NIGHTMARES IN "THE MYSTERY HOUSE"

By

David Gegia
FADE IN:

EXT. MARTVILL, PA. - DAY

A stand-alone estate in a rich community surrounded by dense woods.

Next to the entrance of the driveway is a sign that says: “WELCOME TO THE MYSTERY HOUSE.”

The driveway leads to a weird-looking, modern mansion with a big fountain in front of it.

A car moves slowly up the driveway.

INT. CAR - DAY

ALAN (33), a slim and handsome man with black hair pushed back. He drives the car.

ALICIA (28), a nice girl with a pleasant smile sits next to him.


ALAN
That’s the house I sold a few months ago.

ALICIA
It looks nice.

She glances at the fountain that contains three devils leaning back into one-another.

The devils stand under an open umbrella and water flows from the top of it.

Suddenly Alicia sees one of the devils blinks his eye. She stares...


ALAN
It’s the illusion...
(smiles)
...Created by the falling water and your moving point of view.

ALICIA
Did your father do that?
Alan nods.

**ALAN**
The house... The fountain...
Everything...

**EXT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – DAY**

The car stops in front of a large staircase leading to the central door.

The odd figures of mythological monsters stand in both sides of the staircase.

Alan and Alicia get out of the car. Alicia eyes the house.

**ALAN**
...I did not become as a great architect as he was...

They head to the entrance.

**ALAN**
...He was calling me “a loser.”

Alan grins. Opens the door.

**ALAN**
It was his last project.

They enter.

**INT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – DAY**

Alan and Alicia tour the house. The interior is impressive. Alicia is charmed.

**ALICIA**
It’s gorgeous!

**ALAN**
Do you like it?

**ALICIA**
Do I like it? I love it!
She stops looking around. Turns to Alan.

ALICIA
But why is it so... cheap?

Alan shrugs.

ALAN
Because nobody wants to buy it, I guess.

ALICIA
(astonished)
Why?

ALAN
For those that are not rich, it’s too expensive and for those that are...

Alan glances at Alicia.

ALAN
...Well, let’s just say, the rich do not buy cursed houses.

ALICIA
This house is cursed?

ALAN
That’s what the neighbors say.

ALICIA
That’s so stupid!

ALAN
I think they have a good reason--

ALICIA
(ironically)
I know their good reason, “the house was built on the cemetery!” Right?

Alan smiles. Hesitates to say something for a while.
ALAN
I sold this house to a family from New York. But they left it because their children were seeing...
(looks at Alicia)
...A ghost.

Alicia is not impressed...

ALICIA
And... that’s it?

A beat.

ALAN
Besides two consecutive double murders... that’s it.

ALICIA
(astonished)
Two double murders? In this house?

Alan nods.

SUPER: FEW MONTHS AGO

EXT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” - NIGHT

The end of a small party.

Some elegantly dressed guests cheerfully leave the house.

Mr. and Mrs. NEDVED stand at the open doorway.

MIKHAIL “MIKE” NEDVED (31) is an unattractive man with a timid smile and a strong East European accent.

His wife LINDA NEDVED (27) is a strikingly pretty woman.

They thank the guests for coming.

MR. and MRS. GILLMOR are the last to leave the house.

MRS. GILLMOR (60) is a slightly overweight lady. She always speaks emotionally.
MRS. GILLMOR
...Such beautiful young people!
We are happy that you are going
to live here--

DR. GILLMOR
I must admit that the food was
delicious... exceptionally delicious!

DR. GILLMOR (62) is a man with black eyes settled deeply
under a bush of thick eyebrows. He is drunk.

MIKE
Oh, thank you! We are glad that
you liked it.

MRS. GILLMOR
(to Linda)
When will you come to my house?

Mrs. Gillmor leans towards Linda, lowers her voice.

MRS. GILLMOR
...I’ll tell you more about Susan,
okay?

LINDA
(smiling)
Okay, Mrs. Gillmor. And thanks for
coming...

They say their goodbyes. The Gillmors leave.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRANCE AREA - NIGHT

Mike closes the door. Looks at Linda.

MIKE
Everybody liked it! We must hire
him. What do you think?

They head to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A nice, big, perfectly equipped kitchen.
HERODOTUS (45), a solidly built cook with a tattoo on his right hand takes off his uniform.

Mike and Linda enter.

LINDA
Mr. Herodotus.

Herodotus turns.

LINDA
Thank you, Mr. Herodotus. You did a great job!

Herodotus does not respond. Smiles.

MIKE
Mr. Herodotus. My wife, and me we need a cook. Somebody like you so...

Mike glances at Linda. Looks back at Herodotus.

MIKE
...We thought maybe you would like to work for us?

Herodotus takes his time before answering. Hangs his uniform. Smiles again.

HERODOTUS
Why not? It’s simply a question of--

MIKE
Money? No problem! I’m a rich man. I can pay well.

HERODOTUS
If the money is not a problem, fine. I’ll come... let’s say... Monday?

MIKE
Great! Monday is great!

Mike visibly pleased, shakes hands with Herodotus.
MIKE
(to Linda)
Good. We have the cook. We just
need a housekeeper. Right?

A faint smile crosses Linda’s face. Both turn. Leave.

Close to the door, Mike stops suddenly.

MIKE
Mr. Herodotus, is it your real
name, “Herodotus?”

HERODOTUS
It’s my nickname... I like to tell
the stories of a Greek writer,
“Herodotus...” Have you heard of
him?

Mike glances at Linda like, “did you hear about him?” Linda
shakes her head, “no.”

Mike looks at Herodotus. Squeezes his eyes.

MIKE
Are those stories as good as
your food?

HERODOTUS
Even better when combined with
one glass of good red wine

MIKE
Good food... good wine... good
stories!
   (glares at Linda)
That’s exactly what I always
wanted!

Mike looks happy. Points his finger to Herodotus.

MIKE
See you Monday, Mr. Herodotus!

Mike and Linda exit.

Herodotus’ gentle smile disappears as soon as they leave.
INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

TERESA (50), a Spanish woman with short black hair cleans a refrigerator.

All of a sudden, she HEARS a scratching NOISE. Looks towards the storage room. Nothing...

She continues.

Another NOISE.

Teresa freezes. Undecided for a while, she finally approaches the storage room, carefully opens the door.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - EVENING

Teresa steps in. Feels around for a switch. Can’t find it. The light from the kitchen is not strong enough to brighten the storage room.

Sensing someone’s presence behind her, Teresa’s expression changes. She turns around... SCREAMS.

TERESA
  (startled)
  Oh, it’s you, Mr. Herodotus!

HERODOTUS
  What are you doing in the dark?

Herodotus turns the light on. Teresa observes the room full of wine bottles, utensils, boxes...

TERESA
  I just heard a noise like...

She tries to find an exact word to describe the noise. Herodotus reaches the switch. Turns the light off.

TERESA
  I heard something like...

Teresa sneaks one last look over her shoulder before she exits the room.
INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Herodotus tastes a meal. Adds some spices. Mixes it.

Teresa takes the plates out of the dishwasher, puts them in the cabinet.

HERODOTUS
Teresa, did you know there was a murder in this house?

Teresa drops the plate. BANG.

TERESA
(astonished)
No...

HERODOTUS
The previous owners were murdered here and--

TERESA
Oh, my God!

Herodotus sees Teresa’s concerned expression. A look of amusement crosses his face.

HERODOTUS
Wait, I’m not finished yet...
(dramatic voice)
...Nobody lived in “The Mystery House” for a long time! The first owner died three weeks after building this house...

Herodotus walks to a big conventional oven.

HERODOTUS
...The second owners left this house soon after they moved in!
(glances at Teresa)
Do you know why?

Teresa shakes her head.

HERODOTUS
They were seeing a ghost!
Teresa makes some unintelligible sound. Herodotus opens the oven.

HERODOTUS
And the third owners... I just told you about them. They were killed!

TERESA
Santa Maria! This house is haunted!

Herodotus removes golden pumpkin bread from the oven. Puts it on the table.

Teresa stays motionless for a while. Then gathers the parts of the broken plate.

She looks worried. Herodotus glances at her. Feels himself guilty...

HERODOTUS
C’mon, Teresa! Ghosts do not exist. They--

TERESA
(strong accent)
No... They exist! I have seen them before! Some of them are good but most of them are bad, very bad.

Herodotus smiles sarcastically.

TERESA
I heard a strange noise coming from...
  (looks at the storage room)
...That room.

HERODOTUS
Don’t worry about those noises. There are always weird sounds coming from that wall.
Herodotus points to the wall between the kitchen and the storage room.

TERESA
(suspicious)
Why?

HERODOTUS
Because this is a nice house. It’s not like our apartments. It has cooling and heating systems installed inside the walls... Engines, fans--

TERESA
Mr. Herodotus, did the ghost kill the previous owners?

HERODOTUS
Teresa, please...
(smiles)
...Do not call me “mister” and do not ask me stupid questions, okay? I told you, ghosts do not exist!

TERESA
Okay... But... who did kill them?

HERODOTUS
Their housekeeper did.

Teresa stares at Herodotus, her mouth agape.

INT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” - EVENING

Mike and Linda are in a darkened movie theater room.

They watch a horror film.

There is a faint KNOCK at the door. Deeply absorbed in the movie, they do not hear it.

The KNOCK continues. Mike hears it. Exits.

Linda watches the film. A room with a large black curtain appears on a big screen.
Suspense MUSIC appropriate for horror films FADES gradually.

Abruptly the distinctive sound of a human voice whispers.

    VOICE (V.O.)
    Mike’s going to kill you,
    Linda… Mike’s going to kill you…

    LINDA
    What?

Linda rewinds the film. After a beat of silence…

    VOICE (V.O.)
    Mike’s going to kill you,
    Linda… Mike’s going to kill you…

Linda stares at the screen. She looks disturbed.

Mike enters. Smiles.

    MIKE
    Herodotus is very upset.
    He apologizes. Says supper will be delayed.

Linda rewinds the movie one more time. Pushes the “PLAY” button without paying any attention to Mike.

    LINDA
    Listen to this!

Mike watches the movie. Sees a room with a large black curtain.

Linda freezes, expecting the dreadful voice to sound. There is no voice.

Linda pushes the button again.

    MIKE
    What are you doing?
LINDA
One minute! There was a
voice...

No voice.

EXT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – NIGHT

The moon’s unusually bright light shapes “The Mystery House’s” weird structure.

INT. SECOND FLOOR – MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

The room is big.

One of the walls has two doors: one - for a big walk-in closet, another - for a master bathroom.

The wall across the entrance has a large sliding door leading to the balcony.

A king size bed leans against the third wall. Mike and Linda make love on it. Mike on top works hard.

His passionate VOICE becomes LOUDER as he moves faster up and down.

Linda’s face is cold. She does not feel any pleasure and does not even try to fake it.

Suddenly she raises her head. Looks at the balcony.

Mike stops.

MIKE
What!?

LINDA
Nothing... Thought somebody was...
Nothing.

Mike continues.

INT. SECOND FLOOR – HALLWAY – NIGHT

A dark, long hallway.
Faint moonlight streams through a big balcony, divides the hallway into two equal parts shadow and light.

A large staircase coming up from the first floor ends in the middle of the hallway.

A strange SILHOUETTE appears on the top step for a split second.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Linda lies in bed. She stares at the ceiling. Mike is beside her, drinks a cocktail from a long glass.

LINDA
...I’m still thinking about Susan Riddell...

Linda glances at Mike.

LINDA
...Mrs. Gillmor said Susan was also seeing a ghost.

Mike puts the glass on his bedside table. Smiles, shakes his head.

MIKE
C’mon! You are old enough not to believe this shit.

LINDA
Mrs. Gillmor knew Susan very well and she--

MIKE
Mrs. Gillmor could not know them “very well!” The Riddells lived here only two or three weeks...

Linda does not argue. She remains quiet.

MIKE
...It was not a ghost she was seeing! It was their housekeeper who was posing as a ghost!
Mike goes to the bathroom to brush his teeth.

MIKE (O.S.)
(muffled voice
as he brushes)
Police found Halloween costumes
and LSD drugs in the guest room...

Mike steps back into the bedroom with a white spot of
toothpaste on his chin.

MIKE
...The housekeeper was sleeping
there.

He approaches the sliding door. Looks out to the pool in
the backyard.

MIKE
I can’t wait for summer to come.
I’m going to dive directly from
this balcony.

Linda rolls her eyes. Mike closes the curtain. The sliding
door disappears behind the long and heavy curtain.

Mike goes to bed. Kisses Linda.

MIKE
Don’t listen to Mrs. Gillmor.
Looks like she speaks too much,
okay? Good night.

Mike turns off the light.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is dark and quiet. Linda lies in bed next to Mike. A
sheet partially covers her naked body.

She sleeps restlessly.

The curtain moves slightly. There is somebody behind it.

Sudden brusque NOISE makes Linda to wake up. She observes
the room with a concerned expression.
Everything seems OK. She realizes she had a bad dream.

    LINDA
    Oh...

Linda turns to Mike. Sees him sleeping peacefully.
She relaxes. Closes her eyes.
In the background, the curtain moves again.
An unusually white hand appears from it.
The hand disappears as soon as Linda moves.
She turns to her left side. Punches her pillow. Puts her head on it comfortably.
Closes her eyes and... opens them again.
Sharpening her focus, Linda sees a pair of shoes protruding from below the curtain.
Scared to death, Linda tries to turn the light on. Pushes a switch of the bedside lamp. No light.
The curtain moves. Linda SCREAMS. Jumps to Mike’s side. Pulls him.

    MIKE
    (confused)
    What... what the hell--

Mike lights his bedside lamp. Looks at trembling Linda.

    MIKE
    (worried)
    What’s wrong?

Mike looks around. Everything seems OK.

    LINDA
    (pointing curtain)
    There, there is somebody... I saw feet!
Mike glances around looking for something he can use as a weapon, finds nothing.

He does not see any feet either. He crosses the room prudently.

Gathering courage, Mike pulls back the curtain. Sees a ghost. Jumps back.

Linda SCREAMS.

MIKE
Shit!

He relaxes. Realizes, “a ghost” was his own reflection on the door pane!

MIKE
(smiling)
Almost got a heart attack.

Linda still looks scared.

LINDA
Mike! The balcony... check the balcony!

MIKE
It’s empty, darling. Nobody is out there.

Linda insists.

LINDA
Please, Mike! Check the fucking balcony!

Mike opens the door. Goes out. Glances around. Steps back.

MIKE
It’s cold outside!

He closes the door.

MIKE
You had a bad dream. So do I sometimes...
He goes to bed.

A look of fear, doubt, and confusion crosses Linda’s face.

Mike tries to comfort her with kisses.

MIKE
Once I had a nightmare. The most--

LINDA
Mike, was the door locked?

Mike thinks for a second then with a convincing voice...

MIKE
Of course it was!

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Linda and Mike sit around a table that is set for three.

Herodotus puts a plate in front of Mike.

MIKE
Hmm, it smells so delicious! What is it?

HERODOTUS
“Le Beuf Bourguignon”

Herodotus takes a bottle of red wine. Uncorks it.

HERODOTUS
I’m sure you will like it.

Mike puts a small piece of meat in his mouth. Chews.

MIKE
Not bad. I like it...
(still chewing)
...Yea, it’s good, very good!

Herodotus smiles as he pours red wine into Linda’s glass.

He next pours a glass for Mike.
HERODOTUS
(to Mike)
Now try this Georgian wine. It represents a perfect balance of
elegance and power. Drinking it, you will taste fresh apricot and
plum flavors.

Herodotus puts the bottle on the table. Takes his place
next to Mike.

Mike tastes the wine. Looks at Herodotus with a guilty
expression.

MIKE
Sorry, but I can’t taste any apricot...

HERODOTUS
Can you taste the plum flavor?

MIKE
(disappointed)
No, but I like it.

HERODOTUS
(smiling)
It took me three years of constant drinking before I recognized those tastes. But
don’t worry, a few months of training and you’ll be a
good “connoisseur”--

LINDA
(sarcastically)
Or a good alcoholic!

MIKE
I don’t want to be an alcoholic.
(sadly)
It killed my parents.

An awkward silence. Herodotus tries to change the subject.

He notices that Linda is not eating much...
LINDA
No, I like it! I just--

MIKE
She had a bad dream, yesterday.

Linda gives Mike an angry look.

Herodotus does not see it.

LINDA
It does not matter. A bad dream is a bad dream...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Teresa takes out a pair of white latex gloves from the drawer.

Her face is cold, unpleasant.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Herodotus talks about dreams. Mike listens attentively.

Linda eats slowly.

HERODOTUS
...Each dream has its meaning. And a bad dream does not necessarily mean something bad will happen to you. Sometimes a nice dream is even worse! If you want I'll tell you what had happened to Croesus...

MIKE
Of course we want! You know I love your stories.
Herodotus pours more wine into Mike’s empty glass and tells a story with his smooth baritone voice.

HERODOTUS
As you already know Croesus was the greatest king of his era. Once he dreamed he would conquer a rich and powerful neighboring country. He immediately sent his servants to Pythia. Pythia was an oracle who could interpret a meaning of any dream... She analyzed what Croesus had seen and sent him back the message: “Croesus, if you wage war against your neighbor you will destroy one of the greatest kingdoms in the world”...

Herodotus makes a pause. Extends his hand. Reaches for his glass.

HERODOTUS
...Croesus was very happy to hear that. Now he was certain that his dream predicted him more fame and glory then he already had...

INT. SECOND FLOOR - HALLWAY - DAY

There is a motion detector light in front of the staircase.

An unusually white hand pushes the detector’s panel slightly up.

BACK TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Herodotus drinks his wine. Mike looks at him.

MIKE
Then?
HERODOTUS
Then he went to war against his neighbor and... lost! He destroyed the world’s biggest kingdom. His own kingdom! He was furious and it was all his fault. He was supposed to ask, which of the greatest kingdoms he was going to destroy, his own or his neighbor’s one...

(looks at Linda)
...Do you see now how a nice dream can turn into an ugly one?

Linda looks irritated. Mike nods.

MIKE
I always try to interpret my dreams in a good way--

HERODOTUS
Because you are an optimist!
Someone who is a pessimist--

LINDA
(irritated)
I had a nightmare, Herodotus!
Not a dream! And...
(to Mike)
...Please, stop this stupid conversation, okay?

Linda leaves the table. Mike shrugs, glances at Herodotus. Herodotus looks sorry.

HERODOTUS
Did I--

MIKE
No, no! Just a bad mood...
(sighs)
...When I met her she was so funny and--
(shrugs)
I don’t know...

Mike looks worried. Rises. Exits.
INT. KITCHEN - REFRIGERATOR - NIGHT

There are many products inside the refrigerator. Mike’s cocktail is on the top shelf.

Some kind of white powder falls into the glass.

INT. STAIRCASE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Linda with a cocktail in her hand walks up the stairs.

The light coming from the first floor turns off itself as Linda advances to the second floor.

Approaching a dark hallway, she steps up more prudently as she notices that the motion-detecting light fails to go on.

The moonlight entering from the balcony is enough for Linda to move forward safely.

Suddenly she HEARS some unintelligible WHISPERING coming from the left side of the hallway.

She looks over there. Sees a noose dangling from the ceiling.

Scared, she jumps up the remaining stairs, runs towards the bedroom.

The motion-detecting light goes on. It illuminates the hallway.

Before entering into the room, Linda glimpses at the noose’s direction.

There is no noose. She sighs.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Linda enters in. Puts the cocktail on Mike’s bedside table.

MIKE

... Tomorrow is the first
(MORE)
MIKE (cont’d)
anniversary since I met my beautiful wife. So…
(beat)
Saturday? Saturday is great. We’ll be there! Thanks… Good night.

Mike hangs up the phone, reaches for his cocktail. Linda takes a remote control. Turns the TV off.

MIKE
The Gillmors invited us. Saturday night…

He glances at Linda.

MIKE
Is something wrong darling?

LINDA
Everything is wrong in this house! The light in the hallway--

MIKE
(with smile)
Does not work properly!

Linda gives Mike a puzzled look.

MIKE
Don’t worry. It’s not a ghost and it has nothing to do with the house either. I saw Teresa dusting--

Mike drinks his cocktail.

MIKE
She probably touched a sensor of the motion detector… That’s why the light goes on too late.

Mike puts his glass.

Linda does not look as worried as she was before.
MIKE
I’ll fix it tomorrow. Before, I used to fix something everyday. If not my lucky ticket, I--

LINDA
I think I saw a noose in the hallway.

MIKE
(curious)
A noose? What noose?

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Mike and Linda have a guest; Linda’s brother BRAD LEEN (32), not a tall man with nervously blinking small eyes.

They eat entrée and talk about the previous owners of “THE MYSTERY HOUSE.”

LINDA
(to Brad)
...The architect, the first owner died suddenly--

MIKE
“Suddenly?” C’mon, Linda! He was over 80!

Linda does not pay any attention to Mike’s “protest.”

She continues...

LINDA
(to Brad)
Next owners had daughters, twins. They were seeing a ghost in their bedroom. The ghost was--

MIKE
They were lying Linda!

LINDA
Why? Why should they lie?
MIKE
I’ll tell you why! The girls were born and grown up in New York City. Do you think they would want to live here, in Martvill? Look around… Mountains and lakes… that’s it! We don’t have any neighbors younger than the Gillmors!

BRAD
(to Linda)
Mike’s suggestion seems pretty believable.

LINDA
And the feet that I saw, does not seem “pretty believable?”

Brad shrugs.

BRAD
It was a nightmare… You always have nightmares!

LINDA
Okay, maybe it was a nightmare but what about the noose… or a dreadful voice I heard when I was watching the movie? It could not--

MIKE
Oh, I’m glad you reminded me of that!
(to Brad)
That evening, we saw an old movie where the killer was hidden in the room and his shoes were protruding from the curtain…
(to Linda)
…And the same day, you had the nightmare with the shoes under the curtain!

Linda shakes her head. Arguing with them makes no sense.
She changes the subject.

LINDA
(to Brad)
Maybe you will stay tonight?

MIKE
Yeah. It’ll be great! We’ll have a tasty dinner with nice stories from Herodotus. After a few glasses of red wine, you’ll going to feel yourself surrounded by the kings, tyrants and heroes of the ancient Greece... Herodotus is an excellent storyteller, believe me! We do not eat without him--

BRAD
I’m sorry, Mike. I can’t. I really have to be in New York, tonight.
(to Linda)
You are nervous, I know. But soon everything will be okay, believe me! You pay too much attention to those stupid stories about the previous owners--

MIKE
That’s exactly what I’m saying!

Herodotus enters followed by Teresa. He pushes a cart.

MIKE
(joyful)
Oh, here you are!

Herodotus takes meals from the cart. Puts them on the table. Teresa gathers used plates.

MIKE
Wow! It looks so tasty. What is it, Herodotus?

HERODOTUS
This is “The Pheasant and Truffle Risotto”...
Mike looks down at his nicely presented plate of “The Pheasant and Truffle Risotto.”

INT. DR. GILLMOR’S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Pair of fish sticks, mashed potatoes, and some vegetables carelessly arranged on a big plate.

Dr. Gillmor looks at it. Grimaces.

He wears a navy color pullover, blue jeans, and stylish shoes. The shoes look familiar!

MRS. GILLMOR
I love fish sticks!

Mrs. Gillmor grabs her fork from the table. Dr. Gillmor puts his fork on the table.

DR. GILLMOR
When they come, please, don’t talk too much, okay…?

He takes a newspaper.

DR. GILLMOR
...Especially about the Riddells and their ghosts...

BACK TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Mike, Linda, and Brad have a nicely decorated cake for dessert. Listening to Herodotus, they eat their cake.

Herodotus tells a story using his great talent of narrator.

HERODOTUS
...So the kingdom of Croesus received a visit from the philosopher named Solon. Croesus proudly show him all of his enormous wealth and asked: “Solon, do you know anybody happier and luckier than me?”...
Herodotus stops for a second. Gulps his wine.

HERODOTUS
...Solon said, "Croesus, I don’t think you are a lucky person at all as far as you are still alive. Rich and powerful today, you can die poor and powerless tomorrow. Remember, no two days are the same in a man’s life, and happiness does not last forever”...
(to Brad)
...Do you know what Croesus had thought?

BRAD
(ironically)
Not yet.

HERODOTUS
He thought Solon was stupid! But soon when he found himself enslaved and hung on a fire he changed his mind.

Herodotus’ look slides from Mike to Linda. It stops at Brad.

HERODOTUS
See? Even a king can lose everything! That’s why “Herodotus” does not advice to wish someone’s good luck if this someone is still alive! Mike won the millions but that was in the past. Nobody knows what will happen to him in the future... Maybe he’ll be killed...

Linda and Brad exchange a strange look with each other. Herodotus and Mike do not see it.

HERODOTUS
...Or Linda will fall in love with somebody else?
MIKE
(chuckling)
Do you still wish to have my good luck Brad?

BRAD
Of course I do!

Brad’s eyes blink nervously.

BRAD
When did you come to America, three years ago?

MIKE
About then.

BRAD
Hundred bucks in your pocket?

MIKE
Hundred fifty.

BRAD
And look at you now! I must be stupid not to wish your luck!

Brad looks at Herodotus.

BRAD
All the books are made to fool people, Herodotus! I never read a book with a good advice in it, believe me!

Mike glances at Herodotus. Herodotus smiles gently.

HERODOTUS
I believe you, Brad. I believe you… Nowadays there are more writers than readers. Everybody tries to write something…

Herodotus rises. Takes an empty bottle of wine.
HERODOTUS
...Even the prostitutes are publishing their memoirs and diaries! Don’t read them, Brad...

He heads towards the kitchen.

HERODOTUS
(walking)
...Switch to “Herodotus” and you’ll find a lot of good advices in it.

He exits. Mike grins, glances at Brad. Brad’s eyes flash.

BRAD
I don’t need his fucking advices!

EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – DAY

Mike says something to Linda. Kisses her. Goes to his car. Linda walks to Brad.

INT. SECOND FLOOR – GUEST ROOM – DAY

A navy-blue color curtain darkens the room. There is somebody here.

A tiny sunbeam enters into the room from the slightly open heavy curtain. It shapes a strange silhouette.

The silhouette looks outside. Sees Mike. He detaches a new fishing boat from his “HAMMER”

Far from him, Brad and Linda have an agitated conversation. Linda looks angry.

EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – DAY

Brad embraces his sister.

BRAD
...It will be over. Just one more week, okay?

Brad grins. Linda nods without saying anything. She does not look angry anymore.
Mike pulls over his car.

MIKE
Last chance to change your mind!

BRAD
No, no! I have to go!

Brad sits next to Mike. Linda watches them leaving.

Then she strides towards the house. Something catches her attention.

She stops, gazes. Sees that the curtain of the guest room is slightly open.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - GUEST ROOM - DAY

The silhouette’s unusually white hand closes the curtain.

The room becomes completely dark.

INT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” - DAY

Linda rushes to the second floor.

LINDA
Teresa! Teresa!

TERESA
Yes, ma’am.

Hands full of cleaning products, Teresa comes out of the master bedroom.

She wears white latex gloves.

LINDA
You were in the guest room!

TERESA
No, ma’am.

Linda looks at her with suspicion.

LINDA
Give me the key of--
TERESA
It’s open, ma’am.

LINDA
(angry)
I know! Give me the fucking key!

INT. GUEST ROOM - DAY

The door opens widely.

Linda with a sense of fear and precaution appears at the open doorway.

She turns the light on. Observes the nicely furnished room.

She does not dare enter inside. Reaches a switch. Turns the light off. Closes the door.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Linda locks the door. Puts the key in her pocket. Heads for the first floor.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY

Linda enters.

LINDA
Mr. Herodotus!

Herodotus turns with a big knife in his hand.

Startled, Linda backs up.

Herodotus’s face is twisted. His eyes are wet and red. He looks terrible.

HERODOTUS
(with apology)
Sorry. Did I scare you?

Herodotus puts down his knife.

HERODOTUS
I’m allergic to onions. I was
not always like that... Are you okay?

LINDA
You scared--

HERODOTUS
I’m sorry, I did not--

LINDA
(sighs)
Okay. It’s okay...

Linda leaves. She looks tired, very tired.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM – EVENING

Linda is naked. She opens the shower. Leans against the wall. Lets hot water flow over her head.

The NOISE of falling water fills the room. There is a fan on the wall.

It turns fast.

INT. KITCHEN – EVENING

Something is cooking in a small pot. The door of the storage room is closed.

Herodotus is not here. The kitchen is empty.

INT. BATHROOM – EVENING

The mirror is completely covered by steam. The fan does not work anymore.

Linda feels something is wrong. Gradually water becomes hotter.

Linda tries to reduce heat. Turns the faucet. No result. Water continues boiling.

LINDA
Shit...!

Foggy.
EXT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” - EVENING

Two headlights pierce the fog. Black “HAMMER” approaches the fountain.

The car’s engine shuts off and lights go off. Mike gets out. Disappears into the house.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Linda looks nervous. The water is so hot; she steps out of the bathtub.

She struggles for breath in the dense steam. Makes her way to the door. Turns the knob.

       LINDA
       (in a panic)
       C’mon! Please...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

An unusually white hand holds the knob tightly.

BACK TO:

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Linda desperately tries to open the door. Exhausted she gives up.

Thick steam covers her naked body lying on the floor.

INT. DR. GILLMOR’S HOUSE - EVENING

Dr. Gillmor, Mrs. Gillmor, Mike, and Linda sit in the dining room. Linda looks sad.

They discuss Linda’s recent accident.

Mrs. Gillmor is particularly active in this conversation.

       MRS. GILLMOR
       (to her husband)
       ...So how do you explain that--
DR. GILLMOR
(nervously)
I do not explain anything! Mike
already explained it but you
never listen to people! It could
have happened to anybody! I often
make hot water instead of cold
when I’m relaxed under the shower.
And those round doorknobs! They
are always tricky to turn.
Especially if your hands are wet.
Moreover, do not forget! She was
in a panic! Anything may happen
when people are in a panic!

MRS. GILLMOR
And the fan? Why did the fan
stop working? Because of;
(mimicking)
“She was in a panic”?

Linda’s reserved smile encourages Mrs. Gillmor.

MRS. GILLMOR
“Anything may happen when people
are in a panic.” The fans do not
stop working because people are
in a panic!

DR. GILLMOR
Maybe she forgot to turn
it on!

MRS. GILLMOR
Maybe she DID NOT forgot to
turn it on!

MIKE
(smiling)
The fan was supposed to go on
automatically. Even now it works
very well.

MRS. GILLMOR
(victoriously)
See?
Dr. Gillmor looks defeated. Glances at Mike. Smiles.

    DR. GILLMOR
    I must admit... I lost it again!

EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – NIGHT

The rain starts as “HAMMER” approaches the house.

Mike and Linda get out of the car and rush to the door, jumping on the stairs.

Once near the door, they HEAR a low RUMBLE of thunder preceded by a glow.

Mike gets a key out of his pocket.

    MIKE
    Dr. Gillmor says that by foot it takes less than ten minutes to walk from our pool to their backyard. Did you know that?

Linda does not answer. She looks at the window. Sees a small beam of light in the kitchen.

The light disappears abruptly. Linda gazes but cannot distinguish anything in the dark.

The next glow of blue lasts enough time to see somebody’s black SHADOW moving in the kitchen.

One more flash and... the shadow is gone.

Mike aware of nothing opens the door. Backs up to let Linda pass. Linda transfixed stares at the window.

    LINDA
    (scared)
    Somebody is there, Mike!

    MIKE
    Where?

    LINDA
    In the kitchen!
MIKE
It’s dark over there!

LINDA
There was a beam... The fridge was open--

Mike does not believe her. Smiles.

MIKE
C’mon, Linda!

Linda looks desperate.

MIKE
OK, okay! I’ll check! Stay here. Don’t move!

Mike goes inside and passes the dining room. Linda sees him entering into the kitchen.

Soon Mike comes back with a cocktail in his hand and a friendly smile on his face.

MIKE
I kicked his ass. You can come in now.

Linda shakes her head.

LINDA
But I saw--

Striking thunder muffles Linda’s voice. The storm is in progress.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness.

Sporadic flash of lightning passes through the widely open curtain and shortly lights the room.

An ECHO of thunder periodically aborts a SOUND of the rain.

Linda and Mike sleep in their bed. There is an empty cocktail glass on Mike’s bedside table.
EXT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – NIGHT

The rain intensifies. Approached storm cracks the sky. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” looks gloomier than ever.

BACK TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM–NIGHT

Linda opens her eyes. She hears some unintelligible WHISPERING coming from the closet.

Mike is not beside her. Quietly, Linda walks to the closet. Listens.

MIKE (O.S.)
...She wants my money. She wants to kill me. Make me the best meal you have ever done. Use her heart. Throw everything else away--

Horrified, Linda runs to the...

FIRST FLOOR

... and tries to escape via the central door but she cannot open it. Runs to the...

KITCHEN

It is dark here. A blue flash lights the room periodically.

Linda takes a knife. Leans her back against the refrigerator. Breathes heavily.

She feels the door behind her move. Turns. Backs up.

A SMALL DEVIL with a cocktail glass in his hand steps out of the refrigerator.

Linda’s eyes go wide. The devil looks exactly like the sculpture from the fountain.

DEVIL
Wonna a glass of cocktail, Linda?
He advances on Linda. Blinks his eye. Opens his mouth, and... A huge shower of blood covers Linda’s body. She SCREAMS.

END OF DREAM.

BACK TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Linda sleeps. Seeing a bad dream, she lets out a muffled cry.

LINDA
Muuh...

She wakes up. Looks around.

A HEAVY HEART BEATING: DIG! DOG! DIG! DOG...! She turns to Mike.

A NOISE of heavy rain penetrating into the room gradually MUFFLES Linda’s slowing HEART BEAT.

A bright blue glow enters through the balcony and illuminates Mike.

He peacefully snores with his left hand under his cheek. Looking at him, Linda’s face shows a sign of disgust.

As the glow passes, the SOUND of thunder PIERCES the darkened bedroom.

Another flash and... Somebody’s chilling shadow appears on the wall across the room.

Linda’s heart goes crazy again: DIG! DOG! DIG! DOG!

She turns her head slowly. An extra flash proves her worst expectation.

In the background, somebody wearing a raincoat stands on the balcony.

He leans his unusually white hands against the door pane. Looks at Linda’s direction.
Petrified, Linda jumps to Mike’s side. Trembling and crying, she uncontrollably punches him.

LINDA
Mike... Mike!

MIKE
(confused)
What... what’s...

Mike turns the light on. Scans the room quickly. Sees nothing alarming.

MIKE
Okay, everything is--

LINDA
There’s somebody on the balcony!

Mike looks at the balcony. It is empty.

INT. KITCHEN – EVENING

An unusually white hand takes a latex glove from the table. Puts it on the other hand.

Both hands mix seasoned ground meat. Herodotus makes supper.

Teresa sits at the table. Drinks coffee.

TERESA
...She does not come for breakfast anymore... She sleeps until noon... What’s wrong with her?

Herodotus glances at Teresa. Smiles.

HERODOTUS
She’s seeing a ghost. No?

Teresa ignores his sarcasm.

TERESA
I don’t understand why Mr. Riddell bought this cursed house!
HERODOTUS
He bought it by Internet...

Herodotus finishes mixing the meat. Takes his gloves off.

HERODOTUS
... Did not know anything about the rumor...

He covers the meat with silver paper.

HERODOTUS
...Plus, he got it for almost half the price.

TERESA
I wouldn’t want a cursed house!
Not even for free! I’m--

The SOUND of a car engine and headlights of Linda’s SUV approaching the house stops Teresa.

Both look through the window. They see Linda stepping out of the car.

Herodotus watches her enter the house. Teresa stares at the car.

HERODOTUS
She looks beautiful today.

TERESA
(not sure)
I think somebody is there.

HERODOTUS
Where?

TERESA
There... in the car!

Both gaze at Linda’s SUV. The car seems empty.

HERODOTUS
(smiling)
The car is empty, Teresa. Stop hallucinating, okay?
Teresa wants to reply. Opens her mouth but...

    LINDA (O.S.)
    Teresa! Teresa!

Teresa leaves, shaking her head.

Herodotus glances one more time at Linda’s SUV. Then turns and continues preparing the supper.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Linda is not sleeping. She looks at the digital clock. It is 01.03am. Mike sleeps.

Like always, an empty cocktail glass stands on his bedside table.

INT. STAIRCASE – HALLWAY – NIGHT

A BLACK SHADOW quietly moves up to the stairs.

As it approaches the second floor, faint moonlight entering from the balcony reveals A MAN in black.

It is TOM COGAN (30).

Walking soundlessly, he approaches the bedroom and leans against the door. Listens. Turns the doorknob slowly.

Somebody appears in the background.

Tom stops. Sensing danger, he turns...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Linda stares at the clock. She HEARS something. The doorknob moves slowly. Linda sees that.

The doorknob briskly returns to its initial position. The NOISE of a struggle comes from the hallway.

It stops abruptly. Silence.

The digital clock skips from 01.06am to 01.07am.
INT. HALLWAY – NIGHT

Somebody wearing a raincoat drags Tom’s lifeless body. They gradually disappear in the dark of faraway hallway.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Linda with her strained face waits for something to happen. Nothing happens. She falls asleep.

EXT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – NIGHT

A beautiful night transfers to a beautiful morning.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – MORNING

Linda wakes up. Turns quickly. Sees her husband snoring serenely.

A trace of anger passes through her face. She goes to the...

BATHROOM

Linda sprinkles the water on her face. Looks in the mirror.

There is a message written in red. It reads, “I WATCH (a painted eye) YOU, MY LOVE.”

Her face turns pale...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – MORNING

A SCREAM and SOUND of shattering glasses awakes Mike. He runs to the...

BATHROOM

Sees Linda lying and bleeding among the shattered pieces of the mirror.

INT. DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Grilled Trout, white wine and his own lecture in the field of psychology provides Dr. Gillmor with much enjoyment.
Mike listens to him attentively. He does not eat too much.

DR. GILLMOR
...Mr. Riddell never believed in ghosts. But his wife, Susan did. The women are more emotional and fragile than men. Moreover, they are very superstitious! Susan was not an exception.

Dr. Gillmor washes down a piece of fish with a half glass of wine and continues.

DR. GILLMOR
Imagine now, Susan enters on the driveway. Notices a sign; “Welcome to The Mystery House.” Sees a big, creepy mansion with a weird fountain provoking fear and fright!

Here, Dr. Gillmor raises his finger.

DR. GILLMOR
Add to this what she hears later! The first owner dies here let’s say “unexpectedly” and the next owners see a ghost! “Voila!” The nightmares are prescribed!

Dr. Gillmor empties his glass. The more he drinks the more he speaks...

DR. GILLMOR
Susan started to have nightmares and the housekeeper, this...

He tries to find an exact word.

DR. GILLMOR
...This bitch... used it for her dirty business! Instead of antidepressants that I prescribed her, she was giving Susan pills causing her hallucinations!

Dr. Gillmor puts the last remaining piece of fish in his mouth.
DR. GILLMOR
Linda has the same psychological problem. Thanks God, she has not the same housekeeper! So with the proper medication--

Herodotus enters with a dessert on the plate. Dr. Gillmor stops talking. Looks at Herodotus.

DR. GILLMOR
I must admit that the Trout was delicious!

HERODOTUS
Thank you, sir.

Herodotus smiles. Pours more wine into Dr. Gillmor’s glass. Exits.

Dr. Gillmor points to his piece of cake.

DR. GILLMOR
He did it, or he just bought it?

MIKE
He cooks everything... even bread he makes it here, in the kitchen.

Dr. Gillmor shakes his head.

DR. GILLMOR
My cook buys everything! She just warms up a frozen meal and... chats with my wife! That’s it!

Mike seems less interested about his cook.

MIKE
Did the Riddells know that their housekeeper was--

DR. GILLMOR
Ex-con?...

Mike nods.
DR. GILLMOR
I don’t know...

Dr. Gillmor shrugs. Continues...

DR. GILLMOR
...But I know that Mr. Riddell “helped” Susan to have nightmares!

Mike looks at Doctor curiously.

DR. GILLMOR
Yes my friend... He had a whole collection of horror movies! Those movies have enormous impacts--

Mike’s expression changes. He wants to say something but hesitates.

Dr. Gillmor sees that.

DR. GILLMOR
...You want to say some--

MIKE
We found those movies in a closet.

DR. GILLMOR
And you watched them!

Mike does not answer. Like a child punished for his wrongdoing, Mike looks down at his empty plate.

DR. GILLMOR
(shouts)
Humans...!

Mike startles.

DR. GILLMOR
...We are the most dangerous “ghosts” in the universe! We do so much harm to each other--
He stops. Sighs.

DR. GILLMOR
(sadly)
...I feel guilty myself, too!

MIKE
Guilty? Why?

DR. GILLMOR
Two days before the murder, Mr. Riddell called me and we were sitting in this room. He seemed very upset...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. DINING ROOM – DAY

Mr. Riddell (50), a bold and not very pleasant man sits across Dr. Gillmor.

RIDDELL
... Susan insists that the ghost asks for one million dollars! If we give him that amount there'll be no more ghosts in this house! Ha! A ghost asking for money... Ha! Can you imagine that?

DR. GILLMOR
(thoughtfully)
Maybe you’ll give them--

Mr. Riddell looks at Dr. Gillmor like, “are you out of your mind?”

DR. GILLMOR
I mean... Put the money on the table and show it to Mrs. Riddell. Next morning, when she finds that the money is intact... See what I mean?

BACK TO:
INT. DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Dr. Gillmor finishes remembering. Empties his glass.

DR. GILLMOR
...Police found the Riddells shot in their bed. The money and jewelry was gone. The housekeeper also was gone. By the way, she’s still at large! You know that?!

Mike nods. Dr. Gillmor wipes his lips with a napkin. He is drunk.

MIKE
Dr. Gillmor, did you know the first owner... the architect?

Dr. Gillmor’s face changes.

DR. GILLMOR
No. We never met. I’m a church going guy and he... I heard he was a very strange person... A member of some kind of Satanic Sect... Just look at this house!

Dr. Gillmor stands up. Takes his medical briefcase.

Mike stands up, too.

DR. GILLMOR
About the house!

They walk toward the exit.

DR. GILLMOR
My advice will be; take Linda somewhere for a few weeks. Hire a contractor and make them remove all those stupid, scary figures!

Dr. Gillmor stops. Puts his hand on Mike’s shoulder.
DR. GILLMOR
And don’t forget to change the name. It’s important! Okay?

MIKE
Okay, Doctor…

They exit.

INT. ENTRANCE AREA - NIGHT

Mike helps Dr. Gillmor put his coat on.

DR. GILLMOR
…I’m not a psychologist but I think she does not trust you any more, because you do not believe her! So next time she tells you that she saw someone or something in the house, do not start to argue or contradict! Call the police and make them search the house. Okay? Maybe it will help…

Dr. Gillmor puts his hat on. Leaves.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Linda is in bed. She has her left hand bandaged. Speaks on the cell phone.

A hairdryer lies beside her. It works. Makes a NOISE.

Linda looks angry. Tries not to scream.

LINDA
…I left him in my car! Then, I don’t know!--
(beat)
He could change his mind at the last moment? Is that what you are saying--?
(beat)
Forget about him! Just forget--!
INT. STAIRCASE AREA – DAY

Teresa walks up. She has a tray in her hand.

BACK TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – DAY

LINDA
There’s someone who wants to
drive me crazy... or make me look
crazy—-
(beat)
It could be one of them! It could
be both of them! It could—-

Linda glances at the door.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Teresa puts her ear against the door. Tries to hear Linda’s
corversation but she cannot.

The heavy oak door and the noise of working hairdryer
muffle most of Linda’s words.

BACK TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – DAY

LINDA
Maybe he killed his wives back
in his own fucking country!
(beat)
To get the insurance—
(beat)
Money is never enough, okay?
I want you here! I need—

A KNOCK. Linda says “bye.” Flips her cell phone. Takes the
hairdryer.

Teresa enters.

TERESA
Your lunch, ma’am.
INT. KITCHEN – EVENING


TERESA
...I’ll leave as soon as I’ll find another job!

HERODOTUS
Why?

TERESA
(lowers voice)
I don’t like this house...
(almost whispering)
...I feel something horrible will happen here! You--

Herodotus opens the refrigerator. Looks inside...

HERODOTUS
(upset)
I always miss some food! Where is the fucking sour cream?

TERESA
I don’t know, I--

HERODOTUS
Maybe you put it in the garbage... like the cheese you--

TERESA
It was not my fault! It had a bad look and it was stinking like--

HERODOTUS
Please, Teresa! Don’t throw anything without--

TERESA
I swear I did not--

HERODOTUS
Okay, okay, forget about it!

Herodotus closes the door. Looks upset.
HERODOTUS
I’m preparing “The Farsh” for tomorrow... I can’t do it without the sour cream!

He glances at Teresa. It is obvious he wants to ask a favor but hesitates.

TERESA
If you want, I’ll go buy some.

HERODOTUS
You will save my life, Teresa!

Teresa grins. Reveals a gap between her two front teeth.

TERESA
I’m going right now!

Teresa washes her hands.

TERESA
Oh, I almost forgot! Don’t make the cocktail, tonight. Mike did not drink it yesterday either. He wants to stay vigilant all night.

She takes her uniform off.

TERESA
Does your cocktail really help to sleep?

HERODOTUS
Of course not. I told Mike it does, but...

(laughs)

...He’s too trustful.

Teresa leaves. Herodotus gets the glass of cocktail out of the refrigerator.

Takes a gulp. The taste is somewhat different then he expected, but...
HERODOTUS
(himself)
Not so bad.

He exits.

INT. KITCHEN – EVENING

Teresa rushes in. Puts the sour cream on the table.

TERESA
Herodotus!

She sees the door of the storage room is slightly open. Assumes Herodotus is there...

TERESA
I am going home! The sour cream is on the table, okay?

A beat. Then...

VOICE (O.S.)
OK!

Exiting, Teresa stops. This “OK” seems a bit strange but her doubt last only for a split second.

She leaves.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

TV glows in the dark. There is a soccer game on a big screen.

Mike is asleep.

TV Turns off abruptly. The dark gets its true color.

TV goes on again. A blurred image of Tom Cogan appears on it.

Tom chained to a pillar near a toilet looks nervous. He has tape over his mouth.

This image quickly transforms into another image.
A bold man, Mr. Riddell watches naked children on his computer.

TV turns off and goes on again a few times.

Linda sleeps restlessly. Suddenly...

    VOICE (V.O.)
    (dreadful voice)
    Show time, Linda!

Linda opens her eyes. Aware of something’s or someone’s presence, she prudently observes the room.

TV is off. There is an absolute silence. Linda turns to Mike’s side. Sees, the closet door is slightly open.

Linda gazes. Somebody watches her from the closet. Linda pushes Mike.

    LINDA
    (whispering)
    Mike... Mike...

A human shaped shadow leaves the closet and sneaks out of the bedroom.

    LINDA
    (screaming)
    Mike! Mike!

Mike opens his eyes.

    LINDA
    Did you see him? Did you--?

    MIKE
    See what... I--

    LINDA
    I saw him, Mike! I saw!

Mike reaches his bedside table. Gets out a gun.

    MIKE
    Ok! Calm down... I’ll call the police!
Mike calls.

EXT. FRONT OF "THE MYSTERY HOUSE" - NIGHT

Two police cars arrive.

INT. "THE MYSTERY HOUSE" - NIGHT

Mike opens the door. Four POLICEMEN enter.

MIKE
My wife saw a stranger in the house!

CAPTAIN LECLERK (45) says something to his colleagues. Follows Mike.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Three police officers carefully search for an intruder.

DINING ROOM

Two police officers enter, holding their guns tightly. One of them turns the light on.

They see the room is empty. They move forward to the kitchen.

LIVING ROOM

The door opens slowly. An armed policeman’s shadow carefully steps in.

TV is on. The empty glass of a cocktail stands on a small table.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Captain Leclerk stands next to Mike. Talks to Linda. Linda lies in bed. She looks frustrated.

CAPTAIN
...It’s practically impossible.
Your security system is directly linked to--
VOICE (O.S.)
Captain! We have somebody here!

Mike’s jaw drops open.

MIKE
What? I can’t believe it!

EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – NIGHT

Herodotus sits in a police car. One of the policemen steps out of the car. Heads to the house.

INT. HOUSE – ENTRANCE AREA – NIGHT

Captain Leclerk speaks to Mike.

CAPTAIN
...He claims he was waiting for the sour cream. Felt himself tired, went to the living room and fell asleep.

MIKE
I don’t think he’s lying...

Mike makes a skeptic face.

MIKE
...I think he has nothing to do with--

He stops talking as the policeman enters.

POLICEMAN
Bartholomew Coin is his real name. He served 25 years for a double murder. Was released August 20.

Mike is stunned. Captain Leclerk turns to him.

CAPTAIN
And now, what do you think now, Mr. Nedved?
MIKE
(absently)
I don’t know... I ...
(to himself)
...Double murder?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – DAY

An unusually white hand takes a piece of cotton.

Dr. Gillmor wears white latex gloves as he cleans Linda’s wound.

Mike stands nearby. Speaks with some excitement and disbelief.

MIKE
...He served 25 years for killing his wife and her lover!

Dr. Gillmor shakes his head.

DR. GILLMOR
Unbelievable!
(astonished)
But where did he learn to--

MIKE
In jail! From the Cooking Magazines! He even worked there in the kitchen...

Mike walks to the balcony.

MIKE
...He had two things to read, Cooking Magazines and “Herodotus.”

LINDA
That’s why he was so obsessed with his stupid stories!

Dr. Gillmor nods.

DR. GILLMOR
Almost every killer has some kind of obsession.
Mike stares at the pool in the backyard.

MIKE
(to himself)
I liked his stories...

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mike and Dr. Gillmor sit around the table.

They drink. No food.

One bottle of vodka stands on the table. It is almost empty.

MIKE
...She was thinking that I
was planning some kind of
conspiracy against her!

Mike shakes his head. He looks sad.

MIKE
I never believed her! I was
so stupid!

DR. GILLMOR
Come on! It’s not your fault!
Her depression, nightmares,
and hallucinations could
mislead any--

MIKE
Hallucinations?

DR. GILLMOR
The noose... voices--

MIKE
Ah, yea...
(sighs)
I hope it’s over now.

Dr. Gillmor turns. Crosses his legs. He wears the same familiar shoes!
DR. GILLMOR
I must admit, Mike. I’m able to picture Herodotus as a killer but… the maniac?

He gets a skeptic face.

DR. GILLMORE
I can’t imagine him sniffing a woman’s underwear… or stealing it… or wearing it.

Mike sighs.

MIKE
It’s hard to believe for me also!

He pours more vodka into his glass.

MIKE
I never had a friend. He was like… my friend…

He empties his glass.

MIKE
What he was doing— (shakes his head) I don’t know!

Mike is drunk.

INT. HERODOTUS’ APARTMENT – EVENING

Herodotus’s apartment looks neat and ascetic.

There is a newspaper on the table. It is open on the page of advertisements.

One of the ads reads, “A COOK WITH 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE MAKES SMALL PARTIES (10-20 PEOPLE) CALL HERODOTUS. TEL: 321 456 0987”

Herodotus drinks red wine. Watches a food channel.
He pushes the button of the remote control as soon as a commercial starts.

He looks sad and bored. Suddenly something on TV catches his attention.

Herodotus makes a last gulp. Puts the empty glass next to the wine bottle. Leans towards the TV.

TV: NEWS AT 6PM:

A REPORTER stands in front of “THE MYSTERY HOUSE.” POLICEMEN and PARAMEDICS can be seen in the background.

REPORTER

...Another double murder took place in “The Mystery House.”
This morning, Police found Mr. Nedved, a new owner of “The Mystery House” in the guest room with a gun in his hand. He appeared to be in a state of shock...

In the background, Paramedics gather around somebody’s covered body.

REPORTER

...Apparently, Mr. Nedved killed his wife, Mrs. Linda Nedved and her lover, whose identity still is not reveled. Their bodies were discovered in the guest room, shot in bed! I want to remind you that six months ago, Mr. and Mrs. Riddell, the previous owners of “The Mystery House” where killed here by their housekeeper, Graciela Perez...

TV shows Graciela’s photo for a few seconds.

Unhappy Hispanic woman (50) with long, light-colored hair holds a tag with her name on it.
GRACIELA PEREZ slightly resembles Teresa. Herodotus does not see it. He pours wine into his glass.

HERODOTUS
(astonished)
Indeed... “Happiness does not last forever.”

REPORTER
...Graciela Perez, who was once condemned for fraud and money extortion, stole about two million dollars from the Riddells. Police still can’t find her...

The phone rings. Herodotus extends his hand.

HERODOTUS
(on the phone)
Yes, it’s me...
(beat)
OK, I’ll be there, Detective...

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE’S ROOM - DAY

DETECTIVE CLAWSON (35) has a very kind face. Does not look like the other detectives shown on TV.

He sits at his desk in front of Herodotus.

DETECTIVE
...Did you ever see this man in “The Mystery House”?

He shows a photo. Herodotus shakes his head, “no.”

DETECTIVE
Did you ever hear about him?

HERODOTUS
I have no idea who he is.

DETECTIVE
This is Tom Cogan. Brad Leen said he was Linda’s ex-boyfriend. Brad (MORE)
DETECTIVE (cont’d)
did not know if they were still seeing each other but I thought somebody in the house should know something—

HERODOTUS
I never heard about him.

Detective persists.

DETECTIVE
Maybe there’s something you can say? Something that could help—

HERODOTUS
I… I don’t know…

Herodotus thinks for a while.

HERODOTUS
There’s only one thing I could probably say…

Detective prepares his notepad.

HERODOTUS
…Mike does not look like a killer!

Detective puts his notepad. He looks deceived.

DETECTIVE
Mr. Coin, we judge people by their behavior, not by their “look.” You too, you don’t look like a kill—

HERODOTUS
(irritated)
I was young and I was stupid, okay?! Mike is different!

DETECTIVE
Okay!... But who else could do it?!

Herodotus shrugs.
DETECTIVE
Mike did it! When we got there, he still was in the guest room, holding his gun...

Detective rises. Herodotus too.

DETECTIVE
...And before you leave I want to tell you something...

Detective walks to the door.

DETECTIVE
...In my list of suspects you are number two, Mr. Coin. So don’t try to rule out Mike... It will hurt you.

Herodotus nods. Then...

HERODOTUS
And still... I don’t believe he could kill somebody.

Detective gasps. They exit.

SUPER: NOWADAYS

INT. RESTAURANT “METRO PIZZA” – NIGHT

The restaurant is not busy.

There are only three workers in the kitchen.

One of them is Herodotus. He cuts zucchinis and tells a story.

RICK (22) peels potatoes. The skins of peeled potatoes fly around the garbage bag, only a few fall inside.

FERNANDO (24) mixes a boiling pot.

HERODOTUS
...As the pharaoh was told that (MORE)
HERODOTUS (cont’d) he was going to die after a hundred nights, he ordered his people to light the torches. Consequently, the sky of Egypt was illuminated 24 hours. The pharaoh slept only after the sunrise! Never at night! He was thinking he could mislead his destiny…

Herodotus glances at his listeners.

HERODOTUS ...Can you imagine how stupid he was? And it’s a true story! It’s not a legend!

Fernando turns, never stops mixing the pot…

FERNANDO So what happened then? Did he die?

The pot falls. Fernando tries to catch it. Cannot.

FERNANDO Shit!

The pot falls down. BANG! Hot meal spills around.

LUIGI (50) owner of the restaurant enters. He looks angry.

LUIGI What’s wrong!

RICK Fernando burnt his hand, boss!

Luigi looks at Fernando… then at Herodotus.

LUIGI (to Herodotus) Still telling your stupid stories, hah?

Herodotus does not answer.
Luigi turns to Fernando.

LUIGI
I wish you burned your head!
I can’t leave you for a second...

Herodotus’s cell phone rings. He answers the phone as Luigi continues to curse.

HERODOTUS
(on phone)
Yes. It’s me, Herodotus...
(beat)
How did you learn about me?
(beat)
Ah, Dr. Gillmor...

Herodotus’ gloomy face gradually turns glad.

HERODOTUS
Do you know I...?
(beat)
Well, if it’s not a problem for you, fine! I’ll be there tomorrow.

Rick cleaning the mess with a mop passes near Herodotus.

RICK
So did he die or not?

Still thinking about the phone call, Herodotus does not hear his question.

HERODOTUS
What?

Rick glances at Luigi. He is angry. Looks at Rick.

RICK
Sorry, boss!

He restarts to mop more vigorously.

HERODOTUS
(himself)
“No two days are the same...”
LUIGI
What?

HERODOTUS
Boss, I just got a new job!

Luigi’s angry face turns even angrier.

INT. “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – DINING ROOM – DAY

Herodotus sets the table. Alicia helps him. She looks happy. Talks about her husband.

ALICIA
...Alan sold his construction company. Then he came back to Philadelphia and we got married.

HERODOTUS
So you got married recently.

ALICIA
Yeah. January 3. January 4, Alan found out that this house was on sale. He was very excited--

HERODOTUS
(smiling)
Why? He likes cursed houses?

Alicia
(chuckling)
No, no... It was built by his father. Alan himself was supervising the construction and he’s sure there is nothing wrong with “The Mystery House.”

HERODOTUS
And you? Are not you afraid?

ALICIA
No. Not really... I don’t believe in cursed houses. As Alan says--
She stops as she sees through the window a car approaching the house.

    ALICIA
    Oh, here he comes!

Herodotus looks out the window. Alicia exits.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Alicia eats her dessert. Herodotus sips his wine. Looks at Alan, waiting.

Alan finishes his meal. Wipes his lips.

    ALAN
    Delicious!

Herodotus smiles gladly.

    HERODOTUS
    I wanted to ask you something... I need a list of products that you like... or dislike. It could make my job--

    ALAN
    No problem, Mr. Herodotus, but first...

Alan looks at Alicia. Smiles.

    ALAN
    ...I think... We must thank Mrs. Gillmor!

Alicia chuckles.

A look of curiosity crosses Herodotus’ face.

    ALICIA
    Dr. Gillmor wanted to hire you but Mrs. Gillmor refused--

    HERODOTUS
    Oh, I’m glad she did it.
ALICIA
We are, too! Doctor said that you were the best cook--

ALAN
He also said that you were the best storyteller!

HERODOTUS
(curious)
He never heard my stories!

ALICIA
(smiling)
Maybe but... We still want to hear your stories.

Herodotus glances at Alan.

ALAN
I’ve loved to hear stories since I was a baby. So...

Herodotus looks happy.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

The kitchen is clean and neat, as always. There is a SOUND of working oven.

Herodotus puts a turkey on a tray.

In the background, somebody’s abnormally WHITE FACE appears in the window.

Herodotus turns but sees nothing. The face is gone.

Herodotus opens the oven. Puts the turkey inside.

Closes the oven and on its door pane, he sees a reflection of the white face gazing at him through the window.

Herodotus turns as fast as he can. The face is gone! Again, he does not see anything.

He takes his knife. Walks out.
EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” - NIGHT

Herodotus stands at the open doorway. Looks outside for a while.

Then turns back into the house. Closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Herodotus enters. Puts his knife on the table. Somebody’s black shadow passes behind him.

Herodotus goes to the oven. Opens its door and...

FFFRRRRR

All of a sudden, a strange CREATURE with enormous NOISE flies out of the oven.

END OF DREAM

INT. HERODOTUS’ BEDROOM – NIGHT

Herodotus sleeps in his bed. Abruptly he wakes up covered in sweat. Looks around.

A faint light of neon enters from a window.

A bunch of food magazines lies on a bedside table. A thick book on top of it is “HISTORIES” of “HERODOTUS.”

Herodotus HEARS a NOISE. Stands up. Goes to the door soundless.

Listens. HEARS somebody WALKING in the living room.

He takes a gyps statuette of “HERODOTUS” from the shelf. Looks at it.

Glances around to find something else. Nothing.

Disappointed, he sighs. Leans closer against the wall as the door opens slowly.

A MAN with a gun steps in. Herodotus smashes the statuette into his face.
The intruder MAKES some unintelligible SOUND. Runs back to the...

LIVING ROOM

... Herodotus CHASES him. After a short struggle, he KNOCKS the stranger down.

Herodotus turns the light on. Approaches the man. Bends down to get a better look...

HERODOTUS

Brad?

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE’S ROOM – DAY

Herodotus sits at the desk. Detective Clawson enters.

DETECTIVE

Brad thinks that you are the killer!

Detective takes his place.

HERODOTUS

Why does he think so?

DETECTIVE

One. You were convicted for a similar crime. Two. You had access to “The Mystery House.” Three. Police found you--

HERODOTUS

(smiling)

C’mon detective! You know this is bullshit!

DETECTIVE

Me, I know but... Brad believes Mike!

Herodotus’ eyes go wide...

HERODOTUS

Mike says that I killed--
DETECTIVE
Not exactly but…

Detective finds Mike’s file. Extends it to Herodotus.

DETECTIVE
…It’s Mike’s new statement. You can read it…

Herodotus reads.

FLASH BACK:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Mike lies motionless in his bed. Linda is not there.

Mike opens his eyes. Sees A GHOST sitting on the edge of his bed.

The ghost with a grey dress and curly hair looks like an ancient Greek.

Mike’s face does not express any fear.

GHOST
(odd accent)
...I’m the famous “Thief from Baghdad” and I came to help you...

Mike listens. His eyes show that he is drugged.

GHOST
I came to open your eyes, Mike!
Your wife cheats on you… look!

The ghost points to TV. Linda’s naked back appears on it. She has sex with a man.

Make cannot see the man. Sees only his hands handcuffed to a bed head.

Linda is on top. Her naked body moves graciously.

Mike wants to say something. Cannot. Struggles to keep his eyes open.
A drug prevails. The ghost puts the gun in Mike’s hand.

GHOST
They are in the guest room.
Kill them Mike… Go kill them!

Mike cannot resist anymore. Closes his eyes. TV turns off.
The ghost stands up and disappears from view.

FLASH BACK:

INT. GUEST ROOM – MORNING

Mike sits on the floor leaning his back against a wall. Some undistinguished NOISE wakes him up.

TERESA (O.S.)
Mrs. Nedved! Hello…!

Mike sees his gun in his hand.
He looks around wondering. And in this very moment, something dramatic catches his attention.

He stands up. Sees Linda lying in bed. Tom Cogan is beside her. Both are dead.

TERESA (O.S.)
(voice approaching)
Mrs. Nedved! Hello…! Mrs. Nedved…!

Mike looks down at his gun.

FLASH BACK:

INT. HALLWAY – MORNING

A Policeman leads handcuffed Mike. Mike has an abnormal look.

MIKE
(to policeman)
She was cheating on me… she was cheating…
BACK TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE’S ROOM - DAY

DETECTIVE
(sarcastically)
See? We have a new suspect, “The Thief from Baghdad.”

Herodotus stops reading. Puts the file aside...

DETECTIVE
Brad believes that you are “the ghost,” you killed them and you stole the money!

HERODOTUS
(astonished)
What money?

DETECTIVE
Mike claims he had $200 000 in his house...

Detective takes Mike’s statement. Puts it into the drawer. Looks at Herodotus.

DETECTIVE
Seems crazy, hah?

Herodotus nods. He looks confused.

DETECTIVE
He tries to avoid justice! You know criminals. They always invent something...

Detective stands up.

Herodotus rises too.

DETECTIVE
“The thief from Baghdad!” Ha...! “Quell imagination!”

They exit.
INT. DINING ROOM – DAY

Alan, Alicia, and Herodotus sit around the table.

Alan manages perfectly to eat and to talk, simultaneously.

   ALAN
   ...He wakes up earlier and finds
   out that his wife who usually
   slept until noon, is not in the
   room! He takes his gun and what
does he see?

Alan glances at Alicia, then at Herodotus.

   ALAN
   His beloved wife cheats on him
   in his own house! In a fit of
   rage he kills them. He’s so
   shocked that he does not even
   try to hide his crime! Later
   in jail, when the shock passes,
   he finds a perfect person to
   blame; the ghost!

   ALICIA
   But who’s going to believe it?

   ALAN
   The neighbors already did! Did
   you forget Mrs. Gillmor?

Alan sips his wine. Raises his finger.

   ALAN
   And you can always find people
   like Mrs. Gillmor among the
   jurors! Right?

Alicia leans towards Alan. Kisses him. Looks at Herodotus.

   ALICIA
   (smiling)
   My husband is genius! Don’t you
   think so?

Herodotus grins. Nods.
INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE’S ROOM - DAY

HERODOTUS
Did you see this photo, Detective?

Herodotus is visibly excited as he puts a newspaper down in front of Detective Clawson. Detective looks at it.

There is a picture of Graciela Perez in this newspaper. This picture is not made by police. Graciela smiles gladly.

She looks like Teresa.

DETECTIVE
And so? We have her pictures--

HERODOTUS
In your pictures she has a miserable face. Here, she is smiling and she looks exactly like Teresa!

Detective gazes down at the newspaper... Scratches his head.

DETECTIVE
We thought she had left for Mexico--

Detective takes a blue file. He looks disturbed.

DETECTIVE
To be frank we did not even put the posters in Martvill--

Detective finds Teresa’s phone number. Makes a call.

DETECTIVE
It’s crazy... I hope she’ll pick up the phone!
(beat)
Fuck! Bitch!

Detective drops the phone. Leans back.

FLASH BACK:
INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE’S ROOM - DAY

Detective Clawson and Teresa sit around the desk.

Teresa speaks fervently. Yes, she looks like Graciela... somehow.

TERESA
...She was cheating on Mike! No
doubt! I even saw Tom in her
car! She banned me to enter
in the guest room! Now I know
why! She was putting pills
in Mike’s cocktail--

Detective with his notepad stares at Teresa.

DETECTIVE
Mrs. Gutierrez, you are the best
witness I ever had!

TERESA
Oh, thank you...

She grins. Reveals the gap between her two front teeth.

BACK TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE’S ROOM - DAY

Detective takes another file. Searches for a phone number
in it.

Seems like he got some idea.

DETECTIVE
Teresa had a gap between her
front teeth, right?

HERODOTUS
(astonished)
Yes.

DETECTIVE
(excited)
We can’t see Graciela’s
(MORE)
Detective finds the number he was looking for. Calls.

DETECTIVE
Hi, it's a Detective Clawson.
Do you remember me, Mr. Wong?

MR. WONG (V.O.)
(Asian accent)
Oh, Detective Clouseau! Of course I remember--

Detective shakes his head. Covers the phone by his palm.

DETECTIVE
(to Herodotus)
Stupid!
(to Mr. Wong)
Not Clouseau! C-L-A-W-S-O-N... N, Mr. Wong.

MR. WONG (V.O.)
Sorry, Detective Clawson!

DETECTIVE
Now it's good! I have one question for you... Did Graciela have a gap between her front teeth?

MR. WONG (V.O.)
What?

DETECTIVE
(to Herodotus)
Stupid!
(to Wong, spelling)
Did Graciela Perez have a gap between her two front teeth?
MR. WONG (V.O.)
A gap? No. She had very nice teeth... white like sour cream!

DETECTIVE
(joyful)
Thank you, Mr. Wong!

Detective hangs the phone. Sighs.

DETECTIVE
They are not the same!

He’s relieved.

DETECTIVE
You scared me Mr. Coin!

He smiles. Gets a mood to talk.

DETECTIVE
Do you know what’s funny?

Herodotus does not answer. He looks disappointed. Detective continues.

DETECTIVE
People with different professions make different associations!

Detective glances at Herodotus. Sees he does not get it. Tries to explain.

DETECTIVE
Mr. Wong is a cook, so he compares everything to food!

Herodotus still has no reaction. Detective continues...

DETECTIVE
When the Riddells were killed I asked him if he had observed anything strange, anything unusual... Do you know what he said?
HERODOTUS
(without enthusiasm)
What he say?

DETECTIVE
He said that the food was
missing! Sour cream! Ha!
"Teeth, white like sour
cream." Ha! Stupid!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alan and Alicia sleep peacefully.

Suddenly a strange distorted voice from nowhere, becomes
clearer and louder.

VOICE (O.S.)
Alicia, you’re going to die.

Alicia opens her eyes. Rolls over and... freezes.

The devil from the fountain lies beside her. He blinks his
eye.

DEVIL
(distorted voice)
Welcome to “The Mystery house”
sweetie!

END OF DREAM.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Alicia jolts up startled awake by her dream.

She glances at Alan. Sighs. Goes to the bathroom.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM’S WALK-IN CLOSET - MORNING

The room is long. One of the walls is entirely covered by a
mirror.

Alicia stands near an oak closet. She pulls one dress,
second, third...
Finally she finds what she was looking for. Takes it. Turns.

SCREAMS.

Alan’s smiling face appears in the mirror.

ALICIA
You scared me, Alan!

Still smiling, Alan kisses his wife. Then he opens his closet.

ALAN
How was your sleep?

ALICIA
Very bad...

Alan sighs.

ALAN
Okay, how about this! You go to your parents for a while and when you come back...

Alan chooses a shirt. Closes the closet.

ALAN
instead of this scary grey house you’ll find a beautiful, joyful white mansion. What do you think?

ALICIA
I think it’ll be great!

ALAN
I’ll prove that I’m not as a bad architect as my father thought I was… And we’ll change the name also--

ALICIA
(exited)
I’ll choose the name!

Alan smiles. Kisses her.
Okay, the deal is done. I’ll fix the house, you choose the name.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY


He reads it.

HERODOTUS
(aloud)
“We went to the city. We’ll be back tomorrow for lunchtime. Alicia. Here’s the list of products. Alan likes: Sour cream…

Herodotus makes his face like, “how can people like sour cream?” Then…

HERODOTUS
(thoughtful)
Sour cream?

A look of excitement crosses his face.

DETECTIVE’S VOICE (V.O.)
He said that food was missing! Sour cream! Ha…

HERODOTUS’S VOICE (V.O.)
I always miss some food! Where’s the fucking sour cream?

Herodotus observes the room. He phones Detective Clawson.

HERODOTUS
Detective, It’s me, Mr. Coin—
(beat)
Mike did not kill them!—
(beat)
Somebody else did. I just
(MORE)
HERODOTUS (cont’d)
remembered, I never told Mike
a story about the “The Thief
from Baghdad”...

FLASH TO:

INT. KITCHEN – DAY

There are only two people in the kitchen, Herodotus and Teresa. Herodotus tells a story.

HERODOTUS
...The son of an architect became
a very smart thief. People
called him “The thief from
Baghdad.” He was so famed
and so popular, even the king
gave him his daughter for a
wife. He was the most famous
criminal in ancient times!

BACK TO:

INT. KITCHEN-DAY

HERODOTUS
(on phone)
...Mike never heard this story so
he could not invent “The Thief
from Baghdad!” He’s telling the
truth!

Agitated, Herodotus cannot clearly explain everything.

HERODOTUS
I mean that “The ghost” really
exists and he had really visited
Mike that night!—
(beat, irritated)
Of course I do not believe in
ghosts!
(beat)
No, I can’t, I’m in “The Mystery
House.” I’ll tell you everything
later... soon... when I find the
proof, Okay?
Herodotus pushes the button. Glances at the clock. Lunchtime approaches!

**TERESA (V.O)**
I heard a strange noise coming from that room.

Herodotus looks at the storage room. Goes there.

**INT. STORAGE ROOM – DAY**

Herodotus turns the light on. Scans the room. Comes closer to the oak shelves.

Solidly made blocks of shelves are tightly set next to each other.

Herodotus sees nothing strange. Decides to walk out of the room when something catches his attention.

He stops. Gazes. Sees one block has six shelves while the others have only five. Examines it.

An extra shelf is set only 3 inches from the floor. Herodotus bends down. Slides his hand under the shelf.

Feels something. Presses on it. The block moves.

Behind "the secret door," inside the thick wall, he finds a large pipe leading up.

The pipe has short extensions on it. No doubts; it is made to climb on.

Herodotus climbs up. Sees the light coming from the top.

Climbing inside the wall is not easy for solidly built Herodotus.

Somewhere in the middle of his way, his cell phone RINGS.

Herodotus stops. Looks at the screen. Sees Detective Clawson is calling him.

He wants to answer but drops the phone. The phone falls down and does not stop to ring for a while.
HERODOTUS

Shit!

Eager to see what is on the top, he continues to climb.

INT. BENEATH THE ROOF - DAY

Herodotus stands in the center of a large and low attic. Astonished, he stares around.

A bright light enters through the square panes integrated into the roof. A long rope dangles from one of those panes. The place looks completely furnished. It has everything; a bed, desk, chair, toilet... even a bathtub.

Another three large pipes similar to one that Herodotus used to climb up go down in a different part of the attic. One of them has an electric engine fixed on it apparently to lift up heavy things.

Herodotus sees a raincoat... a noose.

A few Halloween costumes hang near the bathtub.

He continues to wander around. Approaches the place where Tom Cogan was chained.

Steps on a dirty empty plate. Looks down. Sees a chain attached to a pillar behind the toilet.

HERODOTUS
   (curious)
   Had a dog?

Herodotus walks to the desk. Passes by a big LCD monitor hung under the roof.

On the desk, there is a remote control, a box of theatrical makeup and a black panel with small buttons on it.

Herodotus pulls a drawer. Sees drugs, medical supplies, and white latex gloves... He closes the drawer.
Takes the remote control. Pushes the “POWER” button. The monitor comes alive.

Thanks to 12 surveillance cameras, he can simultaneously observe almost every room and every corner of “The Mystery House.”

HERODOTUS

Wow!

He looks down at the panel. Pushes the buttons “SPEAK” and “MOVIE ROOM.” Speaks into a microphone.

INT. MOVIE THEATER ROOM - DAY

HERODOTUS’ VOICE (V.O.)

I found you. “A famous thief...

BACK TO:

INT. BENEATH THE ROOF - DAY

HERODOTUS

...From the attic"

Herodotus releases the buttons. Turns. Sees a grey sheet lying on the bed. Takes it.

FLASH TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

“A ghost” with an ancient Greek face and grey “Greek dress” sits on the edge of Mike’s bed.

GHOST

(odd accent)

...I’m the famous “Thief from Baghdad” and I came to help you...

“The ghost” is Alan...

BACK TO:

INT. BENEATH THE ROOF - DAY

Herodotus drops the sheet onto the bed.
HERODOTUS

"The thief from Baghdad" could not be a Greek...

Abruptly he HEARS a SOUND. Turns with a concerned face.

One of the many cameras shows a car approaching "The Mystery House"

EXT. FRONT OF "THE MYSTERY HOUSE" – DAY


Alan makes his way to the house.

BACK TO:

INT. BENEATH THE ROOF – DAY

Herodotus rushes to the nearest pipe. Climbs down.

Somewhere near the second floor, he realizes - he took the wrong pipe! Stops.

HERODOTUS

Shit!

He looks down. It is dark over there.

Decides to climb up. His back touches the wall. The wall moves.

Herodotus steps in a dark room. It is the walk-in closet of the...

MASTER BEDROOM.

After brief NOISES, he bolts out of the closet with women’s underwear attached to his right leg.

He rushes to the hallway.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY

Alan enters. Herodotus dices the carrots.
ALAN
Mr. Herodotus, we are back. Is lunch ready?

HERODOTUS
Yes... almost.

Herodotus answers without turning. Never stops dicing.

Alan sees that the carrots are not peeled. He looks at Herodotus from head to toe.

There is no underwear attached to his leg.

ALAN
Are you okay, Mr. Herodotus?

HERODOTUS
Yes, sure.

Alan turns to exit.

Herodotus’ cell phone RINGS.

Its muffled SOUND coming from the storage room becomes increasingly LOUDER.

Herodotus takes diced carrots. Puts them into the blender. Pushes the button.

He does it fast.

RRRRR...

The blender’s NOISE covers the SOUND of the cell phone.

Alan stops near the door for one second... Then exits.

Herodotus sighs. Turns the blender off. Wipes his face. Runs to the...

STORAGE ROOM.

He enters inside the wall. Finds the phone. Closes “the secret door” and steps back in to the...
He pushes the button intending to answer the call. Alan enters with a gun in his hand.

Herodotus discreetly puts the phone behind the blender.

**ALAN**
Did you find the attic?

**HERODOTUS**
(loudly)
I did, Alan!

**ALAN**
You should not!

Alan gets a silencer out of his pocket.

**HERODOTUS**
(louder)
You killed them! You are “The thief from Baghdad!”

**ALAN**
(smiling cynically)
Yes, and I’ll be the most famous criminal of--

Alan has a problem putting the silencer on his gun.

He glances at it for an instant and in next moment, he sees a big cutting board coming to his face.

Alan skips back to avoid it. Too late. The board hits him.

Herodotus uses gained seconds to attack Alan. He jumps on him and they are pushed out of the kitchen to the...

**DINING ROOM.**

While wrestling, the gun slips far from the wrestlers.

**EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” – DAY**

Alicia plays with the puppy. She wants to catch him but the puppy with a long stick in his mouth escapes.
BACK TO:

INT. DINING ROOM – DAY

Alan lies on the floor. Herodotus pushes a piece of chair against his throat using all his mass.

Alan resists but the mass of Herodotus prevails.

Alan chokes. Just before he loses conscience, he HEARS two gun SHOTS.

BANG... BANG.

Herodotus drops to the floor wounded.

Alicia with the gun in her hand stands near the door. Her face expresses horror.

Herodotus crawls back. Breathing heavily, he leans his back against a wall.

ALAN
Kill him, Alicia! He wanted to kill me!...

HERODOTUS
Alicia, please... call the police!

ALAN
...He wanted to kill us, kill him!

Wounded in his left leg, Alan stands up as fast as he can.

HERODOTUS
Alan killed everybody--

ALICIA
I don’t believe you, Herodotus!

ALAN
He’s “The ghost,” Alicia. Kill him!--

HERODOTUS
Please, just call the police...
Herodotus tries to speak fast as he sees Alan advancing on Alicia.

HERODOTUS
There’s a secret attic--

ALAN
Don’t listen to him, Alicia! You know his stories...

Limping, Alan approaches Alicia.

ALAN
Give me the gun!

Alicia seems undecided. Does not know what to do, whom to believe.

ALICIA
I’ll call the police!

ALAN
Don’t call! Give me that--

Trying to grab the gun, Alan jumps toward Alicia.

Alicia mechanically backs up. Steps on the puppy. The puppy YELLS.

Alan and Alicia fall dawn together. Herodotus HEARS a gun SHOT.

ALAN
Oh, my God! Alicia...

Alicia opens her eyes full of pain. She tries to say something...

ALICIA
You did not kill anybody, did you?

Alan does not answer. He looks mad. Alicia closes her eyes.

ALAN
Oh, no! No!
Alan unzips Alicia’s jacket...

    ALAN
    Everything was so great!
    You ruined--

Lifts her sweater...

    ALAN
    Why? Why did you do that?

Herodotus looks sad.

    HERODOTUS
    (breathing heavily)
    I don’t know...

Alan rips Alicia’s shirt open...

    ALAN
    You don’t know!...

He reveals her bleeding wound...

    ALAN
    ...You never know anything...

A look of anger passes through his face...

    ALAN
    ...Beside your food...

He takes the gun...

    ALAN
    ...And your stories!

Wounded, Alan stands up as fast as he can. Aims...

Herodotus closes his eyes.

BANG! BANG!

Alan collapses.

Herodotus opens his eyes. Sees Detective Clawson.
HERODOTUS
(himself)
“No two days are the same...”

DETECTIVE

What?

THE SIRENS of approaching ambulances MUFFLE Herodotus’ voice.

EXT. FRONT OF “THE MYSTERY HOUSE” - DAY

Some PARAMEDICS rush wounded Herodotus and Alicia to an ambulance.

TWO OTHERS carry Alan’s covered body.

SEQUENCE OF FLASHS:

INT. ATTIC - DAY

HERODOTUS
...His father did not die
“suddenly” and he never was
a member of any Satanic Sect
either...

The big LCD monitor is on. Alan watches it.

One of the cameras shows two GIRLS and their PARENTS standing in front of “The Mystery House.”

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
Alan’s plan was simple: sell the house, make it look like it’s haunted and buy it back when the price’s dropped...

INT. CHILDREN’S ROOM - NIGHT

Alan enters the room. He wears an old man’s Halloween costume. Two girls are sleeping in their beds.

Alan takes a nice porcelain doll. Cuts its head off. Leaves the room.

One of the girls opens her eyes.
INT. ATTIC – NIGHT

Alan looks at the monitor. One camera shows Mr. Riddell watching naked children on his computer.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
Maybe he never intended to kill anybody... Maybe Mr. Riddell would not leave the house...

Another camera shows Graciela. She sneak out of the master bedroom.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Graciela looks at herself in the mirror. Smiles.

A nice diamond necklace shines on her neck.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
...Or Alan decided they deserved to die... We'll never know that...

Alan with a gun in his hand appears behind Graciela. BANG!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alan enters in. The Riddells sleep in their bed.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
...But what we know is that he killed them...

Alan approaches the bed. BANG! BANG! BANG!

Goes to the nightstand. Grabs an open briefcase full of money.

EXT. WOOD - NIGHT

Alan pushes Graciela’s dead body into the grave.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
...And he made it look like Graciela did it...
INT. ATTIC - EVENING

Alan watches the monitor. One camera shows Herodotus telling a story to Mike and Linda.

Another camera shows Teresa cleaning the kitchen.

INT. ATTIC - EVENING

Alan watches the monitor with great interest. It shows Herodotus telling the story about “The thief from Baghdad” to Teresa.

The other cameras do not show Mike and Linda. They are not at home.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
He probably enjoyed watching his own “reality show…”

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The dark. A blue glow enters into the room.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
He watched it...

Alan opens the refrigerator. Puts a white powder in Mike’s cocktail. Takes the sour cream out. Closes the door.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
...He participated in it.

Alan sees Linda gazing at his direction through the kitchen window. He goes to the storage room.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
And he intervened in it when Brad hired Tom to kill Mike...

Alan sees Linda on the monitor. She approaches the front door and deactivates a security alarm.

Alan stands up. Puts his raincoat on. Glances at the monitor. Sees Tom entering the house.
Alan opens the drawer. Takes a bottle of Chloroform from it. Goes to the pipe.

LATER

Alan stands near the pipe. The cord, dangled from the electric engine moves up. It lifts Tom’s senseless body.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
...Brad lied. He wanted to hide his crime. Tom never was Linda’s lover. Seems like Alan saved Mike’s life.

LATER

Tom chained to the pillar sits on the floor. Alan, wearing a pair of familiar stylish shoes watches the monitor.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
And when the time came he directed the show’s last episode...

INT. ATTIC – NIGHT

Alan is not here. The monitor is on.

One of the cameras shows Mike and Linda sleeping in their bed. Alan appears with a syringe in his hand. He approaches Mike.

INT. GUEST ROOM – NIGHT

The door opens. Alan pushes scared Linda into the room.

Tom handcuffed to the bed head with his hands looks confused.

His face shows that he cannot understand what is going on.

INT. ATTIC – NIGHT

The camera shows naked Linda on top of Tom. Alan appears. Kills them.

LATER
Alan is in the cabinet room. He opens the safe. Takes the money.

HERODOTUS (V.O.)
He had everything planned very well...

LATER

Alan sits on the edge of Mike’s bed. He gives him his gun. Mike closes his eyes.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens. Alan drags Mike’s unconscious body into the room.

INT. ATTIC - MORNING

Alan watches the Monitor. It shows Teresa walking in the hallway. Alan smiles.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinner. Mike, Herodotus, Dr. Gillmor, and Mrs. Gillmor sit around the table.

HERODOTUS
...He had everything executed very well. If not for his attic, we could never know the secret of “The Mystery House”

Teresa enters. She holds two bottles of red wine.

MR. GILLMOR
I always knew there were no ghosts in this house!
(looks at Mrs. Gillmor)
Admit it darling... Ghosts do not exist!

Herodotus uncorks the bottle. Looks at Mrs. Gillmor.

Waiting for a fierce reaction, Mike also looks at Mrs. Gillmor.
But it is Teresa who speaks out first...

TERESA
No, Dr. Gillmor! They exist!
I have seen them before!

MRS. GILLMORE
(delighted)
See?

Mike and Herodotus chuckle. Dr. Gillmor shakes his head.
Looks at them.

DR. GILLMOR
So guys, when we go fishing, hah?

FADE OUT:

THE END