

GRAY ZONE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. EVELYN MONROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

An armored door leaf slightly vibrates.

Muffled knocks and shouts pass through its narrow gaps along the sides into the super tidy woman's apartment.

An ascetically ordered place of colorful furnishing, however, all looks empty and unused as from the catalogues.

Even clean dinnerware for one person is laid on the table.

The safety door strikes the eye, just as the three wood blinds whose horizontal slats are rotated in an angle that allow a view out but not vice versa.

Soft sobs sound from the opening of the

BEDROOM

where EVELYN MONROSE, 34, a pale brunette, drags a pillow over the back of her head.

She kicks her legs onto the bedspread, rolls to and fro.

A smartphone rings from the bedside table. "MRS MUNZ" is calling.

Evelyn sneaks a peek on the phone. The call disappears. She leaps to her feet.

EVELYN

Mrs Munz? I'm sorry, Mrs Munz.

She rushes into the

LIVING ROOM

to the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUES

An old lady, MRS MUNZ, shoves her 90s cell phone into the pocket. She picks the cake plate from the floor and turns off from the door.

MRS MUNZ

This poor child.

INT. EVELYN MONROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUES  
THROUGH THE DOOR'S FISHEYE LENS: Mrs Munz trudges off.

EVELYN (V.O.)  
Mrs Munz. It's Mrs Munz. I must  
open the door for her.

BACK TO SCENE

Evelyn grabs for a knob on the door, twists it.

With each rotation a bolt in the lock pops back.

She pulls the heavy door open, holds it in hand and pokes  
her nose into the

HALLWAY

where Mrs Munz steps through her apartment door, diagonal  
from Evelyn's.

EVELYN  
Mrs Munz! I'm sorry, I haven't  
known...

Mrs Munz' door snaps shut.

Evelyn gets teary eyes.

EVELYN  
(soft)  
I'm sorry, Mrs Munz.

Evelyn clenches her fist, bares her teeth.

EVELYN  
Gooooodd. You stupid.

She takes a look right, nobody, left, nobody, pads into the  
hallway and rushes to Mrs Munz' apartment.

She shoots a fearful glance back to her open safety door.

EVELYN  
Mrs Munz. It's me, Evelyn.

As she raises her fist to knock, something from behind makes  
her - BLACK.

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

A spotlight beams diagonally from the ceiling.

The incident ray is perfectly bundled to solely illuminate a framed painting that hangs on a concrete wall.

Below it in the dimmed light, with legs stretched, back against the wall, sits Evelyn. She slowly opens her eyes, blinks them rapidly till they calm.

EVELYN

Hello?

Faint female groans and squeaks appear from the darkness of the room's other side.

EVELYN

Who's there?

No answer except further soft winces.

EVELYN

Where have you taken me?

Evelyn touches her arms and moves her legs a little- all seems okay.

She looks up to the ray of light that illuminates the painting three feet above her head.

She slides her hands over the wall behind her, pushes herself up. With a fearful look into the darkness, she stays at the source of light, and turns to the painting:

THE HEAD OF A WOLF is directed toward her.

Evelyn stumbles backward, screams her most shrill cry, falls on her butt, can't take the trembling eyes off the painting:

THE WOLF has a slim long snout, sharp dirty teeth, and pointy ears. The picture's background is all black.

A short breath of Evelyn and she screams another time, as long, still failing to turn her eyes off the painting:

On closer examination, the eye sockets of the Wolf are cut out. Human brown eyes sparkle from behind the slits. IT'S A MASK. A very realistic mask of a wolf head, painted perfectly detailed.

Evelyn's scream decays. She breathes quickly, reclines, and passes out.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

In a shadowy-filled place, a monitor sits on a desk.

It broadcasts a green night-vision record of Evelyn, who lies passed out on the floor.

A man with wispy gray sideburns, glasses, and a bald patch on his rather emaciated head, FRANK SURLOCK, 53, leans over the table toward the monitor.

FRANK  
That's where I want you.

Frank's pupils study the monitor intently.

FRANK  
That's where I want you.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW (not indicated in headings)

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

A claw hammer swings through the air against the backdrop of a perfect blue sky.

It hits the back of the head of a BROWN HAired MAN.

With a hollow sound, the hammer strikes into the skull as in a dried out log.

The man's body falls on the knees, where it rest a second in balance, then slumps unconscious forward onto the grass.

YOUNG EVELYN (O.S.)  
(shrieks)  
Daddy!

YOUNG EVELYN'S P.O.V. - HER SMALL HAND IN FRONT

releases a wicker basket. As it drops, some of the field flowers bounce off and scatter around her bright red ballerina shoes.

Her arms swing in front. The grass below and sky above heavily shake.

The prone lying body is where "her view" steadily runs to till it's "reached".

Her view more and more nears the body's brown pullover until there is only BROWN while heartbreaking sobs and howls sound.

Her now tearful "blurred view" looks up into the distance.

There, a MALE PERSON, in jeans and dark shirt - with an odd fur covering his back of the head - strolls away across the meadow, toward the woods.

The claw hammer hangs loose in his fist.

INT. WOODS - NIGHT

-- BROWN.

It's the bark of an oak tree.

From behind the trunk, the long snout of a wolf pokes out.

It's the Wolf Mask.

And the man in jeans and dark shirt is who wears it. His brown eyes glitter through the slits at the eye sockets.

He carefully watches YOUNG EVELYN MONROSE, 10, who with her head down and the empty wicker basket in hand stumbles along. She looks devastated, red face, running nose, alone.

The man with the wolf mask steps out of his hiding.

INT. GIUSEPPE ZAMPIDI'S ATELIER - DAY

Long wooden planks, partly splintered at their joints, are covered with a mixture of dusk, old dabs of paint and fresh dabs of paint.

From the filthy windows comes still a warm daylight in due to their height and numerousness, surrounding the atelier from three sides.

There's a circle of easels, each positioned few feet from the outer walls. Most have paintings on them:

It's a dark style registered from the first sight - Body parts, ghosts, gloomy colors - all carry the clear atmospheric tone of a grotesque abstractness.

In the midst of this circle of artwork is a lot of space and only a single work bench.

On its top sit pain tubes, brushes, solvents, filthy cloths. The table is so jam-packed that GIUSEPPE ZAMPIDI'S slightly teetering feet shove a box with felt pens over the edge of the top.

This accident arouses nothing of Giuseppe, 50, the painter, dressed in his guild's "uniform" of paint-spattered casual.

With his legs propped up, he lingers on a chair and scrolls on his smartphone. In his other hand burns a cigarette with a long ash that drops.

FRANK (O.S)

So, this is the most holy place of  
the unholy genius.

Giuseppe looks over his shoulder to Frank Surlock who stands close to the entrance door in a long cream-colored coat and a scarf that hangs from his neck to his ankles.

Frank moves his leather shoes carefully over the dirty flooring and extends his hand to Giuseppe.

Giuseppe rubs his palms together, still dirty, and accepts.

GIUSEPPE

Mister Surlock.

Frank takes a few steps ahead and examines the paintings.

Behind Frank's back, Giuseppe checks and adjusts his side parting hairpiece, walks over to Frank and stops beside.

FRANK

That's truly delivering some  
darkness, emotions. But...

He tries to make eye contact with Giuseppe.

FRANK

How real is it actually?

Giuseppe's eyes stay with his artwork as if defending it.

GIUSEPPE

It is. To a certain degree it is.  
Then it's never real enough, Mister  
Surlock. Otherwise, I'd have to  
find a new profession, wouldn't I?

Frank smiles, turns to the artwork.

FRANK

I like your ambitions.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Evelyn crosses a one way, swiveling her head from left to right. She rushes up the steps toward a building entrance.

INT. DR. FRANCESCA'S OFFICE - DAY

A BLURRED VIEW - fixates a desk crammed with IT equipment, psychology books, papers, and a brass angel statue.

The small statue gets more and more in focus, whereas the adjacent objects blend into absolute blurriness.

DR. FRANCESCA (O.S.)

And while you fix your eyes on that spot, go deeper and deeper, you may perceive your eyes twitch and get a bit bleary.

The View on the angel statue pulsates. A tear film smears the vision. Quick blinks try to get it back in focus.

DR. FRANCESCA (O.S)

And now, if you wish, you can allow your eyes to close and enjoy this relaxed state you are in.

BACK TO SCENE

DR. FRANCESCA COLE (45), casually dressed with a blonde updo hairstyle, sits on a chair amid her tidy therapy room.

Calm and concentrated, she observes Evelyn (33) on the sofa beside.

Evelyn stares at the desk a few steps ahead. Her brown eyes blink rapidly, then slowly close.

DR. FRANCESCA

Now, try to focus on what you hear only. It could be what comes through the window. Cars passing by. It could be my voice. That does not have to mean anything. You just listen to it.

A stillness overtakes Evelyn. Her breathing slows down.

Sounds drift in from the office's wide-open window:

A car honks. Birds chirp - each call distinct, loud and clear. The wind roars and dissipates, undulating in waves.



LATER

DR. Francesca sweats a bit, not that relaxed anymore.

DR. FRANCESCA

Well, we spoke about that mask before. We said it cannot affect or hurt you here, right? It's just a mask as was always the case.

Evelyn's face twitches.

Dr. Francesca gives a slight sigh. She grabs her own neck while her gaze stays fixed on Evelyn.

DR. FRANCESCA

Don't forget that you actively maintain control and can end this session anytime.

EVELYN

It's okay. I need to continue. I need to...

DR. FRANCESCA

All right then. So... You say the mask stands in the foreground now.

Evelyn's face keeps twitching.

EVELYN

Yes. It stands still in the air.

EVELYN'S HYPNOSIS

THE WOLF MASK STANDS IN THE AIR AGAINST A BLACK BACKGROUND.

The brown human eyes glitter through its slits.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And what color is the background?

EVELYN (V.O.)

Dark. It's all dark.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Now try to focus on that black, dark background. More and more. And let the head of the wolf dissociate from you. You just push it away.

The wolf mask gets smaller, dissociates, as if the blackness is a room with spatial depth.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)  
How does that feel, Evelyn?

BACK TO OFFICE

Evelyn sits still, relaxes more and more.

EVELYN  
Good.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Good. It gives you space. And you feel good, right?

EVELYN  
Yes. It's good for me.

DR. FRANCESCA  
If you would give a color to this good, freeing feeling, what color would that be?

EVELYN  
Green.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Green. Green as the woods you used to love before you met... the mask?

EVELYN  
Yes.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Fine. You now may want that green color filling your view. Slowly it replaces the darkness.

EVELYN'S HYPNOSIS

The wolf mask hangs far away in the background, tiny. Green slowly displaces all blackness.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)  
And, you may see yourself in a forest, with fallen leaves, meadows, and trees, beautiful green nature.

The green slowly transforms and blends into

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY (*EVELYN'S HYPNOSIS*)

Fallen leaves cover a path flanked by bushes and meadows. Straight ahead, oaks reach for the blue sky. The cropped wolf head vanishes behind a trunk.

BACK TO OFFICE

Evelyn sits completely still.

Dr. Francesca uses this temporary calming, takes a sip of water, quickly turning her eyes back on Evelyn.

DR. FRANCESCA

So, would you tell me... where is the mask now? Is it far away?

EVELYN

Yes.

DR. FRANCESCA

It is gone, right?

Evelyn twitches uncontrollably.

EVELYN

No. No, it's behind a tree. It's there. I know it's still there.

Dr. Francesca strokes her own forehead, swallows.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY (*EVELYN'S HYPNOSIS*)

Behind the trunk of an oak, the long wolf snout is directly ahead. The brown eyes glitter from beneath the mask.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Okay. I want you to walk backward now. Leave that tree, but try to keep the mask in focus. You will not run from it again because the mask just gets where it belongs, in the background of your life.

The mask in sight, Evelyn moves backward -- watching Evelyn first time in her visions -- SHE IS A KID HERE, the Young Evelyn, ten years old, with her wicker basket in hand and the red ballerina shoes on.

Fear in her eyes, she focuses the mask, reels back. Step by step. Wind blows into her face, her small nose is running.

BACK TO OFFICE

DR. FRANCESCA  
You can make it. Just don't forget  
it is a safe spot you're at now.

Evelyn's convulsions subside.

Dr. Francesca takes another sip of water. She taps and strokes her forehead, swallows, unsure.

DR. FRANCESCA  
How far is he away now?

EVELYN  
The wolf mask?

DR. FRANCESCA  
No! You know whom I actually mean.  
And you may also notice that you're  
not a child anymore. Just look at  
you.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY (*EVELYN'S HYPNOSIS*)

Evelyn stops walking backward. HER GAZE drops to her hands:

One a child's palm, the other one of the adult she is.

The kid's hand transforms into an adult hand as well --  
SHE'S IN HER ACTUAL AGE (33).

Less frightened, Evelyn looks toward the oak tree.

BACK TO OFFICE

Evelyn sits relaxed.

EVELYN  
Okay. I'm fine.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Now while you recognize that you're  
not a weak child anymore, I want  
you to pay attention on the beauty  
in those woods - how it smells, how  
it sounds.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY (*EVELYN'S HYPNOSIS*)

Evelyn's attention shifts from the oak tree to the ground.

Evelyn drives her foot through the leaves, hears the birds sing and the wind blow.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)  
And I want you to know that while  
you do so I stand right beside you.

DR. FRANCESCA STANDS BY EVELYN'S SIDE.

They make eye contact.

DR. FRANCESCA  
I'm with you. Now, it's all about  
the truth, Evelyn.

Dr. Francesca lets her gaze wander over the open woodland.

Evelyn hesitates, then also enjoys the nature.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Here, in this beautiful and utterly  
trustworthy atmosphere, would you  
please answer me one simple  
question?

Evelyn nods.

Dr. Francesca stretches her arm forward. Her index finger points directly toward the oak trunk while her now serious, determined eyes stay fixed on Evelyn.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Who is behind the oak tree?

Evelyn looks into Dr. Francesca's eyes.

EVELYN  
It's Michael McKinley, wearing a  
wolf mask.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Michael McKinley who?

EVELYN  
Michael McKinley who killed my  
father, abducted me to his house,  
raped me, and almost killed me.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Is it the truth of your life?

Self-aware, Evelyn nods her head up and down several times.

EVELYN

It is.

DR. FRANCESCA

And while you repeat those words, louder, I want you to look at him when you allow him to step from behind the tree and take off his mask. You can say "you" to him if you want.

The unmasked Man in jeans and shirt steps from behind the oak tree.

He's MICHAEL MCKINLEY, 38, short hair with gray spots.

EVELYN

You're Michael McKinley. You killed my father, abducted me to your house, you raped me, and you almost killed me.

DR. FRANCESCA

Is he free?

EVELYN

No. He's imprisoned.

Michael shivers, fear in his eyes.

Fake, he bursts out into laughter.

MICHAEL

Bullshit. I'm freer than ever. And I enjoyed all of what you said, my little Evelyn. You're not a woman. No. You will always be the girl I once met here with her daddy. Just look at you.

Evelyn looks down at herself -- SHE'S A KID.

Alone. Dr. Francesca is gone.

MICHAEL

And now look at me.

Michael wears the wolf mask. He comes closer.

BACK TO OFFICE

Evelyn lies on the floor. She suffers an epileptic seizure, foams at the mouth.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

We two will always meet in these woods. I'll wait for you and you will listen. To me. Only to me.

Evelyn's convulsions become stronger.

Dr. Francesca kneels down beside, gives an injection syringe to Evelyn's wildly twitching body.

The serum slowly calms Evelyn. She's alive, breathes deeply.

Dr. Francesca reclines on the floor. She takes a deep breath, gets on her knees again, raises the glass of water to Evelyn's lips, pours water into her mouth.

LATER

From behind her desk, through the office's window, Dr. Francesca watches the ambulance cars rush off.

She moves the computer mouse, disables the screensaver of her PC. A tabloid webpage pops up, showing the daily celebrity gossip. She turns off the monitor.

She grabs her telephone, not even picks it up, just holds it in its base station... lets off, scribbles some notes, then SCREAMS, presses her fists against her cheeks.

She slaps on the table. The angle statue falls from the edge to the floor.

DR. KYLE, 57, a colleague from the therapy practice enters.

DR. KYLE

You okay?

DR. FRANCESCA

I wanted too much. The hypnosis failed. I'm just not capable.

DR. KYLE

You're the best psychologist there is in your field.

DR. FRANCESCA

I know. But that still is not enough.

Dr. Kyle puts his hands in his pockets.

DR. KYLE

No, it isn't.

He makes for the door, turns.

DR. KYLE

Can you live with it?

She gets up, walks over and faces him

DR. FRANCESCA

I want to help her. That's my one  
and only reality.

EXT. GIUSEPPE ZAMPIDI'S ATELIER - OUTSIDE STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Frank climbs the metal grate steps.

Giuseppe awaits him. With a smoke, he sits at the top step  
and enjoys the dusk.

GIUSEPPE

No. Not really?

Frank smiles all over his face while lifting a bag up high.

Giuseppe takes a deep drag from the cigarette.

GIUSEPPE

How did you get it?

Frank disappears into the atelier.

FRANK (O.S.)

With money.

Giuseppe's eyes get a bit teary. He stares into the  
distance.

GIUSEPPE

What else if not... Money.

INT. GIUSEPPE ZAMPIDI'S ATELIER - NIGHT

Several hanging light bulbs illuminate the atelier.

At the cleared and tidy work bench, Giuseppe sharpens a  
pencil with a knife.

Frank grabs into the bag. He produces the wolf mask and  
unfolds it.



GIUSEPPE

An impressive piece of art.  
Unbelievable. That haven't been  
legal...?

Frank mocks him by putting the pointer on his lips, SHHH.

He lays the mask on the work bench, wants to leave--

GIUSEPPE

Wear it.

FRANK

Wear it?

GIUSEPPE

Put it on.

Frank points at the mask.

FRANK

You know that it's his...

GIUSEPPE

Oh my. I see. The scientist  
considers moral.

(rhetorical)

Isn't it just a thing for you, an  
item, a dead object?

FRANK

Sure. It's just a mask.

Giuseppe grins with a little scorn toward Frank.

GIUSEPPE

Sure. Just a mask it is.

LATER

With wolf mask over the face, Frank steps from behind a huge  
black canvas and positions in front.

Giuseppe stands at an easel. He puts the pencil to the white  
paper of a sketch pad.

He draws lines, quick and confident.

More and more Giuseppe's precise pencil strokes reach the  
contours of The Mask.

And the whole sketch becomes more and more...

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

...THE WOLF MASK PAINTING hangs on the concrete wall.

The incident beam of the spotlight perfectly illuminates it.

The rest of the room is almost completely dark. From there, the soft winces resound.

In the shade near the middle lies Evelyn. She moves a bit and slowly gets conscious.

CURATOR (V.O.)  
(disguised)  
Wake up, little Evelyn.

Evelyn shakes.

EVELYN  
Who is this?

She sits up. From the corner of her eye, she watches the wolf painting.

CURATOR (V.O.)  
(disguised all along from here)  
It's just a picture.

Evelyn looks up where she expects a loudspeaker or similar.

It's too dark, except for the piercing ray.

EVELYN  
(soft)  
Why you do that to me, sir?

CURATOR (V.O.)  
We weren't ever ready, little Evelyn. We weren't ever ready.

EVELYN  
Ready with what?

CURATOR (V.O.)  
Within my gallery, you're allowed to touch the artwork. Even to destroy it.

EVELYN  
This is no artwork.

CURATOR (V.O.)

Then destroy it. Believe me. Your escape path lies behind the painting.

EVELYN

You're very trustworthy. No, I won't play that game, sir.

CURATOR (V.O.)

Oh, you will. And hey, you could use this hammer for it.

From the ceiling, a second spotlight shines down and hits the floor right beside Evelyn:

In the illuminated spot lies THE blood-smeared claw hammer.

Evelyn scares up at the mere sight of the tool. She quickly picks the claw hammer and flings it with all her might into the darkness behind.

A STROBOCOPE PRODUCES BRIEF REPETITIVE FLASHES OF LIGHT.

The constant flashes make everything appear slow-moving, stationary, frames that pop up and out.

Evelyn gives a deep, guttural roar.

And while the room - a square room with twenty-five foot long concrete walls - is first time wholly visible, at least for a second, then not, Evelyn heads to the wolf painting.

She punches the mask, strikes with fists and nails into the canvas, rips it all apart. Eventually she pulls at the whole frame and drags it from the wall, crashes it on the floor.

She breathes heavily. Short sounds of exertion with also a clear bit of relief escape her mouth.

She collapses upon the frame and canvas pieces below.

THE LIGHT GOES OUT.

Her breath still loud and clear. In and Out.

THE LIGHT GOES ON. Now the whole ceiling is an area-wide artificial light source that illuminates the room from behind its acrylic glass surface.

At the other side in the far away left corner from her, stands a FIGURE.

It has the wolf mask on.

Evelyn gets up. Stumbles over the picture fractions, leans back against the wall to keep balance, slides away into the corner the farthest away from the 'Wolf'.

Her breaths full of fear, hyperventilating.

The Wolf just stares at her room's side.

She looks left and right. No way out, neither behind the painting that she destroyed - only concrete in sight.

For a second, she focuses the wall to the right from the Wolf, opposite from "hers".

She realizes there's ANOTHER PERSON, female, lying on the floor in fetal position. Above hangs a painting.

But the Wolf instantly regains her full attention.

Her hands pushed against the concrete behind, she slides with little footsteps along the right wall.

Her wide eyes keep the Wolf steadily in focus.

She reaches the corner of the female person's wall where the Wolf stands at the other far end.

She squats down, grabs for the claw hammer, picks it up, glances at its blood-smeared appearance.

Evelyn tightens the grip around the handle, looks up toward the Wolf.

WITH A "BATTLE CRY", she walks, speeds-up, jumps over the female body.

She gets closer to the Wolf, raises the claw hammer high above her head.

SWINGS IT DOWN as she reaches him.

The hammer crashes into the mask.

The body slumps to the ground.

Evelyn jumps with her knees on his torso.

She strikes him in the face.

Over and Over.

Blood runs from behind the sides of the wolf mask over the floor and forms a crimson puddle.

Evelyn strikes on.

The mask tears to shreds, tufts of hair scatter in all directions, blood splashes.

Evelyn's fist loses the firm grip of the handle.

She fights to keep it in hand, swings the hammer with her loose grip down. Lifts it up again, screaming.

Down again. Up. Down, the hammer merely falls by its own weight. She fights him to the last drop in him and herself.

She loses the hammer from her hand and collapses, rolls beside him, her back on the floor.

Exhausted loud groans accompany her expiration.

Her face turns to the side that her cheek lies in his blood.

It bubbles as she exhales from the corner of her mouth that touches the crimson surface.

CURATOR (V.O.)  
Congratulations.

Evelyn laughs aloud.

Then a cry of pain.

She rolls on her back, embraces her own belly, winces and weeps in pain.

She makes another shout of delight, so her tears come off as tears of joy.

As she calms, the winces from the other woman on the floor become louder.

Evelyn turns the head toward her.

EVELYN  
Wait. Wait. I'm coming. I'm coming.

Evelyn crawls out of the blood puddle.

She looks back to the 'Wolf'. He doesn't move an inch.

She smiles, crawls on toward the woman.

EVELYN  
Wait. Wait.

Evelyn reaches her.

The woman on the floor is CORRY DANIEL, 52, red curly updo hairstyle. In fetal position, lashed and corded like a parcel, she whimpers through the fiber rope in her mouth.

While unleashing Corry, Evelyn throws a glance up at the painting above. It has three motifs:

Right - Gila Monster, a two foot lizard, with short legs and claws, its whole body covered with bead-like scales in black and light yellow.

Left - A scorpion stands on a rock, its claws in front, four legs lead from each side of the exoskeleton. From the rear, the tail curves up forward with a stinger at the very front.

In the middle - A Mojave Rattlesnake, brown and pale green scaled. It sidewinds forward through the desert dust.

Evelyn tugs on at the tight knot that fixes Corry's shins to her upper body. It unravels so that Corry can release her arms from the cord around her back.

Corry hectically looses the rope in her mouth, breathing and groaning, while Evelyn releases the ankles.

CORRY

Who are you? Where have you taken me?

EVELYN

Nowhere. He's watching us.

Corry scrutinizes the room.

CORRY

He?  
(looks to the Wolf)  
Who's that?

EVELYN

Someone dead.

CORRY

How did we get in here?

EVELYN

I don't know that either, ma'am.  
There's no exit as far as I can see. You see more than me -- then let me know?

Evelyn helps her up.

EVELYN

Come on.

CORRY

What's been with the lights and screams?

EVELYN

Light. That was him. Screams... well, I guess that's been me.

She smiles bright.

Corry raises her brows, wrinkles the nose.

CORRY

I see - Someone likes to be held hostage.

Evelyn shakes 'no' and heaves a weary sigh.

EVELYN

Not really. At least we're not alone.

She looks around the square room.

EVELYN

There must be cameras, lights and speakers in between the joints of the ceiling. You see that?

In fact, there's some space between the acrylic panels.

Corry nods.

CORRY

I heard him too. A bit. My name is Corry.

Evelyn keeps her eyes fixed on the ceiling, searching.

EVELYN

Evelyn.

CORRY

What happened to...?

She points her head toward the Wolf's body.

EVELYN

That's a long story. I believe this is some kind of puzzle, a test. What about your painting?

CORRY  
My painting?

EVELYN  
My picture was over there. Yours  
is, well, I guess, right behind  
you.

Corry slowly turns. She remains silent.

EVELYN  
What is it?

Corry's pupils dilate.

CORRY  
Gila Monster, Bark Scorpion and my  
fate... The Mojave Rattler.

She gets teary eyes.

CORRY  
The deadliest snake in North  
America.

She swallows.

EVELYN  
Bad memories?

CORRY  
It's a long story.

EVELYN  
Just go on. We might get some  
answers.

Her stare becomes glassy, less emotional, rather cold.

CORRY  
(embittered)  
We moved to Arizona when I was  
fourteen. My father had left us and  
we bought a house in the deepest  
corner of nowhere to stay with  
grandpa. I cried every night.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

INT. DANIEL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The tiny prefab house is worn out but cobbled together  
wherever needed. However it's tidy.



DAVE DANIEL, 82, and MARLA DANIEL, 46, sit at the kitchen table which also belongs to the living room.

From an adjacent door sound gasping bitter sobs of a girl.

DAVE  
It's been a mistake.

MARLA  
She'll get comfortable with this life.

DAVE  
But what's the price, hon?

MARLA  
That we can care for you. And she knows that, dad.

The sobs continue.

Dave places his elbows on the table, touches his forehead.

DAVE  
It's been a mistake.

Marla grabs his hand.

MARLA  
Hey! You need the fresh air here. Out of city. Away from the industry.

DAVE  
Away from your ex-husband.

MARLA  
That' not fair.

DAVE  
No. It isn't.

The sobs from the adjacent door get louder.

DAVE  
And this isn't either.

MARLA  
Dad. She's a teenager. She'll be fine.

EXT. ARIZONIAN DESERT - GILA RIVER - NIGHT

SUPER: GILA RIVER VALLEY, ARIZONA, 1982

The sunset light gleams on the peaceful water of the Gila River. Bushes and life surround its rocky shores.

Only a throw stone away, a pickup truck parks in the dust.

On the edge of its tailgate perch two Native Americans from the Tohono O'odham tribe. They wear denim shirt, leather boots - a modest appearance.

Left is UNDER-THE-ROCK, 32, black queue. He makes a grim face with his beer can in hand.

Beside sits the gray CHIEF ANTONITO, 73. He wears a necklace of stones, puffs from an antique pipe.

Instead of watching the gorgeous river panorama behind, their eyes stare toward the dry, inland desert side.

There, between rocks, sand, and multi-armed cacti sits the Daniel House. A little prefab cube, rather just dropped there than actually been built.

UNDER-THE-ROCK (all subtitled)  
(Uto-Aztec language all)  
They seem not know why the prices  
for this land are low but no one  
buys.

Chief Antonito just puffs on in thoughts.

He watches how the YOUNG CORRY DANIELS, 14, storms out of the house, sobbing.

She hops from the porch and runs straight into the desert.

CHIEF ANTONITO (subtitled)  
(Uto-Aztec)  
Argument. That is their language.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
I'll take care of it, Chief.

He takes a sib and grins.

EXT. ARIZONIAN DESERT - NIGHT

The sun almost set.

Under-The-Rock holds a burning cigarette over Young Corry's shoulder.

Young Corry who embraces her shins, cowering on a rock, gets attentive, turns and faces him.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
(speaks English here all)

You want?

Young Corry shakes 'no', turns ahead.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
You from the city, right?

With wide eyes, Young Corry bites.

YOUNG CORRY  
How do you know, sir?

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
I do not look as if, but I'm from  
the city too.

He hands her a can of beer.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
Old enough?

YOUNG CORRY  
Sure.

She smiles, rubs over the dried tears at her cheeks, and grabs for the drink.

Under-The-Rock holds the beer can firm, so it's in both their hands.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
That's not for nothing.

YOUNG CORRY  
What?

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
I said, 'That's not for nothing'.

He releases it to her.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
In my tribe's tradition, you must  
listen to a story once you get a  
gift.

Young Corry opens the can.

YOUNG CORRY  
Nice gift. I hear you.

CORRY (V.O.)  
He then told of Gila Monster, a  
giant lizard who's venom might kill  
a person if having a weak immune  
system like older people do.

Under-The-Rock speaks on (MOS).

CORRY (V.O.)  
He told about the Bark Scorpion and  
that its nerve toxin could even  
kill an adult if there's no  
antidote at hand.

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Corry stands still in front of the painting, her eyes teary.

CORRY  
And he also told me about the  
Mojave Rattler, the deadliest  
animal in North America.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

EXT. ARIZONIAN DESERT - NIGHT

Young Corry listens attentively to Under-The-Rock.

CORRY (V.O.)  
It scared me but I couldn't put his  
words and motives in context back  
then.

Young Corry receives another beer from Under-The-Rock.

CORRY (V.O.)  
I thought, at least I haven't been  
crying anymore. Then he said...

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
... Don't worry, this only happens  
to inexperienced people, who are  
new to the desert.

Young Corry smiles at him.

YOUNG CORRY  
Now that I know, I'm not  
inexperienced anymore.

Under-The-Rock raises his can. They clink.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
Of course not. You now do belong  
here.

CORRY (V.O.)  
He let me go that night.

YOUNG CORRY  
I need to get home now. My mom may  
freak out already. What's your  
name?

Young Corry gets up from the rock.

UNDER-THE-ROCK  
I am Under The Rock.

She reaches out her hand to him.

YOUNG CORRY  
Corry Daniel. Nice to meet you,  
Under The Rock.

She runs away, turns her head a second.

YOUNG CORRY  
I love your name, Under The Rock!

He raises his hand 'good-bye'.

EXT. GILA RIVER SHORE - DAY

On a low rock formation, Dave Daniel, a fishing rod in hand,  
baits the hook with a fly.

He throws the line toward the river flow.

Out of his sight, GILA MONSTER, a giant black and yellow  
lizard, moves his short legs step by step over the rock  
formation toward Dave's spot.

It's slow, as moving in trance.

As it reaches him - it rests a second and - SNAPS WITH HIS  
WIDE JAWS IN "LIGHTNING SPEED" AT DAVE'S ARM.

Like a predator, Gila Monster not let go.

Dave screams, falls backward behind the rock.

DAVE (O.S.)

Help me!

Far in the distance sits the

EXT. DANIEL HOUSE - PORCH

The shouts echo from far away.

Marla comes out the door.

DAVE (O.S.)

Help me!

MARLA

(to herself)

Dad?

Another shout.

Marla sprints from the porch.

MARLA

Dad!

Young Corry steps out the door. She watches her mother race through the dust toward the Gila River where Dave's screams of pain resound.

CORRY (V.O.)

It was a painful dead. He fought for weeks. When it was finally over, I went to San Lucy, the local Native community, to search for Under-The-Rock and his consultation.

Young Corry's gaze stays fixed at her mother who in the distance reaches Dave.

CORRY (V.O.)

Maybe I believed in a kind of mystic Indian prayer that at least keeps the rest of my family save. The citizens of San Lucy told me, I need to go far outside the district where they execute a tribe's ritual. Then, what I found there was not what I came for.



CORRY

They let me drink from their elixir. Soon I was so dazed that something happened to me.

EVELYN

You don't have to--

CORRY

-- They got louder and louder. Laughing, yelling. Then it stayed silent for minutes before it started all over. We built a connection. Their O'odham language became a mix of English to me, then not, but eventually, I understood each and every word from them.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

INT. TIPI TENT - NIGHT

THE BLURRED VISION of the intoxicated Indians and Young Corry in a smoke-filled tent.

Young Corry laughs as she receives the bowl and takes a deep swig, followed by a drag from the pipe.

Mayivu, stoned, just smiles at her all the time.

The mix of Under-The-Rock's and Chief Antonito's yells and dialogues in O'odham language become more and more understandable.

UNDER-THE ROCK

(in English)

Gila Monster for the old. Bark Scorpion is sent to the mother.

CHIEF ANTONITO

(in English)

And the Goddess Rattler for the child.

Chief Antonito devilishly laughs, holds his stomach and almost flops backward like a child.

Young Corry gets up, grasps the center pole for a hold.

YOUNG CORRY

What are you talking about! You did this to grandpa?



CHIEF ANTONITO (subtitled)  
 (Uto-Aztecan)  
 What is she saying?

Young Corry runs off, stumbles into the leather clothes at the entrance, falls, and crawls out.

UNDER-THE ROCK  
 (in English)  
 Hey, wait. We're not finished yet.

INT. DANIEL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

At the kitchen table, Marla puts an ice pack on Young Corry's forehead.

MARLA  
 Jesus, I understand it is hard and that you miss grandpa, but please stay away from drugs and the like.

YOUNG CORRY  
 But mom believe me...

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

In front of the painting, Corry stands beside Evelyn.

CORRY  
 Of course, how could she. At least she researched in the net for her antivenom. Surely, solely for my reassurance rather her "survival". It arrived in our mailbox two days after the accident.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

EXT. ARIZONIAN DESERT - DAY

In trekking clothes, Marla and Young Corry wander through a narrow canyon.

Young Corry's eyes stay glued on Marla. She scans the ground and every step of her mother.

Marla stops, puts down her backpack.

MARLA

Can I leave you alone for a second,  
hon?

Young Corry shakes 'no'.

MARLA

Not really... Listen, you stay  
here. Have you heard me?

Young Corry shakes 'no'.

MARLA

Gosh, that girl.

She walks off

BEHIND A ROCK

Marla pulls down her trousers, pushes the waistband together  
with her panties below her knees, squats down.

She extends her hand to the rock in front to stay in  
balance. As she begins to pee--

On the rock, a BARK SCORPION scuttles toward Marla's hand.

The scorpion's stinger jabs down into her forearm.

Marla shouts out.

LATER

Marla sits in the dust. Young Corry gives water to her face.

LATER

Marla touches her own forehead. She sweats heavily, slumps  
on the ground.

Young Corry has a phone in hand, shouting in (MOS)...

CORRY (V.O.)

Every minute felt like hours. I had  
to choose.

NARROW CANYON - LATER

With both hands, Young Corry drags Marla through the sand.

EXT. ARIZONIAN DESERT - NIGHT

An ambulance nears from the distance.

Young Corry let go of Marla's arms and sinks down beside her. After deep breaths, Young Corry pushes Marla's side.

YOUNG CORRY  
We made it. They're coming.

She realizes Marla doesn't move.

Another push.

YOUNG CORRY  
Hey! Hey!

Her eyes realize...

YOUNG CORRY  
(soft)  
Mom?

EXT. DANIEL HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Young Corry perches on the veranda railing.

CORRY (V.O.)  
The Youth welfare soon arrived to get me to my father. At least back to the city, I thought.

Two SOCIAL WORKERS load her belongings into a van.

She hops from the porch and steps through the rear door.

INT. VAN (DRIVING) - DAY

Young Corry rolls down the side window.

A tear runs down her cheek.

She watches the Daniel house getting smaller and smaller while they slowly roll down the gravel way of the property.

A near HISS.

Young Corry looks down:

A MOJAVE RATTLESNAKE sidewinds along, as quick as the rolling van.

The snake's tongue waves from the mouth, head in the air it snaps - just as Young Corry shuts the window.

With a thud, the snake's jaws bang against the pane.

YOUNG CORRY  
Faster! Faster!

As they accelerate, Young Corry turns to the rear window.

In the desert sand, with its head up high - The Mojave Rattler flicks its tongue. The fangs sparkle in the sun.

EXT. EAST COST CITY SKYLINE - DAY

The sun rises through the deserted urban canyons.

CORRY (V.O.)  
I often thought about to go back  
and shoot those Natives. Just  
shoot'em down. On the other side, I  
honestly feared them. They brought  
a magic to me that was so  
overwhelming and of course not at  
least against all elements of  
science.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT. YOUTH WELFARE OFFICE - DAY

Two SOCIAL WORKERS leave the room. Young Corry remains with a THERAPIST.

CORRY (V.O.)  
As common practice failed...

THERAPIST  
... You know, Corry. When we people  
cannot explain a coincidence, we  
often choose to find more logic  
behind than there truly is. We  
create images, stories. And I  
absolutely believe you saw what you  
saw.

YOUNG CORRY  
But I haven't, right?

The Therapist shakes his head.

CORRY (V.O.)

Since then, for all my life I tried to find a connection to that curse and see a pattern that explains me why and how.

INT. CORRY DANIEL APARTMENT - DAY

Corry (44) meditates cross-legged.

CORRY (V.O.)

Tried tranquility.

INT. GYPSY CARAVAN - NIGHT

A FORTUNETELLER lays cards on a table top.

CORRY (V.O.)

Superstition.

INT. EMPTY CHURCH - NIGHT

Corry kneels at a pew.

CORRY (V.O.)

Belief.

INT. CORRY DANIEL APARTMENT - DAY

An INDEGENOUS AMERICAN consults Corry.

Feathers, stones, a pipe are placed on the coffee table.

CORRY (V.O.)

And, of course, Shamanism.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. DR. FRANCESCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Corry (51) sits beside Dr. Francesca in a therapy session.

CORRY (V.O.)

Lately I ended up with modern psychiatry. Till then I've never found the confidence to tell that story to someone "serious".

CORRY  
Do you mind if I smoke?

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Corry checks her pockets.

CORRY  
Gosh, I need a cigarette. You found anything with you.

Evelyn beats on her empty trouser pockets.

EVELYN  
Nothing.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

INT. DR. FRANCESCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Francesca smiles at Corry.

DR. FRANCESCA  
No. But unfortunately you're not allowed here.

Corry lights up anyways.

CORRY  
I think for three hundred bucks an hour I am.

Dr. Francesca walks to a shelf and takes a saucer, places it on the table.

DR. FRANCESCA  
You're allowed to smoke.  
(rhetorical)  
Can we speak now? Would be better for your three hundred bucks to pay off, no?

CORRY  
Nasty bitch. I already like you.

Corry taps ashes onto the saucer.

Dr. Francesca smiles, getting honest...

DR. FRANCESCA  
I got it. Why are you here?

CORRY  
The big question? Really?

DR. FRANCESCA  
Listen, Corry. This isn't the big question. It's the first.

CORRY  
I'm afraid of a snake while living in the middle of the city.

DR. FRANCESCA  
That's a simple answer isn't it?

CORRY  
And, unfortunately it'll be my last.

DR. FRANCESCA  
Well, then this conversation could be short. Tell me about the snake.

CORRY  
(rhetorical)  
The Mojave Rattlesnake? My fate?

Corry glances to the window, her eyes glassy.

CORRY (V.O.)  
How could anyone believe me? I don't mind them. None of them.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Giuseppe Zampidi, "clean" in tailor-made black suit, chunky gold signet rings on his fingers, steps over the sterile tile flooring.

Frank awaits him in his white coat in front of three huge terrariums:

Gila Monster, Bark Scorpion and the Mojave Rattler, each placed on a plate of peat soil within their glass box.

Giuseppe picks the reflex camera from around his shoulder.

Hooked, he shoots photos.

Frank eyes Giuseppe's inspiration until-

Giuseppe moves his hand toward the opening of the Gila Monster terrarium...

GIUSEPPE

Look at me, fat boy.

Frank grasps Giuseppe's forearm just in time.

They share a serious look.

FRANK

This is a two foot lizard. It looks slow and it moves slow -- It is slow -- Then you wouldn't believe how fast this animal can bite, Giuseppe.

Giuseppe swallows. He nods his understanding to Frank who releases Giuseppe's arm.

Giuseppe puts his fingers back to the camera.

FRANK

All right?

GIUSEPPE

Yes. All right. I understood.

FRANK

We need to treat it with respect. Everything.

Giuseppe shoots more pictures.

GIUSEPPE

I get it, Frank.

Frank walks off, leaves him alone.

EXT. SEASIDE PARKING LOT - DAY

An old car pulls into a deserted area amid sand dunes.

EXT. PATH TO THE BEACH - DAY

It's foggy and windy. In a long coat, therapist Dr. Francesca ambles along over the wooden boards, passing few closed shops.



As Dr. Francesca reaches the last timber threshold, she takes off her flats and looks around

THE DESERTED SAND BEACH

and the wide ocean beyond. With bleary eyes, she steps barefoot through the sand toward the water.

She stops halfway, and stares ahead, motionless.

Watching Dr. Francesca from behind, suddenly, SHE'S NOT ALONE anymore-

To her right: a line of PEOPLE, broken people, sad looking children, men and women, "young and old Evelyn" among them.

To her left: a second line of PEOPLE: all wear wolf masks. Their snouts point toward the victims, standing opposite.

In the middle of both lines, remains Dr. Francesca. She stares at the ocean with her bleary eyes.

Motionless, dead still she is, at her position between victims and perpetrators. It's her mind, NOT TRUE, rather true - her own haunting memories, it seems.

INT. GIUSEPPE ZAMPIDI'S ATELIER - NIGHT

Giuseppe at the workbench sharpens his pencil.

A projector displays a photo onto a projection screen. The photo is a split screen of three motifs: Left Bark Scorpion, in the middle Mojave Rattlesnake, right Gila Monster.

Giuseppe steps to his easel. A sketch pad is placed on it.

He draws lines. His strokes become more and more...

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

The painting of Bark Scorpion, Mojave Rattler, and Gila Monster ahead, Corry and Evelyn linger in front.

CORRY

All of my shrinks truly tried their best. I don't blame them. And three hundred thousand dollars later, surprise, I find myself captured here. What went wrong?

Corry smiles, steps back from the painting.

EVELYN  
I know how you feel. He haunted me  
for all of my life.

They turn to the dead 'Wolf'.

CORRY  
Who is it?

EVELYN  
His name is Michael McKinley.

Her jaw halfway down, Corry's wide eyes stay fixed on Evelyn's face.

CORRY  
No way.  
(rhetorical)  
But you are not...

She points to the Wolf...

CORRY  
... And this is not...

Evelyn nods.

EVELYN  
'Found guilty but mentally ill'. A  
ruthless murderer's life is saved  
because he's insane. I never  
understood that contradiction, and  
never will. Well... never need to  
anymore, I think.

CORRY  
He fled from the mental hospital,  
right?

EVELYN  
Two years ago. But I think I found  
him. Or rather whoever put him in  
here.

Corry embraces Evelyn.

CORRY  
Oh, honey. You won't believe how  
much I hoped for your peace of  
mind. We all did. We are so many.  
And... I'm lost for words.

EVELYN

Thank you. But now we're here. And that's another problem, don't you think?

Evelyn gazes up.

EVELYN

So, what's up, big brother?!!!! You like violating women, ha? What do you want, bastard?

CORRY

Right. What do you want, you short dickhead?

Evelyn throws Corry a nod of respect.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

More of the desk is visible: a table microphone and several monitors with different camera angles that show Corry and Evelyn flipping the bird; no night-vision needed anymore.

Frank leans with the heels of his hands on the edge of the table top, gazes through his small glasses ahead.

FRANK

Perfect. Please defend yourself, ladies.

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Evelyn touches the concrete walls, searching for a hidden exit or whatever may help.

Merely small air bubbles are scattered along the plain concrete surface.

Corry kneels beside the 'Wolf' body.

She turns to Evelyn who searches at the far away corner.

Corry gazes back down at the crushed pulp of hair and blood. Her pupils sharpen, stay fixed on the remains of the 'Wolf's' head.

CORRY

Evelyn?

EVELYN

Yes?

CORRY

Michael escaped from his facility,  
right?

EVELYN

Well. So far.

CORRY

Well, not so far, it seems.

From the mess of blood and hair, she picks up a piece of  
bloody plastic.

CORRY

It's a dummy.

EVELYN

What did you say?

Corry pulls up the Wolf's shirt.

In fact, the body is covered by a rubber membrane, fake  
blood packs are tightly connected to it - a custom made  
manufacture.

CORRY

It's not real. I- I am sorry,  
Evelyn.

She ribs a blood pack from the dummy and tosses it against  
the wall where it explodes.

CORRY

Shit!

Evelyn sinks to the ground.

Corry walks over to her, embraces Evelyn. They both sob.

CURATOR (V.O.)

Ladies, ladies. We haven't enough  
time for all the sobbing and  
whining. Could you please stay  
focused on your test?

EVELYN

I just want to get out.

CORRY

Me too, honey. Me too.

Corry looks to the ceiling.

CORRY

So, which test you want us to pass?  
What the hell do we have to do that  
you let us out?

CURATOR (V.O.)

At first, I want you to listen.  
More specifically, I mean you shall  
listen, Evelyn.

CORRY

No way. Can't you leave her in  
peace for a second? Go on with me.

CURATOR (V.O.)

We get to you later. Don't worry,  
Corry. Hahaha. You want to get back  
outside, Evelyn. Live on? Earn it.

Evelyn pulls up her sleeve and reveals the countless cuts  
and scars along her forearm.

She examines them closely.

EVELYN

I'm not sure if I want to live on,  
sir. Not sure at all... obviously.

CORRY

Oh dear.

Evelyn gets up, looks to the ceiling panels.

EVELYN

But I'd do everything for Corry.  
She deserves to live. She isn't  
lost as I am. I got nothing to live  
for out there. And I need to  
realize that. So, do what you want  
with me. But let her go. Now!

CURATOR (V.O.)

No! Now! You will listen. And you  
want listen. Just look into your  
heart and you must frankly admit  
that you want to face me. You want  
to challenge me.

CORRY

Who's done that to you, Evelyn?

CURATOR (V.O.)  
 Shut up, Corry! I got three stories  
 for you, Evelyn, before we'll be  
 done forever. Of those three  
 stories, one is yours, the other is  
 mine and one is a lie. We'll begin  
 with 'The hut' - you know whose hut  
 I mean, don't you?

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

INT. WOODLAND - MCKINLEY'S CABIN - DAY

Young Evelyn sits at the dining table, peels mushrooms with  
 a blank expression.

CURATOR (V.O.)  
 You clearly do remember that night  
 with him, don't you?

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
 From now on, I'll always be a part  
 of you as you'll be a part of me.

With the wolf mask over his head, Michael crawls on all  
 fours toward the table.

Young Evelyn shivers while he circles the table.

He passes her, slowly turns his wolf mask back to her like  
 an attentive animal.

MICHAEL  
 Now let me have a bit of you. I  
 want to see you with my big brown  
 eyes, poke my long snout into you,  
 and hear you scream with my large  
 pointed ears.

Young Evelyn utters an endless SCREAM, a mysterious mixture  
 between a piercing sound the child makes and the energetic  
 deeper voice of the adult she is...

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Evelyn stands in the center, calm.

Corry cowers in the corner.

CURATOR (V.O.)

I think we both know that this one  
wasn't the lie, no?

Evelyn's chin falls.

CURATOR (V.O.)

But is it your story or mine? That  
is the question. We may hear the  
next one before we judge. Agreed?  
Maybe not. I name it 'Sanatorium'.

The ceiling illumination dims down a fair bit. From a border  
joint of the ceiling, a motorized projection screen lowers.

A stream of light beams the photo of a white building in the  
thicket of a pine forest onto the screen.

CURATOR (V.O.)

It's a little longer and a lot more  
powerful and personal for my taste.  
Just my opinion of course, but okay  
-- Deep in the woodland is a closed  
institution for the criminal  
insane. We again will find Michael  
McKinley there and...

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

EXT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - DAY

Surrounded by pine trees sits a white limestone building.

CURATOR (V.O.)

... and this is about how he has  
done it. After turning two decades  
in the wheels of the law for the  
mental ill, in March two thousand  
eighteen, McKinley asked for his  
right of spiritual conversation  
with a cleric.

INT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - CORRIDOR - DAY

A PRIEST, 50, in black robe and a square cap with peaks,  
trudges along the hallway.

In front of a door, a JAILER awaits him.

JAILER

Keep a distance.

The Priest nods while the Jailer turns the key four times, that several locks clack.

The Jailer ushers the Priest through the steel door into

MICHAEL'S CELL

In a straitjacket, Michael (60) gray short hair, rolls up and takes seat on the edge of his cot.

MICHEAL

Forgive me Father for I have sinned.

The Priest turns to check if the door is closed.

It is.

He takes off his cap, tosses it beside Michael.

PRIEST

Ah, shut up, Mike.

He puts a can of pills from under his robe, places it in the gap between the cot's mattress and rack.

PRIEST

Take some of these and you'll pass out as planned. The rest you shall know.

MICHEAL

Couldn't thank you enough for this consultation, your Holiness.

Soft, the Priest double slaps Mike's cheek.

PRIEST

It's been an honor. Good luck, freak.

The Priest puts his cap back on and knocks on the door, which quickly unlocks.

INT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - MICHAEL'S CELL - NIGHT

At his desk, Michael, freed from the straitjacket, draws with a pencil.

One sketch shows him with the mask on, how he pokes his head from behind the oak trunk. In the foreground stands the Young Evelyn.



A second drawing is a portrait of the adult Evelyn Monroe.

In his left hand, Michael holds the can of pills.

While drawing on, Michael flicks with his thumb single pills into his mouth, constantly, as using a pez dispenser.

He shakes the plastic can, empty, throws it over his shoulder onto the cot.

INT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The Jailer drags Michael along the floor.

He's unconscious. A DOCTOR in white coat rushes toward them.

JAILER  
Suicide attempt!

The Doctor reaches them. He slaps Michael's face.

DOCTOR  
Mister McKinley. Hey!

A stream of saliva runs from Michael's mouth. Otherwise, no reaction.

DOCTOR  
(to Jailer)  
Quick.

INT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - INFIRMARY - PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

Michael lies in bed, gets infusions from two drips.

His heartbeat sounds from the monitoring equipment.

Close to the door, the Doctor pulls off his rubber gloves as the Jailer comes in.

JAILER  
How is it going?

DOCTOR  
Hm... It's a maybe. The night will show if that bastard gets through.

LATER

Michael awakes in the dim light of the machines.

Michael's eyes shift from left to right. A broad grin spreads across his visage.

He grasps the cable that leads from the monitoring source to his body and folds it in his fist, twists it, over and over.

Must've been broken since the heartbeat monitor displays a flat line and drones a constant high-pitched hum.

Michael leans his head back.

MICHAEL  
Soon, my darling.

He closes his eyes, gives a yawn.

MICHAEL  
Soon.

INT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - CORRIDOR - DAY

The Doctor yawns as he reaches the Jailer who waits at the entrance to the infirmary.

JAILER  
It's McKinley.

DOCTOR  
Thank god, no more tax money for this scum. Bring him down. I'll prepare the death certificate.

INT. WOODLAND SANATORIM - MORGUE - DAY

On a gurney lays a body bag.

Its zipper's slider moves a bit, then drives downward revealing Michael's face and body.

He sits up, frees his legs from the bag and yanks off the identification label from his big toe.

MICHAEL  
Undead.

In his long burial gown, he hops from the gurney and makes toward the door that has the typical, glowing white arrow and green "emergency exit imagery" atop.

He pushes it open. The sunshine blinds him a little as he steps over the threshold.



CORRY (V.O. through darkness)  
Evelyn?

EVELYN (V.O.)  
I'm here, Corry.

Hiss.

CORRY (V.O.)  
Oh Gooooodd...

A STROBOCOPE PRODUCES BRIEF REPETITIVE FLASHES OF LIGHT.

Corry and Evelyn hand in hand back away into the corner.

From the painting's opening, the triangular broad head of the Mojave Rattler pokes out, flicking its tongue, "almost" as if the picture would be in order as before.

The Mojave Rattler slithers down and winds its elongate body onto the edge of the picture's inner frame.

While the head reaches for the floor, the tail with the vibrating rattle emerges from the opening.

It's four foot long.

THE REPETITIVE FLASHES OF LIGHT last a little longer.

In the corner, Corry and Evelyn quiver with fear.

LIGHTS OUT.

Bitter sobs and hisses from the snake.

LIGHTS ON

The black and green scaled Mojave Rattler reached the room's center, slithers toward them.

LIGHTS OUT

EVELYN  
I take care of it, Corry.

LIGHTS ON

Evelyn tears loose from Corry and gets up.

LIGHTS OUT

CORRY  
(sobs)  
No! Don't leave me alone. Please.

LIGHTS ON

Evelyn front-kicks toward the snake but misses its hissing head clearly.

LIGHTS OUT

EVELYN

I can't see it.

Aahh, Corry cries out in agony.

THE CEILING ILLUMINATION TURNS ON.

Corry holds her ankle, pulls up the pant leg.

The viper's fangs left two red impressions in her skin.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Frank turns his head from the tech-equipped desk, looks to his right.

FRANK

It's done. Put the scent lure into the opening.

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

The Mojave Rattler slithers along the floor corners, searches for an exit.

It stops, raises its head, turns it toward the painting.

Speedy, it sidewinds across the room, reaches the frame, coils up, and slides back into the small opening.

EVELYN

It's gone, Corry. It's gone.

CORRY

In my case that doesn't matter anymore. Few minutes and this little bite here is a wound that you wouldn't imagine. I-I usually wear a vial with the antivenom around my neck. All in all, I got less than four hours.

She plonks herself to the floor, leans against the wall.

Evelyn slumps down beside. She touches her scars.

EVELYN

If you die tonight, I swear we both die together here. I so often was that close.

CORRY

You have any friends?

Evelyn smiles at her.

EVELYN

Besides you? Call me crazy but I'm actually glad I can talk to a human being.

CORRY

Your anxiety disorder?

In shame, Evelyn bows her head to her knees.

CORRY

Hey. Welcome to the club, honey.

EVELYN

Last month, I've had a safety door installed, for five thousand dollars. If my only friend wouldn't have a key to my dungeon...

She strokes over her scars.

EVELYN

Well, at least then I'd have passed on this episode.

CORRY

Who's your only friend?

Evelyn makes eye contact with Corry.

EVELYN

My therapist.

Corry bursts out in laughter.

CORRY

Sure, your therapist.

Evelyn purses her lips.

CORRY

Oh. You're serious?

Evelyn nods with a slight shameful smile.

EVELYN

But since she had to pull me out of my bathtub recently, I thought about to end the friendship. She's a good woman and doesn't de--

CORRY

-- I don't think you're a burden to her.

EVELYN

Sorry, but that's hard to imagine after what she's gone through with me.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

INT. EVELYN MONROSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

The smartphone rings from the bedside table.

"Francesca is calling."

INT. EVELYN MONROSE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUES

Evelyn's head pokes out of the crimson water of the bathtub.

Her eyes look tired as in trance. They fall shut, then slowly reopen.

Dr. Francesca rushes in. She pulls a cell phone from her overcoat, makes a call and shouts into the phone (MOS).

She drops it on the bath rug, knees down beside the tub, strokes over Evelyn's hair.

DR. FRANCESCA

They're coming. You'll make it.  
Another time you'll make it.

Dr. Francesca gnashes her teeth.

DR. FRANCESCA

Hey, you hear me...? You'll make it!

Evelyn recognizes her, makes eye contact.

EVELYN

It's okay.

DR. FRANCESCA

All will be okay, sweetheart. We  
got so much to do.

She pulls Evelyn's cut forearm out of the water.

The blood just flows from the wounds.

Dr. Francesca presses her palms over the cuttings.

Trembling heavily, she fights for each drop of Evelyn.

DR. FRANCESCA

Not here. Not now. There's so much  
to take from this life you'll  
discover and live.

Evelyn smiles.

EVELYN

(well-minded and honest)

Yes? What? Can you tell me about  
it?

Tears roll down on Dr. Francesca's cheeks. Her broad smile  
crosses 'through them'.

DR. FRANCESCA

Drunken driving.

EVELYN

Drunken driving?

DR. FRANCESCA

Drive a car faster than you should  
after a long night with friends.

Evelyn laughs from the corner of her mouth.

EVELYN

There's nothing better?

Dr. Francesca shakes her head.

DR. FRANCESCA

Nothing.

PARAMEDICS enter the bathroom. Dr. Francesca let go Evelyn's  
arm and steps back as the medics begin their job.



EXT. THE DESERTED SAND BEACH - DAY

Dr. Francesca remains between the two rows of victims and figures with wolf masks on.

Her glassy eyes stare straight ahead toward the calm surf.

She takes some deep breaths.

The wolf figures vanish, one after the other.

At the opposite row of the 'victims', the broken looking people also one by one vanish into thin air, except for Young Evelyn and Adult Evelyn.

Only a second and Young Evelyn also melts into thin air.

Dr. Francesca makes a loud sigh.

She faces the remaining Evelyn.

DR. FRANCESCA

God, help me. I cannot do this to  
you.

She drops to her knees, sits back, embraces her shins and swings back and forth on her butt.

An exhausted shout escapes her lips. She buries her head between her knees.

Evelyn is gone.

Dr. Francesca is all alone.

EXT. DESERTED MAIN ROAD - NIGHT

A convertible races along. It swerves from side to side.

From its open top drone female cries of excitement.

The car darts through a red light of an intersection.

EXT. CONVERTIBLE - CONTINUES

The steering wheel in hand, Evelyn smiles at the road ahead, sunglasses on her nose.

Beside, sits Dr. Francesca with a bottle of champagne.

She shouts against the airstream.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 Hey! You may put them off to see at  
 least a little.

EVELYN  
 That wouldn't change much. I can't  
 see anything anyways.

Dr. Francesca turns on the radio. She lifts the bottle of  
 champagne up.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 Wooohhooo!

EXT. DESERTED MAIN ROAD - CONTINUES

Accompanied by girly shouts the convertible swerves about  
 and passes another red light of an intersection.

In a wide arch, the empty champagne bottle flies backward  
 from the car and crashes onto the blacktop.

CORRY (V.O.)  
 Well, this definitely sounds fun.

EVELYN (V.O.)  
 She's the best and without her--

The rear lights of the car disappear into the night.

CORRY (V.O.)  
 -- How did you get to know her?

INT. DR. FRANCESCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Behind her desk, Dr. Francesca is on the phone.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 I wouldn't have called if it  
 weren't that urgent.

FRANK (V.O.)  
 They say you belong to the very  
 best, so why call me.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 Forget that, these two patients are  
 far above me. One believes she's  
 cursed by desert Indians, and the  
 other is, well, the other is a case  
 of its own. Suicidal at the highest  
 level.

FRANK (V.O.)  
How many therapists have they had  
before?

DR. FRANCESCA  
Too many. Perhaps too many.

FRANK (V.O.)  
Maybe, send them to the asylum.  
They're over.

DR. FRANCESCA  
That's not what I expected to hear  
from you.

FRANK (V.O.)  
You're serious? Look, I'm bound to  
my own stuff twenty four hours.

DR. FRANCESCA  
I know. I know.

Dr. Francesca spots something through her office's window.

DR. FRANCESCA  
She's coming. Talk to you later.

DR. FRANCESCA'S P.O.V. THROUGH WINDOW PANE:

Evelyn crosses a one way, constantly swiveling her head from  
left to right.

INT. NEUROLOGIC INSTITUTION - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Within the luxuriously furnished place, Dr. Francesca sits  
opposite to Frank, who behind his glass desk leans far back  
in the chair.

FRANK  
How many suicide attempts?

DR. FRANCESCA  
Countless.

FRANK  
Any pharmaceutical results?

Dr. Francesca shakes her head.

DR. FRANCESCA

It's short of a miracle that she hasn't been successful yet. I tried everything. At the moment, we stuck in a hypnosis method. Last week, on the day I called you, it almost killed her through her sheer imagination.

Frank strokes his chin.

DR. FRANCESCA

And honestly said, I can't read enough books to develop a new approach. I need help, Mister Surlock.

FRANK

Well, from what you said, I wouldn't call it a miracle that Mrs Monroe is still alive. Not at all. Rather see it as an expression of her. She harms herself that badly but still comes to you. You haven't lost her, Francesca. Something within her wants to live on.

Frank gets up.

FRANK

But, I admit it's a difficult case. And I appreciate your openness toward our science. There's no time to lose. I'd also need to visit him.

DR. FRANCESCA

Visit him?

FRANK

Of course. He's the deciding factor. Don't you agree?

Dr. Francesca looks astonished.

DR. FRANCESCA

McKinley sits in a death row cell, ready for his last walk next month.

FRANK

-- I know. The time is short. Come with me. Let me show you some science, Doctor.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - ROOF TERRACE - DAY

Between plants and coffee tables, Dr. Francesca and Evelyn sit on a bench.

In jogging suit Evelyn sips from a coffee.

DR. FRANCESCA

I'm glad your arms recovered so well.

EVELYN

It's been close. If you wouldn't have had the keys and found me...

DR. FRANCESCA

There's something I need to ask you regarding your future treatment.

She gets up and squats right in front of Evelyn.

DR. FRANCESCA

You could put that down if you want.

Evelyn puts the coffee mug beside her.

Dr. Francesca embraces Evelyn's hands with her palms.

She softly strokes over Evelyn's scarred forearm, looks her in the eyes.

DR. FRANCESCA

For how long do you come to my practice?

EVELYN

Must've been three years, I guess.

DR. FRANCESCA

Correct. What was the deciding moment that made you contact me?

EVELYN

His escape.

DR. FRANCESCA

Michael McKinley's escape, correct?

Evelyn nods.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 Michael McKinley is dead, Evelyn.  
He died one year ago by lethal  
injection within the execution room  
 of the San Quentin State Prison.

Evelyn shakes her head.

EVELYN  
 No. He escaped from the asylum.

Dr. Francesca nods with wide eyes to convince her.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 And more than that. To truly  
 convince you, I, your therapist and  
 by this time I'd gladly say friend,  
 drove to the execution and saw it  
 with my own eyes. I made one  
 mistake though. Due to your mental  
 instability back then, I decided to  
 not convince you to witness it  
 yourself.

EVELYN  
 That's not true. It can't be true.

DR. FRANCESCA  
 It is. And my own fundamental  
 mistake haunts me ever since.  
 Because underestimating your role  
 in his execution left open a crack  
 of the door, for a psychological  
 escape, that you constantly choose  
 to enter. Over and over. It opens a  
 zone to a life where he still  
 wields power over you. Most times  
 you deny these facts, then  
 sometimes, I was able to convince  
 you of the truth. For a certain  
 period of time at least. Now, we're  
 at a point, where I have to decide  
 if I can carry the responsibility  
 any further.

She strokes Evelyn's scars.

EVELYN  
 You leave me alone?

DR. FRANCESCA  
 Never. I promise you. But...

EVELYN

You're talking about my freedom of movement.

Minimal nods of Dr. Francesca reflect back.

Her eyes get teary, her neck swells.

DR. FRANCESCA

(gasps out)

I just don't know what to do, Evelyn.

FRANK (V.O.)

I need to know. What's your true connection to her?

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I somehow fell in love with her.

Dr. Francesca sits down beside Evelyn.

FRANK (V.O.)

Oh, it's personal?

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Yes, not necessarily what you think though.

Evelyn's eyes stare with confusion ahead.

As she recognizes Dr. Francesca's shoulders drop down, she clutches her upper arm and drags her to her own.

FRANK (V.O.)

Onto a helper syndrome?

Dr. Francesca lays her head on Evelyn's shoulder.

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Possibly. I admit that it may look like that. It's just ... As a therapist that I became, after all those years, I want to be measured by this case. She's why I learned at first. She's my task and judge. It makes sense for my own life. Do you know what I mean?

FRANK (V.O.)

I just hope you'll be able to differentiate now. Our whole career is at stake. I'm talking about getting behind the bars, Francesca.

Arm in arm, Evelyn and Dr. Francesca watch the plants of the roof terrace.

## EVELYN

I know what to do. Drunken driving after a long night with friends.

Dr. Francesca looks up to her.

## DR. FRANCESCA

That sounds good.  
(in thoughts)  
A last ride together.

## INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Frank, in white coat, rolls with his revolving stool closer to a labyrinth for rodents that sits on a work bench.

The labyrinth has two pathways:

The left ends at a blue flap.

The right one leads to a red.

Only behind the blue revolving flap lies a chunk of cheese.

Frank puts his elbows on the table and opens the sliding door to the box of 'test subject' RAT SEVEN, releases the snuffling rat into the labyrinth.

## FRANK

It's a pretty simple experiment but you may understand what it is saying. Rat Seven knows that the right way leads to a blue flap where it receives an electric shock when touching the blue flap. So it directly chooses the left way to search for the red one. You see that.

Rat Seven turns into the left channel, winding its way along till it arrives in the target zone. There's a blue flap-



FRANK

But hey, the blue flap isn't what I came for, doctor. I better turn here.

Rat Seven turns, races back, and enters the right path.

FRANK

Bingo. Red flap. That's what I go for.

DR. FRANCESCA

It doesn't fear the right path?

Rat Seven moseys toward the red flap, turns its head unsure.

FRANK

The way doesn't matter.

Rat Seven pushes through the red flap and finds a big chunk of nothing.

FRANK

Surprise, no cheese in here, buddy. Go back to start.

Frank turns his revolving chair to Dr. Francesca who watches the experiment with folded arms.

FRANK

It's only the blue color of the flap which our small friend fears. The shock surpasses the hunger. I'd bet it just sits in his start box now, starving and dreaming of cheese.

Dr. Francesca nods.

In fact, Rat Seven lingers in his box and aimlessly sniffs along the glass walls.

FRANK

In fact the overall path itself, left or right, isn't a deciding factor for Rat Seven. It's solely the blue flap, the villain who triggers it.

Dr. Francesca rubs her chin.

DR. FRANCESCA

Forget the journey. The goal is the destination.

FRANK

Exactly. We here call it core psychology. Ten out of ten would now sit in the start box. Aimless. Demotivated. And the more shocks the subject has received before, the longer it will take him to overcome the fear and try the blue flap. Except it has a friend at its side.

DR. FRANCESCA

A friend?

FRANK

No matter what we do, it cannot be completely out of this world. That would change nothing. Rather we send her in a gray zone. Fear, definitely, confrontation, for sure, but there also should be common social habits to find, like compassion, intellect, friendship. The set-up alone will cost us one year from now. We need a test run. An easier case will also better the chances that it'll be green-lit.

LATER

DR. Francesca and Frank shake hands.

FRANK

Don't forget your main task. Keep her alive.

DR. FRANCESCA

I will.

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Corry and Evelyn cower against the wall.

EVELYN

But she couldn't fix me either. It's him. He implanted himself into each and every pore of me.

(MORE)

EVELYN (CONT'D)

And I shake and shake to toss it  
all out. But fail. For so long now.  
I even met him before all that  
happened. My father never forgot to  
warn me whenever we saw him.

DIFFERENT TIMELINES FOLLOW

INT. PICKUP TRUCK (DRIVING) - DAY

Young Evelyn (9) and her Dad stuck with their pickup truck  
behind a tractor that moseys along the village route.

Dad looks through the open window outside, where the framing  
of a timber construction is built.

The only workman in sight, Michael McKinley (37), who  
perches up high on a beam, strikes nails with his claw  
hammer into the wood.

DAD

(to himself)

Now, look who's there.

Dad touches his forehead; hiding his face.

Michael nevertheless gets attentive of him, waves.

MICHAEL

Hey yo. Monroe!

DAD

(shouts out the window)

Hey.

(to himself)

Bloody bastard.

Young Evelyn turns to Dad.

YOUNG EVELYN

What's wrong with this man, dad?

Dad raises his pointer.

DAD

You'll keep distance to him. You  
hear me.

YOUNG

Yes dad, but-

DAD

No buts. He's a dangerous man. You just stay away from him.

He pushes the horn.

MICHAEL

In hurry, ha?

DAD

Yes. No time. As always. See you.

Dad overtakes the tractor over the side stripe.

CORRY (V.O.)

Your father knew.

EVELYN (V.O.)

That he's dangerous? Yes. When I asked him why he is, he used to answer that good people say so. He was already branded. It was the time when their registration eventually began to go public.

Michael bangs further nails into the wooden beams.

EVELYN (V.O.)

He sensed the upcoming danger from the start. But how to prepare for such evil.

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Evelyn pulls at Corry's trouser leg.

EVELYN

Let me see. How's your leg.

CORRY

It's okay.

Corry pushes Evelyn's hand away, which irritates her.

CURATOR (V.O.)

Last round. Time for the 'The Revelation'.

A video tape is broadcasted on the projection screen.

The recording shows: a white cell door, shot from prison security cameras...

INT. SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON - DEATH ROW CORRIDOR - DAY

Above a white cell door is a black prisoner number in bold.

Integrated into the door leaf are two elongated bullet proof windows with narrow width.

Mounted beside the frame is the prisoner ID of 'MICHAEL MCKINLEY' with his portrait photo below.

Frank arrives at the door. He wears the orange prisoner clothing, carries a tray with a plate of fries and sausages.

The cell door slides open.

As Frank steps inside, the door shuts behind him.

INT. SAN QUENTIN PRISON - MICHAEL'S DEATH ROW CELL - DAY

Frank glances up at the camera above the door.

He quickly fixes his gaze on Michael, who handcuffed, ankles strapped with a leather belt, cowers in the corner of a cot.

The few sun rays that pass through the barred opening shine onto his face as if he tries to catch them.

FRANK

Got your last meal, McKinley.

MICHAEL

Fuck off...

Frank places the tray on the bedside table.

FRANK

Fries and wieners. Yummy. Just think about it.

MICHAEL

Think about to fuck off...

FRANK

Hey, relax, brother. I'm one of your kind. Team death row. They're trying some new stuff to calm us.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

It seems there's too much screaming and whining in the execution chamber. Guess they don't want to scare their audience. And since I got some months in front of me, it's my job to fix that problem.

Michael turns his sallow face to him. Dark rings circle his eye bags.

MICHAEL

I won't cry. Promise. Now f--

FRANK

--Yeah, yeah, they all say that. They all do. Believe me.

Michael averts Frank's gaze.

MICHAEL

What if I'll be the first who keeps promise?

Frank smiles.

FRANK

You think?

Michael begins to tremble.

Frank gets closer.

A tiny tear rolls down Michael's cheek.

FRANK

Well, this was quick. Must've been a new record. It's not a shame.

Michael gnashes the teeth.

MICHAEL

Listen, if you don't leave this cell asap, I'll tear you to pieces.

Frank laughs aloud.

FRANK

Michael, Michael. And how would you do that? Strapped like the piece of shit you are, from head to toes.

Frank laughs on, looks around the cell.

FRANK

Helpless. Alone. Weak.

Michael squirms in his "unbeatable fixation". He manages to sit up but falls from the bed onto the floor.

With his face on the stone floor, he sweats, spits.

He calms. His pupils realize - He is helpless.

A moment and, Michael starts to shiver all over his body.

MICHAEL

Help me!!!! God, help me!!! Let me out! Bring me out of here! Bring me out of here! Please, god. Please!

Frank gives a thumb up toward the camera.

The door slides open.

Frank steps out into

THE DEATH ROW CORRIDOR

where he turns back to Michael who catatonic bobs his head accompanied by a row of not-ending shouts, prayers and curses, vibrating his genuine fears into the hallway.

Frank smiles while the door shuts and silences Michael.

BACK IN PRESENT

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

On the projection screen plays the footage from within Michael's cell, how he squirms on the floor, screaming.

Evelyn positioned herself in the center of the room. Her jaw halfway down.

CURATOR (V.O.)

This is the true story of Michael McKinley before his execution. The sanatorium, Michael's escape, has been the lie. He's dead, Evelyn. I promised it will be over after the third story and I keep that promise.

EVELYN

Who is the other man, is this you?  
Has this been you? You made this  
all up here?

CURATOR (V.O.)

No.

The curator's voice changer is first time turned off, which reveals a female voice--

DR. FRANCESCA (V.O.)

It's not me, Evelyn. And before I  
explain, I'd like to make it clear  
that I understand if you hate me  
now. It was a sacrifice I'm willing  
to make. Despite the fact that you  
got a place in my heart forever.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Frank grabs on the shoulder of Dr. Francesca whose head falls down in sadness.

She perches in front of the monitors, the table microphone sits ahead.

FRANK

(to Dr. Francesca)

It's okay. Let me talk to her.

He grabs for the table mic.

FRANK

The man in the video was me,  
Evelyn. My name is Frank Surlock.  
I'm a neuroscientist from a private  
research institution. When your  
therapist Dr. Cole consulted me as  
she stuck with your therapy while  
your suicide attempts proliferated,  
she convinced me of your right to  
get this chance. We found you were  
worthy.

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Evelyn's jaw nears the ground.

EVELYN

Worthy? Chance?



Puzzle pieces spread in Evelyn's eyes.

With a shameful look, Corry distances a bit from her.

FRANK

The truth is you don't need to worry about anything anymore. Nor have you been in any danger during your time over here.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Frank adjusts his glasses, leans over the desk.

FRANK

You weren't even the first subject who went through this therapy method. We had a similar case, not in the slightest that difficult as yours is but it's been a success. You originally have been planned to get involved later, after a row of others but... the circumstances forced us to act.

On the screen, Evelyn remains stone-still, paler than ever.

FRANK

For reasons of safety, we chose to put Subject Number One at your side. Because we're just the cold scientists. That's true. What do we really know about your pain other than our theories and methods?

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Ashamed, Corry looks to the ground.

EVELYN

Is that true?

Slight, sensible nods from Corry - let Evelyn's eyes widen.

EVELYN

It's all been fake?

FRANK (V.O.)

No. The video from the cell was real. As are most of the memories we triggered.

(MORE)

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

His escape that you made up over the last years was the main problem we had. As he suffered his death penalty by lethal injection, you were that instable that we couldn't take you there. In case that you want to see his execution now, there's a tape of it too. We also took DNA patterns, which, if you wish, will be compared to those from the corpse that rests six feet under. We'd literally dig him out for you to bury him again. Be sure about one thing.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Laser focused, Frank watches the monitors that broadcast the stunned Evelyn.

FRANK

I know the human fears. Studied and explored them. You probably won't deny that after what happened here. And 'his fear' has been true. I even felt it on my skin. He is no exception, not a being or god, no creature. And no wolf. He sucked all his power from yours. Put his life above yours, the life of a child. But how has it ended? -- You survived him. You are here. His life concept was a lie, built on hatred and fear. His price was his demise.

Dr. Francesca touches her running nose, can't take it, hops from the chair, rushes to the door and weeping bitterly exits the control room.

INT. ONE ROOM GALLERY - DAY

Evelyn stares at the screen that still displays McKinley, squirming on the floor, screaming, weak.

FRANK (V.O.)

We can't ask you for forgiveness. But we'll give you the assurance that this was a single exception.

(MORE)

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 There'll be only few chances you  
 have left to escape your past. Take  
 it Evelyn. You earn it. We got one  
 life on earth. Live it. It's on you  
 from now on.

Evelyn collapses.

Sits down on the concrete flooring, breathes in an out.

A door, perfectly integrated into the concrete opens up.

Corry walks toward it.

She turns to Evelyn who puts her chin on her knees, one eye  
 on the projection screen.

Corry opens her mouth, but shuts it, slowly.

She walks into the opening.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Frank looks to a TECHNICAN who sits beside the desk in front  
 of a mixer console.

FRANK  
 Silence the microphone.

TECHNICAN  
 Microphone is off.

Frank stares at the monitor.

He breathes a sigh.

Frank turns from the monitor, but stops halfway, beholds the  
 screen where:

A slight smile grows on Evelyn's face. She gets up.

She strokes over her lips. MAKES ONE STEP FORWARD as...

FRANK  
 Cut the connection.

...the monitor goes black.

FRANK  
 Cut the connection, Evelyn.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK

GIUSEPPE (V.O.)

Let's get to work. Can you rewind  
that? ... Good ... Another frame  
... That's it. Perfect.

SUPER (white letters):

In 2019, a social experiment documented as The Zone Trials, was green-lit by constitutional judges in a special session caused by the trauma therapist Dr. Francesca Cole and neuroscientist Frank Surlock.

With the help of several volunteers and institutions, the researchers invented a highly complicated role play in the hope to cure trauma patients, originally classified as incurable, in a radical confrontation therapy.

The Zone Trials raised a debate about modern victimology and how far a society should go to treat trauma patients in order to save them from losing their civil rights when posing an acute threat to themselves.

While the first patient Corry Daniel often proclaimed the confrontation therapy as an act of humanism, even when executed without the respective person's agreement, the second patient Evelyn Monroe has never been seen again, which leaves open questions about the experiment's overall ethics and its future interpretation.

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERTED SAND BEACH - DAY

Dr. Francesca relaxes in the sand.

Her untied blond hair flutters in the sea breeze.

Giuseppe reaches her, hands buried deep in his pocket.

She recognizes him from the corner of her eyes.

DR. FRANCESCA

The master painter himself.

GIUSEPPE

They told me this is your spot.

DR. FRANCESCA

Yes.

Dr. Francesca takes a look around.

DR. FRANCESCA  
And they're all gone. Even her.

GIUSEPPE  
I think that's good.

Giuseppe takes his hands from his pockets, strolls off.

GIUSEPPE  
I got something for you, Doctor.

INT. DR. FRANCESCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Giuseppe and Dr Francesca enter her tidy therapy room.

She pauses, stands still, her eyes fixed on something.

DR. FRANCESCA  
It's beautiful. Not actually your  
stylistic direction though.

GIUSEPPE  
(agrees with a)  
No.

DR. FRANCESCA  
How is it titled?

GIUSEPPE  
I first wanted to call it 'The Last  
First Step'. Then I realized that  
would be too superficial.

Giuseppe walks to the door, stops in its frame.

He gazes back at Dr. Francesca.

GIUSEPPE  
Its title is 'Doctor Francesca  
Cole'.

We see what they see:

Above Dr. Francesca's desk hangs a painting.

It's the portrait of Evelyn Monroe as she takes the first  
step from the center of the One Room Gallery.

It is the slight smile from the corner of her mouth that  
tells this picture's story, entirely and more.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A plate with slices of cake is placed on the floor.

Mrs. Munz stands at Evelyn's door.

She raises her fist to knock but spots that the door stands open a crack.

It's a light door, no heavy armored construction anymore.

Mrs. Munz pushes it open.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Evelyn lays the table, throws a warm smile at Mrs. Munz.

The apartment looks truly inhabited now. The blinds are hoisted, magazines scattered across the couch, clothes hang over chairs.

Mrs. Munz puts the cake on the table and embraces Evelyn.

MRS MUNZ

Hello, honey.

She turns back to the door.

MRS. MUNZ

Should I close the door?

EVELYN

Sure. Let's eat.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUES

Evelyn's door shuts.

FADE OUT.

THE END