

THE REFERENCE NIGHT

Psychological Thriller

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FADE IN:

1. EXT. MID CITY - NIGHT

Easy rain pouring down on an empty boulevard.

Some countable cars parked around but not a single being in sight.

For a dragging moment, nothing moves and not much is heard but soft raindrops.

Then, A WOMAN surfaces from one of the parked cars. She wears a long raincoat with its hood thrown over her head, obscuring her face.

The woman locks her car and faces the empty road.

She checks her watch and calmly steps into the wide road.

As she proceeds to cross to the other side, the sound of the rain deafens, drown out by the rhythmic sound of her high heel boots punching the concrete road.

Just as she finally reaches the edge of the road, a sports car SWOOSHES by, barely catches a glimpse of it but luckily it misses her.

She read her wristwatch again. It tells 00.00 am, of course, this city sleeps.

Throughout, the woman's face remains unseen and just when she removes her hood, she disappears into a dark blind alley.

Now, it's only a dwindling sound of her footsteps and the indistinct soft raindrops.

FADE TO BLACK:

2. INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Crime scene barrier tape.

Police officers and forensic professionals fill the room.

A body of a middle-aged man lay flat in a pool of blood on the floor. The dead man has a gunshot wound to the head and is being inspected.

3. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING

Tiny, definitely not enough room for three people but here they are --

-- JEFF, 19, nervously tapping his overgrown dirty fingernails on the desk that separates him from two detectives.

-- DETECTIVE JACKSON, late 30s, smugly looking, waiting for an opportunity to get eye contact with Jeff who has his face down the whole time.

-- DETECTIVE NOAH, early 30s, leans against the wall, a few steps away from Jackson. He casually takes notes in a small notepad in his hand.

Detective Jackson pushes a printed image from a security camera in front of Jeff.

It looks like Jeff in the image, but --

JEFF

...I told you... It's not me.

Jackson looks at it again, *yep, that's Jeff*, same hair, same clothes and everything.

DETECTIVE JACKSON

How is that not you?

Jeff shakes his head.

Detective Jackson gazes into his face.

Jeff lowers his head even more and avoids sparing Jackson any eye contact at all costs.

DETECTIVE JACKSON (CONT'D)

What were you doing at the Mayor's office in the middle of the night, Jeff?

Jeff keeps his mouth shut:

" the boy knows his right"

... And Jackson knows, his wrist's veins show, frustration getting the best of him.

Noah can read the room, so he approaches Jackson and whispers into his ears.

Jeff is now covered in sweat. Jackson studies him.

Noah retreats to the wall.

DETECTIVE JACKSON (CONT'D)

Does your mom know you have been doing drugs?

Only then, Jeff looks up at Jackson. Chapped lips, tired eyes and droplets of sweat all around his face.

DETECTIVE JACKSON (CONT'D)
Son, you need to talk to me.

Jeff just continues to tap his fingers on the desk.

Detective Jackson gives him a strong gaze, but even with his daring stare, Jeff has nothing to say to him.

4. INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE - DAY

Detective Jackson budes in with Noah behind him but Noah stays by the door.

Detective Jackson goes to stand at the wall where a web of investigation is neatly displayed.

Detective Jackson has his gaze glued to one image in particular, a woman from the opening scene, looking at her watch outside the Mayor's office.

A female police officer walks in with the same image that detective Jackson has eyes on, only that the image in her hand has better quality.

She hands it to Noah.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER
Here you go... still doesn't offer much.

NOAH
Thank you.

Noah passes the image over to Jackson.

Jackson studies the image upon receiving it. Noah keeps his distance and does not intervene.

A sudden hint of epiphany crosses Jackson's face. Noah notices that and moves closer.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Talk to me.

Jackson does not respond. He just walks out with the image.

5. EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

Cloudy.

A few people stand over a descending coffin.

Among them is ANNA, 35, wears all black and sunglasses. She holds a red rose in her hands that matches her lipstick.

As soon as the coffin reaches the ground. Everybody else standing next to Anna backs away like it's casual etiquette for the service.

Anna tears petals off of the rose, one by one, throwing them on top of the coffin, the watch on her wrist show, a similar watch from the lady in the opening scene.

ANNA (V.O.)
 Everybody dies eventually, you know? Nobody stands a chance, all that matters is how you go. I never anticipated George leaving me this soon, despite his age. He was one of my favourites.

Next to the grave is a memorial banner of GEORGE SMITH, a man in his late 90s. Anna sobs hysterically as she glances at it.

SONIA, also 35, steps closer to Anna and pats her on the shoulder.

Sonia reaches into her purse for a tissue and gives it to her. As Anna wipes her tears, Sonia takes the chance to whisper into her ears.

SONIA
 You are not handling this one well... the man was 98 years old. Did you think he inherited some of his cats' lives?

Anna takes a deep breath and peers at the grievors behind her.

ANNA (V.O.)
 Uh, talking of inheritance...

ANGELA, early 60s, has this look of disdain directed towards Anna. As soon as Anna spots her, a noticeable tension fills the air between the two.

6. INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Anna and Angela sit from across a middle-aged MAN, George Smith's Attorney who is seated behind the desk, scanning through a document.

The attorney lays the file on the desk and hits Anna with a gaze of disappointment.

Anna shamelessly gets up and gracefully struts her way out.

ANNA (V.O.)
 Nothing new, the ex-wife with the kids always gets the biggest pie.

Angela turns to Anna as she walks out and makes a scornful grin as soon as Anna disappears.

7. EXT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

A car pulls up in front of Anna right on time.

The driver gets out of the car and opens the door for Anna.

ANNA (V.O.)
I am not mad at that. It is what it
is.

8. INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Anna slides into the back seats and sits in the middle for a reason only known to her.

The driver gets back in his seat and drives off.

Anna digs into her purse and looks at a picture of herself and George.

Anna's face appears in the rear-view mirror, intensely looking into it.

ANNA (V.O.)
George was a good husband. He
laughed at all my shallow jokes...
although, he never called me by my
name. Dementia was always his
excuse...

Anna grins as she touches her wedding ring and looks back in the mirror with a gentle smile.

ANNA (V.O.)
...I believe George really fooled
around in his prime, and the names
he called me weren't random at all.

Anna puts back the picture and takes out a small envelope. She opens it and finds a key.

Anna removes her wedding ring and throws it inside a small jewellery bag that carries a few more other rings already.

9. EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Anna's driver pulls up. Detective Jackson waits for her.

Anna gets out of the car and the vehicle drives off.

JACKSON
Who's next?

Anna walks to Jackson.

ANNA

Oh, and to think you are here to offer your condolences...

Anna tries to walk past Jackson.

Jackson blocks her and shows her the image from the office.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What am I supposed to be looking at?

JACKSON

... The mayor was murdered last night, in case you didn't hear a thing. That image shows that you are one of the few people to be last seen hanging around his office building.

ANNA

Oh, Jackson. You think that's me?

JACKSON

Please...

Anna looks at the image intently.

ANNA

The boots look like me, but that's such a hideous coat, even for the season. You must know me better than that, Jackson.

JACKSON

I do know you that well, I would not be here if I didn't, Anna.

ANNA

Oh, I forgot you were never that much around...

Anna proceeds her way into the house.

JACKSON

What were you doing there in the middle of the night?

Jackson's phone rings and answers it.

Anna walks away.

ANNA

Goodbye, Jackson!

Jackson holds the call.

JACKSON

You didn't answer the question.

Anna stops and faces Jackson, annoyed.

ANNA

Jackson, yesterday was my husband's memorial service. Why would I need to visit another dead man? You need to find better excuses to see me.

He receives a text on his phone.

The text reads: *"The Mayor is alive"*

Jackson gives Anna a suspicious look, Anna is not fussed by any of it, so she leaves him.

Jeff walks back to his car.

10. INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE - DAY

Jackson and Noah stand next to a TV showing live broadcast news of the Mayor outside his office.

OUTSIDE THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

The media going crazy, everyone trying to get a chance to ask the Mayor as he tries to get inside the building.

The Mayor turns and faces the camera, the man from the crime scene with a gun wound to the head.

MAYOR

I don't know who is behind this publicity stunt, or hoax but they need to stop. I am alive and well.

With that, the Mayor proceeds into the building with his bodyguards shielding him all the way.

Jackson picks up the remote and pauses the clip.

JACKSON

Is this for real?

NOAH

We checked the morgue, there was nothing.

Jackson laughs, but not in any way amusing, but rather pseudobulbar affect taking control.

Jackson stops laughing, still trying to make sense of it.

He receives another text from an unregistered number.

He opens a text that reads: *"Meet me at this address if you want to learn the truth."*

Noah looks at him, waiting for him to say something but Jackson doesn't.

11. INT. BAR - NIGHT

Detective Jackson enters. His badge brightly peeking from underneath his unbuttoned suit -- *Nevertheless, who wears glitters on graveyard shift just to show it off in a freaking bar?*

Detective Jackson spots Anna. She is seated by herself at the counter next to a glass of wine. Anna smiles at him as soon as she catches him gazing at her.

Detective Jackson walks over to Anna. He takes a seat on the stool next to her.

The bartender rushes over.

JACKSON

Beer.

The bartender nods and goes to grab a 500-litre bottle of beer, opens it and puts it in front of Jackson.

Jackson takes the beer and drinks from it.

Anna gives him a look.

Jackson stares back at her.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

I am getting tired of your little games, Anna.

ANNA

I am surprised that of all people, you think this is a game, Detective Jackson.

Jackson smirks. Then he laughs, this time amused for sure.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I am not who you think I am. Everything is not as it seems.

Anna makes a dial a number on her phone. The number gets picked up in seconds.

Anna hands the phone over to Jackson.

ANNA (O.S.)
 Why are you calling me at this
 hour? I told you to stop looking
 for excuses to hit me up.

Anna takes the phone from him and ends the call.

Jackson is not convinced.

JACKSON
 ...That stupid?

Jackson drinks up his drink.

Anna gets up, her glass of wine still there, untouched.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
 ... Anna, lady, whoever you think you
 are, why did you text to meet her?

ANNA
 Last night you stood over a dead
 man, shot to the head, and today he
 showed up alive...

Jackson looks at the can of beer in his hand and puts it back
 on the counter.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 I have met a few versions of you,
 Jackson. You have so much to learn
 about yourself.

DETECTIVE JACKSON
 What do you mean by a few versions
 of me?

ANNA
 You are a smart man, I am sure you
 will do your research.

Jackson gives a blank stare.

Anna drops money at the counter.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 That should be enough to pay for
 that... and Jackson, I will see you
 soon.

With that, Anna walks away.

Jackson tries to see if he can see her, but she is gone.

12. EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Jackson is in his car, there is so much movement going on, and the city is fully awake.

He checks his time and it's three o'clock.

13. EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK.

A few police cars parked around.

A body is being wheeled out of the building.

Detective Jackson checks out all the security cameras outside, counting them.

Noah finds him.

NOAH

Are we done here?

JACKSON

Yes.

Then he starts walking away. Noah follows him.

They get to the car.

Jackson stands for a moment, looking around.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Something is not right. Why is the city quieter than usual?

NOAH

Jackson, it's three o'clock in the morning.

JACKSON

You are not noticing anything unusual?

Noah just looks at him, confused.

END OF FLASHBACK.

14. EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Jackson, still sitting in his car.

ANNA (V.O.)

You are a smart man, I am sure you will do your research.

Jackson takes the phone, and tries to type, but changes his mind.

Jackson types "*alternative realities*" in a googles search box, but deletes the words just as he finishes typing.

Jackson types again, but this time he writes: "*false memory syndrome*"

A knock on his window. Jackson looks to see --

-- The same Anna from the bar stands there, waiting for him to roll down his window.

15. INT. DARKROOM - MORNING

Dim light, CLANGING sounds. The door gets unlocked.

Jackson now with an overgrown beard, writes in a small notebook.

Jackson takes a deep breath and puts down the pen, reacting to his door getting unlocked. His gaze stays on the page he is writing on.

Doctor Emma, late 50s, enters.

She SITS on a chair next to Jackson's bed, poised, dressed in a formal SLIM-FIT BLOUSE paired with a SLIM-FIT MIDI SKIRT and a scarf THROWN over her neck.

Jackson keeps his eyes fixed on his notebook.

JACKSON

How many more days?

Emma stares at him and hopes he stares back.

EMMA

Hello, Jackson.

JACKSON

We do this, again and again, every day. Does it get us anywhere?

EMMA

I am only doing what is best for you...

Jackson finally looks away from the notebook and stares at her.

JACKSON

Let's say I spend one more night in these walls... Will it bring back everything I have lost?

EMMA

I need you to understand there is a reason why you are here.

JACKSON

I asked...

(Raises his voice a
little)

...Do you believe this little mind
game will help me gain what I have
lost...

EMMA

Jackson, it's all up to you. What
exactly do you remember?

Emma shifts her gaze to the notebook on the table. Tempted to
ask but doesn't.

Emma gets up.

Jackson sits up. He looks at the door, then at Emma for
reassurance. Emma nods.

Emma walks to the door. She glances back at Jackson one more
time, then exits and leaves the door open.

Jackson remains seated for a couple of seconds, hinting at no
attempt to leave the room.

Then, he finally gets up and walks to the door.

He closes it slightly and looks at a blurred reflection of
himself in the door transom window's mirror.

A kid and a woman giggling in the background. Jackson walks
out the door.

16. INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Jackson enters, confused. They are all there, Anna, wearing
the clothes Emma was wearing. Come to think of it, it's been
Anna the whole time.

Anna smiles at him, the child eats breakfast and waves at
him.

JACKSON

(To himself)

Not again.

Jackson walks back to the room.

17. INT. HOSPITAL - SAME

Jackson is back in the mental health institution. He looks
out the transom window and is met with a long eerie empty
hallway.

FADE OUT: