

"OBEY"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

INTERTITLE - "INVIDIA"

ALICE (17) enters her bedroom after school, she charges her cellphone and goes to the computer at her desk to check for new messages on social media.

Today, Alice has a new friend request from "Fred Lee: Higher FREDucation" [FRED (18)]. After inspecting his picture (the picture is of Fred with a toy gun pointed at his head) she checks out the details of his profile.

ALICE

Ugh... weird.

Alice recognizes Fred has few friends, is disturbed, and likely suicidal. She quickly returns to the request page and denies his request.

She gets up from her desk and lies down on the bed. There is a chime from the computer. Alice reaches over toward her desk and notices Fred has commented on one of Alice's photos. The comment reads, "I drive by your house every day."

Alice promptly goes through the steps to block Fred from her profile. There is a knock at the front door of her house.

She calls out to her mother but there is no answer. There is a second knock, but Alice ignores it. She hears knocking at her window and turns to see Fred perched outside. He has shaved his head and there are markings all over it very similar to mapping diagrams of 19th century phrenologists. Alice opens the window.

ALICE

What do you want?

FRED

Help me.

ALICE

Why should I? You're fucking scary
dude.

FRED

I scare me.

ALICE

So, get help. I can't help you.

Fred pulls a hammer out from behind his back.

ALICE

What are you going to do with that?

FRED

I need you to hit me with it.

He tries to hand the hammer to her.

ALICE

Uh... no. I'm not hitting you in the
head with a hammer. Do it yourself.

FRED

I would, but I can't reach.

Fred points to an area marked out near the back of his head.
Alice looks at the area which is marked, "HATE".

ALICE

Well, tough. Maybe you shouldn't
hit yourself in the head with a
hammer then.

FRED

Please.

ALICE

Forget it. Take medication, go see
a shrink, talk to someone.

FRED

I'm a mirthless loser. I need you
to hit me right here and I'll be
all better.

ALICE

What the fuck is "mirth"?

FRED

Joie de vivre - the joy that people get just from knowing that they are alive and free to do things with their day. I don't have that in my life. Shouldn't I?

ALICE

Here, give me the hammer.

Fred hands the hammer over to Alice. Fred carefully turns and gets on both his knees and holds the edge of the window with both hands. He takes a moment to point at the spot where he wants to be hit.

FRED

Thank you, Alice.

Fred closes his eyes and then Alice pushes Fred forward and slams the window shut. This causes Fred to fall forward, and he rolls off the roof plummeting to the ground. Alice peeks out to see if Fred is moving. Fred looks to be unconscious. She rolls her eyes and shakes her head, disapprovingly.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Fred is lying on Alice's bed. Alice has used nail polish remover to clean the marker lines off Fred's head the best she can. She applies a wet cloth to his forehead. He comes to consciousness and realizes that Alice is caring for him.

FRED

(groggy)

Where am I?

ALICE

You don't remember what happened?

FRED

No. I can't remember anything.

Alice raises an eyebrow quizzically.

FRED

I don't know you. Are you my...
girlfriend?

Fred seems serene, even jovial. Alice pauses and then raises her eyebrow as if to question whether the suggestion has merit.

On Alice's computer screen is a screensaver image of a picturesque nature scene from a North American national park.

TRANSITION - The tableau screensaver image becomes the setting for the next scene.

EXT. ALLEGHENY NATIONAL FOREST - DAY

INTERTITLE - "ACEDIA"

TITLE - "TWO YEARS LATER"

[OPENING CREDITS]

FRED (20) makes his way through the brush off the main path of a dense woodland trail. He heads toward his campsite.

EXT. FRED CAMPSITE - DAY

Fred hoists his backpack off his shoulder and drops it on the ground. He begins setting up his tent that was attached to the backpack.

START MONTAGE - SETTING UP

Fred puts up his tent and then gathers sticks from around the site. He sets up the sticks and starts a fire. He cooks some beans and eats his lunch. The sun is still shining brightly. Fred rolls a cigarette and lights up off the fire.

END MONTAGE - SETTING UP

Fred opens his backpack and pulls out a hammer, a scalpel, a

needle and thread, an empty jar, some clean rags, and a bottle of vodka. He gathers the items in one of the rags and grabs the items in a bundle. Fred makes his way through some brush in the woods to a secluded area away from his campsite.

Time passes. Fred returns from the woods and is stumbling forward. He has blood on his hands and occasionally reaches back with one hand to check the back of his head. In his other hand he holds tightly onto the jar which has a bloody rag over the top of it.

Fred drops to the ground beside his tent. He passes out. Time passes and Fred wakes to the sound of whispers in the distance. Fred rouses himself and attempts to track the source of the noise. The whispers continue until it quickly crescendos to a yell. Someone is calling out hauntingly from the next campsite over. Fred gingerly rises to his feet and then heads out to investigate.

EXT. NEIGHBORING CAMPSITE - DAY

There is a tent set up at the next site. Fred moves towards it. Fred crouches in front of the tent and knocks on the front panel of the tent.

He waits and then slowly opens the zipper on the front panel of the tent. He looks inside. There is a man (ADAM, 40) inside the tent, lying motionless. The man's eyes are wide open.

Fred moves his hand in front of the man's face. There is no reaction. Fred places two fingers on the man's throat and checks for a pulse. The body is stone cold.

Fred covers his own mouth realizing the man is dead. He steps back from the tent, zips up the door again and makes his way back to his own tent.

EXT. FRED'S CAMPSITE - DAY

Fred sits by the edge of the lake contemplating what he should do about the corpse. He takes his cellphone and tries to call out, but the signal is too weak. Fred contemplates the predicament and then heads back to the neighboring camp site.

EXT. NEIGHBORING CAMPSITE - DAY

When Fred arrives back at the site, there is no tent and no dead body. Fred is confused and upset. He feels his head wound and then passes out.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. FRED'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The sun is setting, and Fred is preparing a clean dressing for his head wound. After putting the clean bandages on, Fred crawls into his tent and lies down. The door flap hangs closed but unzipped such that a light breeze makes the flap sway. Fred can see the lake when the flap pushes in slightly.

There is a loud set of sirens that begin ringing out across the lake. Fred leaves his tent and spins around attempting to locate the source of the sirens. The sirens cease and leave a faint echo across the lake until there is silence once more.

Fred is frazzled and moves down to the edge of the lake to wash his face. When he looks up there is a figure moving towards him from across the lake. The figure is gliding along the top of the water towards Fred and has a bright aura. As the figure gets closer, Fred can see that it is the man from the other tent who he thought was dead (Adam).

Fred takes a few steps back from the water. Adam gets to the edge of the land but stays floating over the water. Fred backs up further and appears terrified. Adam reaches out with both arms. Fred is mesmerized and moves forward slowly.

Fred is held by Adam. Adam kneels over the water and baptizes Fred gently. The sirens start up again but are muffled to a gentle hum.

Suddenly, there is a bright light from around Adam. The light blinds Fred. Ringing bells crescendo to a deafening chorus. Fred is holding his hand in front of his eyes to block the light. Then the force of the light throws him under the water. He is knocked unconscious once more.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - DAY

INTERTITLE - "LUXURIA"

Fred wakes up in his bed. ALICE (19) is beside him and she is very pregnant. She is already awake, sitting up and watching professional wrestling on the television set. She is using a pickle to scoop pudding out of a pudding cup. Fred wipes his eyes and puts on glasses that are resting on the bedside table.

ALICE

Wake up sleepy head.

FRED

(groggy)

I'm awake.

Alice starts pestering Fred and poking his face with her pickle.

FRED

Alice...

Alice doesn't stop. Fred rolls away from her.

Fred falls out of bed and there is a thud as he hits the ground. He gets to his feet and heads to the bathroom. He turns on the sink and looks out into the bedroom. He pulls his boxer shorts down and sits on the toilet.

Alice lies in bed unmoved by Fred's morning routine.

The bachelor apartment is modest and cramped even for a couple.

ALICE

What are you doing?

FRED

That a trick question?

ALICE

I mean today...

FRED

... going to work.

ALICE

But you don't start until noon.

FRED

Alice, c'mon I've got stuff to do.

Alice's mood suddenly transforms from content to malevolent.

ALICE

Hey, fuck you, you asshole! What are you doing to help anyway? The easy stuff, that's it. That's all your funky ass is good at.

FRED

Don't start. I'm getting constipated.

ALICE

Not surprised, you're full of shit.

FRED

Alice, please...

ALICE

(mockingly)

Please... Please...

Fred shuts the door to the bathroom.

ALICE

You've been so weird this past week. Ever since you got back from your camping trip. And that gash on your head... it's like...

Fred opens the door again. He is pulling up his boxers and flushing the toilet.

FRED

Like, what?

ALICE

You've been nice.

FRED

And that's bad, how?

ALICE

It's weird. It's not you. But, it is like when we first met. And that gash on your head. Fred, it's not okay. It's bad timing.

FRED

I feel great. Positive. Good.

He walks over to Alice and feels her belly.

FRED

Better for all of us.

Alice looks straight at Fred and is noticeably troubled.

FRED

I feel good... promise.

Fred grabs his keys and exits the apartment.

EXT. FRED'S CORNER - DAY

Fred goes into the coffee shop next door to his building and comes out a minute later with coffee in hand. He gets in his car that is parked on the street in front of the building.

INT. CAR - DAY

Fred starts driving. He goes to sip his coffee but spills it all over his legs when a car cuts him off. Fred seems strangely calm and has no negative outburst to the accident.

Fred tries to clean up, unsuccessfully. He grabs the used tissues and napkins in the well of the door, but they start flaking and make more of a mess. Fred shrugs, accepting the mess and he continues driving.

EXT. PAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Fred parks in the driveway of PAM's house. But then, he backs up and parks on the street. He gets out of the car and walks up to the front door of the house. He knocks on the door. PAM (40) is a beautiful, older woman who opens the door for Fred. She has twenty years on him.

PAM

Oh, it's you...

Pam looks in the driveway and then notices Fred's car across the road.

PAM

And you parked across the road for once. Gold star for you.

INT. PAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Pam lets Fred in and then goes to the kitchen. Fred enters the house and takes off his pants.

Pam comes back to the entrance hallway.

PAM

Real cute, cowboy. What the hell are you doing, Freddy?

FRED

I spilt coffee all over myself. Let me throw this in the wash quick.

PAM

Give it to me. I'll do it.

Pam takes the pants and runs upstairs. Fred takes a seat on the couch in the living room. Fred sees framed photos of Pam and her husband. Pam comes back down.

FRED

We need to talk.

Pam sits down beside Fred. Pam starts stroking Fred's hair.

PAM

You need a few bucks sweetie? You want mommy to give Freddy his weekly allowance?

FRED

About that...

Pam opens her blouse and takes Fred's hand and makes him fondle her breast over her bra. Some folded money bills are in her bra and Pam encourages Fred to take the money. Fred obliges the overt seductions for a moment and then pulls his hand away, putting the money on the coffee table.

FRED

Pam, my girlfriend is pregnant.

Pam is shocked and buttons up.

PAM

Girlfriend?! What the fuck are you talking about?

FRED

I should have told you before.

PAM

No, no, no. Hold on. Hold on.

Pam looks very upset. Fred seems calm.

FRED

Yeah, you didn't pop my cherry.

PAM

Oh my god... I feel disgusting.

Fred seems confused.

FRED

That's what makes you feel disgusting about all this?

Pam shudders.

PAM

It was just a dirty affair then.
What we were doing was meaningless.

FRED

Well if your husband found out he probably wouldn't think it was meaningless.

PAM

You little shit...

FRED

I just wanted to come clean. I feel different about everything now. I'm thinking right. For the first time in my life I'm thinking right. So, I want to act right too.

PAM

(sarcasm)

Oh, how convenient for you then...
I guess I'm the bad guy here.

Fred shrugs and Pam waxes philosophical with a lecturing tone.

PAM

I was your school teacher, Fred. I thought that I could teach you how to love a woman the right way. Not like other men. Selfish men like my husband or just beasts that treat women as if they were a slab of brainless meat.

FRED

Well you did teach me a lot.

PAM

You're twenty years old, Fred. And you knocked up some girl? Clearly, I taught you nothing about love or how to treat a woman.

FRED

You're a high school teacher that fucks your students. That was about love?

Pam slaps Fred across the face. Fred reaches out to touch her to offer consolation, but Pam instinctively slaps Fred's hand away. Pam storms up the stairs. Fred sits stoically on the couch and watches her leave.

CUT.

INT. FRED'S CAR - DAY

Fred is sitting in his car without pants on. A few moments pass and then Pam comes out the front door of her house. Fred unrolls the window. Pam tosses the pants over to him and turns around walking away in a huff.

PAM

Don't come back here or Anthony will pound you into the cement, you little bastard.

FRED

(mutters)

Love you too...

Fred ignores the ridiculous threat, and he manages to get his pants on without getting out of the car. He drives off to work. Fred works at a pet retailer. He parks his car in one of the reserved spaces for employees. Alice texts Fred asking him to pick up asparagus and blueberry yoghurt. Fred reads the text but doesn't reply.

INT. DOGGY DOG WORLD - DAY

Fred enters the store and is immediately confronted by his boss.

MANAGER

Fred, we need to talk.

The manager signals Fred to follow. He leads them to the manager's office.

INT. MANAGER OFFICE - DAY

The manager sits down at his desk and motions for Fred to take a seat.

MANAGER

You hate Mondays, Fred?

Fred looks completely calm.

FRED

I'm not sure I hate anything anymore.

MANAGER

Well... today might change your mind.

FRED

What's up?

MANAGER

Your time here, Fred. Your time is up.

FRED

I don't understand.

MANAGER

One of our regulars - the old lady with the eyebrows - Mrs. Osbourne. She remembered she forgot her coin purse here last Friday, and came back to pick it up yesterday.

FRED

Well I wasn't in town last weekend. I was camping up north.

BOSS

Listen, just be honest with me, alright?

FRED

Don't know what you're talking about. But ok...

BOSS

Look, Fred, I know that you stole from that woman's purse during your shift. I have it on camera.

The manager sighs. He has security footage loaded on his computer monitor sitting on the desk beside him. He turns the monitor so that Fred can see the screen. He loads a video clip of the theft.

Fred and the manager watch the security footage. The camera recording clearly shows a retail worker at the counter serving Mrs. Osbourne. It is obvious that the worker is not Fred.

Fred seems confused and throws up his hands in a questioning motion. The manager points at the screen.

The worker in the footage waits for Mrs. Osbourne to leave the store and he then reaches into the red coin purse she forgot on the counter. He pulls out a wad of bills from the purse and pockets them. He looks up at the security camera and has a sinister creepy smile directed right at the lens. He flips the bird to the camera.

The manager pauses the footage.

MANAGER

So, what do you have to say now?

Fred is perplexed.

FRED

What are you talking about?

MANAGER

You're caught red-handed, kid. Case closed. I mean, seems like that was the point. God knows why.

The manager has pulled out some forms that are termination papers for Fred to sign. The manager slides a pen over to Fred.

FRED

But that wasn't me.

The manager looks up and seems annoyed. He rubs the bridge of his nose and then massages his beard.

MANAGER

Excuse me?

FRED

Well, we can clearly see that guy in the video and it isn't me. I've never even seen him before. Maybe I was on lunch or something.

MANAGER

I have to give you credit, Fred. You're creative. Shameless, but creative.

Fred shrugs and is still confused.

MANAGER

You're being serious?

Fred seems serious about his claim of innocence. The manager is laughing in a frustrated way. He gets up and goes to the door to his office. He pokes his head out.

MANAGER

(yelling)

Susie! Get in here... now.

The manager goes back to his chair and sits down again. Another employee, SUSIE (18) enters the office. The manager rewinds the security footage and replays it.

MANAGER

This might seem like a dumb question, Susie. But, Fred here seems to think that I'm a pretty dumb guy. So, tell me... who is that on the video?

The manager points at the thief on the screen.

MANAGER

Who is that person right there?

Fred seems eager for Susie to put things straight. Susie squints to make sure she has taken a good look at the security footage. She answers with a quizzical look.

SUSIE

It's Fred?

MANAGER

Fred who?

Susie looks confused. She points at Fred with a "duh" look on her face.

SUSIE

Fred... there...?

Fred is shocked and he doesn't know how to react to his burgeoning paranoia caused by the conspiratorial betrayal. The manager loops the theft footage, and it plays while Susie is dismissed, and the manager continues to fill out the termination forms. Fred concentrates on the footage and is suddenly hit with migraine pain in the front of his head. He reaches back to the scar on the back of his head. The manager looks up for a moment but largely ignores Fred's reaction to the pain.

CUT.

EXT. DOGGY DOG WORLD - DAY

Fred goes back to his car but is still shocked and speechless. He fumbles for his keys, and they drop on the ground. As he crouches and reaches down to pick them up suddenly a hand reaches out from under his car. There is a bizarre frightening figure under his car that grabs Fred's hand. The figure is bald with the phrenology markings on their head. Fred is scared and pulls his hand away from the figure's grasp.

Fred grabs the keys and stands up. He is breathing heavily and wants to look under his car again but is cautious. He slowly crouches down again and looks under the car. Suddenly, a cat bats its paw at Fred and hisses. The frightening figure is no longer there.

The manager opens the front door to the store and whistles. The cat runs out from under the car and goes into the store. The manager just looks at Fred with an unfriendly cold gaze.

Fred gets in his car and drives home.

CUT.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - DAY

Fred climbs the stairs spiritlessly. The deafening sirens from the lake ring out and Fred is jolted several times as if someone has struck him.

INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - DAY

The front door to Fred's apartment is ajar. Fred approaches the apartment door tentatively. Fred pushes the door open and there is a body in the bed covered by a white sheet.

Fred cautiously moves toward the bed. He pulls the sheet back and Adam is in the bed motionless and seemingly dead just as Fred had seen him in the tent from the lake.

The bright light emanating from Adam overcomes Fred once more. Fred collapses.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - DAY

Fred is on the ground outside his apartment. He seems dazed but snaps out of it and unlocks the door to his apartment. He enters his apartment.

INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fred goes to the fridge and is looking for something to eat or drink. Near the back of the fridge is a jar with fogged glass. Fred looks suspiciously at the item. He focuses on it and there is some movement from inside the jar, but then Fred closes the fridge instead of investigating further.

Fred goes to the toilet and finds a note written on the seat. The note was "written" by Alice and explains that she went out to buy asparagus via a crude drawing of her, asparagus, arrows, and such.

Fred unzips his fly and lifts the toilet seat but the bizarre figure from under the car is now in the toilet and once again reaching out for Fred. Fred cries out in horror and slams the seat down. He continuously flushes the toilet in a panic until the toilet overflows and floods the floor

of the bathroom. He scrambles out of the bathroom and falls on his ass. He is pressed up against the foot of the bed. He is panting and has his eyes fixed on the toilet.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

TITLE - "7 DAYS LATER"

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Alice is sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office. She is reading a magazine and chewing gum.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Fred is in the examination room with the doctor. The doctor is writing notes in Fred's file on the computer.

DOCTOR

Alright Fred... so just go down to the pharmacy and have this prescription filled.

FRED

This is for the... uh...

DOCTOR

(nonchalant)

It's a Bisacodyl stimulant laxative. That should clear up your constipation problems.

The doctor hands Fred the prescription.

DOCTOR

Now let me have another look at that scar on your head.

Fred turns slightly and the doctor puts on some latex gloves. The doctor pulls the hair back and sees a very large scar at the back of Fred's head. The doctor sighs.

DOCTOR

Well there isn't an infection but it hasn't healed up ideally. This looks deep, Fred. You say someone attacked you?

FRED

I got attacked coming home. Didn't see who it was and blacked out after the hit.

The doctor raises an eyebrow finding the story implausible.

FRED

I didn't want to worry Alice, so I just stitched it up myself.

The doctor rolls his eyes but seems satisfied that there is nothing more to look at with the scar.

DOCTOR

Well, don't do that next time, ok?

The doctor waits for Fred to confirm that he understands.

FRED

Yeah, I kind of Frankenstein'd it, didn't I?

Fred laughs uncomfortably. The doctor goes back to his computer and writes some more notes.

DOCTOR

Fred, I'm going to write you a referral for a psychiatrist. He's very good with people your age and in your situation.

FRED

What situation am I in?

DOCTOR

Well, I mean come on - you are a man, only twenty. You are about to be a father. And you've got some strange ideas right now.

The doctor waits for Fred to agree.

FRED

Well, I've changed a lot recently.

DOCTOR

Yeah. So, you'll go see this guy and tell him about those changes and he'll be able to give you some good advice. He'll get you back on track. Sound good?

FRED

Sure. Yeah, ok.

DOCTOR

He's in this building, on the fourth floor. Why don't you go take this up there now and set an appointment with his assistant.

The doctor hands the referral to Fred.

FRED

Ok.

DOCTOR

You can send Alice in here about the nausea. It's a very common symptom for women this late in their pregnancy. I wouldn't worry about it.

Fred gets up and leaves the doctor's examination room.

The doctor pulls out an X-ray of Fred's skull. He seems interested in the dark area around where Fred's scar is. It is as if there is a missing piece of Fred's brain.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Fred helps Alice up from her seat and tries to support her as he walks her toward the doctor's examination room. She pushes him off gently and signals that she is alright.

Fred leaves the office.

INT. MEDICAL BUILDING - DAY

Fred heads over to the elevator. There is another very pregnant woman waiting to get on the elevator. Fred smiles at her and she smiles back. They get on the elevator together.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator is ascending, and Fred decides to small talk with the pregnant woman.

FRED

You look ready to pop.

PREGNANT WOMAN

It will be a welcome change from the snap and crackle.

She leans back and her back makes a cracking sound. Fred huffs in amusement and they smile at each other.

FRED

I'm almost a dad too. Real soon. Is this your first?

PREGNANT WOMAN

My fourth.

FRED

Whoa, you're a regular bumpaholic.

PREGNANT WOMAN

(nonplussed)

Yeah, that's not a real thing..

Suddenly, the elevator halts. Fred tries to press buttons to get the elevator working. He opens the panel for the phone.

FRED

Hello? Yup we're stuck.

(pause)

Ok, thanks. Please hurry. We have a very pregnant lady in here. Just thought you should know.

Fred hangs up the phone.

PREGNANT WOMAN
What's going on?

FRED
The power went out in the whole building. They say the backup generators will come online in a few minutes.

Fred gives a big exhale and the pregnant woman paces around her side of the elevator.

Suddenly, the woman starts hitting the wall of the elevator with her fist.

PREGNANT WOMAN
Oh God...

FRED
What is it?!

Fred looks down and can see a pool of liquid on the ground between the woman's legs.

PREGNANT WOMAN
My water broke.

FRED
You're kidding?

PREGNANT WOMAN
(sarcasm)
Yeah, and for my next trick I'm going to squeeze a head out of my cooch.

The woman grabs Fred's arm and squeezes it tight as she has a contraction. Fred winces.

The pregnant woman sets up on the floor of the elevator and positions herself in preparation to deliver.

FRED
What are you doing?

PREGNANT WOMAN

The back stroke! What the fuck do you think? I'm going to have a baby.

FRED

That can't be right?

The woman is huffing and gritting her teeth.

PREGNANT WOMAN

Well what do you think I'm about to do, serve a happy meal?

Fred drops to his knees and is trying to understand the situation.

FRED

I just thought that there were hours after your water breaks before you actually deliver.

PREGNANT WOMAN

(sarcasm)

Does it look like we're taking a vote here?

Fred has taken his jacket off and has laid it down in front of the woman so that the baby won't be in contact with the dirty floor.

The woman is now pushing hard and bearing down.

PREGNANT WOMAN

Can you see him?

Fred pulls back the woman's dress slightly to get a better look.

PREGNANT WOMAN

(sinister)

He sees you, Freddy.

Fred looks under the dress and once more it is the bizarre frightening legless figure with the phrenology markings. The figure is reaching out for Fred.

Fred freaks out. He jumps to his feet and starts pounding on the elevator doors. He is yelling and screaming for someone out in the hall to get the power back up. The siren sounds from the lake start up again and the elevator lights flicker like lightning in a darkened sky. The elevator's cables snap and the elevator plummets down its shaft.

The terrifying figure is crawling toward Fred who is pressed against the doors of the elevator. Suddenly, the elevator floods with bright light. The light then flickers. Fred turns to pry at the doors again.

The power comes back on, and the lights come back up in the elevator. The elevator starts moving again. Fred turns around and the pregnant woman is standing there calmly. She isn't in distress, and it seems that her water breaking and going into labor never actually happened.

The doors open for the fourth floor, Fred picks up his jacket from the ground and slowly backs out of the elevator. Fred watches as the doors close.

PREGNANT WOMAN

(mutters)

What a pussy.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Fred reaches back and feels at his head scar. He falls back against the wall of the hallway and looks up relieved that the hallucination wasn't real. He checks his jacket, and it is dry.

He pulls the referral form from his pocket and reads the office number the doctor wrote down. Fred walks down the hallway toward the psychiatrist's office.

Fred gets to the office door. The door has a plaque that reads: "DR R.J. RODGER - PSYCHIATRIST - REFERRALS ONLY".

Fred opens the door and enters the office.

INT. DR RODGER'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

The secretary greets Fred, and Fred hands her his referral.

SECRETARY

Please have a seat, fill out the form. Return it to me when done.

The secretary hands Fred a clipboard with a registration form to fill out. Fred sits down and fills out the form and then returns it to the secretary.

SECRETARY

Would you like to see Dr. Rodger right now?

FRED

Like "right now", as in right now, right now?

The secretary chuckles.

SECRETARY

He had a cancellation. You can go in. Go ahead.

FRED

No time like the present, I guess.

Fred accepts the offer and knocks on the office door and then enters.

INT. DR RODGER'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. RODGER (50s) is sitting on a couch reading a book. His desk is on the other side of the office. Dr. Rodger looks up and puts his book down.

DR RODGER

A new face. Always a welcome sight. Please, come sit down.

Dr. Rodger has a pleasant manner and motions for Fred to sit down beside him on the couch. Fred sits on the couch and then looks around the office. He notes the university graduation certificates framed on the walls. Dr. Rodger's full name is "Roger John Rodger".

FRED

Your name is "Roger, Rodger"?

DR RODGER

Yes. You find that amusing?

FRED

I mean, I guess a bit. It's like the
Star Wars droids, right...

Dr. Rodger shakes his head slightly in amusement but doesn't understand the pop culture reference.

DR. RODGER

What's your name?

FRED

Fred Lee.

DR. RODGER

Fred Lee?

Dr. Rodger looks up and is concentrating. He snaps his fingers and then begins laughing with contempt and points at Fred. Fred thinks he might be hallucinating again.

FRED

Well, that's pretty uncool. That's
my name. I don't really find it
that funny personally.

DR RODGER

No, you don't understand. "Fred
Lee" is an anagram of the word
"fleered", meaning to laugh in a
taunting way. A gibe. Mockery.

Fred motions in confusion by the egghead behavior of Dr. Rodger.

FRED

Oh...

Dr. Rodger reaches across the couch and comforts Fred by gently putting his hand on Fred's shoulder.

DR RODGER

Kidding aside, so, why are you here
today, Fred?

FRED

Should I just tell you everything?

DR RODGER

Start with what you think is most important.

FRED

Well I guess it started a long time ago. Before I met my girlfriend, Alice, I was unhappy all the time.

Dr. Rodger reaches back onto his bookcase and pulls out a pad of paper and a pen. He is taking some notes.

DR RODGER

Were you diagnosed with depression?

FRED

I never went and saw anybody about it. It became a lot worse after my father died.

DR RODGER

How did your father die?

FRED

He killed himself. Depression. It made me want to kill myself too.

DR RODGER

Did you hear voices telling you to hurt yourself or kill yourself?

FRED

Just my own voice.

DR RODGER

And did you ever act out any of those thoughts? Did you try to hurt yourself? Or hurt other people to change how you were feeling?

FRED

That's the thing... do you know what phrenology is?

START FLASHBACK - FRED'S PHRENOLOGY BOOKS

INT. FRED'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - DAY

Fred is in his childhood home. He has books open at a coffee table in the middle of his room. The books are on phrenology and young Fred seems excited by their content.

DR RODGER (V.O.)

The pseudo-science that connected personality traits to specific physical areas of the brain...

FRED (V.O.)

After my father died, I felt bad all the time and I was afraid that I would end up like him if I didn't do something about it. So, I learned about brains and the mind.

DR RODGER (V.O.)

What did you do, Fred?

FRED (V.O.)

I got these books on phrenology and they had the diagrams. Most of them had hatred located at the back of the brain... or your head.

DR RODGER (V.O.)

Why did that matter, Fred?

FRED (V.O.)

If I could cut out hate from my thoughts then I'd always feel happy about life. That's what I thought would happen.

END FLASHBACK - FRED'S PHRENOLOGY BOOKS

INT. DR RODGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Fred as a child at the coffee table is superimposed such that his child self appears to be in Dr. Rodger's office at their coffee table. Slowly, that phantom of Fred's memory fades away and the child is replaced by Fred, the young man.

Dr. Rodger is jotting some more notes down on his pad.

DR RODGER

Well Fred, those phrenology charts are like astrology. They are symbolic interpretations. It isn't real medicine or science. The greatest power it has is through the imagination of those who have faith in its answers.

FRED

Well, for a while my girlfriend loving me made the negativity go away. But then a bunch of stuff happened and she got pregnant.

DR RODGER

Did you want to keep the baby?

FRED

Oh sure, yeah. Always. But, her dad kicked her out. My mom couldn't accept the whole thing either. Life was so negative again and I didn't want my baby to be experiencing that, you know what I mean? What is my baby ended up like my dad too?

Dr. Rodger doesn't answer the question, and he finishes jotting some notes. He moves over to his desk and starts a file for Fred on his computer. Dr. Rodger stays seated at his desk.

DR RODGER

So, you got the referral here to talk about it?

FRED

Well no. I mean that wasn't the first thing I did. The first thing I did was to take out that piece of my brain where the hate is.

Dr. Rodger seems bewildered by the details of Fred's story.

DR RODGER

You gave yourself a lobotomy?

FRED

Yeah, I guess that's what you would call it. I got in there with the back of a hammer. Cracked through my skull and I made a hole big enough that I could take a scalpel and cut that chunk out.

Dr. Rodger is stunned.

DR RODGER

And who is the doctor that referred you to me?

FRED

Dr. Gold, downstairs.

DR RODGER

And he knows what you did? To your skull... and brain?

FRED

He's seen the scar. And some x-rays. But he doesn't know why I did it.

DR RODGER

So, why do you think that he sent you to a psychiatrist, Fred?

FRED

I told him that I've been having hallucinations. He said that he thought it could be a concussion but that with the stress from the baby and losing my job and whatever, that maybe you'd know more, I guess.

DR RODGER

Hallucinations?

FRED

Yeah. I feel really great on the inside - at peace. But, there's things happening around me that don't make any sense. Really evil things in the world around me.

Dr. Rodger is writing some final notes on his computer and then fills out a prescription on his pad. Fred sits quietly waiting. Dr. Rodger gets up and approaches Fred.

DR RODGER

Fred, I'm going to be up front and honest with you since you've been that way with me.

FRED

Ok, great.

DR RODGER

I don't like the sound of hallucinations. Now, after only a brief discussion I wouldn't be able to determine the causes. So, as a precaution I am going to prescribe you an anti-psychotic medication for schizophrenia.

FRED

It won't make me sleep all day, right?

DR RODGER

This is a low dosage to start with but I really want you to take this right away. This may all be, as you say, stress related and also complicated by the damage that you may have done to your body.

Dr. Rodger hands the prescription over to Fred.

DR RODGER

I'm also going to have you go to the hospital for more X-rays and an MRI scan. Do you have insurance coverage?

FRED

Yes, Alice and I took out a policy together once we decided to keep the baby.

DR RODGER

That's good. Let's figure out what kind of physical damage you have endured. In the meantime, I want you to schedule another appointment.

FRED

With you? Here?

DR RODGER

With me for next week. Right here.

Dr. Rodger walks Fred to the door.

DR RODGER

We're going to figure this out.

Dr. Rodger lets Fred open the door. Fred leaves Dr. Rodger's office but before he can exit the waiting room, the secretary calls out to him.

INT. DR RODGER'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

SECRETARY

Fred... come here for a minute.

Fred walks over to the desk. The secretary is writing an address on the back of one of Dr. Rodger's business cards.

SECRETARY

This has Tuesday's appointment time written on it and I've also put down an address for a support group that meets weekly on Thursdays.

FRED

Support group?

The secretary double checks her computer.

SECRETARY

Yes. I see here that Dr. Rodger wrote you a prescription for anti-psychotics. The group that meets on Thursdays are all young people like yourself and most have been diagnosed with schizophrenia. You may find some comfort in being around others that understand what you are going through.

Fred takes the card and reads the address.

FRED

Well it might not be schizophrenia.

The secretary shrugs her shoulders.

SECRETARY

Up to you.

FRED

Well thanks for this. I'll think about it.

The secretary smiles coldly and goes back to work.

CUT.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER LOBBY - NIGHT

INTERTITLE - "SUPERBIA"

Fred looks inside a games room at the local community center. There are people setting up a circle of chairs. More people are entering the room.

There is a sign outside the door that identifies the event. The sign reads, "Living with Schizophrenia. All friends and family are welcome. Walkens Welcome!" There is a picture of actor Christopher Walken from The Dead Zone movie as part of the signage.

Fred walks over to a bench in the lobby and sits in quiet contemplation. He sits uncomfortably such that it is unclear whether he will join the group and take part in the session.

Another young man, RON (23) sits down beside Fred.

RON
You going in?

FRED
Not sure yet.

RON
I'm Ron.

FRED
Fred. You're uh...

RON
Schizo? That's what they call it..

FRED
What do you call it?

RON
One-eyed.

FRED
One-eyed?

RON
In the land of the blind, the
one-eyed man is king. Get it?

Ron points at his forehead to identify the location of his
"third eye" that can see.

RON
...the blind don't understand what
you see so they call it "schizo".

FRED
So you think hallucinations are
real?

RON
I don't know what you've been
seeing but I'm guessing it isn't a
hallucination.

Fred chuckles and then pulls the anti-psychotic pills from his pocket and looks at the bottle to read the labels.

RON

You been popping those?

FRED

I forgot to this morning.

RON

You got to be breaking Bills not paying them.

FRED

Bills?

RON

Bill's Pills. Bill's Pills.

Ron is poking his third eye location.

Fred squints as he sizes up Ron. Fred appears confused by Ron's take on the abnormal mental condition. Ron points at the bottle of pills in Fred's hand.

RON

Don't take those now. Trust me.
Keep the blinders off.

Fred pauses and sighs. He puts the pills back in his pocket.

RON

Good man. It will be worth it.
You'll see.

Ron points to his symbolic third eye again. Ron gets up and Fred follows. Ron pats Fred on the back as they enter the room together.

CUT.

INT. GAMES ROOM - NIGHT

The meeting is getting underway. A young woman, EMILY (27), is speaking about her condition. Ron is making faces on purpose, picks his nose with his middle finger, tries to give a wet willy to the guy sitting beside him, and

generally is trying to be a nuisance and disturbance for the group. His behavior is very immature for his age.

Everyone is doing their best to ignore Ron. There is an older, heavysset woman, CAROL (50) leading the group and on occasion she signals for Ron to stop his antics.

EMILY

I knew that the numbers meant something. Back then, I followed the numbers all the time. It was like work. Like a job. I'd count up anything that could be counted, like numbers on houses or taxi cabs. And then some numbers I got would put me in touch with the witches. Those were their numbers.

CAROL

Emily, who did you think the witches were?

Emily seems apprehensive about answering the question.

CAROL

Were they people you met in real life? People you knew?

EMILY

Sometimes. Sometimes I would be talking to someone and I knew that it was really one of the witches that I was talking to.

CAROL

And what about now?

EMILY

Well since I've been on medication I never have the interest or energy to think about numbers.
(laughs awkwardly)
I mean I hate math now. It gives me a headache.

Ron interrupts Emily.

RON

Sure, because you have no creative energy anymore. You're a blind zombie popping your fucking Zombicillin like a good little automaton. Paying the Bill for the meal someone else ate.

CAROL

Ronald please! That's enough. Everyone here gets a chance to speak their truth.

RON

And it's a waste of all our time to hear her speak **your** lies.

Carol tries to redirect the discussion.

CAROL

Would someone else like to comment on what Emily was telling us about her numerology system? Did some of you have numbers as important to you, or other kinds of symbols? Words, or objects? A kind of object.

A young man in the circle starts talking about words that he thought had cosmic power.

Fred frowns and is beginning to tune it out. He is watching Carol. Suddenly, he notices a hand mysteriously appear from behind Carol's head. The hand is old and rotting with scaly green skin and gnarled fingers with sharp black fingernails.

The hand curls around Carol's face and covers her mouth. No one seems to have noticed except for Fred. The young man is still talking about magical words, and everyone is focused on him.

Fred can now see a figure appearing from behind Carol. It is a witch rising from behind Carol. The witch appears much like the Wicked Witch of the West from the Wizard of Oz movie only more horrific in appearance.

The witch is staring right at Fred and baring her rotten blackened gums and jagged teeth at him. She licks her lips

and then slices open Carol's throat with her razor-sharp fingernails.

The witch seems to punch her fist into Carol's back and is grinding her arm into Carol's body accompanied by the sound of crunching bone and sinew. The more the witch pushes her hand into Carol's back, the more blood spurts from Carol's neck gash and out Carol's mouth.

Fred looks over at Ron quickly and it seems that Ron is watching the horrific supernatural murder as well. Fred and Ron are the only people in the room focused on Carol. Fred looks back at the witch. The witch yanks Carol's heart out of her body and bites into it like an apple. The witch has blood dripping down her chin.

Carol is dead and the witch pushes Carol's lifeless corpse off the chair and onto the ground in the middle of the circle of seated people. The witch walks over to Fred and Ron who are sitting beside each other in the group circle.

The rest of the group is continuing discussion as if nothing out of the ordinary were happening, however the ambient sounds have been silenced and the speaker is uttering in whispered monotone articulation (homage to Wes Craven).

The witch moves in menacing gliding movements as if she were floating. The witch approaches Ron and offers him Carol's heart. Ron buttons his lips, covers his mouth with one hand, and shakes his head. Ron has pure fear in his eyes. The witch then offers the heart to Fred. Fred also declines the offer by shaking his head.

The witch scrunches up her long, crooked nose and looks annoyed by the lack of adventurous spirit for the two young men. She takes another bite of the heart and chews a little bit before spewing blackened blood and sinew in Fred's face. Fred quickly shuts his eyes but ends up covered. The woman sitting on the other side of Fred is oblivious to what has happened and is smiling and chuckling about what the group is talking about despite getting splattered by some of the witch's projectile vomit.

Fred cries out in horror.

When he opens his eyes, the group has stopped their discussion, and everyone is looking at Fred. The ambient

sounds resume, and people are speaking in a normal sound and tone. All signs of the witch having been there vanish. Carol seems troubled by Fred crying out.

Fred looks to the ground and seems ashamed. The young man speaking resumes yammering on about his secret words fantasy reality. The group goes back to listening. Carol is in her seat unharmed, but she keeps her eyes locked on Fred for a moment.

Fred turns to Ron. Ron looks back at Fred.

RON

We aren't in Kansas anymore, Toto.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER LOBBY - NIGHT

Fred can't handle the disturbing event and he gets up and storms out of the meeting at the games room in the community center. Ron follows and catches up to Fred in the foyer.

RON

Witches love their bleeding hearts,
don't they?

FRED

You saw that?

RON

Doy!

Ron points to his forehead again.

RON

Only the eye can see.

FRED

I thought that...

RON

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You thought you
had schizophrenia... whatever that
is. And you thought you had been
hallucinating. I get it.

Fred seems even more unsettled now.

RON

Been there bro, been there. Seen that. Had to eat this, shit out that. Round and around we go.

FRED

They can touch us? Hurt us?

RON

Take a look at this.

Ron pulls his track pants down a little. Fred doesn't want to look.

RON

Just look. No homo.

Fred looks at what seems like an appendix scar that didn't heal properly. He then turns away disgusted.

RON

A gang of goblins came into my room one night when I was a kid and they put a tape worm in my nutsack.

FRED

Put it away, dude. I saw it, ok?

RON

The scar is from where the doctors extracted the worm in the hospital. It was a clever little bugger. Trying to burrow deeper into me. Doctors blamed me. Officially, it was recorded as an appendicitis.

FRED

But you were a kid.

RON

Evil doesn't care.

FRED

So, this is real.

RON

It is for us.

FRED

Can they kill us?

RON

Sure they can. But it works out better for them when they make you kill yourself. Or better yet, kill the people you love and then kill yourself. They really love that.

Fred is shocked.

RON

(air quotes)

Lots of "schizos" do that shit, right. Shoot up movie theaters, rock concerts... schools.

FRED

What do we do then? I don't want this. I can't do this. I'm about to have a kid.

Ron stands up.

RON

Come on, let's get out of here.

Ron leaves the community center and Fred hesitates. He pulls his antipsychotic meds out of his pocket again and contemplates taking them. Ron beckons Fred over to the entrance. Fred puts the pills away and catches up to Ron.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Ron and Fred are leaving the community center and walking toward Fred's car that is parked across the road. As they get to the stop lights at the intersection, Ron points up for Fred to look at a window in the apartment building on the corner.

In the window are two silhouettes of a large male and small female child. The man begins shaking the child violently and then strikes the child. The man keeps beating the child.

RON
That's a classic.

FRED
Classic? What is it?

RON
A wraith. You are supposed to run up there and stop the child from getting beaten but once you get to the apartment it belongs to a cop or a psychiatrist or something. There's no kid and you end up sounding like a raving lunatic and they report you for sure.

The light hasn't turned green, but Ron begins to cross the road anyway. Fred takes one last look up to the window and sees that both silhouettes are now facing the window as if they were looking down at Fred watching him in disappointment that he ignored their ruse.

Fred catches up to Ron and then points out his car.

FRED
This is me.

Fred gets in the car and opens the door for Ron. Ron gets in too.

INT. FRED'S CAR - NIGHT

FRED
Wraiths?

RON
Gremlins, poltergeists, banshees, sirens, basilisks, witches, goblins, demons of course.

Fred is shocked.

RON
One guy swore that he was attacked by the Lochness Monster but I don't believe that. It was probably just a ghoul with a sense of humor.

FRED

And we can see them because..

RON

Because there is something wrong with the part of our brain that usually blocks the dark realm out. Something wrong or something right. Personally, I'd rather live in reality and know the truth.

FRED

The "truth"?

RON

I'd rather live cursed but free, than blessed but shackled.

Fred raises an eyebrow signaling he still has doubts.

RON

I'm a Red Pill kind of guy. Ignorance isn't bliss for me.

FRED

Even if the truth kills you?

RON

It's not going to kill me.

FRED

Why don't you just take the doctor's pills and make it go away?

RON

Obviously, it doesn't make anything go away. It just makes the bad stuff get labelled "unlucky" or "karma". It doesn't go away. It never goes away just because you don't see it anymore.

Fred looks at Ron carefully and seems genuinely frightened.

RON

I was told that a long time ago by a hunter and I believe it.

FRED

A hunter?

RON

Yeah, they're just regular one-eyed guys like us except they think that they can hunt dark realm creatures. They do the whole Van Helsing shtick. It's real pathetic usually but it's how those guys get through this shit and survive. LARPing for psychos.

FRED

Well what did this "hunter" tell you?

RON

Ahhh, he wasn't a hunter really. He was more of a wizard or necromancer I guess.

Fred is shaking his head dismissively. Fred sighs signaling he has doubts regarding the veracity of Ron's claims.

FRED

(doubting)

A necromancer?

RON

Yeah, regular dildos just like hunters except they make potions instead of running around with wooden stakes. Usually it's just a lot of bleach and lighter fluid. Most of the time the necromancers get thrown in the clink for arson.

FRED

Dude, this sounds fucking ridiculous.

RON

Was getting some fat bitch's heart
spat in your face, ridiculous?

It is a sobering question for Fred who must now accept that the phenomenon is not a simple hallucination. Ron did see the witch as well. Fred signals this understanding through nodding.

FRED

Folie a deux, maybe.

RON

Huh, what's that?

FRED

Nothing. Nevermind.

RON

Can you drive us to Dairy Queen?
For some reason they don't like
haunting that place and right now
I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.

FRED

Just not a pale one right...

Ron points to his forehead and nods affirmatively.

RON

Dealing with dark realm creatures
burns more calories.

FRED

That sounds made up.

RON

I'm serious. It's like two different
layers of reality with different
densities. So, it's like when
dealing with the dark realm you are
running in water... or quicksand, I
guess.

FRED

Sounds like a nightmare.

RON

Good for your core though.

Fred is driving and turns into the main street that leads to the Dairy Queen.

CUT.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - NIGHT

Fred and Ron are seated at a table in Dairy Queen. Fred has a milkshake and Ron is eating a burger and fries along with a Blizzard.

RON

So, when did they tell you that you were a schizo?

FRED

This week. My doctor sent me to a psychiatrist.

RON

And he put you on anti-psychotics.

FRED

Pretty much.

RON

But when did you start to see the reality of this world? See the light and the dark?

FRED

I took a chunk of my brain out with a hammer and scalpel a few weeks ago.

RON

For fuck sake, you mean you didn't need to see any of this? That's really twisted man.

FRED

Well I guess I was tired of the demons being on the inside all the time.

Ron resumes eating but locks eyes on Fred in recognition that there is something different and special about Fred.

FRED

So, you were saying before that the hunter told you something...

RON

Wizard... uh, Necromancer. Yeah. Well, I don't know if I believe it but he was convinced that if you can trick something in the dark realm into taking the life of an innocent soul then the dark realm becomes blind to you. They can't see you anymore so they can't haunt you. You get to live the rest of your life in peace.

FRED

Like a ritual sacrifice? Do you believe that?

RON

Well it isn't like there is some Necronomicon for this shit. I don't know. This dude knew his stuff. He had done a lot of research on the occult and mythology.

FRED

Occult?

RON

I saw him use one of his potions on a Siren and she screamed like someone had cut her titties off. I mean it really seemed like he had hurt that bitch bad.

FRED

So... sacrifice an innocent soul? Like a kid?

RON

That's the thing though right. Are kids all that innocent? I mean if
(MORE)

RON

(continuing)

they hear us yelling at each other or see us hitting each other then just because they're too small and weak to do it themselves, they still have the ideas in their head at that point. They are corrupted.

FRED

Kind of cynical, but I guess I see what you mean. But still... can you think of anything else that would work? I don't want to be a medicated zombie but I don't think I can live with this much longer either.

RON

I'll text my buddy. He was a hunter - legendary - and then it seems like they just left him alone one day. Maybe he did the whole sacrificing an innocent thing and it worked.

FRED

Sounds like a longshot. What the fuck am I saying? Yes, contact a "hunter" about "ritual baby sacrifice", for fuck sakes.

Fred is shaking his head finding Ron's reality to be a tougher pill to swallow than his anti-psychotic medication.

RON

You got a better idea?

FRED

Not yet.

CUT.

INT. FRED'S CAR - NIGHT

INTERTITLE - "GULA"

Ron is pointing out where Fred should park.

RON

Just pull up here. I'll run in and see if he'll talk to us.

Ron hops out of the car and crosses the road. He knocks on the door to the hunter's apartment. Someone answers the door, but Fred can't see the figure in the shadows. Ron walks in. Time passes. Fred is watching people walk down the street and everything seems completely normal.

Ron comes back out from the apartment. He is about to cross the road but turns as if someone is calling to him from the alleyway beside the hunter's place. Ron walks over to the alley.

Fred can see some sort of goblin-man (GOBLIN KING) speaking with Ron at the entrance to the alley. The Goblin King is green-skinned much like the witch and has bizarre piercings and tattoos on his unattractive homunculus-looking face as well as his exposed chest and back.

Suddenly, the Goblin King makes a hand signal and regular passersby on the street swarm Ron and start beating him and then pull him deeper into the alleyway. Fred jumps out of his car and runs across the road to the alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Fred can see the mob dragging Ron down the alley. Fred chases after them. The mob rounds the corner. Just as Fred is about to arrive at the bend, the Goblin King jumps out from behind a dumpster and clotheslines Fred to the ground. Fred wrestles with the goblin. The Goblin King headbutts Fred but Fred manages to kick the goblin into the wall roughly. The Goblin King shakes it off and takes off down the alley to rejoin the rest of the gang.

Fred continues down the alleyway more cautiously. He arrives at the back of a restaurant. Fred looks around and it seems that the only place to take Ron would have been the restaurant.

Fred carefully enters the restaurant through the back door.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Fred is sneaking around at the back of the restaurant. Suddenly, a door to a walk-in freezer swings open and the CHEF, MAITRE D, and two of the kitchen staff come out of the freezer. The two kitchen staff members are dragging a naked man through the kitchen.

Fred peeks into the freezer and can see more people that have been hung up on hooks like slabs of meat. Fred slowly inches to where he can see what the restaurant workers are up to.

The chef is preparing an electric bone saw while his two workers position the naked man onto a cart. The cart is a standard restaurant food cart that has been converted into a type of stockade. The naked man is being put in place such that he can be wheeled around on the cart, but he is held in the cart by holes for his neck and hands. The naked man's arms are outstretched, and he is on his knees.

The chef revs up the bone saw. The naked man is now conscious. He understands what is happening to him and begins screaming. The Maitre D shoves an apple in the man's mouth to gag him. The Maitre D has a noticeable tribal neck tattoo and interesting piercings on one of his ears, suggesting it is the Goblin King in disguise.

MAITRE D

This can be painless I promise you.
Or it can hurt like Hell but if I
hear one more peep from you I will
cut your tongue out, shred it, and
make it a taco for the kid's menu.

The chef now takes the bone saw and begins sawing around the naked man's skull much the way that surgeons do for brain surgery. The naked man begins screaming again but it is muffled given the apple stuck in his mouth.

The chef finishes cutting and then removes the top of the naked man's skull. The naked man's brain is exposed. The other kitchen workers bring some prepared dishes over which are placed on the cart at either side of the naked man's head. The Maitre D then wheels the cart through the double doors that lead into the dining room of the restaurant.

The chef is at a counter cleaning the bone saw.

CHEF
I'm out of olives.

The chef writes down olives onto an ingredient list. He holds it up without looking back.

CHEF
Go get them. Now.

One of the two workers takes the list and then heads for the back door. The other worker follows behind and then enters the walk-in freezer. Fred must quickly find a wall to press himself against to avoid being spotted.

Fred comes out of his hiding spot.

The chef has wheeled over another cart that has a naked woman trapped in it. Her brain is already exposed. The chef scoops out her brain and the naked woman screams, but then quickly dies. The chef pushes the cart away casually and then puts the brain in a frying pan and tosses them.

Fred is visibly horrified. He drops into a stance realizing that he must act. He puts the pin in the freezer door thus locking the worker inside. He then approaches the chef. Fred sees a butcher's knife on a rack and picks it up. He comes up behind the chef slowly.

The chef hears banging on the freezer door and turns around. Fred chops down with the knife but only cuts into the chef's shoulder. The chef is a large man and grabs Fred roughly.

CHEF
Ah, dessert.

Fred is struggling to get away. The chef is ignoring the knife stuck in his shoulder. The chef has Fred by the throat with one hand and is reaching for the bone saw with the other. Fred is trying to break the chef's grip on his throat. The chef is pressing Fred up against the hot stove where the brains are frying in the pan. The chef is getting closer to Fred's face with the bone saw.

Quickly, Fred grabs the frying pan and smashes the chef over the head with it. The chef is off-balance. Fred moves closer and pulls the butcher knife out of the chef's shoulder. He

chops into the chef's neck with the knife. The chef falls over and dies.

Fred takes a breather but then gets back to his feet. He moves toward the double doors that lead to the dining room.

INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Fred enters the dining room of the restaurant. There are many tables with guests, and each has a cart in front of them. It seems that everyone is feasting on live human brains. There is even a family with a baby set up in a highchair. The mother is lovingly feeding the baby human brains. The Maitre D sees Fred and gracefully bows to Fred and then motions for Fred to take a seat and be served.

Fred can't accept what is happening around him. He is freaking out and the room starts spinning. He looks at the baby once more and the baby laughs very happy to be eating the tasty food. Everyone in the restaurant seems to be having a wonderful time. Fred races out the front door of the restaurant in a panic.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Fred runs back to his car. When he gets there Ron is standing outside the car.

RON

Where'd you go?

FRED

I saw you get taken...

RON

You saw me?

Fred takes a deep breath and realizes that he didn't even think twice that everything happening was only happening in the dark realm that he can see.

Ron points to his forehead again.

RON

Don't forget. You see reality now -
the realm of light and of darkness.
You have to remember which is which.

Fred accepts the advice with a look of sobriety.

RON
Or you won't last long.

Fred gets in his car. Ron gets in the passenger side.

INT. FRED'S CAR - DAY

Fred begins driving. Slowly, he drives past the restaurant and then U-turns so that he can peek inside. Fred can see normal food on people's plates.

FRED
They were in there eating... people.
Eating people's brains!

RON
Sounds like goblins to me. You
should just ignore them. Sick fucks.

FRED
Ignore them?!

Ron shrugs casually, but Fred is still in shock.

RON
Anyway, my buddy the hunter. Fuck
dude, he's useless.

FRED
He doesn't know anything? Or he
won't help us?

RON
Worse. He's a phony. I went into
his washroom and found a half-empty
bottle of pills. He's paying the
Bill. Dude's a zombie. I guess
that's why he stopped hunting. He
covered for it well though.

Fred notices that the car's gas tank is almost empty.

FRED
So he's normal now?

RON

Well... he's blind.

Fred rolls his eyes.

FRED

I need gas.

Fred pulls into a gas station.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Fred is pumping gas. Ron stays in the car and is texting someone. Fred looks around the gas station and sees another driver at the pump behind him. The driver is a beautiful, exotic woman. She looks over at Fred and smiles. Fred smiles back.

Fred watches the woman bend over to open the cover to the gasket. The woman is dressed professionally wearing a white blouse and a tight skirt that goes down to the top of her knee. She is wearing black stockings and high heels.

Ron is in the car looking to light a cigarette. He is checking his pockets in search of his lighter. He can't find it.

The woman then looks at Fred again but this time with seductive bedroom eyes. She seems full of lust. Fred sees a bead of sweat roll down the woman's forehead. She wipes it off. She then removes the gas pump handle and starts dousing herself with gasoline - getting wet in a seductive manner.

Fred now understands that he has been tricked. Ron is banging on the window urging Fred to get back in the car. The woman pulls out a small lighter from her bra. Fred realizes he should get back in the car. He slides across the hood and gets in the car.

Fred drives off before the woman can light herself on fire and cause a huge explosion at the gas station in the dark realm.

INT. FRED'S CAR - NIGHT

Fred is driving away from the gas station and checks his rearview mirror to make sure they are safe.

RON

Wow, they don't like you at all.

FRED

What the fuck was that?!

RON

A succubus. Haven't seen one in a long ass time. Forgot all about them actually.

Fred is fed up.

FRED

I'm sick of this. I can't do this.

RON

Hey, fuck you man! You've been living with this for like two weeks. I've been tortured my whole life virtually. My whole fucking life!

FRED

I'm sorry I didn't think about it.

RON

Yeah, well you'll be real busy thinking from now on or you'll be real dead.

Fred considers the warning.

FRED

I've got to drive you home now. My girlfriend is going to be pissed at me coming in this late.

RON

It's all good. Sorry for blowing up. Anyway, there will be another day to fear the reaper, cuz the switchman's always sleeping.

Fred rolls his eyes seemingly out of patience for what is happening to him and especially for Ron's cryptic doublespeak nonsense.

CUT.

EXT. FRED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fred parks outside his apartment building and enters the building.

INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fred enters his apartment. Alice is asleep. Fred doesn't bother taking off his clothes and he just climbs into bed. He holds onto Alice and kisses her. She doesn't wake up. Fred falls asleep.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Ron is walking into the community center. Carol is near the entrance of the lobby.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER LOBBY - NIGHT

CAROL

No more antics this week, Ronald. These sessions are to help people so if you don't want any help you should give this a break.

Ron scrunches up his face holding back his harshest criticism.

RON

Who needs help more than me, Carol? Are you going to turn me away?

CAROL

No one is turning you away but you need to be cooperative. You should be helping me organize and lead these sessions.

RON

Why, because I've been diagnosed the longest? How does that make me qualified to help these zombies?

CAROL

Stop calling them that.

Carol grabs Ron's arm.

RON

Go eat brains, you zombie bitch.

Ron pulls his arm away. Ron walks over to the bench outside the games room and sits down. He seems to be waiting for Fred. Carol enters the games room, and the room starts filling up with other people participating in the session. Ron is still outside waiting.

INT. GAMES ROOM - NIGHT

Ron gives up on Fred and goes in for the session. Ron sees that Fred is already in the room and there is no open seat beside him. Ron signals to Fred and Fred nods but it is obvious that Fred isn't interested in seeing Ron.

CAROL

Welcome back Ronald. Pull up a seat. Hopefully, we can keep things civil this week.

Ron makes a sneering face but pulls up a chair, then farts loudly, thus forcing two of the meek members of the group to move aside and make room for him in the circle.

CAROL

So, who would like to share first?
Fred, you are returning to us and you didn't speak last week. Are you ready to introduce yourself?

Fred shuffles in his seat a bit.

FRED

Sure, I can go. I'm Fred and I was diagnosed with schizophrenia a couple of weeks ago. I was seeing a lot of things that scared me in the world around me. I didn't trust people or situations. But, I've been feeling better recently. My girlfriend is pregnant with our first baby so I didn't want to take any chances. I've been taking the medicine the doctor gave me...

Ron rolls his eyes and shakes his head.

FRED

I feel better. I don't see or hear any weird stuff. This week has been good. I found a new job. My girlfriend and I even decided to get married sometime this year.

CAROL

Oh, congratulations. So, your fiancée then?

FRED

Uh yeah... I guess so.

Fred seems proud and the other young people in the room appear supportive. A young Latino man, LUIS, is sitting beside Fred and pats him on the back while nodding approvingly.

RON

You know just because you don't hear and see weird stuff doesn't mean it isn't still happening.

LUIS

What does that even mean? Every week you spout all this nonsense about how the rest of us are zombies but we are getting better and feeling better... fitting in. You need to shut your mouth homie and
(MORE)

LUIS
(continuing)
start listening to people who are
making this work. Feel me, ese?

Some in the group quietly applaud and show support for Luis.

CAROL
Well Luis, remember we are all
here to get through our problems
together and some of you have been
coping with your conditions alone
for a long time. That isn't healthy
and that's why we come together.
The paranoia in schizophrenia is
about thinking that you are on your
own with your thoughts and feelings
but this group exists to prove to
all of you that this isn't true.

RON
Oh you aren't alone, that's for
sure.

Ron stands up and looks right at Fred.

RON
And you're not alone.

He ends the stare-down by turning around and leaving the
room.

LUIS
... and don't let the door hit you
in the *culo* on the way out, *cabron*.

Some in the circle chuckle at Luis's snark and one of the
participants gets up and goes over to Luis for a quick high-
five. Fred frowns and appears to feel some guilt about his
decision to rely on medication and turn his back on Ron and
the truth of the dark realm.

CUT.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Fred is heading to his car. He drives home.

INT. FRED'S CAR - NIGHT

Fred drives past familiar as well as new locations. The world seems normal.

EXT. FRED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fred has parked his car and he is heading into his building. Ron is in the shadows in an alley across the road watching Fred enter his building. Ron hears movement behind him. He turns to acknowledge the mysterious figure noted by its shadow.

CUT.

EXT. THRIFT DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

INTERTITLE - "AVARITIA"

Alice and Fred are looking at baby clothes in the thrift store. They seem like a happy couple. Alice holds up a onesie for Fred to look at.

FRED

Just imagine it's a little boy
though. Wearing pink unicorns on
his butt!

ALICE

You're such a dinosaur Freddy.
Don't you know it's cool to be
queer now.

FRED

Oh don't hand me that LBJ KFC Y2K
bull.

ALICE

"LBJ"?

Alice starts laughing.

ALICE

You're so out of it.

FRED

Well excuse me for not waking up to the sounds of twitting or FacePaging or Fayging whatever.

ALICE

You're being dumb on purpose. You know it's Facebook.

FRED

Alright fine, but I just want our baby to be who they want to be, and not what's popular on Buzzfart dot com this year because a few people screamed super loud about their abnormal feelings.

ALICE

How's our baby going to know how to use the Internet? You're like a grumpy old man and you aren't even legal age to drink yet.

Alice is laughing at Fred.

FRED

I'll show you legal age...

Fred goes to grab Alice in a loving, playful way. She pulls away giddy but then feels a contraction. Alice feels under her dress.

ALICE

Freddy, I think my water just broke.

At first Fred looks dumbfounded but then a big smile rolls across his face.

FRED

That's amazing! Are you ready?

ALICE

Yeah I guess...

FRED

Sure you are. Well let's get out
of here then. We're having a baby!

Fred helps Alice to the front door of the store. They leave and get in Fred's car. Fred peels off and heads for the hospital.

CUT.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Alice is in her gown on a stretcher being wheeled into a delivery room. Fred is also in a sterile gown. He's holding Alice's hand as an intern wheels Alice down the hallway. As the stretcher starts to enter the delivery room, Fred lets go of Alice's hand.

The OB-GYN doctor comes up behind Fred.

OB-GYN DOCTOR

Are you coming in, Fred?

FRED

Nah, me and Alice were reading a lot of stuff online about how the father being there makes the delivery take longer and it's more painful for her.

OB-GYN DOCTOR

Nonsense! But, I doubt Alice will wait for you to change your mind.

The OB-GYN doctor pushes past Fred and enters the delivery room.

Fred stares at the double doors for a moment and then decides to enter. Fred stands off to the side. Alice makes eye contact with Fred.

FRED

I'm right here, Ali.

Alice is busy pushing. The delivery room has a lot of activity, and no one notices Fred.

CUT.

INT. ALICE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Alice is asleep recovering from giving birth. The newborn baby is in a crib beside her. Fred is sitting in a chair in the corner of the room. He can hear coughing coming from behind a curtain that divides the room.

Fred stands up and walks over to the curtain. Carefully, he peels back the curtain and sees a young mother who doesn't appear very healthy. The woman is coughing. There is another newborn baby in a crib beside the mother.

Fred then leaves the room and stands out in the hallway for fresh air.

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

A nurse walks past Fred and he grabs her by the arm.

FRED

Excuse me, nurse. My girlfriend - well, fiancée - is in the room here and she just delivered our baby. But, there is another mother in there and she's got a real nasty cough. I'm just wondering if it could be dangerous for Ali or our baby?

The nurse leans toward Fred to speak to him in a quiet voice.

NURSE

You shouldn't worry about the other mother. She's tougher than she looks. Just between you and me, she's a prostitute from out of town. Came here to deliver the baby away from the father who is the pimp. She was afraid he'd kill the baby. The baby is very healthy though... surprisingly.

Fred gives a disconcerted look.

FRED

That sounds terrible.

The nurse nods.

NURSE

By the way, it's just a smoker's cough. I wouldn't worry.

The nurse walks away. Fred leans back against the wall in the hallway. He is deep in thought. He pushes off the wall and goes back into the room.

INT. ALICE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Fred gazes at Alice and his baby. They are both asleep. He sits back down on the chair and pulls out his bottle of pills. As he tries to shake two pills into his palm the woman on the other side of the divider hacks loudly. Fred almost spills all the pills. He puts the cap back on the bottle, but when he looks to the side, Ron is standing beside him.

FRED

(whispering)

What the Hell are you doing here?

RON

I need your help. They're trying to kill me.

CUT.

INT HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

Fred and Ron are sitting in the cafeteria talking in low voices.

FRED

You've been taking meds? For real?

RON

Yes! But, I still see them.

FRED

Maybe the dosage is too low...

RON

It's three hundred milligrams.
They aren't even supposed to
prescribe that high. It's against
FDA approval.

FRED

Well, it's working for me.

RON

Yeah, I'm not so sure about that..

FRED

Look, Alice just gave birth. I can't
get involved in this.

RON

You're involved whether you accept
that fact or not, bud.

Fred sighs.

RON

I'm going to try what the
necromancer said.

FRED

(skeptical)

Sacrifice an innocent to the dark
realm?

RON

Exactly.

FRED

(nonplussed)

Uh, you should try something else.

RON

What like cut out a piece of my
brain like you, ya genius.

FRED

I'm doing good now.

RON

Yeah, well we'll see about that.

FRED

What's that supposed to mean?

RON

I'm telling you - the medication does nothing. The pills might as well be sugar. Those evil fucks were just pretending it blocked them out. Making us feel safe. They just wanted us to obey by taking pills and getting zombified. It's all a big game to them. They break everyone that is strong who can see them.

Fred stands up from the table.

FRED

That's your problem, Ron. You treat life like it's a game with good guys versus bad guys - white hats and black hats. Angels and demons. I'm just trying to live my life now. I'm not in a fairytale book anymore. So, do me a favor and don't come into my life again.

Fred walks away from Ron.

CUT.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Fred gets back to the hallway on the floor where Alice's room is. He looks in on Alice and she is still sleeping. He stays in the hallway and pops a couple of his antipsychotic pills, and he seems relieved.

Suddenly, he sees doctors and nurses rushing past him to a room down the hallway. Fred heads back down the hall to see what is going on.

Fred stands outside in the hall but is looking into the room. Many doctors and nurses are working to revive a patient, but Fred can't see who is in the bed because of the crowd of staff members.

He moves closer and then finds himself standing in the room.

INT. STRANGE HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Once Fred is in the hospital room the door closes behind him. The doctors and nurses stop working and Fred can see that there is no one in the hospital bed. The doctors and nurses all turn to Fred and stare at him silently. Fred is terrified.

Suddenly, the doctors and nurses grab Fred. Fred struggles to escape but they overpower him and put him down on the bed.

A doctor holding defibrillator pads charges them and shocks Fred. Fred is rendered unconscious.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. UNDERGROUND TENEMENT HALLWAYS - DAY

Fred wakes up woozy. He is strapped to the hospital bed. He is being wheeled through a maze-like underground of a deserted tenement building that is clearly not connected to the real hospital.

Fred struggles to escape. The doctors and nurses no longer look human but instead appear pig-like (homage to The Twilight Zone "Eye of the Beholder"). Fred is taken to a surgical operating chamber.

INT. UNDERGROUND OPERATING CHAMBER - DAY

The doctors and nurses prep Fred for surgery.

PIG NURSE

He doesn't look right doctor.

PIG DOCTOR

Let's have a look. (pause) Oh I see. No, the problem nurse is that he doesn't think right.

The nurse nods at the wisdom and prepares a large syringe.

PIG DOCTOR
But we can fix that.

The doctor reaches over to his surgical cart and brings over the jar with Fred's piece of brain in it. The piece of brain seems normal at first, but then the doctor taps the jar.

The piece of brain is some kind of horrific maggot with rows of sharp teeth on its underbelly.

PIG DOCTOR
This is what's missing.

Fred is screaming and trying to escape. The doctor opens the jar and pulls the brain-maggot out. He places the brain-maggot on Fred's face. The brain-maggot begins crawling up into Fred's nostril. Fred is shaking his head but can't stop the procedure. Fred's eyes suddenly go bloodshot, and then he passes out.

CUT.

INT. ALICE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Fred wakes up and he is seated in the chair by Alice's side.

ALICE
Wake up sleepy head.

Fred is groggy but quickly becomes alert. He assumes that he had a nightmare but can't be sure without checking if Ron had been at the hospital.

ALICE
I think Celia's waking up.

Alice is signaling for Fred to pick up their daughter from the crib and bring her over to Alice.

Fred walks over to the crib and looks down at his baby. He is horrified to see that his baby has the pig-face likeness of the doctors and nurses from his hallucination. He screams out in terror.

CUT.

Fred wakes and is in the chair in Alice's hospital room again. Alice is still asleep.

He stands and walks over to his baby. He puts his index and middle finger on the baby's chest for a moment. Then he kisses Alice on the forehead. He steps back. They are both still sleeping. Fred sits down again.

A nurse walks into the room and moves past Fred and Alice. The nurse pulls the curtain back on the divider and tends to the prostitute mother. Fred can't see the nurse's face, but he can see silhouettes through the thin divider curtain.

The nurse seems to be doing normal routine things with tidying the room and tending to the mother. Fred then sees the nurse pick up the baby from its crib. Suddenly, the nurse's silhouette begins smashing the baby against the wall. Fred is horrified and then covers his eyes. He opens his eyes and the nurse's silhouette behaves normally once more.

Fred pulls out his antipsychotic medication and fumbles with the bottle. The pills spill on the ground. He goes to collect the pills and put them back in the bottle. When he looks up the curtain is pulled back and the nurse is now the green-skinned witch in a nurse's uniform. The witch has the prostitute's baby in her arms. The witch glides past Fred as if floating on air with disconcerting cross-country-skiing-like scuttle movements.

Fred is shocked. He gets up and follows the witch.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

The witch continues down the hall and no one seems to notice. Fred is following behind her. The witch takes the stairs. Fred hurries to catch up to the witch.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRCASE - DAY

It seems the witch has already made it down many flights of stairs. Fred looks over the railing and sees the witch heading out the door at street level. He races down the stairs in pursuit.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Fred gets out the door at the bottom of the staircase and looks around the parking lot in all directions. He can't spot the witch but at the last minute he sees Ron in his car placing the baby in the seat beside him and driving off. Fred runs after the car screaming for Ron to stop but Ron continues driving.

CUT.

INT. ALICE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Fred is finishing writing a note for Alice for when she wakes up. He grabs his jacket and leaves.

CUT.

EXT. RON'S HOUSE - DAY

Fred parks outside Ron's house and goes to the front door. He bangs on the front door and rings the bell incessantly.

FRED

Ron!! Ron, open up!!

Fred moves around to the back of Ron's place. Fred breaks a window at the back and climbs through.

Some time passes as Fred investigates Ron's place. Fred emerges from the back door empty-handed.

CUT.

INT. FRED'S CAR - DAY

Fred is driving like a maniac to get to the hunter's apartment.

FRED

Ron, you sick fuck.

Fred starts pounding on the steering wheel with his fist.

CUT.

EXT. HUNTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fred runs across the road to the hunter's apartment. He knocks on the door and waits. No one answers and Fred decides to move around to the back of the building through the alley.

EXT. ALLEYWAYS - DAY

Fred is cautious in the alley given his previous encounter with the Goblin King. The back alleys don't give him access to the apartment, so he heads back to the front.

EXT. HUNTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fred comes back to the front of the building and sees that the hunter's front door is now ajar. Fred pushes open the door and enters the apartment.

INT. HUNTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fred climbs the stairs and looks around the hunter's apartment. Fred is investigating the living space but there doesn't seem to be anyone home.

INT. HUNTER'S BATHROOM - DAY

Fred pushes open the door to the bathroom. He is nervous about lifting the toilet seat. He pulls back the shower curtain and the HUNTER is in a tub full of blood. It looks as if he slit his wrists.

Fred reaches down to check the hunter's pulse. Fred is cautious, anticipating something horrific popping out of the water to spook him. Nothing happens. Fred backs up and leaves the washroom.

INT. HUNTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fred moves toward the kitchen and opens the fridge to get a drink. He downs a can of pop. When he closes the fridge door, he sees a note fixed to the door with a magnet. The note reads "CABIN 555-488-6767".

Fred pulls out his cellphone and looks up the phone number in a reverse-number search engine. He gets the address to the cabin, but the address doesn't make any sense and is in Timbuktu, Mali, Africa.

Fred seems frustrated but looks around the apartment further. He sees a framed photograph of the hunter and presumably other buddies who suffer hallucinations. They look like a group of LARPerS (live-action roleplay) but in the photo they are showcasing a hunting kill. One of the buddies holds up a creature by its hind quarters for the camera. The creature appears to be the mythical fearsome jackalope.

The photo has a cabin situated in the background. Fred takes the photo out of its frame and there is information written on the back, including the title "Jackalope Hunt" along with the names of the people in the photo, their titles (hunter, wizard, etc.) and the name of the town where the cabin is located.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Fred is arriving at the cabin as the sun is setting. Fred doesn't realize it but the path to the cabin is rigged with explosive mines. Ron comes running out of the house, signaling Fred to stop the car.

ECU - LAND MINE ON CABIN ROAD

Fred slows down and comes very close to tripping one of the mines. Fred stops the car and gets out.

RON

You're fucking crazy. You almost
blew yourself straight to Hell.

FRED

What are you talking about, Ron?

Ron starts taking paces away from the door and counts the paces aloud. Fred goes to unload baby supplies from the car that he picked up from his apartment. He continues to watch what Ron is doing.

Ron counts out fifteen paces and then goes into the grass beside the dirt path. He finds a switch in the grass and flicks it off. He then paces five steps farther from the

door and goes to the other side of the dirt path and finds another switch in the grass on the other side. He flicks that switch. He then goes to the front door and picks up a fake rock. There is a key underneath.

Ron picks up the key and then looks inside the fake rock. He points it out to Fred to show that a little red light is flashing inside along with a clump of plastic explosives attached. He flicks a switch inside the fake rock.

RON

Party favors... of the plastic explosive variety.

Fred blows out a deep breath.

FRED

You brought a baby in here so can you make sure that you've turned everything off that's going to blow our elbows into our assholes?
(pause)
Please.

RON

How did you know I...?

FRED

Where's the baby, Ron?

Fred pushes past Ron and enters the house.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Fred goes to turn the light switch on beside the front door.

FRED

Can I turn this on?

RON

I wouldn't just yet.

Ron walks over to the fridge in the kitchen and opens the door. He reaches to the back and pulls out a remote control from inside an old Chinese food box.

Ron stands at the front door and presses the main button on the remote. There is a chime that sounds.

RON

Ok, we're good.

FRED

Did I just avoid taking a poison dart to the throat or some giant boulder rolls down the stairs to crush me...?

RON

Nah. If you don't turn off the main trap then when the lights go on, this floor floods with water and then a two thousand volt electrical current is run through it. Should be fatal without the right boots.

FRED

Yeah, but witches float...

Ron is confused and can't understand if Fred is an ally.

FRED

You shouldn't have come here, Ron.

RON

It's the perfect shelter from every kind of threat actually - light or dark. I'll just have to show you where everything is.

FRED

We have to take that baby back.
That's the only reason I'm here.

Fred puts all the baby supplies he brought with him down on the couch. For all intents and purposes, the cabin is very well-furnished and stocked. Fred can see that the baby is in a crib near the fireplace in the living room. Ron has moved over to the baby and tries to get the baby to hold onto his finger.

RON

(baby talk)

Hey little guy... how you like your new home? This is Fort Knox... yes it is. Yes it is. And you're our little golden nugget. Yes you are.

FRED

I know what you did. To my pills.

Ron looks confused. Fred pulls out the pill bottle from his pocket and opens it. He takes a handful of the pills and throws them at Ron.

FRED

I don't know how you did it, but somehow you switched them out. You got into my place. I don't know.

RON

You know how crazy you sound?

FRED

(sarcasm)

Oh, that's good.

RON

Well, it's true.

FRED

You know, it's probably against the law to take someone's medication away from them. When I hallucinate I see things and that makes me hurt myself. You know that.

RON

Listen to yourself. You're so full of shit, it's unbelievable.
(yelling) It's not hallucinations!

FRED

Yeah well, my pills are the least of your worries. Now, you're going down for kidnapping.

Fred takes a moment to contemplate the situation.

FRED

Wait a minute. Did you think this was my baby?

Ron averts his gaze. Fred lunges at Ron. They begin fighting and Fred has the upper hand, however Ron knows the territory and he reaches under the couch and grabs a sawed-off shotgun which he points at Fred. Fred gets off Ron.

RON

The plan is that an innocent soul is sacrificed to a dark realm creature that doesn't know better or doesn't care. Then we are free forever. Or I can free you right now.

FRED

(yelling)

You're psychotic!

Ron shrugs.

FRED

There's no "we" with this. I'm taking the baby back to the hospital. Your plan is cowardly.

RON

Well, I'm not living like this anymore!

FRED

The pills aren't working for you. But, maybe there's something else you can try. But, not this. This is worse than your dark realm, Ron. Can't you see that?

Fred moves over to take the baby. Ron tries to stop him. Fred elbows Ron in the face and grabs the shotgun. He pulls the shells out and throws the gun on the ground. Ron tries approaching Fred again who has now picked up the baby. Fred punches Ron again, knocking him to the ground.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Fred has the baby in his arms and heads back towards his car. Ron is shaking off the effects of the punch and getting back to his feet.

Fred marches toward his car. A surreally dense fog has rolled in surrounding the cabin. There is a shrill wind blowing through the fog. The dark realm forces are attempting to keep Fred and Ron sieged at the cabin.

HARPIES rush forward through the fog, shrieking at Fred as he gets closer to his car. The harpies have short wings, not large enough to fly, and their arms are like bird talons. Parts of their bodies are feathered. The harpies begin clawing at Fred and cutting him with their talons. Fred protects the baby from harm. Fred realizes he will be killed if he continues through the fog. He turns back and returns to the cabin.

The harpies start to leave the fog and are rushing and leaping at Fred, now clawing up his back. Fred is injured by the harpy strikes and slashes. Once Fred has cleared the explosive mines, Ron turns the mines back on with the master switch in the fake rock. Ron picks up a baseball bat propped up near the front door.

Fred tries to get through the front door of the cabin but falls to his knees still protecting the baby in his arms. One of the harpies leaps forward for a final strike on Fred, but Ron swings the bat and connects with the harpy sending her flying back. She lands on the dirt path and is about to shift her weight onto a mine and set off the explosive. Ron grabs Fred and rushes him inside. There is an explosion that blows out the front windows of the cabin. There are feathers outside falling from the air around where the mine was detonated. The harpies have vanished, and the fog recedes a few dozen feet, but it does not clear.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Ron helps Fred to his feet and then takes the baby and puts it back in the crib. Fred sits down on the couch and pulls his shirt off to inspect the claw marks.

RON

If it's hallucinations, I guess
you have double-jointed elbows.

Ron has gone to the kitchen and is looking through cupboards. He finds bandages and antiseptic solution. He gives the supplies to Fred.

RON

Might be worth adding that I did not take your pills. I told you - they don't work. I swear.

Fred tries to change the subject.

FRED

This place looks well-stocked.

RON

This is the shelter from Hell brother. It was designed to keep someone safe in the event of... well, the Rapture - judgment day.

FRED

(humbly)

Would you mind...

Fred is offering the swabs with antiseptic to Ron because he can't reach all his back. Ron helps Fred with his wounds.

RON

My dude, this shack was made to sustain a full crew for years. My hunter buddy was a legend among cryptozoologists.

FRED

He was a legend. He's dead. Suicide.

RON

Yeah, I saw that. I had wondered how you found me so quick.

FRED

I thought you had done it.

RON

What? Killed Jerry. No fucking way, bud. He was like a brother.

FRED

So, what happened to him? Why didn't he come here?

RON

I think he was like you - trusting the medication. But, then he saw the reality. It does nothing.

Fred walks over to the blown-out window and looks through the fog.

FRED

I have to get back to Alice.

RON

How do you figure that's going to happen?

The harpies can be heard screaming shrilly through the fog and the silhouettes are seen flying and flitting through the fog.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Ron is outside chopping wood for the fireplace but also uses the exercise to stay fit. He has grown a thick, dark beard as well as having lost weight suggesting that a considerable amount of time has passed.

There is eerie silence and apart from a wind that blows nothing in nature is stirring. Ron stops chopping and wipes sweat from his forehead. He scans the area. The dense fog is still surrounding the cabin.

ELA (3) runs outside through the front door of the cabin. She wears jean overalls and has a shaved head.

ELA

Daddy Ronnie! Lunch time!

Ron puts the axe in the wood block and heads toward Ela. He picks her up lovingly and carries her inside.

INT. CABIN - DAY

There is a sense of daily life. Ron sits at the kitchen table and eats his lunch. He doesn't speak with Fred. Fred is on the couch in the living room playing with Ela.

When Ron is finished eating, he puts his plate in the sink and then goes to the living room to sit at the standup piano. He begins playing the bridge and then solo from Pink Floyd's Comfortably Numb. In some ways, it seems like the lifestyle at the cabin is peaceful, yet time has stood still for the unlikely trio.

CUT.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Another day has dawned, and Ron is back at the wood block chopping wood. He stops and puts the axe down. Ron gazes into the fog that undulates like a troubled ocean.

A few meters away, the ground starts rumbling as if a tunneling animal were digging. A figure begins to rise from the ground. The figure is dark but also somewhat covered in tree roots. The figure is shrouded in a dark cloak.

Once the figure has fully emerged from the ground and is standing still in front of Ron, the figure extends one arm and points at Ron. The arm and hand look like a skeleton. The figure is DEATH.

Death stands in front of Ron, but the hood covers Death's eyes. Ron is terrified. Death has a skeleton skull and opens its mouth. Death is whispering incomprehensibly and then bellows.

DEATH

Came FOR YOUUUUUUUUUU!

Ron is scared but enraged. He picks up his axe and charges at Death. He chops down on Death, and the dark cloak falls as if whatever was under it vanished. Ron bends over to pick up the cloak to inspect it.

The cloak becomes animated, and it is starting to constrict Ron. The cloak is coiling itself around Ron and he seems to be suffocating. The cloak unwraps and covers Ron. Once the cloak is fully on Ron, Ron begins to cry out in agony. His skin is burning and then melting. Chunks of flesh are falling off his body onto the ground at his feet while billows of steam rise off his body. The process continues until Ron has become the figure of Death. The skeletal figure stands motionless and the world around it is still.

A gust of wind blows through, and the cloak is blown off and disappears into the sky. The skeleton figure crumbles to a pile of bones. The bones sink into the ground as if it were a swamp or quicksand. There is no trace of Ron.

There is complete stillness.

Suddenly, a hand thrusts its way up out of the ground. Ron pushes himself out of the ground and gasps for air. He crawls away from his temporary grave and seems relatively unharmed physically. Ron is trying to fathom what he has experienced. He slowly picks up his axe and takes it back over to the wood block. Ron needs to catch his breath and he is shaking.

Fred comes out the front door with Ela.

Ron slowly walks over to Fred.

FRED

What happened? You look like death.

Ron shakes his head and makes his way into the cabin. Fred chuckles but Ela is trying to understand what happened. Ela pulls at Fred's arm for comfort.

Fred has lost one of his hands and all that remains is a stump.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Ron is sitting at the kitchen table when Fred and Ela enter.

RON

We have to talk... about the plan.

Ela is in the living room playing with the pieces of an old chess set. She picks up the black queen.

ELA

Once upon a time... there was an ugly old lady. And she was green.

Ron was zoning out but now is alert.

RON

Green? What did you say, Ela?

Ela starts giggling and goes back to the chess pieces and keeps playing with them. She starts another story while holding the black rook piece. Ron appears distressed.

ELA

Once upon a time there was a big cow... and he had funny pants.

Fred sits down at the table with Ron.

FRED

It's not our plan. It's yours.

Ron sighs.

FRED

I won't let you hurt her.

Ron gets up from the kitchen table. He turns on a radio that is sitting on the windowsill in the kitchen.

There is a talk radio program in progress. Ironically, it features the psychiatrist, Dr. Rodger. The radio program provides a soundtrack for the montage of events that follow.

START MONTAGE - FRED ESCAPE

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Help me to welcome back one of my favorite guests from your favorite psychology show - "Evermind".

Ron heads upstairs and enters a bathroom at the end of the hall.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Doctor Roger John Rodger. Thanks for joining us Dr. Rodger.

DR. RODGER (V.O.)

My pleasure as always.

Fred is cleaning up dishes and Ela is playing with pots beside him.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Of course, Dr. Rodger is a best-selling author and registered psychiatrist associated with the Downing Psychiatric Research Center. He specializes in paranoid schizophrenia and has pioneered a new approach to treatment that he calls R.E.A.L. What's that acronym, "real", Dr. Rodger?

DR RODGER (V.O.)

R.E.A.L. stands for "Relativized Endemic Abstracted Language". A bit of a mouthful but it basically describes the semiotic bridge that is required to properly communicate with schizophrenic minds. Through this technique of communication, medical treatment becomes more effective because the patient develops a positive meaning for treatment.

The door to the washroom is slightly ajar, yet Ron cannot be seen inside the room.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Really interesting stuff I have to say...

(pause)

And my other guest tonight is a parole officer and former lawyer. He's also a best-selling author, with his latest published book titled, "Mind your Business". Welcome, mister Adam Sheppard.

Fred stops washing dishes and it seems he has heard something awry upstairs. He walks over to the base of the stairs and looks up.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

So, Adam, you approach the condition of schizophrenia without considering it a disease of the mind that requires treatment at all. Is that fair to say?

ADAM (V.O.)

It is. I'll ask you to play a little game with me for a moment.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

(chuckles)

Alright.

ADAM (V.O.)

Your listeners can't see of course, but Roger is wearing a nice sweater right now. Can you tell me what color that sweater is?

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Sure. It's blue.

ADAM (V.O.)

Now, Dr. Rodger, if you'll indulge me. Can you show me the inside part of your sweater? Just a bit of it.

Fred has cautiously ascended the stairs and is working his way down the hallway to the bathroom at the end.

DR RODGER (V.O.)

Like this?

ADAM (V.O.)

Exactly. That's great. Thank you.
(to interviewer)
Now, what color is the inside of the sweater?

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
It's white.

ADAM (V.O.)
Alright, but you said earlier that
Roger's sweater was blue and now it
appears that the sweater is both
blue and white.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
(chuckles)
Ok, you've got me. So, what does
it all mean?

Fred rushes out of the bathroom. The door is now more ajar,
and Ron has hung himself from the light fixture.

ADAM (V.O.)
What if our world, or at least, our
perception of the world around us
is similar to Roger's sweater. We
see a world from one angle and it
appears blue, but from another
vantage it might appear a totally
different color.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
So schizophrenic minds see a
different color?

Fred has gathered some of his and Ela's things. He is
leading Ela outside.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Fred is packing the car. He takes a moment to examine the
dense fog that still surrounds the cabin.

ADAM (V.O.)
Not exactly. A schizophrenic mind
may be seeing both colors and that
is to say multiple planes of
reality, while the rest of us see
only the most obvious - the one
which impresses our physical senses.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Now, I've read your book and you seem to be saying, if I have it correct, that there is a light side to the universe which we see and a dark side that can be seen by schizophrenic minds.

Fred has placed Ela securely in the car. He looks back one last time to the cabin. He gets in the car and drives off.

ADAM (V.O.)

That's correct... a "darkverse" as it were. Schizophrenics can see the darkverse while awake yet almost all of us experience it during our sleep in what we tend to call nightmares.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Well, if you don't mind... that sounds rather insidious.

DR RODGER (V.O.)

Yes, but how do you prove it?

The fog clears just enough to provide a safe path out for Fred and Ela. Fred drives carefully and checks around him for the harpies or other darkverse creatures.

DR RODGER (V.O.)

If I could pose Mr. Sheppard a question about this bifurcation of reality. Firstly, it doesn't sound dissimilar to what Manichean thinkers believed starting in the third and fourth centuries. It was Mani who wrote...

EXT. CABIN ROAD - DAY

Fred turns off the radio in the car, and there is an eerie silence as Fred drives through the woods and makes it out to the highway.

END MONTAGE - FRED ESCAPE

CUT.

INTERTITLE - "IRA"

EXT. RURAL ROADS - DAY

Fred makes it to the highway safely. He looks back at the path to the cabin. The fog is cascading away from the woods and disappearing.

Fred takes a series of winding rural roads before he reaches the local town.

EXT. LOCAL TOWN - DAY

Fred parks outside a coffee shop and then puts on a baseball cap and sunglasses that cover his eyes and hopefully conceals his identity from locals who might have seen news stories about the kidnapping years earlier. Ela is asleep in the backseat.

Fred walks into the coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Fred orders a coffee and then sits down with a newspaper and starts reading. A woman sitting beside him at the next table clears her throat. Fred looks over. It is Pam in the booth beside him. Fred is immediately agitated and tries to get up and leave as quickly as possible.

Pam reaches over and grabs Fred's arm to stop him.

PAM

Freddy?

Fred must deal with Pam.

FRED

Wow look at that, Pam! Crazy! What are you doing around here?

PAM

My sister lives at Abbott's Point?
I've never seen you in town though.
Are you on a fishing trip?

Fred appears very uncomfortable and is scrambling for excuses.

FRED

Actually just passing through. Was helping my uncle in Bucketsville. He's building a new garage.

PAM

Hmm... Bucketsville...

FRED

Yeah...

PAM

Yeah... kind of out of the way for a coffee and paper, no?

There is an uncomfortable silence.

PAM

Sit down for a minute. I want to ask you something.

FRED

Aww, Pam, I've really got to head out.

Pam grabs Fred's hand again and squeezes it.

PAM

Buh, buh, buh. I'm your teacher, remember? Now sit down mister or I'm going to have to give you detention.

Fred reluctantly sits down at Pam's table. Pam is just sitting staring at Fred seductively.

PAM

Have you been working out? Your shoulders are looking bigger. You've really filled out. You've become a man.

Fred is looking around frustrated that he is stuck sitting with Pam. He is anxious about being exposed.

FRED

I really need to go. Can we do
this some other time?

Pam starts playing footsie with Fred. She moves her leg up against Fred's leg and then her foot ventures toward Fred's crotch.

FRED

Pam, I really don't have time..

Fred looks down, but instead of a foot he sees a grey hoof rubbing against him.

When Fred looks up, the woman across from him is no longer Pam but instead is the succubus from the gas station. She licks her lips at Fred. And when she speaks, her voice turns demonic.

SUCCUBUS (PAM)

Come on Fred, I'm done playing
hide and seek. Now I want to see
what a real man is made of.

Fred quickly jumps up from the table panicked. He scrambles for the front door of the coffee shop. Everyone in the shop turns to look at him and see what the commotion is. The succubus is laughing. Fred takes one last look back at her and she is coyly waving goodbye to him.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Fred is backing out of the coffee shop. He bumps into someone near the entrance. He turns and it is the succubus, but she is in her natural darkverse fantasy form. She has dark grey scaly skin and white eyes with curled horns. As Fred keeps backing away from her, she starts to march his way. Fred is even more freaked out.

Fred moves toward his car at a brisk pace. He bumps into someone walking toward their car. It is the succubus again. She pushes him to the ground. He scrambles to his feet and continues toward his car. But he continues to be knocked down by the succubus who seems to be teleporting around him. He is taking a light beating as he finally reaches his car.

On the last hit by the succubus, Fred's sunglasses go flying and drop on the ground ten feet away from the car. Fred motions as if he were thinking about going and getting them but just wants to get away. The succubus is still pacing toward Fred. As Fred drives away erratically, the succubus's hoofed foot stomps on the sunglasses.

CUT.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Day has turned to night and Fred is driving through the city streets heading toward his old apartment.

EXT. FRED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fred climbs the stairs of his old apartment building.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Fred arrives outside the front door of his old unit. His keys work and he enters. However, as he enters the apartment, he realizes that he is back in the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Fred inspects the cabin and when he turns to look outside the front door, he can see that the fog surrounds the cabin.

Fred makes his way upstairs and down the hallway toward the bathroom. The bathroom door is ajar.

Fred pushes the door open slightly and he can see that Ron's body is still hanging from the light fixture, however, something is being done to his body.

The witch is standing in the bathtub, and she is butchering Ron's body. There is blood and guts spilling into the bathtub around the witch. She pulls out Ron's heart and takes a bite. It seems that she hasn't noticed Fred.

Fred backs away from the bathroom and heads back downstairs. He moves over to the windows at the front of the cabin. He can see the harpies flying through the fog. Suddenly, one of the harpies crashes through the window and tackles Fred.

The other harpies fly through the window. Fred must fend off the three harpies. He spots the fridge and remembers the trap that Ron had shown him. He manages to work his way to the back of the kitchen where he lowers a lever which causes the floor of the cabin to flood with water.

The harpies continue to attack Fred and he must keep them at bay. There is a switch above him that he reaches for but one of the harpies slashes at his back and he falls to his knees. Fred manages to get back to his feet. He grabs a chair from the kitchen and strikes a harpy with it.

Fred puts the chair down as the harpies close in. He stands on the chair and hits the switch. Electrical current runs through the water electrocuting the harpies. The harpies appear to be dead. Fred flicks the switch off. He carefully walks toward the front door to the cabin.

INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fred is backing away from the harpies when a hand touches his shoulder. He swings around and finds that he is back in his old apartment.

Alice is standing in front of him with Ela beside her. Ela has been bald her entire life, however, she now has the phrenology markings written on her skull similarly to how Fred had once done to himself.

FRED

Alice?

ALICE

Oh Freddy!

Alice puts her arms out and Fred approaches her for an embrace.

ALICE

I just don't understand why you left and everyone was so worried. I think if you bring Ela back the mother won't press charges. She became a real mess after you ran off and I think she'd just be happy to have her little girl back.

Fred is extremely suspicious of Alice. Fred is unhappy about the markings on Ela's head. He takes Ela away from Alice and turns away from Alice. He kneels and wets his fingers and begins trying to wipe off the markings on Ela's head.

NEW MALE TENANT

What the hell are you doing in my place?

Fred is shocked by the strange voice. He stands up and turns around to see that there is a strange couple standing in front of him. He looks down and Ela is not there.

Fred looks around the apartment and realizes that it isn't the furnishings from when he lived there.

NEW MALE TENANT

Wait... you're that Fred Lee guy.

FRED

You know me?

NEW MALE TENANT

This used to be your place, right?

FRED

Yeah, it was. What happened?

NEW MALE TENANT

What happened to you, dude?

NEW FEMALE TENANT

They said that you kidnapped your baby and disappeared.

FRED

It wasn't my baby.

The male tenant pulls out his cellphone and begins calling the police.

NEW MALE TENANT

You just stay put pal. We'll let the police figure this one out.

Fred pushes past the couple and races out of his apartment.

EXT. FRED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fred races back to his car. Ela is awake in the backseat. She has no markings on her head.

Fred drives off in a hurry.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Fred arrives at Alice's childhood home. He notices the window to her bedroom that he fell out of so many years earlier.

Fred takes Ela out of the car and leads her by the hand to the front door of Alice's house. Fred knocks on the door with his remaining hand.

ALICE'S FATHER answers the door and is shocked that Fred is standing there. He glances down at Ela and then kneels to put both his hands on her little shoulders.

FRED

I need to see Alice.

Alice's father says nothing but leads them into the house.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alice's father leads Fred and Ela into the kitchen where they all sit down. The father stares at Fred without saying a word as if he expected Fred's arrival.

INT. ALICE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

ALICE'S MOTHER enters the kitchen and begins preparing a snack for Ela.

ALICE'S MOTHER

Well look at the two of you. Out in the dead of night. Cold, I imagine.

FRED

Is Alice here?

ALICE'S MOTHER

No need to worry about Alice, right now.

Alice's mother walks over to Ela and presents her with a glass of milk. Then, she strokes Ela's bald head.

ALICE'S MOTHER

Would you like a snack, sweetie.

Ela doesn't respond, neither does she even look up at Alice's mother. She has her gaze locked on Fred as does Alice's father.

FRED

Alright, what's going on here? Let me guess, you called the police when you saw us coming up to the door.

ALICE'S MOTHER

Police? Why on Earth would we call them? I'm sure they have more important things to do.

Alice's mother comes back over with a plate of apple slices for Ela. Then she notices dirt on Ela's cheek and tries to wipe it off with her finger.

FRED

So, you aren't surprised to see me?

ALICE'S MOTHER

(distracted)

No.

FRED

Wouldn't you say that it's a bit of an inappropriate reaction?

ALICE'S MOTHER

Why? Oh dear, he just doesn't keep you clean, does he? No, no, no. You look like a little boy. That won't do. Here, come with me, angel.

Alice's mother helps Ela up from the table and leads her to the back of the kitchen where a door leads to the basement.

ALICE'S FATHER

Can't take care of her, can you? I always knew you were a good for nothing loser. Couldn't take care of our daughter. Can't take care of our granddaughter either, Fred.

Fred stands up shocked.

FRED

What did you say?

Suddenly, Fred turns to Alice's mother and Ela, but Alice's mother has revealed that she is the witch. She is covering Ela's mouth and holding Ela tightly. Ela is struggling to get away.

The witch forces open the door to the basement and begins carrying Ela downstairs.

When Fred looks back at Alice's father it is the Goblin King. The Goblin King smashes down on the kitchen table and splits it in half. He charges forward and grabs Fred.

The Goblin King throws Fred into the living room. The Goblin King pursues Fred who is now on the ground trying to get to his feet.

INT. ALICE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Goblin King picks up the television set and smashes it over Fred's head.

GOBLIN KING

Let's see what's on the ol' telly.

The Goblin King picks up Fred and throws him onto the couch. The Goblin King begins pummeling Fred on the couch.

GOBLIN KING

That's your problem, Fred. You're lazy. Not good enough for Alice. A real mashed couch potato.

The Goblin King flips the couch over easily with Fred on it. The Goblin King then picks up the television and throws it out of the room and into the kitchen. He is making space.

The Goblin King reaches down to Fred and uses one of his long, sharp fingernails to slice into Fred's cheek.

The Goblin King takes his bloody finger and carves a large circle out on the floor around Fred.

The Goblin King stands over Fred who is struggling to regain his strength.

GOBLIN KING

You're looking pale, kid. Must be your diet. Can't forget to eat your greens.

The Goblin King snaps his fingers, and the ring of blood ignites in flame. Quickly, the entire room is up in flames. Fred struggles to his feet. He prepares to charge at the goblin. The Goblin King takes off his vest and teases Fred with it as if Fred were a bull charging at a matador.

Indeed, Fred charges at the Goblin King, who easily dodges the attack and leaves his vest around Fred's head blinding him. Fred is pushed back into the kitchen.

INT. ALICE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

When Fred pulls off the vest from his head, he can see that the house is back to normal. Fred looks around but all is silent.

Then, he hears Ela call out from the basement. Fred turns and approaches the door but before he can get one step forward, the Goblin King grabs him by the throat and choke slams him into the renewed kitchen table.

Fred begins fighting the Goblin King in the kitchen. The fight is based on mixed martial arts moves, and it reveals Fred's ability in hand-to-hand combat. Finally, Fred has the Goblin King in a rear-naked choke hold. Fred snaps the Goblin King's neck and pushes the lifeless corpse off him.

Fred heads back to the basement door and cautiously descends.

INT. ALICE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Occasionally, Fred hears Ela calling out to him.

There is a curtain beside the washing machine in the basement. Fred pulls the curtain back and steps forward.

INT. LABYRINTH - NIGHT

Fred recognizes that he is no longer in Alice's house and instead has entered the darkverse. Fred looks around and the space is a dungeon.

FRED

The darkverse..

Fred follows the sound of Ela's cries. Ela's cries have become a chorus as if there were several children trapped in the labyrinth.

Fred follows the narrow dungeon hallways until he comes to a chamber.

INT. MINOTAUR CHAMBER - NIGHT

Fred peers into the chamber and sees a gigantic Minotaur-man sitting on a small wooden stool with his back turned to Fred. The Minotaur is playing with a doll the way that a little girl might.

When the Minotaur opens its mouth, there is the sound of children crying out for help.

FRED

Ela...

The Minotaur rises when he hears Fred call out. The Minotaur turns and begins stalking Fred.

Fred backs up and then runs from the Minotaur. For several minutes, Fred tries to evade the Minotaur through running and hiding in the labyrinthine passages of the dark underworld realm. There are a few close calls.

Fred is hiding in the shadows at a dead-end in the labyrinth. The Minotaur rounds the corner and opens his mouth again and children's cries ring out. It is unclear if the beast can see Fred where he is hidden in the shadows.

The Minotaur does not come down the dead-end path and carries on the other way. Fred sighs relief.

Fred exits the shadows and makes his way back to the Minotaur's chamber. Instead of finding the chamber, surreally Fred is outside at a modern industrial complex.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX - NIGHT

Fred looks behind him and it seems that the labyrinth was a sewer system and Fred had emerged from a pipe to the outside.

Fred moves across an empty field toward the abandoned factory buildings in front of him. The setting seems earthly, but the dark sky is surreally nightmarish and appears like an expressionist canvass from a painter such as Edvard Munch.

Fred surveys the buildings and believes he can see Ela on the second floor of one of the buildings running past the window. The witch is gliding behind her in pursuit.

Fred races toward the building remaining on the outside and trying to visually track where Ela may have gone on the floor above.

Fred gets to the end of the building and tries to force open a door which is jammed.

Fred looks up and can hear Ela pounding on the windows. She can see Fred and is calling out to him.

Fred looks around and finds a brick that he throws through a window on the main floor. He clambers into the building.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

Fred makes his way up to the second floor of the building. There are dead, mutilated bodies as well as piles of bones all over the place.

Fred reaches an abandoned office in the factory on the second floor.

INT. FACTORY OFFICE - NIGHT

There is an obese figure in the office sitting at a desk, and it is eating human bodies which are strewn about the office floor as well as littering the desk.

FRED

Ron?

Although the creature before him is of the darkverse, Fred's call signals that he has a sense that the malevolent beast is Ron. Ron has been transformed and although as a human he was stocky, his feasting has now made him a mass of corpulent festering flesh. Additionally, he has grown gnarly horns and his teeth are razor-sharp lined up in a maw of blackened gums and acidic drool.

RON

Oh, hey there pal. You see I told you it was all real. But, you just had to find out the hard way, didn't you?

Ron reaches back to a filing cabinet behind him, and he pulls out a jar.

RON

By the way, she left this for you. Something you lost, she said.

Ron tosses the jar to Fred who manages to catch it with his remaining hand.

The jar is the same one that he put the piece of his brain into when he performed his lobotomy.

Fred hangs onto the jar.

RON

Now go. She needs you.

Fred backs out of the office. He continues searching the factory for Ela.

INT. ABADONED FACTORY - NIGHT

Fred is walking along the rafters on the second floor looking down at the factory's large main floor. There is a billow of smoke coming from behind an old industrial

machine. Fred moves forward until he can see what was behind the machine.

The witch has a cauldron boiling. She is standing in front of the cauldron holding onto Ela. Ela looks up and sees Fred.

FRED

Ela!

Fred finds a way to jump down to the main floor.

WITCH

(using Alice's voice)

The devil makes work for idle hands,
Freddie.

FRED

Let her go. She's innocent.

WITCH

(cackles)

No one is innocent. Do you think
we would exist - this place would
exist - if any of you were innocent?

FRED

What do you want from me!?

WITCH

Your obedience.

A dense fog begins to shroud the factory floor. The harpies are flying through the fog threatening to lash out at Fred.

FRED

To Hell with that.

Fred rushes toward the witch. She lets go of Ela to deal with Fred. Fred struggles with the witch but finally headbutts her and then picks her up and dunks her into the boiling cauldron. The witch screams and struggles but eventually dies.

The harpies are still threatening an attack from the fog.

Ela runs to Fred and hugs him. Fred picks up the jar with his brain piece in it and gives the jar to Ela.

FRED

Ela, hold onto this as tight as you can and follow me close.

Ela is holding Fred's hand with one of her hands and then holding onto the jar with the other.

Fred rushes them out of the abandoned factory trying to avoid the fog that continues to seep in from all directions.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX - NIGHT

Fred and Ela make it out of the factory and back to the field. They are running back toward the sewer pipe. The fog continues to pursue them.

The harpies are lunging out from the fog and slashing at Fred and Ela. Ela is screaming but continues running. Fred sees a pipe on the ground and stops to pick it up. With a well-timed strike he skewers one of the harpies that lunges at him from the fog.

Fred and Ela continue toward the entrance to the sewer. When they arrive, they see that the sewer exit is no longer dry. There is a stream of dark water, and the sewer appears to be a river.

There is a figure in front of them with his back turned. He is standing on a gondola raft motionless. The figure is wearing a black cloak. One might suppose that the figure was the Death character that attacked Ron at the cabin. However, when Fred and Ela get to the front of the raft, they can see that the figure is a normal man.

The man is Adam - the same who baptized Fred at the lake. Fred tries to rouse Adam, but he remains motionless. The fog is still seeping toward them.

ELA

Give him something.

Fred hesitates, staring at Ela remembering the prophecy regarding sacrificing Ela to the darkverse.

Fred then takes the jar from Ela's arms and offers it to Adam. Adam's eyes open and he nods. Adam motions for Fred and Ela to climb aboard the raft. Fred and Ela get on the raft and the raft begins moving down the sewer river. Fred puts his arm around Ela, and they seem to be safe.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. FRED'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - DAY

Fred wakes up in a single bed. He is in his childhood bedroom. The phrenology books are open on his bed and on the coffee table in his room.

Fred has his other hand back and he seems a few years younger based on a haircut and his less muscular physique. He opens his closet expecting a boogeyman to pop out. He picks up one of the phrenology books and inspects it.

Fred leaves his room and heads towards his father's bedroom.

INT. FRED'S FATHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Fred pushes open the door to his parent's bedroom. His father is sitting up in bed - his father is Adam. Adam has a .44 magnum revolver in his hand. His father commits suicide. Fred cries out.

FRED

Dad!! No!!

Fred wakes from the nightmare.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Fred is in an orange jumpsuit befitting a prisoner of the state. A guard runs his nightstick across the bars of Fred's cell.

PRISON GUARD

Lee, you're up.

Fred rises to his feet.

INT. JAIL - DAY

Fred is led down the hallway of the jail. He investigates the other cells expecting to see elements of the darkverse haunting him. However, there are merely shady criminals locked behind bars who appear bored more than anything else.

CUT.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A bailiff leads Fred into the courtroom. Alice and her parents are sitting with Celia along one bench in the courtroom. On another bench, a social worker sits with Ela.

Fred is placed at a stand in front of the judge.

JUDGE

Mr. Fred Lee. It would seem that you are a hapless victim in this ordeal. To your best effort, you attempted multiple escapes from your captor, the late Mr. Ronald Kyle Watkins.

The judge turns a page in front of her and resumes her judgment.

JUDGE

It would also seem that you risked your own health and safety to protect the late Ms. Galloway's kidnapped child.

Ela is watching Fred with longing and hope in her eyes.

JUDGE

The evidence presented seems clear to me, and it would be fair to note that you were not prepared or trained to deal with a dangerous mind and disturbed person such as, Mr. Ronald Kyle. I would say you did the best you could and have the lifelong scars, both physical and psychological to prove it.

Fred rubs his arm and is still missing his hand from some unknown altercation at the cabin.

JUDGE

This has been an ordeal for you.
You have lost years of your life.
I see no reason for the courts to
hold you for trial on any charges.

Alice appears excited and is agitated in her seat.

JUDGE

You are free to go, Mr. Lee.

Alice and her family stand up and are ready to greet Fred. Ela and the social worker are still seated on the other bench.

JUDGE

It has also been brought to my
attention that Ela Galloway, with
no surviving family members known
to the state, would be kept in your
custody if she so chooses. Her
social worker will make the
necessary arrangements.

The judge pounds her gavel twice to mark the judgment as final and the court session complete.

Fred is allowed to embrace Alice. Alice's parents hold onto Celia. Fred walks over to Ela.

FRED

Ela, do you want to come with me
and be part of our family?

Ela embraces Fred.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW HOUSE - DAY

Fred is celebrating with family and friends at a BBQ hosted at their new house. Fred and Alice are seated at a picnic

bench in the backyard. Celia comes over to show Fred some of her drawings. Fred is smiling approvingly and flipping through the drawings.

Ela is playing on her own further away from the others. Fred glances at Ela. Fred has a bandage on the back of his head, suggesting that he might have had surgery to repair his brain.

Alice holds Fred and is happy he's back. Alice's father raises his beer to give a toast. Friends enter the backyard through a short white wooden gate at the front of the house.

Celia makes her way down the grassy lane toward the gate.

There is a woman standing at the gate. All that is seen is that she is wearing black stockings and high heels (Succubus). Celia stares at the woman and then lifts her picture to show the woman what she was drawing. It's a picture of a cow standing beside a garden maze.

Alice walks over toward Celia to bring her back to the rest of the group. Alice looks at the woman. The succubus in her human form is wearing sunglasses but smiles back at Alice. Alice pulls Celia away from the gate and they return to the picnic tables.

ALICE

CeeCee, who were you talking to at the gate, sweetie?

Celia just starts humming.

FRED

Celia, Mommy asked you something.

Ela comes over and sits down beside Celia at the table. The two girls have posture and movements that are uncannily identical.

CELIA

I dunno who. A pretty lady.

Alice and Fred look at each other and seem puzzled, but it isn't a big deal. Celia keeps humming for a moment.

CELIA
Once upon a time...

CELIA & ELA
(unison)
... there was a pretty grey lady with
big horns.

FADE OUT.

THE END