? Now, I  
know. Nothing. Like nothing  
happened.

His grip on the mug grows tighter...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Can you believe that? The kind of shitty person that he was, all those people he hurt? Lives he destroyed? Still, no guilt, nothing.

A solemn mood overcomes him... He stares into his cup, thinking...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

That poor girl... Her poor family... she was so young... Bastard...

He takes a big gulp of his coffee, finishing it off... then takes off the draped towel from his shoulder, throwing it on the sofa...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Fuck simulations, I'd kill him in real life if I could. And yeah, you can tell him I said that if you ever fish him out.

Ronnie directs his angry stare towards the recording camera...

IN CAPTOR'S DEN

CLICK

The TV freezes on the image of Ronnie staring at the camera...

Arthur looks at the TV screen, nothing to say...

VUN BROWN

This was minutes after they came out of the chamber. After you killed their characters. Kevin used to be a persistent depressive. We cured him with the spiral method. Now, he's relapsed because of you.

ARTHUR

What girl? What was he talking about?

VUN BROWN

Enough, Mr. Halloran. You know already.

Vun Brown walks over to the teenager...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Amber. Her name was Amber. You simulated her as Ember and Gloria Deveraux, both strong, independent women who can take care of themselves. In reality, she never lived to see her seventeenth birthday. Because you killed her.

ARTHUR

No... No, you're the one who killed her! You're the one who was torturing her! You ate her body, I saw you!

VUN BROWN

And yet here she is, whole again. How do you figure that?

ARTHUR

You did it in a dream... She reached out to me in a dream.

VUN BROWN

She reached out to you? Why you?

ARTHUR

I... She was there with me... in the experiments...

VUN BROWN

Right. Those would be the experiments where the military is trying to create a super soldier?

Vun Brown lets out a snort of laughter...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

You know, Mr. Halloran, now that I've been acquainted, now that I've had a look, up close, into the mind of the so-called leading cerebral TV writer of our generation, I must say, I'm sorely disappointed. Too many clichés for me. Not enough substance, you know?

Arthur puts his hands on his ears, blocking the noise...

ARTHUR

Stop trying to brainwash me!



VUN BROWN

(dismissive)

You brainwashed yourself, and with appalling results, I might add. Your mind has been simulating nothing but the worst human traits. Paranoia, betrayal, violence, murder. Is that really what's going on in that head of yours?

ARTHUR

You're the one who did this, not me. I never wanted to harm anyone.

VUN BROWN

You were about to simulate a fucking war! Who knows what else you'd have conjured up had I not stepped in. Don't tell me you're not violent, you blatantly said you were out for blood.

ARTHUR

That bloodshed is on your hands.

VUN BROWN

You still don't get it, do you? There's no blood, you fool. It's all in your head.

ARTHUR

You keep telling yourself that. I know what's real.

VUN BROWN

Oh, you do? Why can't you move then? There's nothing restraining you.

Arthur attempts to break free... He still can't move an inch...

ARTHUR

You've done something to me... to my legs... to the floor...

VUN BROWN

Your legs don't work because I rewrote your code. They will only move when you genuinely accept what I tell you to be the truth. It's your character's conditional statement.

Arthur stops trying to break free... He looks at Vun Brown with disdain...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

If you still don't believe you're on the spiral, you can reach behind to the base of your neck. You'll feel it there.

ARTHUR

What's the point? You'll probably make me believe I felt it even if there's nothing there.

VUN BROWN

Ah, but that's where you're wrong. In our simulations, storylines have to play out in logical order. Characters can't just grow wings and fly. That would present too many possibilities to the human mind.

He taps the side of Arthur's head...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Which leads to data overload... which leads to complete sensory shutdown... which leads to a lobotomy. Then, no more Arthur, simulation or not.

He holds the space behind his own neck... His hand seems to be wrapped around air, but the shape of his grip clearly indicates there's something there...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

I have one too. After your two co-residents failed, I plugged myself into your simulation with my mind as a second host. Which means while you're still waging battle in your mind, you have no choice but to accept my outcome in mine.

He taps himself on the temple, indicating his brain...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

That's right. I'm the host here. And this...

He gestures to the room...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Is the only thing you will get in my simulation. No crazy twists, no subplots. This sub-rate Hollywood farce ends here.

He puts his hands in his lab coat's pockets...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

You know, my spiral method can help people overcome mental disorders, irrational fears, obsessive compulsive behavior. Even boredom.

Vun Brown runs his hand through his flowing silver hair, restraining his anger...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

It's the forerunner to a future of truly humane healthcare. But you perverted it. You somehow twisted it into one of your juvenile screen works. You even simulated people that don't exist, just so they can reinforce your delusion.

He lets out a deep sigh...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

To think, I lobbied vigorously for your transfer into our facility. I naively thought that healing a prominent celebrity would legitimize our operation and turn our critics into believers. Instead...

CLICK

The TV shows an assortment of article clippings, images, and videos all sharing headlines such as 'Oddball billionaire sued for negligence', 'Vun Brown Center celebrity resident Halloran "stuck" in fake world', 'TV scribe Arthur Halloran may be lost in ill-conceived simulation forever', 'The beginning of the end for spiral therapy?', etc.

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

You decide to not come out of your simulation, drifting even further into your delusion... I'm being trialed for negligence by your family... I'm ostracized by the entire medical community...

(MORE)

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
Seems this whole fading republic  
abhors me and wants to see me  
either dead, imprisoned, or  
destitute...

He laughs, amused at the irony...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
You, Mr. Halloran, are the single  
worst thing to ever happen to me.  
And had the circumstances been  
different, I would have unplugged  
your spiral and enjoyed watching  
you die the most painful death.

He lets out another deep sigh, trying to control his anger...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
Unfortunately, if I do that, my  
whole life's work would be rendered  
meaningless. So, I have no choice  
but to bring you back, alive and  
well.

He presses the clicker again, turning off the TV...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
Now, that you've taken stock of  
reality, I'll ask you once again.  
What's the last stage of grief? You  
know them, don't you? The five  
stages? It starts with denial... 'I  
don't feel sick. I don't need  
treatment'....

This gets Arthur's attention... It sounds familiar...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
Then comes anger... 'You didn't  
feel my pain, now you're gonna feel  
my wrath'... then bargaining...  
'Please, just take me, let her go  
and take me'...

Arthur's eyes are drifting elsewhere... It's coming back...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)  
Depression... 'It's over. It's all  
over'... and now, we're at the  
final stage. Do you know what stage  
that is, Mr. Halloran?

Arthur closes his eyes...

CUT TO:

I/E. ARTHUR'S SPORTS CAR/EMPTY ROAD - NIGHT

Arthur sits behind the wheel of his two-seater sports car...  
The sunroof is closed...

He looks completely different... His hair is slick and he has  
beard stubble... He wears a denim jacket, the oversized  
collar of his open shirt protruding over it... His chic  
sunglasses tucked into the jacket's front pocket...

A uniquely long cigarette hangs from his mouth... Jewellery  
glitters on his neck and hands... He has a rock star look and  
a captivating demeanor... Suave, smooth...

He fiddles with his smartphone while his knees are bouncing,  
restless...

The passenger door opens... His legs stop bouncing...

In comes AMBER, the teenager, holding way too many shopping  
bags... She wears exactly the same clothes she wore when  
Arthur saw her in the snow storm...

Sitting next to each other, the age disparity between the two  
is unmissable...

AMBER

(tada)  
All done!

ARTHUR

Finally.

He puts the cigarette in the holder...

She takes the bags and bends over, searching for room in the  
tiny back seat area...

Arthur gives her a playful spank...

AMBER

Ow!

ARTHUR

Amber alert!

She gives him a soft nudge and rubs her behind...

He starts the engine and drives...

Her eyes have a lingering sleepy quality... Her mannerisms and voice scream underage, innocent, naïve...

Her smile shows teeth but still feels dampened, as if she's forcing it through masked pain...

                  AMBER  
Those keep getting harder.

                  ARTHUR  
Maybe your butt is getting softer.

                  AMBER  
Shut up.

                  ARTHUR  
It's definitely getting larger.

                  AMBER  
So is yours.

                  ARTHUR  
That's cause it has to hold my  
extremely fat wallet.

She laughs...

She raises her arms, victorious...

                  AMBER  
Yay! We're rich!

Arthur laughs...

                  ARTHUR  
Ah shit, I forgot.

He speaks to his car's AI assistant...

                  ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Helia...

The AI CHIMES...

                  ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Send message to Mr. Curtis,  
subject... tomorrow's 9am meeting  
pushed to 10am.

                  HELIA  
Tomorrow at 10am is scheduled for a  
meeting with Mr. Silverstein.  
Should I send him a message to push  
it to 11am?

ARTHUR  
Ah, yes, please.

DING... DING...

HELIA  
Both messages sent.

ARTHUR  
Thank you, Helia.

Another CHIME... She must be off now...

AMBER  
That thing will never stop creeping  
me out.

ARTHUR  
Hey, be nice to the lady robot. Her  
kind will be our overlords one day.

He pinches the bridge of his nose...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Ugh...

AMBER  
Your eyes again?

ARTHUR  
Eyes, neck, other parts. I need a  
top up.

He opens the armrest box... An assortment of pill bottles and  
blister packs...

He lifts one bottle, pops the lid, and pours a bunch of pills  
directly into his mouth...

AMBER  
You throw these things in like  
popcorn.

He gives himself a couple of slaps, trying to beat the pain  
away...

ARTHUR  
How do you know they're not  
popcorn?

AMBER  
Cause no one needs a top up of  
popcorn.

(MORE)

AMBER (CONT'D)  
And cause I know you only like  
popcorn that comes with a  
prescription.

                  ARTHUR  
Yeah, that sounds like me, doesn't  
it?

                  AMBER  
You take a lot of meds...

                  ARTHUR  
Don't worry, I know my limits.

                  AMBER  
Famous last words...

                  ARTHUR  
I mean it. These things are my  
friends. I have an understanding  
with them... You don't believe me?  
Here, watch this.

He sticks out his tongue, puts another pill on it, and  
closes..

He points at his throat and gulps, very clearly swallowing...

He opens his mouth again... The pill is all gone...

                  AMBER  
Cool trick. I think I've seen it  
before.

He raises his finger, gesturing for her to wait...

He closes his mouth again, crunching his nose and lips at the  
same time...

                  AMBER (CONT'D)  
What are you doing?

He makes a disgusting nasal sucking noise...

                  AMBER (CONT'D)  
Eeeew!

Without touching it, he blows out his nose... and the pill  
comes flying out of his nostril, accompanied by a little  
mucus...

Amber REACTS in disgust... which quickly turns into  
laughter...



ARTHUR  
See? Failproof. I'll never OD.

AMBER  
I can't believe you just did that!  
I think that may be the greatest  
thing I've ever seen!

ARTHUR  
I'm a man of many skills.

AMBER  
That one's gotta be at the top!

She laughs uncontrollably...

AMBER (CONT'D)  
Oh, my god!

ARTHUR  
I'm glad you enjoyed the show...  
Come here.

He tries to grab her but she's too quick to evade...

AMBER  
No.

ARTHUR  
No?

AMBER  
You'll ruin it with your big  
hands... What do you think?

He looks to see she's admiring a golden bracelet on her left  
arm...

ARTHUR  
Oh, that's beautiful. So shiny. I  
might need to put my sunglasses on  
just to get a good look at it.

AMBER  
(playful)  
You know what they say. Alllll that  
glitters is...

ARTHUR  
Gold?

AMBER  
Expensive!

They share a laugh...

ARTHUR  
Can't argue with that...

BEAT.

His mood changes... He's more serious, contemplative...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
How do you feel about this, by the way?

AMBER  
About what?

ARTHUR  
Us. Doing this. All the sneaking around and the hush hush stuff.

AMBER  
We both know what's gonna happen if people find out about us.

ARTHUR  
I know, but it's just that... I guess sometimes I feel like I'm not a good influence on you. Like I don't trust my judgement when it comes to things that might affect you.

AMBER  
Why?

ARTHUR  
I don't know. I can't even be with you when you're shopping. We can't be together in public. It's like a partnership with two people who are somehow still alone.

AMBER  
It doesn't matter. You're still my partner.

ARTHUR  
Then, don't trust your partner. Cause he doesn't even trust himself. You know what I'm trying to say?

She doesn't...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

You should be making the kind of memories other girls your age are making. Not be carrying my secrets. And for what? Some clothes and jewellery? Is that really worth it?

She's quiet, not particularly happy about the direction this conversation is taking...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I mean, what kind of person am I? Making you do something wrong, just so I can get what I want?

She rests her head on her seat... in silent thought...

BEAT.

AMBER

I don't wanna go home yet. Can we please just... just drive around?

ARTHUR

It's two in the morning. You still wanna drive around?

AMBER

Yeah.

ARTHUR

You never wanna go home. Doesn't your dad worry about you being out so late?

Her demeanor changes... She seems heavyhearted...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Or at least gets bored? It's just the two of you in that small house.

AMBER

I just don't wanna go home... please?

Arthur nods... and flashes a reassuring smile...

She reciprocates...

He takes the cigarette out of the holder, dangling it from his mouth... He opens the sunroof...

She immediately sticks her head out of it...

AMBER (CONT'D)  
                  (dramatic)  
Faster!

                  ARTHUR  
Do you have any idea the speed I'm  
doing right now?

                  AMBER  
Faster, I say! Onwards!

                  ARTHUR  
And you think I'm the addict.

He accelerates... The motor ROARS... Now they're going at a  
crazy speed...

                  AMBER  
                  (adventurous)  
Speeed is your frieeend,  
woooohooooo!

She reaches down, swipes the cigarette from his mouth, takes  
a drag, and blows directly into his face...

Out comes a cloud of yellow, orange, and red smoke, swirling  
together in front of his eyes... Must be a strange, new kind  
of cigarette...

He waves away the smoke, squinting to see the road ahead...

She goes back to sticking her head out of the sunroof...

He squeezes the bridge of his nose again, his eyes shut...

The pain won't go away, he keeps squeezing and rubbing his  
closed eyelids...

                  ARTHUR  
Ugh... Ugh...

                  AMBER (O.S.)  
Look out!

WHOOSH

Arthur hears a strange sound, not sure what it is or where it  
came from...

BOOM

Sound of a tire blowing out...

Arthur steers hard lefts and rights as the car SKIDS along the road...

TIRES SCREECH

CRASH

They both tumble around inside the car as it rolls over several times...

GLASS SHATTERS

Shards fly, attacking them from all angles...

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

EMPTY ROAD

A SHARP RINGING SOUND...

Arthur opens his eyes...

He can see forest trees burning close by, similar to wildfire...

He tries to get up... but can't...

He has a large diagonal scar, stretching from his left ear to his right cheek...

His clothes are torn... Red, fresh scars are visible across his arm, chest, and shoulders...

He turns to lie on his stomach instead...

He's surrounded by shattered glass and other car debris, but the car is not here...

He tries to push himself up... but can't... He's too weak...

He looks at his legs... They're completely bloodied and limp...

He looks around...

The shopping bags are scattered to one side... Their contents spilled on the asphalt, forming a trail...

He turns in their direction...

An orange glow fills his face...

His eyes widen...

A few feet away in the direction of the trail, the car sits upside down, consumed by enormous, rising flames...

Amber is stuck under... She's still alive...

The roof on the driver's side next to her has been completely dented inwards, leaving only the smashed passenger window open...

She can't get out, most of her body trapped under the weight of the car... Only her face and hands can be seen, reaching out to him... She's bloodied, scarred, and crying...

The SHARP RINGING DIES DOWN... He can now hear her...

Her breathing is so heavy, it almost crushes her chest with each contraction...

He starts crawling towards her... She's still far away...

He can't move any further... He extends his hand, reaching out to her... The only thing he can do...

She suddenly stops crying... She's staring directly at him...

An orange glow fills the inside of the car...

Her fearful eyes start bulging... Her mouth widens...

She lets out the familiar LONG, PIERCING SCREAM...

Her eyes and mouth fill with the same orange glow around her...

Her head starts expanding, stretching... The fire is consuming her from the inside...

BOOM

Her head explodes into pieces, flying high, carried by the enormous flames of a massive explosion...

Arthur is frozen still as he stares at the flames rising to incredible heights...

Some things are raining down from the night sky... They're pieces of her burnt body...

They fall down all over the place, from all angles...

Arthur is hypnotized, eyes wide open, mouth agape... He can't look away...

Something is about to fall on him... It's the bracelet, still wrapped around her severed hand...

It spins as it falls down...

Down...

Down...

BACK TO:

CAPTOR'S DEN

Arthur falls on his knees... His legs can now move...

He's devastated...

VUN BROWN

That's why I led you to believe that you were having those dreams. It's the only way I could manipulate you into the grieving process without your subconscious protest.

Arthur is lost in another world...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

You see, Mr. Halloran, simulations work very much like those movies and shows you loved to write. We give you just enough of the story to believe. We leave out the rest. And oh, how you believe.

Vun Brown walks closer to Arthur...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

You end up avoiding the obvious questions. You don't ask things like 'why can't I remember getting my PI license?', 'why am I not hungry even though I never eat?', 'why am I seeing only one woman in this whole world?' Too trivial.

He sits on the ground next to Arthur, getting comfortable...

He looks around him...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

I created this very basic room just for you and I.

(MORE)

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

No other human knows it exists.  
It's not on our servers. It's not  
even online. I went back to basics  
for you.

He takes a deep breath, mentally preparing for what he's  
about to say...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Right now, as we speak, we're both  
in a makeshift chamber that I built  
in a secret bunker, with both of  
our necks plugged into a special  
double-spiral that I crafted just  
for this occasion. On one tip,  
there's you, on the other, there's  
me.

Arthur's hands fall to the floor... He's on all fours...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

I had no time to spare, so I only  
set one prerogative for both of our  
characters, which is for you to  
self-heal. That's the only way out  
for both of us. Do you understand  
me?

He reinforces his commands with his hand gestures, almost  
karate chopping the air in front of him...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

You must believe that this is a  
simulation and leave of your own  
volition. You must unplug your own  
spiral and wake up. Then, I can  
unplug mine.

Tears roll out of Arthur's eyes...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Once we're both out, you will tell  
the world that you've been healed  
by my hands. There is no other  
outcome here where we both come out  
of this alive.

He grows more resolute as he speaks...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

The authorities are searching for  
me cause they know I took you. Any  
minute now, they will find me, but  
I don't care.

(MORE)



VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

I can give up my life, but I won't allow you to take away my life's work. The spiral method must live on.

ARTHUR

I killed her...

VUN BROWN

You did. And then you simulated her into this fake existence of yours. A grown, happy version of her, at least. I don't know how you did it, but I know I had to stop you.

Arthur turns to look at him, broken...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Sorry, but I couldn't let you do it. I'm not you. I'm in the business of healing people. Not letting them drown in some silly made-up stories. Especially ones as sickening and hackneyed as yours.

He gets up...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Well, time to get out. Are you ready?

ARTHUR

No.

VUN BROWN

We don't have much time left, Mr. Halloran. What will it take for you to believe that you're in a simulation?

ARTHUR

I believe you... I believe every word you said... That's why I won't do it.

VUN BROWN

What?

Arthur slowly starts to stand back on his feet...

ARTHUR

I won't go back there. To a world where I hurt people with impunity and get rewarded for it? For what?

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

So sick people can celebrate me at my worst, and put me on a pedestal when I stomp my way to the top? So I can kill more people that I love? No. I'll never go back there. I'd rather die in here.

Vun Brown looks down at him for a second... then GRABS him by the hair and pulls him so close that he's breathing down on his face...

VUN BROWN

Listen to me, you little shit! I sacrificed everything for this! I'm not gonna lose it for a moment of feigned superiority by a mental weakling like you!

He savagely pulls his hair down further, asserting control...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

(wrath of gods)

Do you know who I am? I'm a Vun Brown! We ate and shat people like you for centuries! I'm no businessman, I'm a maker of dreams, son of an enterprising visionary, grandson of trailblazing masters, descendant of colonial pioneers, and I will not yield my destiny FOR MORALS!

Arthur grabs him by his flowing hair and sends him flying towards Amber's coffin...

He holds on to the edge, breaking the force of the push and landing on his feet...

ARTHUR

I don't care if you're the fucking devil himself, I'm not going back to that hell.

VUN BROWN

You fucking idiot! If you don't go back, they'll think I murdered you!

ARTHUR

You did murder me! You took away my last chance at happiness! I could have been here with her, instead you brought the monster back. Why?

He's resolute as he stares Vun Brown in the eye...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Why would I ever go back there? To nothingness... to guilt... to a reality that's... that's just as bland... and empty... and tasteless as those leaves you made me eat.

VUN BROWN

What fucking leaves?

Amber lets out the same LONG, PIERCING SCREAM... except this time the scream goes longer... feels endless...

Vun Brown is mortified, his eyes are about to bulge out of their sockets...

WHOOSH

Her body ERUPTS IN FLAMES, which rise higher than him as she continues to scream...

He's in a state of disbelief, unable to move...

The flames fly out, falling all over the room, burning the black curtains and wreaking havoc...

Her body starts disintegrating, burning to a crisp, revealing the skeleton underneath... she still screams...

He falls back on his behind, scrambling away from her...

He quickly stands back up and looks around to see the entire room has caught fire...

Out of nowhere, Arthur jumps on Vun Brown's back, wrapping one arm around his neck and the other around the spiral shape in his back...

His hand holds air, but it's clearly wrapped around Vun Brown's spiral...

ARTHUR

Amber has earned her vengeance...  
Today is the day...

VUN BROWN

(choking)

Don't do it... Arthur... Snap out... You know who you are...

ARTHUR

I know who I am... I am wild fire... burning with indignation...

VUN BROWN  
NO! STOP! YOU'LL KILL US BOTH!

ARTHUR  
A proud aberration in the  
machine... that makes us out to be  
heroes... and spits us out to claim  
victims...

VUN BROWN  
DON'T!

Arthur's crying...

His grip grows tighter... His hand is more powerful,  
trembling, shaking as it closes in...

ARTHUR  
The last remaining spark... of a  
once glowing Amber...

VUN BROWN  
ARTH... AR...

He's at the point of no return... Ready to pull out the  
spiral...

ARTHUR  
Whose wrath... I'm about... TO  
FEEEEEE-

He pulls...

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

Arthur sits on a swivel chair, just swiveling...

He's in a studio... A mic boom hangs above him and camera in  
front... It's a televised interview...

He wears the same outfit he wore with Amber in the car...  
This time, he also wears his chic sunglasses...

He doesn't seem too happy to be here...

TV HOST (O.S.)

(haughty)

Your critics have said in the past, more times than one, that the characters in your screenplays and novels, and indeed in most of your works, are more flash than flesh.

ARTHUR

Mm.

TV HOST

They also criticized the level of violence used in the TV show Bando, mainly by your protagonist, Oscar Dixon, portrayed by your long-time collaborator Timothy Curtis.

ARTHUR

Mm.

TV HOST

Iconic as that character may be to younger audiences, the consensus among older ones is that he's an amalgamation of the worst traits of the alpha male.

ARTHUR

Right... Am I supposed to find a question in all that?

FAINT SPATTER OF LAUGHTER from the crew behind the scene...

TV HOST

You don't think violence on screen affects minds off screen?

ARTHUR

No. I think it's the other way around. We depict violence on screen because it exists in real life. Reality is violent. We just hide that fact when it's convenient.

TV HOST

What do you mean?

ARTHUR

Every day, news channels show us people getting killed around the world. No one says a word.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

But when I write a fictional scene about a fictional informant having his fictional limbs severed by a fictional gang, they can't shut up.

TV HOST

Well, it's gratuitous, isn't it?

ARTHUR

I don't know how it can be gratuitous if it's not real. That's like saying there are too many zeros in nothing. It's a make-believe world where there are no consequences.

TV HOST

So, you don't believe it affects viewers at all?

ARTHUR

No.

TV HOST

Do you feel it affects you in some way?

Arthur smirks, smug...

ARTHUR

Yeah. It makes me richer.

ANOTHER FAINT SPATTER OF LAUGHTER...

He chuckles, amused by his own remark...

TV HOST

Final question...

ARTHUR

Good.

TV HOST

What if Arthur Halloran never became a writer? Never won awards. Never introduced Oscar Dixon to the world. No wild parties until sunrise. No posses of beautiful women hanging on his arm. If none of that ever happened, what would Arthur Halloran be doing today?

Arthur ponders deeply...

INT. VUN BROWN HEALING CENTER - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Arthur is in a wheelchair... He wears a hospital gown...

His face is a blank expression, eyes and mouth half open... Almost as if he's somewhere else... His hair is a disheveled mess...

A small plate of uneaten pudding sits on the sofa next to him... It's the same one that Ronnie and Kevin were sitting on in the video...

Vun Brown enters... He's brimming with confidence, excited...

He crouches down to eye level with Arthur...

VUN BROWN

Alright, Mr. Halloran, we're ready for you. Now, don't be afraid. The whole procedure is safe. We've done it a million times. And I'll be right here with you. I just need you to take this first.

He brings out the small orange pill...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

It's very important because it will make sure you don't feel the pain of the needle as it goes into your skin. That's all it does. It takes the pain away.

He tilts Arthur's head backwards, opens his mouth and drops the pill in...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Now, swallow... swallow...

Arthur clearly swallows... then sticks out his tongue...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Good! You're all set.

The door opens... A TECHNICIAN IN A LAB COAT pops his head in...

TECHNICIAN

Wall's been breached again.

Vun Brown massages his forehead, a familiar headache...

VUN BROWN

Shaman1392 again?

TECHNICIAN

We haven't identified a username yet, but we think it's him.

VUN BROWN

How many residents this time?

TECHNICIAN

Two. Well, we found two so far.

VUN BROWN

He changed their storylines already?

TECHNICIAN

Some, yeah... I hate to bring this up again but we really are overdue on that security overhaul for-

VUN BROWN

I know, I know. I'm working on it.

TECHNICIAN

So what should we do now?

VUN BROWN

I'll be right there.

The Technician vacates, leaving Vun Brown alone with Arthur again...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

This is what the world is reduced to now. Hackers and pranksters. They think it's a videogame, can you believe that?

He flicks some dust off of Arthur's gown...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

But that's all gonna change with you, won't it? You're my ticket out of this dead end. The great Arthur Halloran, restorer of faith in the spiral healing method.

He pats Arthur's hand, reassuring...

VUN BROWN (CONT'D)

Sit tight. Once I'm back, we'll have you ready to go in no time.

He exits, leaving Arthur alone...



BEAT.

Arthur crunches his nose and mouth... He makes a disgusting nasal sucking noise... then blows his nose without touching it...

The pill flies out, accompanied by some mucus, and lands on the floor...

He's back to the blank expression, spaced out...

INT. VUN BROWN HEALING CENTER - THERAPY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Arthur, still wearing the gown, still with a blank expression, lies down on the bed inside the chamber, exactly as he was on Vun Brown's TV...

His eyes are drifting left, right, here, there... His eyelids are coming up and down... His head is moving around...

A pointy needle, attached to a machine below him, is pointing up towards an opening in the bed, ready to go through it and penetrate his neck...

VUN BROWN (O.S.)  
Standby for contact... Going spiral  
in 3... 2... initiate slow roll...

The spiral starts spinning around like a drill bit, but slowly...

Arthur turns once, his body rolling over until he's on his stomach, and his face plopping in the opening where his neck is supposed to be...

VUN BROWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Ah, damn it. Hold.

Arthur peers through the opening...

THE POINTY TIP OF THE NEEDLE SLOWLY SPINS AROUND, ITS SHAPE IDENTICAL TO THE UNUSUAL SPIRAL IN THE SHAMAN'S PAPER

VUN BROWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I said hold, god damn it. Go and  
fix him, go, go.

A couple of arms come into view, holding him and trying to roll him over...

Arthur drools...

BACK TO:

TV STUDIO

Arthur ponders deeply...

ARTHUR  
What would he be doing?

BEAT.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Losing his mind in creative ways.

He takes a deep drag of his cigarette... and blows...

Out comes a cloud of yellow, orange, and red smoke, swirling together...

END