

LIVE!

written by

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1 EXT. CLOSE UP - GROUND - DAY (B&W)

An empty, crumpled soda can and some other trash lie on the ground. The wind carries a scrap of newspaper.

A stick falls, and a second later, a large black dog, presumably a Rottweiler, runs up and grabs the stick with its teeth.

CLOSE UP - TEETH

SLOGAN TITLES ON A BLACK SCREEN:

No matter how bad things get, never despair, hold on while you have the strength! (Alexander Suvorov)

2 EXT. US MILITARY BASE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. SPORTS FIELD - DAY

CLOSE UP - SOLDIER

A male soldier is doing push-ups. We see his strained face. Off-screen, we hear voices.

TITLES: U.S. MILITARY BASE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

MALE VOICES (O.S.)

Come on, come on, Scott! Don't give up! One hundred fifty-one, one hundred fifty-two!

(and other voices)

Come on, Annie! Come on, girl, destroy this weakling! One hundred fifty-three! Again, one more time!!!

The soldier, using his last bit of strength, does one more push-up and falls to the ground from exhaustion. The camera moves to the side, and we see a young woman in a military uniform, also doing push-ups next to the guy. We see her face with a short boyish haircut and clenched white teeth like a she-wolf! She groans and growls at the same time and does two more push-ups, after which she confidently stands up to the cheers of the crowd! THE CAMERA backs away, and we see a dozen soldiers who were cheering for the contestants.

Anne stands up, and we can get a better look at her - she is of average, or rather, short height, wearing a tight-fitting tank top, under which the outlines of her small breasts are visible. She is under 30 and has thin but muscular arms. She raises her hands in the air in victory over her opponent! She is not a beauty, but there is something appealing in her boyish directness! A black guy, who looks younger than her, approaches. He is tall with an athletic build.

RAY
 (smiling)
 Annie, you're a knockout!
 (it's clear he's into Ann)

ANN
 I know it, Ray!
 (with a hint of smugness)

RAY
 (with good-natured irony)
 You've got strong arms! Like iron!
 Are you "iron" everywhere, or are
 there softer spots?
 (looks pointedly at her
 butt)
 Ann, staring at Ray, with a brazen
 smirk, gracefully turns her pretty
 backside to him.

ANN
 Take a risk and touch it!

Ray looks at her, then laughs and holds up his hands, shaking
 his head no-like, not going to risk it!

ANN (CONT'D)
 (with feigned
 disappointment)
 It's always the same with you men!
 All talk and no action!
 (laughs cheerfully)
 A smiling red-headed soldier walks
 by.

GINGER
 You can take the risk to touch it,
 little brother! Just if you end up
 in bed with her, let her climb on
 top of you! Don't you lie on top of
 her!

Ray looks at him with a smile and a puzzled expression.

GINGER (CONT'D)
 (grinning from ear to ear)
 If she tosses you up, you'll hang
 from the chandelier!

The crowd of soldiers bursts into laughter, bending over with
 amusement!

Ann, with a proud smile, turns around with her arms spread
 wide, showing herself off

ANN

Well, yes, I have strong abs!

Someone in the crowd yells.

VOICE FROM CROWD

Lift your shirt, sweetie pie!

Ann raises her middle finger and says cheerily.

ANN

Sweets are bad for your teeth, boy!
It's time to get off your mommy's
candies! You're in a war, you
little bastard!

A voice from the crowd is heard again.

VOICE FROM CROWD

Ray, how are you doing with your
muscles?

Ray silently casts a confident gaze over the soldiers standing around and pulls up his shirt, showing off his six-pack abs! The crowd laughs and says in unison.

CROWD

OOOOH! Awesome!

Ray walks to a nearby pull-up bar and easily jumps up to grab it. Then, just as easily, he does a "muscle up," after which he jumps down to the ground. Ann saunters up to him.

ANN

(in a soft, sexy voice)
Tell me, why didn't you show me
your stomach in
private?
(and then, laughing)
Do you like showing off your abs
when a crowd of men look at you?!

The crowd laughs again!

3

EXT. ABANDONED LOT - GLOOMY DAY (B&W)

All kinds of trash lie here and there. A black dog picks up a stick in its mouth and brings it to its owner. We only see the owner (hereafter DOG OWNER) from the waist down in all the scenes.

His chest and face are not visible. The Dog Owner takes the stick from the dog and throws it again. The dog runs after the stick.

4 INT. US MILITARY BASE. SHOWERS AND MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Ray stands in the shower.

The streams of water run down his beautiful, athletic torso. He then turns off the water and, naked, steps out of the shower, wrapping a towel around himself and wiping himself off as he goes. From behind, we see Ray's magnificent figure. He gets dressed, pulls on his pants, stands up straight, and suddenly a woman's hand slides down his back! The hand gently and slowly touches his skin.

5 EXT. ABANDONED LOT - GLOOMY DAY (B&W)

The dog has brought the stick to the dog owner. He takes the stick in his hand but doesn't throw it again. The dog, leaning on its front paws, whimpers playfully.

MALE VOICE
(authoritatively)
Sit!

The dog obediently sits.

6 INT. US MILITARY BASE. MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A woman's hand slides down Ray's back. He slowly turns around. Ann is standing behind him.

RAY
(with a displeased face)
Ann, this is the men's locker room!
If someone sees us and Sergeant
Robinson will get us in trouble!

Ann caresses his body with her hands. Ray tries to weakly resist, but all his being longs to surrender to her caresses.

RAY (CONT'D)
If Robinson finds out, they'll
transfer us to different units, and
then

CLOSE UP ON ANN'S FACE

A look of lust on Ann's face!

ANN
Then I'll bite him!

Ann passionately and at the same time tenderly bites Ray on the chin, and then sinks her lips into his! Pulling away from Ray's lips, Ann begins to cover his chest with kisses.

RAY
(breathing heavily, with
irony)
I forbid you to bite the Sergeant!

ANN
(with lustful innocence)
Why, honey?

RAY
I'm afraid he might like it!

7 INT. DOG OWNER'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - DAY (B&W-POV)

A dirty, unwashed stove with a metal kettle on it. A table with various dishes and leftovers. The Dog Owner (POV) pokes at the food on one of the plates with a fork. The dog sits by the table, looking at him imploringly as he eats. The Dog Owner takes a small piece of meat and throws it to the dog. It snatches the piece in mid-air and swallows it, then sits down and looks at its owner again.

DOG OWNER (O.S.)
Not enough? I know!

The Dog Owner (POV) walks to the refrigerator, which is covered with various lewd pictures of naked girls, interspersed with rock band souvenir pins, and opens the door inside the refrigerator is a typical bachelor's set of products - sausages, a couple of cans of beer, ketchup, and huge bone. He pulls out a huge bone with very little meat on it. He takes the bone, closes the refrigerator door, and throws the bone to the dog, which catches it in mid-air. The dog carries the bone to another corner of the kitchen and begins to gnaw on it.

8 INT. US MILITARY BASE. CANTEEN - DAY

A few soldiers with trays are standing along the serving line. The canteen is quite large, and there are several empty tables. Ann sits at one of the tables, eating greedily.

CLOSE UP - ANN EATING.

She crunches a chicken leg bone. Her small, white teeth dig into the bone with a satisfying crunch.

The red-headed soldier approaches the table, holding a tray.

«GINGER»
(hesitantly)
Is this seat taken?

Ann, after a loud swallow of her last piece, with a displeased and insolent look.

ANN
Aren't there enough free tables
around?

«GINGER»
(with disappointment)
You've got a hell of a temper,
Annie! You should have been a man!

«Ginger» turns and leaves.

ANN
(condescendingly, to his
back)
You too!

At that moment, Ray approaches Ann with his tray and, without an invitation, flops down on the empty chair.

Ray with a good-natured smile, nodding toward Ginger.

RAY
Well, now that guy won't be able to
sleep! And tomorrow we're on a
cargo escort mission together!

ANN
(wincing)
What is it this time?

RAY
I don't know. But you know - we're
special forces, and we don't escort
simple cargo, like humanitarian
aid. Probably something valuable.
Two long-haul trucks! We're support
for military police! Be proud, Ann!
(with irony)
They've entrusted us with our great
country's most valuable cargo!

ANN

I'd rather escort humanitarian aid.
Less danger! Besides, we could get
diapers from them for this pup!

Anne gestures with her head towards "Ginger", who is sitting nearby and chewing actively.

Ray smirking, starts cutting a
piece of meat on his plate.

RAY

Why are you so angry at him? He's a
decent guy, a good sniper! And he's
a cheerful one! He hasn't
participated in many battles yet,
but he takes down targets very
accurately.

ANN

(takes a sip of juice)
This time he chose the wrong
target!(smiles)

Ray chewing and pointing a fork at Ann, speaks with a full
mout.

RAY

Are you talking about yourself?
Settle down! There are a handful of
women on our base!
(chewing his food, starts
laughing)
So you are a potential target for
all the men here, within the reach
of their eyes!

ANN

(smiling with feigned
offense)
Well, thanks for the "compliment"!
You jerk!

RAY

(comically throws his
hands up)
Where are your proper manners?

ANN

I left them as a gift for my
mother-in-law, about 8 years ago!
Now that one was truly "well-
mannered"! A viper!

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

A mommy for her beloved son, and on top of it all - a zealous Catholic! Every word filled with pathos, as if she were a character from a sappy "soap opera"!

Ann comically folds her palms together as if in prayer and imitates her mother-in-law.

ANN (CONT'D)

(mimicking in a low voice)

"Let us, my children, praise our Lord for the piece of bread we have today!" Ugh! It makes me sick just to remember! She always loved coddling her little boy.

RAY

People are all different, Annie. What seems pathetic to you might have been her life principles. Who knows... Why did you get married?

ANN

I was young! A fool! And he was two years younger than me. A handsome Latino!

(dreamily rolls her eyes upwards)

You know I like colored guys!
(laughs)

RAY

(ironically)

Oh, I know! (also laughs) Where did your husband go? Don't tell me you slit his throat in the night and ate him, like this chicken?

CLOSE UP ON ANN'S FACE

Ann's face suddenly becomes serious. She squints at Ray and, with a gloomy expression, says separately, syllable by syllable.

ANN

I... slit... his... throat.

Ray looks at Ann with a dumbfounded expression.

ANN (CONT'D)

(suddenly bursting into laughter)

Don't be scared, I didn't kill him.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

The husband of the bitch next door knifed him. He caught him with his wife when that asshole got under her skirt.

Ann stops laughing as suddenly as she started and continues in a somber voice.

ANN (CONT'D)

I was in the last stage of my pregnancy at the time! And that bastard... In short, I didn't mourn him for long. I gave birth, and a year later, I signed a contract to serve in the armed forces. Even as a child, I always played with boys, then I got into karate, and finally - shooting. In short, they took me into the army without any extra questions. And then, when I had served for 3 years, I applied for special forces on the recommendation of my commander. I passed the selection course, and then the qualification course. And then I ended up here. I've been stuck here for two years already. And you know. You know what? I've gotten used to it!

(smiles sadly)

9 INT. DOG OWNER'S APARTMENT. ROOM - DAY (B&W)

CLOSE UP - ON A TABLE, A BENT SPOON.

On the table is a spoon with a bent handle, used to heat drugs. Next to it is a tourniquet and a used syringe.

In the room, on an old worn armchair upholstered with fabric, the "Dog Owner" sits (it is not visible above the waist) In one hand, he holds a extinguished cigarette, while his other hand hangs down limply to the floor. Light breaks through the window, which is half-covered by curtains. THE LIGHT IS DISTORTED in a cloud of tobacco smoke. The dog approaches and licks the hand hanging towards the floor. The hand weakly lifts, pats the dog on the head a couple of times, and then drops back down. The dog lies down in front of the armchair, rests its muzzle on its paws, and looks at its owner with sad eyes.

10 INT. US MILITARY BASE. CANTEEN - DAY

Ray and Ann are sitting at a table.

RAY
(putting his fork aside)
What about your daughter?

ANN
(dropping her head)
What about my daughter? She's fine
- her mother-in-law is raising her.

Ann lifts her head with a biting, angry look.

ANN (CONT'D)
She always hated me, she thought I
wasn't a match for her darling son.
But her granddaughter, she loves!

RAY
(sadly shaking his head)
How long has it been since you saw
your daughter? Do you miss her?

ANN
I saw her when she turned 2. But
when I transferred to special
forces, there was no time. But I
send money to my mother-in-law
often!

Then Ann stares intently at Ray for a few seconds and then says words that feel like a burn to his body.

ANN (CONT'D)
(staring intently at Ray)
And why would I miss her? She's the
daughter of that bastard. His blood
is in her. In a word - an unwanted
child!

11 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (B&W)

A girl of 7-8 years old plays with a doll in a sandbox. She sits the doll down and in toy dishes, prepares "lunch" for the doll. On the opposite side of the sandbox, a boy is playing with a toy dump truck. He fills the dump truck with sand and "drives" towards the girl. He then empties the sand from the dump truck's body directly onto the girl's doll.

GIRL
 (in the calm voice of an
 adult)
 Boy, are you an stupid?

FEMALE VOICE
 (sternly)
 Rita, that's not a nice way to
 talk!

RITA
 (shrugging in surprise)
 Maria, but I told the truth! He's a
 stupid boy! He dumped it on
 Juliet's head...

Rita doesn't have time to finish her sentence before the boy
 grabs her doll and runs to the other side of the sandbox.
 Then, throwing the doll in the sand, he begins to hit it with
 his small sand shovel.

CLOSE UP ON THE DOLL

It's a small, but very beautiful doll, dressed in a snow-
 white blouse and a bright colored skirt. The doll's clothes
 are heavily stained with sand. Shovel blows rain down on the
 doll-BAM! BAM! BAM!

RITA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Maria! Grandma-a-a!

12 INT. BARRACKS - EVENING

The location of a U.S. Army military unit. The barracks. A
 four-man Special Forces group is cleaning their weapons. Ray
 and Ann sit next to each other.

RAY
 (to Ann)
 Ann, hand me the oil can and some
 rags.

ANN
 (with irony)
 Do you eat those rags?
 (hands them to him)

RAY
 Our lives depend on the condition
 of our weapons! The weapon must be
 perfectly clean!
 (pause)
 And life - clean as a weapon! Wow!
 (MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Did you hear that, Ann?

(laughs)

A talent for philosophy is being
wasted in me!

ANN

(condescendingly, with a
smile)

A talent for a clown is being
wasted in you!

(then, after a moment's
thought)

You know, Ray - don't think I'm
such a bitch.

RAY

(setting his M-16 aside)

I don't think that at all! What are
you talking about?

ANN

(wiping her hands with a
rag)

I'm talking about my daughter. You
see... You see, at first, I hated
everything connected with my
husband: the bed we slept in, the
damn flower on the window that my
mother-in-law told me to water
every day, the mother-in-law
herself. And even Rita. But then, I
wanted to come back. But... but why
would she need a mother who can do
more push-ups than men, but doesn't
even know how to cook dinner?

(smiles sadly)

I don't even know how to braid
hair!

"Ginger" walks by, and upon hearing the last words of Ann and
Ray's conversation, he stops and says.

"GINGER"

(smiling good-naturedly)

You don't need braids, Annie! A
crown fits very well on your short
haircut, beautiful! (then, jokingly
winking at Ray)

When you get tired of this rough lunkhead, (nods towards Ray)
come to me - I'll read you a thousand poems about what a
queen you are!

RAY AND ANN

(laughing with admiration)

- O-o-o-o!!!

ANN (CONT'D)

(through her laughter)

Holy hell! I thought I was with Special Forces soldiers, but it turns out one is a philosopher and the other is a poet! Benny, get off me!

(good-naturedly)

The red-headed Benny laughs and, making a "cool" gesture with his fingers in a "hip-hop" style, walks away.

Ray laughing, and takes Ann's hand in his.

RAY

Benny would definitely put a crown on you! I'm afraid he'll smother me with a pillow because of you one day!

(stopping his laughter)

But you know,

(looks into her eyes with a sly look)

I actually know how to braid hair!

ANN

(smiling and with surprise)

No way?! Really?

RAY

Yeah, imagine that! I had a little sister. There were three of us kids in the family - my older brother, me, and my little sister. My father left us, and I hardly remember him. I only remember one time - he got drunk that day.

(sadly)

Well, I only understood later that he was drunk, but then... Back then, I was just very scared! Mom grabbed one-year-old "Mimi" in her arms, and we all ran from him. We hid at the neighbors' house until he fell asleep.

ANN
 (stroking his hand)
 He beat you?

RAY
 He beat my mother when he was drunk
 (and then, smiling) When we were
 left without him, Mom had to work a
 lot and very hard, and my older
 brother... well, the streets took
 my brother.

RAY (CONT'D)
 He got mixed up with the bad guys
 and would disappear for two or
 three days at a time. So, I had to
 babysit "Mimi"! So, braiding hair
 is not the limit of my childcare
 abilities!

ANNE
 "Mimi?"

RAY
 Melissa! She was a sweetheart, and
 everyone called her "Mimi"! So,
 your daughter's name is Rita, then?

Anne looks at Ray with a gentle, slightly sad gaze and nods
 her head. At that moment, Sergeant Robinson walks by. He is a
 short, middle-aged man, a little bald with small, sharp eyes.

ROBINSON
 (in a commanding tone)
 Hey, lovebirds! Did you clean your
 weapons? Good! Put your rifles in
 the armory, and you, Anne—get to
 your barracks! Tomorrow's not a
 walk in the park, so everyone get
 some rest!

13 INT. MUSIC STORE - DAY (B&W - POV)

The "Dog owner" (POV) stands by the counter. View from the
 "Dog owner's" point of view. A bearded, strongly built man—
 the seller—holds a beautiful acoustic guitar in his hands.

SELLER
 (in an appraising tone)
 Ah, I see, I see! A "Fender"! What
 do you want for it?

DOG OWNER (O.S.)
Two and a half grand!

SELLER
(smirking brazenly)
You kidding, kid? 300 bucks!

DOG OWNER (O.S.)
600!

CLOSE UP ON DOG

The dog is panting, tongue hanging out, and looks up at the seller with sad "puppy-dog eyes," whimpering.

SELLER
(looking down at the dog)
That your manager?
(smirking)
Fine, the dog's got such sad eyes!
I guess... 500 bucks and not a cent
more!

The Dog owner (POV) nods his head, looks at his hands, then at the wall with various musical instruments hanging on it, and then shifts his gaze to the ceiling. THE CAMERA MOVES IN, AND IN THE CORNER OF THE CEILING WE SEE A COBWEB.

14 INT. EMPTY MUSIC STORE - DAY

No one is in the store. The seller, looking satisfied, is spinning the newly acquired "Fender" in his hands, which he just bought for cheap. A creaking sound of the front door closing is heard.

15 INT. HUMMER - DAY

The Hummer drives through the desert. Inside sit four soldiers, and two in front—the driver and Sergeant Robinson. In the back sit Redheaded Benny, and next to him, another strongly built soldier with headphones listening to music. Across from them sit Ray and Anne. They are all in full combat gear. Benny is twisting a Rubik's Cube in his hands.

RAY
(to Benny, smiling)
So, how's it going?

BENNY
(in a frustrated voice)
You know, I once got two sides
done.

(MORE)

BENNY (CONT'D)

But I can't finish the whole thing.
I read on the internet what order
to turn and where, but it's not
working for crap!

ANNE

(laughing)

Give it up, Benny! You're a
romantic, not a mathematician!

BENNY

(skeptically)

Says who?! You gotta be a
mathematician to put this crap
together? Little kids can do it!

Ray and Anne laugh.

RAY

Don't listen to her, Benny! She
just never had a gizmo like that as
a kid, that's why she's jealous of
you!

ANNE

(to Ray, with fake
annoyance)

And how would you know what I had
and didn't have?!

Now it's Benny's turn to laugh.

BENNY

(through his laughter)

It's a no-brainer—you had a teddy
bear hanging from the ceiling by
its head in your room instead of a
punching bag! KIYAI!!! (Benny mocks
a karate chop) Poor little bear!

Ray laughs and Anne playfully hits him in the side with her
elbow.

16

EXT. YARD IN A CITY ALLEY. A BACKWATER - DAY (B&W)

A bleak landscape, old buildings that haven't seen a repair
in a long time, many with smashed windows. It's clear no one
lives here. A black jeep with chromed, very bright wheel rims
stands nearby.

CLOSE UP ON MALE HANDS

The hands are counting small bills.

MALE VOICE

(in a cocky tone)

That's 500 bucks. You still owe me 150 bucks from last month for the smack, right? And you want two more grams? No problem! But you'll pay a 50-dollar late fee for the overdue payment! So there won't be any change.

CLOSE UP ON DOG

The dog sits obediently at its owner's feet, but it bares its teeth and starts to growl.

CLOSE UP ON MALE HANDS

A hand pulls a massive "magnum" pistol from behind the belt.

DRUG DEALER (O.S.)

Control your mutt!

CLOSE UP ON DOG

The dog bares its teeth viciously, barks a couple of times, and gets into a stance, showing with its whole demeanor that it's ready to lunge!

DOG OWNER (O.S.)

(quietly, but menacingly)

Don't be a fool! She'll tear you apart before you can even aim. I don't give a damn about that fifty bucks—choke on it! I need my merchandise!

CLOSE UP ON DRUG DEALER'S HANDS

The hand puts the pistol back behind the belt.

DRUG DEALER (O.S.)

(in a conciliatory tone)

Okay, okay! Here!
(and then with a show of bravado in his voice) Next time, don't be late with the payment, or that "brown snowball" will cost you more, man!
A hand pulls a small bag of heroin from a pocket and extends it.

CLOSE UP ON DOG

The dog tenses, ready to pounce!

DOG OWNER (O.S.)
 (in a commanding tone)
 Sit, Fury! Calm down, girl!

CLOSE UP ON DOG

The dog obediently sits at its owner's feet, continuing to watch the drug dealer intently.

DRUG DEALER (O.S.)
 So it's a bitch? But she's as big
 as a male! Be careful, man! A bitch
 can ruin a guy! I knew a guy whose
 bitch took everything he owned in
 the divorce!
 (laughs)
 Bitches—that's what they're like,
 brother!
 (laughs)

17 EXT. DESERT ROAD - SUNNY DAY

CLOSE UP ON ROAD SURFACE

We see the wheels and the lower part of the vehicles' bodies driving along the road. First, an M1117 Guardian (Armored Security Vehicle), then two long-haul trucks, and finally—the Special Forces "Hummer" our heroes are riding in. Dust rises from under the wheels.

CLOSE UP ON TERRORIST

A terrorist in typical clothing (a kufiya on his head and body armor over a shirt). He is aiming a shoulder-fired missile launcher.

MALE VOICE
 (in Arabic)
 تجاهل الشرطة العسكرية، سيتولى أمرهم كريم. هدفك
 هو «هامر» القوات الخاصة!

SUBTITLE TRANSLATION:
 Ignore the military police, Karim
 will handle them! Your target is
 the Special Forces "Hummer"!

The terrorist silently nods his head.

18 INT. INSIDE THE "HUMMER" - DAY

Benny is twisting a Rubik's Cube.

19 INT. INSIDE THE "HUMMER" - DAY

Benny (POV) looks up from the Rubik's Cube and looks across from him where Ray and Anne sit, swaying in time with the road bumps. Ray is dozing, with his eyes closed and his head leaning back. Anne turns her head and looks at Ray with loving eyes, then carefully places her palm on his.

CLOSE UP ON RAY'S FACE

Ray opens his eyes and with a slight smile, turns his head toward Anne.

RAY (POV) LOOKING AT ANNE

CLOSE UP ON ANNE'S FACE

Anne looks at Ray and smiles.

RAY (POV) LOOKS DOWN AT ANNE'S PALM RESTING ON HIS

Then Ray (POV) turns his gaze to Benny, and their eyes meet. Benny, with a sad smile, lowers his gaze and continues to twist the Rubik's Cube again. THE CAMERA MOVES IN and takes a close-up shot of the Rubik's Cube in Benny's hands.

CLOSE UP ON THE CUBE

The Rubik's Cube in Benny's hands disappears, and in its place, another, smaller Rubik's Cube appears in the hands of a 7-8 year old African-American girl.

20 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A very poor interior. The refrigerator is covered in stickers, on the table is a simple but clean tablecloth with a vase holding a single apple. An UNKNOWN BOY (we see the boy's hands) is braiding the hair of a little girl sitting on a chair. She wiggles restlessly on the chair and swings her legs, but at the same time, she is trying to solve the Rubik's Cube.

BOY (POV)

(with feigned strictness)

Melissa, stop squirming! Or I'll stop braiding your hair! You'll have to wait until your mom gets home!

Melissa sticks out her tongue.

MELISSA

(with hilarious child-like confidence)

Mom will come home and say, "Ray, you bum! Why aren't you watching your little sister?! And why didn't you wash the floor?" And she'll give you a whack on the back of your head! (laughs)

SUDDENLY, UNKNOWN TEENAGER'S VOICE

(cocky and playful)

That's how she'll whack him on the back of the head, "Mimi"?!

The sound of a slap on the back of the head is heard, and Ray's (POV) head sways with the impact. Melissa laughs and nods her head in agreement that this is exactly how her mom would hit him.

RAY (POV)

Johnny, you idiot! That hurt!

We see a slender African-American teenager—JOHNNY. He's wearing baggy jeans pulled down low on his hips.

He smiles with a brazen look on his face. In one hand he holds some kind of package, and in the other, a cream puff, which he extends to Melissa.

JOHNNY

Take it, little sis, it's full of cream! Just how you like it!

Melissa puts the cube aside, happily grabs the cream puff, and shoves it in her mouth, smearing her cute face. Johnny goes to the refrigerator, opens it, and puts the package inside.

RAY (POV)

(in an offended voice)

"Mimi," are you ever going to stop squirming? Let me finish braiding your damn pigtail!!!

MELISSA

(in a mentor-like, funny voice)

Swearing is not nice! (shoves the cream puff in her mouth)

Ray (POV) makes a final movement and finally finishes braiding the hair!

RAY
 (tiredly)
 Phew!
 (exhales wearily)
 Hey, Johnny, what did you drag in?
 What did you put in the
 refrigerator?

JOHNNY
 (satisfied with himself)
 Five pounds of prime beef, you
 asshole! (good-naturedly to Ray) So
 little bro, wash that floor
 properly, or I'll leave you hungry!
 (laughs) And me and little sis are
 going to go start the fire for the
 barbecue! Right, "Mimi"?

Melissa jumps up from the chair, runs to Johnny, and takes his hand, not forgetting to bite her cream puff as she does so. The two of them walk toward the door. Melissa stops for a second:

MELISSA
 (to Ray)
 Come on, hurry up and wash the
 floors before mom gets here! Johnny
 and I will call you when we start
 the fire!

THE CAMERA takes a close-up shot of "Mimi's" face.

CLOSE UP ON MELISSA'S FACE

MELISSA (CONT'D)
 We'll start the fire!

CLOSE UP ON MELISSA'S FACE. SLOW-MO

MELISSA (CONT'D)
 We'll-l sta-art the fi-i-ire! FI-I-
 I-IRE!
 (Slow, terrifying speech!)

CLOSE UP ON RUBIK'S CUBE

The cube lies on the floor of the vehicle and is engulfed in flames! THE CAMERA moves back, and next to the cube we see Benny's hand, lying nearby! The sounds of explosions and gunfire are heard!

SERGEANT ROBINSON (O.S.)
 Open fire! Everyone spread out!
 Take up defensive positions!

21 INT. INSIDE THE "HUMMER" - DAY

Ray (POV) sees someone dragging him out of the "Hummer" from behind. He sees his legs dragging along the floor of the vehicle, and one of them is covered in blood, with the pant leg torn. In the depths of the vehicle, in the fire, he sees Benny lying down—his face a bloody mess—and the second soldier in an unnatural pose. Ray (POV) sees himself being dragged out of the "Hummer" and hears the sounds of an ongoing battle with the sergeant's shouts.

22 EXT. DESERT. ROAD - SUNNY DAY (POV)

SERGEANT ROBINSON (O.S.)
 Hinckley, goddammit! Crawl to the side of the road and take the left sector! Annie, where are you?!!

LOUD VOICE OF ANNE (O.S.)
 (breathing heavily, with the groans of someone pulling something heavy)
 I'm dragging wounded Ray!!!

SERGEANT ROBINSON (O.S.)
 While you're dragging him, the hajji are flanking us on the right! Move faster!

ANNE
 (nervously)
 With all due respect, Sergeant—fuck you!!! Call for backup!

At this time, Ray (POV) sees his legs dragging along the ground as he is being pulled away from the "Hummer," he sees Anne's hands that are clutched to his uniform.

SERGEANT ROBINSON (O.S.)
 I already did! We need to hold out for another hour and a half! Take control of the right sector!

Ray (POV) sees himself tumble into a shallow ditch on the side of the road and then sees Anne's dirty face leaning over him. Through her bared teeth, she SNARLS at Ray:

ANNE

Hang on! Hold on to me!!!

Ray (POV) grabs Anne, and she pulls Ray with all her might! It's very difficult for her; she groans and snarls simultaneously! Ray tries to help her by pushing off with his good leg. His other leg has been shattered by a piece of shrapnel, and at one point, it catches on a rock and Ray (POV), feeling the intense pain, groans loudly!

ANNE (CONT'D)

(with a very tired face,
breathing heavily)

Hang in there! Just a couple more
meters to the rocks, and I'll
inject you with fentanyl!

They crawl a few more meters to the side of the road, to a small pile of rocks, behind which they hide.

Anne immediately uses her army knife to slit open Ray's pant leg. We see a gruesome sight: a crushed leg with a wound from which blood doesn't flow but gushes out!

ANNE (CONT'D)

(nervously)

Oh, my God!!!

She quickly and without panic pulls out a tourniquet and tightens it on Ray's leg, above the wound. Suddenly, she turns her head to the side, and after seeing something, she grabs a grenade.

ANNE (CONT'D)

(viciously)

You son of a bitch!

Anne lunges in the direction she was just looking and falls to the ground, simultaneously throwing the grenade at the enemy! At the same time, several bursts of bullets kick up little fountains of dust near her. An explosion is heard in front of Anne! And after, a man's scream with a groan in the distance. Anne takes the M-16 rifle from her back and opens fire! She shouts something; we hear fragments of swearing, but the roar of the gunfire drowns them out. After half a minute, she stops firing and crawls back to Ray.

ANNE (CONT'D)

(with a savage grin,
breathing heavily)

The fucking hajji asked me to show
him the way to "the gardens of
bliss"!

Ray (POV), through his pain and groans, smirks.

RAY (POV)
I heard that beautiful houris are
waiting for them there!

ANNE
(playfully, pulling out
the fentanyl auto-
injector)
Are you jealous of them? Aren't I
enough for you?!

Anne, with a steady hand, confidently gives him the injection. Ray (POV) groans. Anne quickly wraps the leg with a bandage. In her every movement, we see a clarity and composure that not every man possesses.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Hang in there, a little longer! I
have to help the guys! I'll be back
soon!

She grabs the rifle and crawls away toward the ongoing battle. Ray (POV) looks up. Above him is the hot, blinding sun! Everything begins to blur in his eyes, and the sun seems to fall on him from the sky!

CLOSE UP ON THE SUN

The sun is in the sky, with clouds moving toward it.

23 EXT. PARK - AUTUMN DAY

Anne and Ray are walking in a park. Ray is limping on one leg.

SUBTITLE: USA, 3 MONTHS LATER.

RAY
(looking at the sky)
Looks like it's going to rain soon.
Did you see the weather forecast
for today?

Anne shrugs her shoulders.

ANNE
After two years in the heat, rain
would be a joy for me! But you'll
probably get soaked for sure!
(smiles)

RAY

(with a smile)

That's for sure! It's not like I
can run far!

(pointing to his leg)

They both laugh.

RAY (CONT'D)

But I'm not a "white sugar cube"
like you! I'm not afraid of melting
in the streams of water! (smiles)

ANNE

(in a playful tone)

It's true, unlike you, I'm a little
bit white! But I'm not sweet, on
the contrary, I'm bitter, like a
chili pepper! Try and take a bite
if you're not scared!

Ray pulls Anne close and kisses her on the lips with a long
kiss! Finally, the lovers stop kissing.

RAY

(with a smile)

I knew you were a little liar and
you're not bitter at all! And
that's why I wasn't scared at all!

ANNE

(laughing cheerfully)

No, you're the liar!

RAY

Why?

ANNE

(grabbing his pants by the
belt)

Because you already knew my flavor!
(coquettishly)
My flavor can't be forgotten once
you've tried it!

RAY

(with feigned surprise)

But the flavor could have changed.
What if someone else peppered you
up while I was lying around in the
hospital? Huh?

ANNE

(with feigned indignation)

Oh, you!

Anne forcefully tugs on Ray's belt.

With the tug, Ray takes a sudden step forward toward Anne, and a pained grimace appears on his face.

ANNE (CONT'D)
 (frightened)
 Oh! I'm sorry, darling! I completely forgot...

RAY
 It's nothing! It's nothing.
 (wincing in pain)
 It's all right, Annie! The prosthetic hasn't settled in yet.

CLOSE UP ON THE LEG

Ray's hands lift the pant leg, and a prosthetic is visible underneath.

Anne gently strokes Ray's shoulder.

RAY (CONT'D)
 (adjusting his pant leg)
 The prosthetic is a minor thing! If that jihadi rocket launcher had fired in our direction, I'd be in the Redhead's place now. (smiles sadly) And maybe you would be with me, too... Shall we go sit down?

Anne nods, and she and Ray walk over and sit on a bench.

RAY (CONT'D)
 I always have the same thing in my eyes—that damn Rubik's Cube in the Redhead's hands...

ANNE
 He never did get to solve it.

A cyclist passes by—an elderly man in shorts and a funny checkered cap.

Ray watches him go, then says:

RAY
 Funny old guy!
 (smiles)
 I think this world is still alive only because of funny people.
 (MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

All the vile things, the cruelty, and the filth in this world can't tarnish just one thing—a genuine smile on a person's face. And funny people, Anne, they make us smile. They're not funny because they're bumblers, but because we're grim people. And they're gifted from above to warm the hearts of grim people, to melt the ice in their souls.

ANNE

(with a smirk)

Yeah, you're probably right. I was sometimes rude to Benny when he was babbling some nonsense. He even tried to clumsily flirt with me... Yeah, Ray! He was a good guy—that redheaded sniper!

(smiles)

An unlucky good guy!

RAY

It seems to me that bad luck is when a person in this life does something he's not supposed to do. Benny read Shakespeare, goddammit! (gesticulating in surprise) You get it, Anne?! SHAKESPEARE!!! And he went to serve in Special Forces... (smirks) He couldn't even solve a fucking Rubik's Cube, but for some reason, he chose THIS toy, and not some other one!

(agitatedly)

Why?!

Ray stands up from the bench and gestures emotionally.

RAY (CONT'D)

Why is some guy who doesn't give a shit about Shakespeare wearing out his pants in some library right now, while the redhead Benny, who was supposed to be sitting there with his nose in a book—is lying in the ground?

Anne also stands and, walking up to Ray, hugs him, resting her head against his chest.

RAY (CONT'D)
 (with a sad smile)
 Even my little sister could do it
 at just 8 years old.

ANNE
 Do what?

Ray begins to walk slowly, limping, and Annie walks a little behind, next to him.

RAY
 Solve that damn cube!

ANNE
 (shrugs)
 Well, you know, your little sister
 is probably a prodigy! I probably
 couldn't solve that thingamajig
 either!

RAY
 (mimicking Anne)
 "I probably couldn't either..." -
 You didn't even try, and you're
 already saying you can't. You could
 if you wanted to! And Benny could
 have if fate had given him more
 time...
 (sighs heavily)
 (ANNE - But still, your sister at
 8... You have to admit, not
)

everyone can do that!

Ray is interrupting Anne mid-sentence.

RAY (CONT'D)
 You're right about that! My
 Melissa, my little "Mimi," wasn't
 like the others!
 (smiles dreamily)
 When my brother was neck-deep in
 street fights and had
 already been arrested three times,
 and I spent all my free time from
 my gas
 station job hanging on the pull-up
 bar in the yard like a monkey,
 dreaming of
 becoming the coolest workout guy in
 the neighborhood, at the same time
 our

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)
 sister got into Princeton
 University's math department on the
 first try!

ANNE
 (surprised)
 Seriously?

RAY
 (proudly)
 You bet! Not only is that
 university one of the best
 in the States, but its math
 department is also known for a
 strong focus on pure
 mathematics, which involves
 attracting the most brilliant
 scientists! Melissa
 wanted to become a scientist! To
 dedicate herself to science! How
 many girls do
 you know from the Black
 neighborhoods and poor families who
 dream of a career
 in science? Exactly!

ANNE
 And what does she do now?

Ray and Anne have already walked a significant part of the park, and on one side, we see a sports ground where teenagers are working out. One teenager of short, strong build with light hair is doing push-ups on the parallel bars, another African American guy has jumped onto the pull-up bar, and two more are standing nearby, chatting about something.

Ray looking toward the boys, with a smile.

RAY
 Honestly, Anne—does that guy on the
 pull-up bar look a little like me?

Then Ray's face suddenly changed and became grim.

RAY (CONT'D)
 What does my sister do, you ask?
 She doesn't do anything, Annie.
 She's in the cemetery, right next
 to my older brother Johnny.

CLOSE UP ON RAY'S FACE

His teeth are clenched tight, a slight twitch of his cheek...
 In his eyes—unrestrained grief!

ANNE

(in a stupor)

How?! How did it... How did it happen?

RAY

(coming to)

My brother, I already told you—he got involved with a bad crowd. He often left home and one time he didn't come back. He always came back, and after every new "job," as he called it, he'd bring something home. Food for everyone, clothes for me, presents for my little sister... But one day he didn't come back. They found him a month later in an abandoned building. His half-decomposed body was torn up by stray dogs. They barely managed to identify him. By his underwear (smiling sadly) with a pattern of red "kissy marks" on them

(pause))

And at that time, Melissa was already studying at Princeton, but just when they found my brother's body, she was in Paris, France.

THE CAMERA shifts focus to the sports ground. A Black guy on the pull-up bar is performing impressive workout exercises.

CLOSE UP ON ANNE'S FACE

Anne is listening to Ray, holding her breath.

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

There's a practice of student exchanges between universities from different countries. Students from other countries come to us, and our students go to them. Such an exchange is very prestigious and extremely useful. As a rule, only the most capable students with high grades participate in it. (smiles) "Mimi" was one of the best..

(MORE)

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

(pause)

Deep sympathy is visible in Anne's eyes for Ray!

24 EXT. PARK. SPORTS GROUND - AUTUMN GLOOMY DAY

Ray has walked over to a tree and is leaning against it.

Ray tearing off a branch and examining it.

RAY

So they sent her there... As it turned out—to her death!
But at least she didn't see how our mother was broken at the funeral for what was left of my brother!
And when they met... up there
(points to the sky)
my brother and my sister, Johnny was handsome again! I believe that!
And Mimi is beautiful there, too. She was charming even in the earthly world.

Ray threw the branch away. THE CAMERA focuses on the snapped branch lying alone on the grass.

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

She was walking after class. Just walking! She wanted to see Paris. She sat down at a cafe to have a coffee and a croissant... She had a terrible sweet tooth!

(smiles))

At that moment, the explosion happened... It was a terrorist attack... The damned, fucking fanatics!

(bursts with emotion)

FANATICS! Damn them!!!

Anne takes a step toward Ray and hugs him, holding tightly.

RAY (CONT'D)

(calming down)

And you know what's the most awful and twisted thing about this whole story?

Annie loosens her embrace and looks at Ray questioningly.

RAY (CONT'D)
 (with a sinister
 (smirk)
 One of those "jihadists" who
 carried out the terrorist attack
 turned out to be a final-year
 student at the Sorbonne! Yes, yes!
 The very same university my sweet
 "Mimi" went to!

THE CAMERA focuses on the tree branches. A gust of wind blew, rustling the tree branches, and... immediately died down.

CLOSE UP ON RAY'S PALMS

The first raindrops fall on Ray's open palms.

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 After that, I decided to join the
 army, a combat unit!

Ray looks at his palms, then wipes them on his shirt.

RAY (CONT'D)
 (emotionally)
 I decided that I would kill these
 bastards as long as I'm alive!

ANNE
 But what about your mom?

RAY
 My mom didn't survive two funerals
 in the same month.

She died six months later... (pause) In a psychiatric hospital.

Ray looked at his hands one more time, then lowered

his gaze and bent down. He picked up the same snapped branch again.

Ray looking thoughtfully at the branch.

RAY (CONT'D)
 Taking a person's life is as easy
 as breaking this little branch,
 Anne!

ANNE
 Give it to me!

RAY
 (with bewilderment)
 The branch? Here, take it!

Ray hands the branch to Anne with a smile.

RAY (CONT'D)
 I used to think that out there, far
 from home, I was fighting a monster
 so it wouldn't come to our home—
 here.
 (gestures all around him)

ANNE
 (with conviction)
 You're right! That's exactly it!
 You're doing the right thing.

RAY
 (thoughtfully)
 Maybe. I'm not sure. You know,
 Annie...
 (pause)
 That "jihadist"—the student—he
 wasn't an immigrant.

CLOSE UP ON RAY'S FACE

His eyes are slightly narrowed, his face is strong-willed,
 and his gaze is intense!

RAY (CONT'D)
 He was born in France! You
 understand? That damn
 bastard was born there! His parents
 came to France—that's true! They
 came many years ago. But he, being
 born there—was already a
 FRENCHMAN!!!

Hearing these words, Annie also lowered her gaze
 thoughtfully. Ray turns toward the sports ground and says.

RAY (CONT'D)
 We think we're fighting a monster
 in the Middle East.
 But in reality, we're only biting
 its tail! Its snout, with its
 gaping jaws, has long been here,
 among us. But few people realize
 it!

Ray starts walking toward the sports ground. Anne, leaning against a tree, watches him thoughtfully. The teenagers who were on the sports ground have already left.

ANNE

What are you planning, Ray?

Ray walks without turning around and raises his hand, giving a thumbs-up! He approaches the pull-up bar.

ANNE (CONT'D)

(displeased)

Ray, I've figured out what you want! Don't! You only just learned to walk!

(at this moment, her mobile phone rings)

Ray approaches the pull-up bar, raises his hands up, and gets ready for a jump. The bar isn't very high, but it requires a small jump.

Anne has the phone to her ear and is listening.

Suddenly, the expression on Anne's face changes! She has heard SOMETHING AWFUL.

ANNE (CONT'D)

(with crazy eyes, gasping for air)

What? What did you say?!!

At this moment, Ray, gathering all his willpower, pushes off the ground with his one good leg... AND JUMPS! He grabs the pull-up bar with his hands!

THE CAMERA moves in and takes a close-up shot of his hands clutching the bar. The rain pours down!

Raindrops and the STRONG HANDS of a real man!

SUBTITLES WITH THE TITLE OF PART 1: "HOLD ON!"

SLOGAN TITLES ON A BLACK SCREEN:

No man is more lonely than he who has survived his beloved.
(Ernest Hemingway)

25

EXT. PARK LAWN - SUNNY DAY

A man in his fifties, fit and youthful-looking PETER, plays badminton with a boy, ten to twelve years old.

They are laughing merrily.

CLOSE UP - FLYING SHUTTLECOCK

A blanket is spread on the grass. A makeshift table is set up on the blanket. On the disposable plates are sandwiches (many!), a huge thermos of coffee, several cups, a large bottle of water, fruit, and several packages of cookies.

Two women in their forties and a man of the same age sit at the edges. The man, ROD, is chubby with a gut. He is chewing a sandwich.

One woman, MAGGIE, is dark-skinned and small, with cheerful eyes. The other, LINDA, is blonde with a sad gaze and beautiful, noble facial features.

The women are drinking coffee.

MAGGIE

(cheerfully)

Linda, why the long face? Look - what a wonderful day! See my clown over there! (tilts her head towards her chewing husband) Nothing gets to him! If he's got something to stuff his gut with - then life's good!

(laughs)

ROD

(mouth full, to his wife)

You, Maggie, are a provocateur! You packed a whole bag of food for this picnic, and now you're shaming me in front of Linda! (chews his food, then laughs)

Someone has to eat all of this if you only drink coffee.

(gestures to the food)

I'm a responsible man, so I'm doing my best!

The women laugh!

MAGGIE

Did you hear that, Linda?! Rod, it turns out, is a "responsible man"! And here I thought he was just a glutton!

LINDA
 (smiling)
 Stop making fun of Rod! He's the
 best you could ever get!

Rod raises his index finger up and, reaching for the thermos,
 nods his head vigorously.

ROD
 Exactly! Listen to your smart
 friend!
 (pours coffee from the
 thermos)
 Why didn't I pick you, Linda, in
 college instead of this witch,
 Maggie?
 (with a smile)

MAGGIE
 (with feigned severity)
 Say another word, you caveman – and
 you won't get any dinner!

ROD
 (pouring coffee into a
 cup)
 And then you won't get a trip to
 Hawaii this fall!

MAGGIE
 (to Linda)
 Did you hear that, Linda? He's a
 blackmailer, to top it all off!

Linda laughs!

LINDA
 Guys, I'm so thankful you dragged
 Peter and me out for this picnic!
 He'll soon grow roots like an oak
 in his clinic! He's there from
 morning till night! And he always
 has the same answer – "Linda, my
 patients don't just have a cold!
 They can't wait!"

Rod takes a sip of coffee and nods his head.

ROD
 And he's telling you the pure
 truth, Linda! You can count the
 number of high-class neurosurgeons
 like your Peter in this country on
 one hand!

LINDA

(with a respectful
expression)

Yes, that's true! But you don't underestimate yourself, Rod! How many women have you saved from breast cancer?

MAGGIE

(with irony)

Oh, sure! Go on, praise him, girlfriend, praise him!

(nodding at Rod)

He already thinks too highly of himself! After your words, he'll become totally ungovernable! What are you doing here, undermining my discipline?

(to Linda, with feigned
strictness)

ROD

(with jovial indignation)

A commander, are we?!

(then to Linda)

Now do you understand, Linda, how much torment I endure with her?

Linda smiles, listening to the chatter. In the distance, the laughter of the boy and Peter playing badminton is heard.

Linda looking toward the player

LINDA

What a good kid you're raising,
Maggie!

Maggie puts down her empty cup and settles more comfortably on the blanket.

MAGGIE

Good, but lazy!

(then to her husband)

Rod, hand me a pillow!

Rod tosses a small pillow at her, hitting Maggie directly.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Oh, you!

(laughs and swings the
pillow back)

Alright, stop! We'll flip everything over here; you almost hit the thermos!

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(then to Linda)

See? You praise him.

(points a finger at Rod)

But this medical genius is a fool,
the same as he was in college. He
hasn't changed at all! Thank God
our son didn't take after him!

ROD

(smirking)

Who did he take after, if not me?

Our neighbor, maybe?

(laughs)

Maggie gives Rod a meaningful look, then turns back to Linda.

MAGGIE Tony is a really smart boy, but he lacks focus. Anything that comes easily to him in school, he does. But where effort is required — he hits a wall! "Mommy, I'm tired! Mommy, my eyes hurt!" Oh, Linda, I don't know! Time will tell what becomes of him! But what about you and Peter? Why haven't you had kids yet?

CLOSE UP ON LINDA'S FACE

A smile plays on Linda's face, but with a shadow of sad thoughtfulness. The CAMERA pushes in and takes a CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S EYES. Deep, bottomless eyes, in which memories stir.

26 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY (LINDA'S MEMORY) (B&W)

A middle-aged woman, the DOCTOR, sits behind a desk. PETER and LINDA sit next to each other across from her desk. They are very nervous, but try to stay calm and hold hands.

DOCTOR

Well, Mrs. Bailey, I have good news for you — your reproductive functions are in perfect order! All your tests — ideal! But as for you, Mr. Bailey...

(a pause)

Your medical chart indicates that you suffered from a severe case of mumps in childhood. Is that correct?

Peter nods his head, his expression tense.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(with sympathy)

Mr. Bailey, I am very sorry.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

We carefully studied all the factors, and it seems that the parotitis you had as a child was the cause. Unfortunately, it left serious consequences that led to infertility. I'm afraid so

CLOSE UP ON LINDA'S FACE

The camera pulls back. Linda seems to return to reality.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

Linda? Linda, I'm sorry! I guess that was an inappropriate question?

27 EXT. PARK LAWN - SUNNY DAY

Maggie looks at Linda questioningly, a guilty expression on her face.

LINDA

(with a sweet smile)

No, no, Maggie! It's fine. I just got lost in thought... Kids? Alas... It's no secret. There are reasons, and they are related to my health. I can't get pregnant, unfortunately. Peter is very upset about it - he loves children so much! So, for us, that topic is 'taboo.'

(smiles)

MAGGIE

(nods her head)

Yes, yes! Of course, I understand!

ROD

(annoyed, to Maggie)

And you, Maggie, just have to stick your nose into everything!

Loud, cheerful voices are heard.

PETER AND TONY (O.S.)

Yeah! Yeah! We totally nailed it!
We're the champions!

Peter and Tony high-five. Peter ruffles Tony's hair. TONY, racket in hand, runs toward the adults. Peter picks up the dropped shuttlecock from the grass and ambles after Tony.

Tony running up to the group, reaching for cookies.

TONY (CONT'D)

Mom, Mom! I just made such a shot
against Peter! My shuttlecock
almost got him in the forehead!
(laughs heartily)

MAGGIE

(with mock sternness)
Look at the big shot, future
"Federer"! Where are you dragging
those cookies? Sit down and eat
properly—here are ham sandwiches,
here are salmon! Who did I pack all
this for?

TONY

I don't want sandwiches! I'm not
hungry!

ROD

(with a sly smile)
And who did she pack all those
sandwiches for? Who knows!

MAGGIE

(looking at Rod, to Tony)
Son, take at least one sandwich!
Otherwise, your 'responsible'
father will devour every single
one!

Peter sinks down next to Linda and, embracing her, laughs
happily with her!

ROD

(grumbling at Maggie)
Devour! Look at yourself, "Miss
Sports Expert"! Federer is a tennis
player, in case you didn't know,
not a badminton player!

Maggie glares at her husband with a KILLER LOOK, then
silently shifts her gaze to Peter and Linda. They are sitting
embraced, Linda's head resting on Peter's shoulder. They both
RADIATE HAPPINESS!

MAGGIE

(with fond admiration)
My God, you are such a beautiful
couple!
(then spins around, trying
to find something)
Rod, where is my purse?! Ah, here
it is!

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
 (takes out a camera)
 Let me take your photo! Such a
 wonderful backdrop, and you two are
 just like angels against it!

Peter and Linda sit embraced and smiling, looking into the camera lens.

CLOSE UP PHOTO

On the writing desk sits the photograph of Peter and Linda, taken by Maggie on the lawn.

28 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

TITLES: A YEAR LATER

Peter, in a white coat, sits at his desk. He picks up the photograph, gazing at it with a reverent smile for a few seconds, then places it back down. His expression turns serious. Peter looks at his watch, then stands and exits his office.

29 INT. SEMI-DARK CLINIC CORRIDOR - EVENING

Peter walks down the corridor—his echoing footsteps are audible. In the distance, a woman in uniform is mopping the floor. Peter walks past her thoughtfully, paying no attention.

PLEASANT FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 Good evening, Mr. Bailey!

Peter turns and stops.

PETER
 Excuse me, I didn't see you right
 away, Mrs., uh... (forgot the name)

WOMAN
 (smiling)
 Maria, Mr. Bailey! MARIA LOPEZ!

The CAMERA focuses on Maria's feet, then moves up in a slow reveal, showing us the woman.

MARIA is a mature but good-looking Latina, with attractive curves and a kind face. She stands, gracefully arching her body, leaning on the mop.

PETER

(a little flustered)

Yes, yes! Sorry I forgot. It's been a tough day.

MARIA

(with a sparkle in her eyes)

I understand – how can you remember all of us, the entire clinic staff? There are many of us, and you are the only one! You are our one and only, the best neurosurgeon!

(smiles coquettishly)

PETER

Please, stop that. I'm just doing my job.

(hesitates)

M-m-m... Excuse me, but I have to go.

MARIA

Yes, yes! Of course! It's already late! There are many of us, and you are the only one! You've stayed behind long enough. All the best!

Peter nods his head and leaves. After a few steps, he turns and glances back at Maria. She continues mopping the floor, her back to Peter.

30

EXT. PETER AND LINDA'S HOUSE SUMMER - NIGHT

A nice car pulls up to the house. Linda gets out of the car. Peter is still inside the car. They are both in a good mood!

LINDA

Yes! Those Italians really know how to cook! My God, that was delicious! Peter, listen, I'm stuffed! I could barely walk out of that restaurant!

(laughs)

What are you fiddling with in there?

PETER

You go on, go on, my dear! Go into the house, a surprise is waiting for you in the living room! I'll just put the car in the garage.

LINDA
You've got me intrigued!

I'm already rushing to see!

31 INT. PETER AND LINDA'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (POV)

Linda (POV) turns on the light in the hallway and walks toward the living room. The expensive interior shows that very wealthy people live here. Linda approaches the open door to the living room, and in the semi-darkness, she sees SOMEONE sitting in one of the armchairs, facing away from the entrance! She only sees the outline of the shoulders and a hat!

Linda CRIES OUT in surprise! She reaches out and flips on the light. AND SEES:

The light comes on and Linda sees a HUGE PLUSH BEAR sitting in the armchair, wearing a man's hat! At that moment, Peter suddenly hugs her from behind!

LINDA
(flustered and joyful at
the same time!)
Oh, my God! I was so scared! He's
so enormous! I thought someone was
sitting in the chair in the dark!
(hugs Peter)

PETER
But it's true - he is sitting
there, waiting for you! Happy
Valentine's Day, my love!
(kisses Linda)

LINDA
(adoringly)
What a child you still are, Peter!
(gently strokes his cheek
with her palm)

CLOSE UP PLUSH BEAR

The plush bear in the hat sits in the armchair.

The image then changes to black and white.

CLOSE UP PLUSH BEAR (B&W)

The plush bear is lying on the bed. The CAMERA then pulls back.

32

INT. PETER'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT (POV - B&W)

Peter (POV) looks at the bear lying on the bed. A luxurious bedroom with a huge bed. The bed is neatly made with a beautiful bedspread. It is clear that no one sleeps in the bed. On one side of the bed lies the large plush bear—Peter's gift to Linda. On the other side of the bed lies a beautiful woman's dress, neatly smoothed out.

The CAMERA shifts focus toward the window. Expensive curtains, partially draping the large window, billow slightly from the open window. The CAMERA moves closer, and we see the night and the moon outside the window.

PETER

Well, I forgot to close the window again this morning! Good thing it didn't rain! On the other hand, fresh air is necessary in the house, I'm telling you that, Linda, as a doctor!

Peter (POV) walks to the window and closes it.

PETER (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah! The moon and the night — it's hard to even invent a better backdrop for depression!

PETER (V.O.)

(looking at the bear)

And you're not bothered by depression? No? Lucky you! (with a sad tone) But I think I'll pour myself a drink! But don't you dare tell my wife about it! You don't want me to give you away to the kids, do you? They'd gut you quickly just to find out — "What's inside him?"

Peter (POV) goes to the kitchen, takes out a bottle of brandy, and pours a very small amount into a glass. He then walks over to the kitchen table, where a photo of a smiling Linda hugging the plush bear sits.

PETER

Even the great Bernard Shaw said: "Alcohol is the anesthesia by which we endure the operation of life." Mind you, those are his words, not mine!

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
 Especially since I, Linda, have
 been forced to make my own
 breakfast and dinner for almost a
 year now. That's the very
 definition of a hardship!

Then, Peter as if being scolded by an "invisible Linda", he
 answers her.

PETER (CONT'D)
 But I only poured a little, don't
 start!

CLOSE UP PETER'S FACE

Incredible SADNESS in Peter's eyes!

CLOSE UP HAND WITH CIGARETTE

Flash! A lighter flares up. Peter lights a cigarette. The
 camera focuses on the burning cigarette. A drag — the
 cigarette burns with a crackling sound.

The glow brightens in the darkness. We hear the sound of
 Peter's exhaled smoke and see the billowing smoke. Then
 another drag — the bright glow of the cigarette, and
 everything repeats... The CAMERA pulls back, and we see Peter
 sitting in his backyard. Next to him is a small table, and on
 it — a glass of brandy. He smokes and looks up at the sky.

CLOSE UP MOON

A bright full moon in the starry sky.

A small, semi-empty room. Moonlight falls through the window,
 partially illuminating the room. It contains a small sofa, a
 coffee table next to it, with a phone lying on top. In the
 corner of the room — a small wardrobe. One door of the
 wardrobe is slightly ajar. There is nothing else in the room!
 Peter is asleep on the sofa, curled up under a blanket.

33

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Peter and a WOMAN stand in the room, both in white coats.
 Opposite them, in a hospital gown, stands the patient — a
 sixteen-year-old boy with a sullen face, JACK.

PETER
 (smiling)
 Well, young man — you're firmly
 back on your feet! Life goes on!

WOMAN

(very joyfully)

Doctor, you cannot imagine how grateful we are! Jack, say "thank you" to Mr. Bailey!

(sternly to the boy)

Did you swallow your tongue?

JACK

(frowning)

Thank you, Mr. Bailey.

PETER

Be well, Jack! And don't fall off the fence anymore. It wasn't easy to repair your spine.

WOMAN

(emotionally)

Mr. Bailey, if you only knew how I scolded him over his cursed hobby! If only he'd taken up tennis - it's safe, good for your health, and he'd have friends from respectable families! But no, the fool loved jumping on roofs and fences!

JACK

(unhappy)

Well, no, Mom! I would have chosen baseball instead.

WOMAN

(agitated to Peter)

Did you hear this dunce?

(then to son)

You better keep quiet, Jack! In baseball, everyone breaks their legs, too!

Jack hums disapprovingly and tries to carefully take a step forward.

PETER

Sit down, Jack. It's still too early for you to stand for a long time. Your spine is not yet ready for a heavy load.

(and then to his mother)

Spinal stabilization is a complex neurosurgical operation.

Jack sits down on his bed, and Peter continues.

PETER (CONT'D)

To restore the integrity of your son's spinal column, we performed a vertebroplasty. This is a minimally invasive procedure where, through a small puncture, bone cement is injected into the vertebra, which quickly hardens, strengthening the broken bone. So you, Jack (smiling) have become as strong as one of the walls you liked to jump on. But
 (switching to a strict tone)
 forget about parkour now!

JACK

(sadly)
 And what should I do now?

PETER

(with irony)
 What should you do? Chess!

Jack folds his arms on his chest with displeasure and aplomb, turning his head to the side.

The woman looks at her son and shakes her head reproachfully.

WOMAN

What's wrong with that? At least you'll get smarter!

The Woman then walks up to Peter, takes his hand in both of hers, and says with sincerity in her eyes

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Bailey - I will pray to God for you until the end of my days! You are a true wizard!

CLOSE UP PETER'S FACE

A shadow of the past flashes across Peter's face.

PETER

(thoughtfully)
 Unfortunately, that is not true.
 I'm not a wizard, alas.

34 INT. ONCO-MAMMOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY (PETER'S MEMORY - B&W)

ROD, in a white coat, sits behind his desk. Opposite him stands an agitated Peter. His shirt is buttoned incorrectly, and he looks disheveled.

ROD
(looking into Peter's eyes)
Peter, I am not a wizard, nor a magician, nor a sorcerer! And even less so - I am not God Almighty!

PETER
(shouting!)
But you are a DOCTOR with thirty years of practice!!!

ROD
(standing up)
Yes, I am a doctor with thirty years of practice! And that's why I'm telling you - the biopsy showed that Linda has Stage Four breast sarcoma! I am your friend, and I won't give you false hope!

Rod walks over to Peter and, hugging his shoulders, sits him down on a chair. He then takes a chair himself and moves it closer to Peter, sitting opposite him and placing his hand on Peter's shoulder.

PETER
(crushed by grief)
But can't we do surgery? (then flares up!) Cut off the breast, for God's sake!!!

ROD
The metastases have already spread to other organs.

Rod stands up from the chair and hugs Peter tightly.

ROD (CONT'D)
Buddy, you have to understand - it's not cancer, it's sarcoma. Linda came to us too late... The surgery is useless.

Jack sits, head down. Rod sits down on his chair and, looking his friend in the face, says. You don't need to torture her. I will do everything possible to make her passing as painless as possible.

ROD (CONT'D)

And you, Peter

(a pause)

You try to tell her everything most important in the time left! Words you might not have said yet. I'm sorry.

PETER

(raising his gaze to Rod)

How much time does she have left?

35 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY (POV)

Peter (POV) looks at the tombstone with his wife's photograph.

PETER (WHISPERING)

See how it turned out, Linda. You always protected me from trouble, but you didn't protect yourself.

Peter places flowers on the tombstone.

PETER (POV) (CONT'D)

Plans, dreams, hopes... What is it all for? Why delude yourself with fleeting happiness if it's only a mirage?

Peter (POV) looks up at the sky. The limitless, cloudless sky!

PETER (POV) (CONT'D)

(voice trembling) Why did you take her? Why did you leave me here on Earth?

(and then loudly)

Take me to her!

SUDDENLY FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Bailey! Are you alright?

Peter turns around and sees Maria behind him, holding hands with a SMALL GIRL, seven or eight years old. The girl is holding a doll.

PETER

(in some confusion)

Yes, I'm fine... What? What's the matter?

(distractedly)

What do you want? Who are you?!

MARIA

(with a kindly smile)

Don't you remember me? My name is Maria! Maria Lopez. I clean at your clinic.

PETER

(a moment)

Ah, yes! I remember... Of course, I remember... Forgive me, I didn't recognize you right away. What are you doing here?

SMALL GIRL

We came to see my dad! He's right over there! (points with her hand)

MARIA

(stroking the girl's head, smiling)

My son is buried here. It's been a while. And this little rascal (nods at the girl) is my granddaughter, RITA.

RITA

(makes a funny curtsy)

Allow me to introduce myself - Margarita Lopez!

A smile flickers across Peter's face.

MARIA

(with concern)

That grave appeared relatively recently. That grave appeared relatively recently. Is this a loved one?

PETER

(nods his head)

My wife. It's been less than a year...

MARIA

(with understanding)

The first year after losing a loved one is the hardest time. I know. It's not easy after that either, but God brings peace to the heart in time, and you start to accept what has happened as inevitable.

PETER

(with some irritation)

Do you see God next to us? I only see your granddaughter, whom God left without a father. Excuse me, I have to go.

Peter takes a few steps, but then turns back.

PETER (CONT'D)

(as if apologizing for his sharpness)

Maybe I could give you a ride?

MARIA

Thank you, but don't bother! We don't live very far away, and the weather is beautiful, so...

RITA

(to Maria)

What are you talking about? "Don't bother!" Did you forget about Charlie? You yourself said we can't leave him alone for too long.

PETER

Charlie?

RITA

Yes, Charlie! He's my poodle puppy. When he's alone, he gets lonely and howls loudly, and he might even chew on the furniture! You know, Mr. Bailey, I was small, too, but I didn't do such naughty things! Right, Maria?

Maria smiles, looking at Rita.

PETER

(with a smile)

Well, in that case, your chariot awaits, Miss Lopez!

RITA

(with a funny, affected tilt of her head)

Thank you, sir!

In his hands, a small bag of powder. With his other hand, he takes money from someone.

DRUG DEALER (O.S.)

Take it, take it! You'll thank me later! This chemical crap is way cooler than heroin and it's cheaper. As I understand it, you're broke right now, and "smack" is getting more expensive.

Someone's hand takes the packet of drugs.

DRUG DEALER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Just be careful with the dose, or you'll 'kick the bucket'! I see you're without your bitch today?

The Dealer counts the money.

DOG OWNER (V.O.)

She doesn't like drugs.

37 INT. "DOG OWNER'S" APARTMENT - DAY, SEMI-DARKNESS (B&W)

A dirty, messy room. The entrance door from the inside. A black dog sits opposite the door and whimpers pitifully.

The CAMERA focuses on the doorknob. FREEZE FRAME!

STOP FRAME 2: DOOR HANDLE CLOSER.

STOP FRAME 3: DOOR HANDLE EXTREME CLOSE UP.

CLOSE UP DOG'S MUZZLE

The muzzle of a dog waiting for its owner.

38 INT. PETER'S CAR - DAY

Peter is driving. Maria and Rita are sitting in the back. Peter looks in the rearview mirror and sees the girl playing with a doll.

PETER

(with a smile)

You have a beautiful doll, Rita!

MARIA

(chuckles)

She never parts with her, drags that doll everywhere she goes!

RITA
 (huffing at her
 grandmother's remark)
 Of course, everywhere! We're
 friends!
 (then to Peter)
 Her name is "Juliet"! She's
 beautiful, but sick!

PETER
 (with puzzlement)
 What's wrong with her?

RITA
 A silly boy hit her with a spade,
 and now when she wants to fix her
 hair, one of her arms falls off!
 Look!

Rita shows the doll and turns one of its arms — the doll's
 arm falls off.

PETER
 (kindly)
 Would you like me to heal her?

RITA
 (with distrust))
 Can you really?

PETER
 Of course! After all, I'm a doctor!

Rita hands her doll to Peter. At that moment, they pull up to
 Maria's house.

MARIA
 Mr. Bailey, please stop here. This
 is our home!

RITA
 (pointing with her hand)
 And over there, across from our
 house — is the playground! We walk
 there with Grandma and sometimes
 take Charlie!

Peter stops the car. Maria and Rita get out of the car.

39 EXT. NEAR MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY

MARIA
 Thank you!

RITA
 (waves her hand)
 Thank you, Mister!

Peter, sitting in the car, also waves his hand at Rita. The car drives away.

RITA (CONT'D)
 Maria, can he really heal "Juliet"?
 Will he repair her?

MARIA
 (with confidence and a smile)
 Of course, my dear! He repairs not just dolls - he repairs people too! Mr. Bailey is a very good doctor, only... He is very lonely.

Rita nods her head with understanding and sympathy.

40 INT. PETER'S HOUSE - EVENING (B&W)

Peter is in the kitchen, fumbling by the stove. He awkwardly slides an omelet off the frying pan with a spatula. Then he pours coffee from the coffeemaker and puts his simple meal on the table. Napkins and a sugar bowl are on the table.

CLOSE UP LINDA'S PHOTO ON THE TABLE

Linda smiling, hugging the plush bear.

PETER (O.S.)
 Yes, Linda! I made an omelet for dinner today. Yes, it's with ham and I'm going to eat it all! Because I performed a complex surgery today, and I deserve an omelet with fatty and unhealthy ham. And also- because I simply WANT it!

Peter eats dinner sitting at the table. Then the camera focuses on the water faucet in the kitchen sink. Water is dripping from the faucet.

CLOSE UP FAUCET
 Water drops drip. SFX: DRIP-DRIP. Then the sound grows louder: SFX: DRIP-DRIP-DRIP! The sound of falling drops intensifies, and becomes very loud! Like impacts: SFX: DRIP-DRIP-DRIP!!!

41 INT. PETER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY (PETER'S MEMORY - POV)

Sunlight shines into the kitchen window. Peter (POV) sits at the table and reluctantly pokes a spoon in a bowl of oatmeal. His wife Linda walks up to the table.

LINDA
(with feigned strictness)
Well, why are you still poking
around in that bowl? Oatmeal is the
best breakfast for your stomach!

PETER
(POV - in a dissatisfied
voice)
And for my taste - the worst!

Linda sits down at the table next to him. She takes the spoon from his hand and scoops up some porridge, then holds the spoon to his mouth.

LINDA
(with a pleading smile)
Honey, you love me, right? Just eat
one spoonful for me!

Linda sits next to Peter and puts the spoon into his mouth. He obediently, though displeased, swallows the porridge. Linda scoops up another spoon, and another, continuing to feed Peter from her hands.

LINDA (CONT'D)
(again with feigned
strictness)
Now finish the rest yourself,
you're not a baby! (and again in a
tender voice) There are only a
couple of spoonfuls of porridge
left in the bowl! Don't be
stubborn!

42 INT. PETER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY (PETER'S MEMORY)

Peter is eating porridge. Linda sits, resting her elbows on the table and cupping her chin with her palms, gazing with loving eyes as Peter finishes the porridge.

43 INT. PETER'S HOUSE. PETER AT THE TABLE - EVENING (POV - B&W)

Peter (POV) sits at the table. He looks at the teaspoon he holds in his hand.

Then he scoops sugar from the sugar bowl and pours the sugar into the cup, after which he starts to stir. SUDDENLY his hand begins to tremble, his sobbing is heard! His trembling hand with the spoon DROPS ONTO THE CUP! With a loud clang, the cup topples and falls! Coffee spills all over the table!

The CAMERA focuses on the shards of the broken cup on the floor. Then the camera slowly moves upward, and we first see Peter's legs as he sits at the table, and then his whole body. Peter is sitting, with his elbows on the table and his face covered by his palms, his shoulders shaking with sobs. HE IS CRYING SILENTLY AND UNCONTROLLABLY!

44 INT. PETER'S GARAGE - MORNING (B&W)

In the morning, Peter enters the garage, opens the car door, and sees Rita's doll lying on the seat. Peter takes the doll in his hand and looks at it for a few seconds. A barely noticeable smile appears on his face. Peter walks to the corner of the garage, where a small table with tools stands. He opens the drawer and takes out a tube of glue and some screws.

45 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Peter and Maria are sitting on a bench. Maria is wearing tight jeans and a blouse with a small décolletage that slightly reveals the piquant details of her very attractive figure, despite her age. Maria holds the poodle "Charlie" on a leash, and Peter scratches him behind the ear. The poodle whimpers contentedly. A few children are playing nearby on the playground, and among them is Rita. She is showing her doll to the children and chirping about something!

MARIA

(with a smile)

Thank you, Mr. Bailey! Rita was so happy when you brought her doll! It's interesting - she has many toys at home, but she simply can't live without this "Juliet" of hers!

Maria strokes "Charlie", but looks playfully towards Peter. Undoubtedly - she finds him attractive!

PETER

(kindly)

First of all, Maria, stop calling me by my last name! If I call you by your first name, please do the same! We're not at the clinic!

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

So, I suggest we leave the subordination for work hours, and during off-hours we'll be familiar with each other! (laughs)

MARIA

(also laughs)

I agree! And what did you mean by "second of all," Mr. Bailey?

PETER

(accentuating his first name)

Peter!

(looks at her questioningly)

MARIA

Oh, excuse me! Peter! What "second of all"?

PETER

And second of all, I'll tell you why your granddaughter doesn't part with that doll. Have you forgotten what Rita said about "Juliet"? It's not a doll for her, but a friend! And all the other toys in your house are just toys. You can't have too many friends!

(laughs)

RITA

(shouting from afar)

Maria! Let Charlie go! Let him play with us!

Maria releases the poodle from the leash, and he happily runs to Rita.

PETER

(looking after the poodle)

Charlie is very lucky to have such an owner!

(smiles)

Many years ago, I was similar to that same poodle!

MARIA

(with a smile)

What, just as curly and funny?

Maria and Peter laugh! Then Peter stops laughing, and a shadow of sadness falls across his face.

PETER

No, not funny. Fast and happy!
Although maybe I was funny? I don't
know... I was constantly running
somewhere, rushing to do something
— studying, postgraduate studies,
dissertation, then practice... I felt
as if I was trying to outrun time!

Maria listens to him attentively, watching his eyes, the
agitated movements of his hands.

PETER (CONT'D)

(continues)

Later, when I was over 50 years old
and had achieved all my goals, time
somehow sped up. Days started to
run faster and faster. Life seemed
to slip away from me, and much of
what was extraordinarily colorful —
became mundane and everyday.

Rita runs up to Maria, the poodle running close behind her.

RITA

(smiling and chirping
happily)

Maria, take Charlie! He's chasing
Elizabeth and not letting her give
Mickey urgent medical attention!

MARIA

(strictly)

Do you see? We are talking to Mr.
Bailey! And you are interrupting!
First, let Charlie go, then take
him back. Maybe make up your mind,
Margaret?

Rita assumes a serious expression on her small face and nods
her head obediently.

PETER

Maria, what are you saying! Rita
didn't bother us at all! Right,
Rita?

At this moment the poodle runs up to Peter.

PETER (CONT'D)

Give me the leash, I'll hold the
dog. Go play, Rita! If you're
playing medics, you can't leave
patients unattended for long!

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Rita running up to Peter, whispers
in his ear.

RITA

Thank you! When she (looks at
Maria) calls me by my full name
"Margaret," it's a bad sign. It
means she's angry!

The girl, like a light breeze, flies away to the flock of
playing children!

Peter looks at the children, and Maria looks at him.

MARIA

(with good-natured irony)

So, Peter, did you manage to catch
up with time?

MARIA (CONT'D)

(with good-natured irony)

So, Peter, did you manage to catch
up with time?

PETER

I didn't have to do that. After
Linda's death, time stopped by
itself. It became sticky and
viscous, and I can't wash it off
with water or tears.

Silence hangs in the air for a few seconds.

MARIA

(thoughtfully)

When my son died, I didn't have the
opportunity to dwell long on my
cruel fate. I had to take care of
her. I often couldn't even cry,
because Rita would have noticed,
and I didn't want to prick her
small, kind heart. I live for her,
and I'm alive because of her!

Maria gently, yet firmly, squeezes Peter's hand.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Peter, it's not time that stopped
for you. It's your watch that
stopped! And time continues to go
on.

Rita runs up again.

RITA

Elizabeth and Mickey's parents took them home, and I came back to you. Mr. Bailey, why are you sad? Did Grandma yell at you, too?

Maria and Peter laugh.

PETER

No, Rita! Your Grandma is kind!

MARIA

(smiling)

That's right! And Grandma — only by responsibility, not by looks!

PETER

(with irony)

Undoubtedly! Exactly so!

Rita giggles, hugging Maria's neck with one arm, and holding her doll in the other hand. Then Rita walks up to Peter with a serious expression on her face and speaks

RITA

"Juliet" and I talked it over and decided that she'll live with you for a while, Mr. Bailey! You are often so sad, and Juliet will cheer you up! She is very grateful to you for curing her!

The girl hugs Peter and pecks him on the cheek, after which she hands him her doll.

CLOSE UP PETER'S FACE

Peter's eyes are moist, and the light of his kindness is reflected in them like in an ocean!

Rita holds Peter's hand, and the doll is in his other hand.

RITA (CONT'D)

I only have one request for you, Mr. Bailey! Bring her sometimes to play with me, otherwise she'll be lonely! Okay?

Peter nods his head with a smile!

MARIA

Well, I think it's time for us to go!

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

And what are you doing tomorrow,
Peter? Tomorrow is a day off!

PETER

(shrugs his shoulders)
Well, yes! A day off, unless I'm
called into the clinic for an
urgent operation!
(chuckles)
Maria, hiding her excitement,
speaks in a confident voice.

MARIA

Then come visit us! I'll make
"paella"!

RITA

(pecks her fingers)
Mmm-ma! Finger-licking good! Maria
cooks very well! Come and bring
"Juliet" with you at the same time!
(pause)
Will you come?

PETER

(shrugs his shoulders)
I don't even know...

MARIA

(in a quiet voice)
I understand you. It hasn't even
been a year since... Forgive me for
my tactlessness!

PETER

No, no! Don't apologize! I'm very
pleased, but... But I truly don't
know my plans for tomorrow!

RITA

(insistently)
Well, since you don't know your
plans - that means you don't have
any at all! We'll be waiting for
you!

PETER

(smiling)
And what do you love besides
Grandma's "paella"?

RITA
 (shrugs her shoulders)
 Many things. For example, sweet
 "cupcakes"! So, will you come?

Peter smiles, spreading his hands apart.

PETER
 (smiling)
 Well, it's hard to refuse such an
 invitation!

RITA
 (with a wise look)
 Impossible!

Maria and Peter laugh!

46 EXT. CITY STREET - SUNNY DAY

Peter walks down the street, holding a briefcase in one hand and the doll "Juliet" in the other. There are many passersby around, but he notices no one, constantly looking at the doll!

CLOSE UP DOLL

The doll in Peter's hand.

Peter, gazing at the doll, awkwardly stumbles. It's clear how dear this gift is to him! Two girls passing by look at him and giggle. He is truly ridiculous in his "awkward" happiness!

47 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (B&W)

The poodle on a leash barks at someone. A woman's hand jerks the leash. The CAMERA shifts focus to the sky. Clouds appear in the clear sky.

48 INT. GROCERY MARKET - DAY

Peter puts groceries into the basket. He does it haphazardly — he puts in a whole package of CUPCAKES, then a box of chocolates, and some other sweets. He walks a meter away, but stops and returns again to grab even more sweets! His basket is almost full and is loaded with various goodies! A kind of mad joy from this shopping is on his face! He approaches the cash register, pays for the goods, puts them in a bag, and opens the door to the street. Rain has started outside.

49 EXT. PLAYGROUND - GLOOMY DAY. (B&W, SLOW-MO)

The "DOG OWNER" (seen only from the waist up) walks with his BLACK DOG. It moves next to the owner, off leash.

CLOSE UP DOG OWNER'S FEET (B&W, SLOW-MO)

Boots tread the mud, leaving tracks!

CLOSE UP BLACK DOG (B&W, SLOW-MO)

The dog shakes itself off, splashes fly in all directions, and it turns its head. Then it bares its teeth and lunges at someone!

50 EXT. CITY STREET - GLOOMY DAY - RAIN

Peter gets out of his car near his house and runs to the door, fumbling for his keys along the way. He doesn't immediately hit the keyhole with the key. He is soaking wet, but the smile still hasn't left his face!

51 EXT. PLAYGROUND - GLOOMY DAY. (B&W, SLOW-MO)

CLOSE UP POODLE

The poodle barks.

CLOSE UP BLACK DOG

The dog runs, baring its teeth! The rain pours.

The Dog Owner ((only his legs are visible not above the waist) shouts at the dog with a voice that is slowed down and muffled, as if from a deep well.

DOG OWNER (O.S.)

Stop, Fury! Come! Come I said!

A woman's hands grab the barking, restless poodle and lift him, pressing him close to her.

CLOSE UP BLACK DOG'S JAWS (B&W, SLOW-MO)

Bared, barking jaws from which saliva splatters!

52 EXT. PLAYGROUND - GLOOMY DAY. RAIN STARTED (B&W, SLOW-MO)

Rita looks with frightened eyes! We see her silent scream; she covers her face with her hands, stumbles backward, and falls!

CLOSE UP RITA (B&W, SLOW-MO)

Rita falls and.. PLUMMETS INTO A DARK ABYSS! She falls down, falls, falls, and falls...

53 INT. PETER'S HOUSE - DAY

Peter, soaking wet, enters the house and turns on the light.

We see Peter's house in bright COLOR! Everything is transformed - the curtains, the furniture color! Everything has become very colorful, bright, and saturated! Happiness is on Peter's face!

Peter walks with the bag to the refrigerator, opens the door, but, then closes it and sets the bag on the floor. He takes the doll out of his briefcase, places the briefcase on the floor near the bag, and approaches the table. Peter sits down at the table, looking at the photo of his wife. After a few seconds, he places the doll next to the photo.

SUBTITLES WITH THE TITLE OF PART 2: "LOVE!"

SLOGAN TITLES ON A BLACK SCREEN:

"Death is worth living for, and love is worth waiting for!"
(Viktor Tsoi)

54 EXT. GLOOMY LANDSCAPE OF A DIRT ROAD (POV - B&W)

A deserted dirt road. Gloomy day.

A GIRL (POV - we see her child's hands and feet) runs along the road; her breathing is audible. A young girl on a bicycle, dressed and looking like the doll "Juliet," overtakes her. The Doll-Girl smiles at the Girl (POV) and rides on. The Girl (POV) continues to run. She turns around and sees a large, black dog with bared jaws running after her! The Girl (POV) stumbles and falls! Then she looks up and sees in front of her a woman holding a poodle. Maria speaks with an affectionate but strict intonation.

MARIA

Rita, stand up right now! And don't forget that I forbid you from staying in the sun for too long at noon!

55 EXT. SEASHORE - BRIGHT SUNNY DAY.

A bright, sunny day, a colorful landscape! A girl who looks like Rita's favorite doll is walking along the seashore, dipping her feet in the water. Rita, dressed in a bright, colorful dress, slowly approaches her.

RITA
Hello! Who are you?

GIRL
(with a sweet smile)
My name is Juliet!

RITA
(shrugging in surprise)
Your name is the same as my doll's!
And your clothes are the same!

JULIET
Your doll's clothes are the same as mine! (and then with an charming, indignant look) Well, why do all children dress their dolls in models of my clothes?! Is it really that hard to invent something themselves?

RITA
Are you a fashion designer, then?

JULIET
Fashion designers are the most useless people in the world! They invent clothes that no one wears! But all the dolls in the world wear my dresses!
(and then in an offended tone)
But no one has ever even said "thank you" to me!

RITA
(laughs)
You're funny! Do you want me to say "thank you"?

A smile appears on Juliet's face again!

JULIET
Go on, say it!
(and suddenly, frowning)
No, don't! You have to say "thank you" even before you are asked.
(MORE)

JULIET (CONT'D)

Now it's not interesting anymore.
 (and again with a smile))
 Better treat me to ice cream!

RITA

I don't have any ice cream!

JULIET

You don't, but the refrigerator
 does!

Rita turns her head and sees a refrigerator standing on the
 sand next to a solitary palm tree!

RITA

Wow!

(and immediately with
 disappointment)

But Grandma forbids me from taking
 sweets from the refrigerator
 without her permission.

JULIET

But this is for me, not for you!
 Take it!

Rita runs up to the refrigerator, opens it, and sees inside..

CLOSE UP REFRIGERATOR INTERIOR

An incredible amount of delicious things! Fruits, candies,
 juice... Rita opens the freezer compartment of the
 refrigerator, which is filled to the brim with ice cream! She
 takes one cone and closes the refrigerator.

Rita carries the ice cream to Juliet and hands it to her.

JULIET (CONT'D)

Do you know how to eat ice cream
 properly?

RITA

(laughs and nods her head)
 Of course, I know! Like this..
 (opens her mouth wide)

JULIET

No, that's wrong! First, you have to stand on your head!

RITA

(curls up her face in
 surprise)
 (MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

Oh my! That's uncomfortable! And why?

JULIET

Uncomfortable? Adults live their whole lives standing on their heads, and everything is upside down for them! At night, when they should be sleeping, they dance and have fun, and in the morning, when the sun rises, their heads hurt, and they quarrel with each other! They never have time to play with their children when the children want to, and they force other adults to be their toys! Hey, the ice cream will melt while I'm talking to you!

Juliet approaches the palm tree, stands on her hands and leans her feet against the palm tree, exposing her slender legs and long, knee-length doll pantaloons with beautiful patterns.

JULIET (CONT'D)

Hurry up!

Rita runs up to Juliet, unwraps the ice cream cone, crouches down, and begins to feed Juliet. She does this awkwardly, and Juliet is also wobbling.

As a result, Juliet's entire face is smeared with ice cream! They laugh merrily! Finally, Juliet falls into the sand, still laughing!

JULIET (CONT'D)

(lying on the sand)

Alright! Let's eat the ice cream lying down!

Rita lies down next to Juliet on the sand, and they take turns biting the ice cream.

The CAMERA rises above them. OVERHEAD VIEW. Waves are splashing, yellow sand, and Juliet and Rita lying side by side.

RITA (O.S.)

And still - why eat ice cream standing on your head?

JULIET (O.S.)
 If you eat ice cream standing on
 your head, you'll never stain your
 dress!

RITA (O.S.)
 But you stained your face!

The CAMERA rises higher and higher.

JULIET (O.S.)
 (now from afar) Nonsense!
 I'll wash it off! But
 it's fun! (Rita and
 Juliet laugh)

The camera changes focus, and on the other side of the sea, a landscape is seen that is completely opposite to this seaside idyll! An endless, LIFELESS DESERT stretches to the horizon under the scorching sun! Then time accelerates; clouds rush quickly across the sky, the sun flies by and sets beyond the horizon. The sky darkens, and stars appear on it.

CLOSE UP RITA

Rita is lying curled up next to the palm tree. The refrigerator is gone, and in Rita's hands is her favorite doll, "Juliet," which she didn't have before. Rita clutches the doll tightly to herself.

56 EXT. DESERT. BRIGHT SUNNY DAY.

A young man in strange clothes approaches from the desert in the distance: in shorts, a shirt, and a World War I pilot's helmet. He holds a model airplane in his hands.

Rita sits with her back to the stranger. The sea is before her, and the sun rises on the horizon.

STRANGER (O.S.)
 Present your documents!

Rita turns around and, without being frightened at all, answers:

RITA
 I don't have any documents. Just a
 doll! (shows her toy) I did have a
 refrigerator with different
 goodies, but it disappeared
 somewhere!

The stranger comes closer and, smiling broadly, says.

STRANGER

I was just kidding! Documents are not required in my kingdom!

Then, demonstrating a military bearing, he stands at attention!

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Allow me to introduce myself - Antoine! (then modestly scrapes the sand with his foot) King Antoine.

RITA

And I am Rita!

Rita extends her small palm, which Antoine carefully shakes.

RITA (CONT'D)

You are a strange king, in shorts!
(laughs)
And what is that you are wearing on your head?

ANTOINE

It's a pilot's helmet! I made a forced landing nearby a long time ago. And when I looked around, I decided to stay here forever.

RITA

And where is your airplane?

ANTOINE

Here it is!

Antoine shows her the airplane model in his hands/

RITA

But that's a toy!

ANTOINE

Adults play games too! Everyone loves to play! But I don't like playing with adults. Their games are cruel!

Antoine places his airplane on the sand next to Rita.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

Do you want to play?
(points to the airplane)

RITA

No, I'm a girl! I have a doll that I play with.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)
How about we give your doll a ride
on my airplane?

RITA
(brightening up, curious)
Let's do it!

Antoine seats Rita's doll on the airplane, holds the doll by her hand, and starts running along the shore, holding the airplane with the doll above his head.

ANTOINE
(imitating the sound of an
airplane))
Woo-woo-woo!

Rita laughs hysterically and claps her hands! After a while, Antoine finishes the game and "flies" to Rita, making a "landing" next to her. Rita is sitting with a contented smile!

RITA
You are probably the strangest king
in the whole world!
(laughs)

ANTOINE
(with hurt in his voice)
One would think you've seen many
kings!

RITA
To be honest, you are the first!

ANTOINE
(taking off his helmet)
It's hot! You see - I'm the only
king you've seen! And yet you judge
me. Many people do that - they see
a stranger for the first time and
immediately judge them. And do you
know why?

RITA
(cupping her chin with her
hand)
Why?

ANTOINE
Because that person is not like
them!

(MORE)

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

You have to be like everyone else — then you'll be accepted by everyone. But actually, they are the strange ones, people.

RITA

(with a wise look)

Exactly! And Juliet said similar words to yours, too. That adults live standing on their heads! But you're an adult too, aren't you?

ANTOINE

Yes, I'm an adult. That's why I seem very strange. But I didn't manage to fully grow up. I only learned to shave, then learned to fly, but I never learned to be an adult. Do you want to make a sandcastle?

Rita shakes her head negatively.

RITA

So, if you hadn't started growing a beard, you would have remained a child? And then they wouldn't have let you fly?

ANTOINE

They wouldn't have given me an airplane. But flying cannot be forbidden! Flying is the same as dreaming! Now, who can forbid you to dream? Right — no one! Can I go and wash my face in the sea?

RITA

(with surprised eyes)

Of course! Or even better — take a dip, and I'll turn away. I won't peek!

ANTOINE

Is the water warm?

RITA

It's warm near the shore. But deeper — I don't know. I haven't gone deeper than my knees into the water.

Antoine runs to the sea and walks into the water up to his knees. He joyfully splashes water on himself and shouts from there

ANTOINE

Why don't you go deep into the water? Do you not know how to swim and are afraid of the water because of that?

Antoine runs out of the water and back to Rita.

RITA

I know how to swim and I'm not afraid of water. And I love the sea very much, but I don't have a swimsuit! And swimming naked is indecent!

Antoine sitting down next to Rita, looking down.

ANTOINE

But I am afraid of the sea.

RITA

(in surprise)

It can't be! You're afraid? And you call yourself a "king"! How are you going to defend your throne if you're even afraid of water?

ANTOINE

(with a cunning grin)

I don't have to defend it from anyone! And I got this throne because no one else claimed it but me!

(laughs)

You wouldn't want to be the queen of the desert, would you? Exactly!

Rita shakes her head negatively.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

(thoughtfully)

Although, if there were others besides us here, someone would surely want it.

RITA

Why do you think someone would want it?

ANTOINE

To be called a king!

RITA

(also thoughtfully)

Hmm... Yes. Everything is "inside out" with these adults! And still, why are you afraid of the sea? You should be afraid of big dogs. But the sea is warm, beautiful, and kind!

ANTOINE

Not all big dogs are mean, and the sea is not always kind. A friend of mine, also a pilot, crashed into the sea when he was flying over it. Before that, he wrote a book about my son. A good, kind book! But, unfortunately, he died later.

(sadly)

Since then, I've been afraid of the sea!

Rita rubs her eyes with her fists.

RITA

Oh no, now I feel sad..

(and suddenly remembering...)

So you have a son after all? Where is he?

ANTOINE

He lives on the moon!

RITA

(in surprise)

WOW! What is he doing there?

ANTOINE

He writes poems. He says that the noise of the tide bothers him, but silence and the starry sky, on the contrary, give him inspiration!

RITA

What is his name?

ANTOINE

My prince doesn't have a name yet. He is small! When my son grows up, he will choose any name he wants!

RITA

Cool! I wish I could do that! I would probably choose a different name for myself. Although... I've gotten used to mine. Do you see your son?

ANTOINE

Once a year, on a full moon, my son flies here at night with a stream of moonlight! And closer to morning, when the first star fades, he returns. He's due to arrive tonight!

RITA

(claps her hands)

How interesting! The three of us will have more fun, even if only for one night!

ANTOINE

Interesting, but it's unlikely that you will have fun with him. He is always sad. If you look at the stars for a long time, peace settles in your soul, but along with peace – comes sadness.

Children shouldn't look at the stars for long; it's better for them to look at the sky with fluffy clouds. And at the sea – just like you do! That's why you love to laugh, and he does not. But he never listened to me.

RITA

Maybe because you often flew away from home?

Antoine pouring sand from hand to hand.

ANTOINE

Perhaps...

(pause)

But the main thing is to come back, isn't it? Isn't that right?

Rita shrugs her shoulders and gets up from the sand.

RITA

Of course... But it's better not to part at all!

Rita runs to the sea, turns back to Antoine, and shouts from a distance.

RITA (CONT'D)
 It's better not to part at all!!!
 (then wetting her hands in
 the water)
 And do you have a refrigerator with
 ice cream?!

Antoine nods affirmatively and stands up, putting on his helmet.

RITA (CONT'D)
 (returning to Antoine)
 Bring some ice cream for your son
 and me, but closer to night!
 Because it will melt during the
 day.

ANTOINE
 Good. Shall I leave my airplane
 with you?

Rita picks up her doll from the sand and addresses her.

RITA
 Will you take care of Antoine's
 airplane?
 (then smiling, she turns
 to Antoine)
 Juliet liked flying! We will look
 after your airplane!

CLOSE UP ANTOINE'S FACE

Sad, kind eyes and then... an innocent child's smile on his face!

57

EXT. SEASHORE - STARRY NIGHT

A swing stands on the dark surface of the water, under the bright moonlight. A boy in a dark, shining cloak and with a diamond wreath on his head swings on it. He looks about 12 years old.

CLOSE UP RITA
 Rita sleeps, curled up on the sand.
 In her hands is the doll, and next
 to her lies the toy airplane.
 Suddenly, she wakes up. She funny
 rubs her eyes with her fists and
 SEES the Prince in front of her!

RITA
 (LOUDLY!)
 PRINCE!!!

Startled by Rita's sudden exclamation, the boy splashes off the swing into the water. But the height of the swing is small, as is the depth of the water. He only gets wet. The Prince flounders for a few seconds, and then, feeling for his wreath that fell into the water, he discontentedly emerges from the water, putting the wreath back on his head on the way.

PRINCE
 Stupid girl! Why did you have to shout like that?

RITA
 (approaching him)
 Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you!
 (with a chuckle)
 You are just like your dad! He's afraid of water, and you got scared by my voice!
 (laughs)

PRINCE
 I wasn't scared at all. I just didn't expect it. Now I'll be sitting here all wet because of you!

RITA
 You should stay here during the day, don't fly back in the morning. Then your clothes will dry!

PRINCE
 (wringing out his cloak)
 Has my father already blabbed everything about me to you?

RITA
 He didn't tell me anything special. Only that you are still small, but you're actually much older than me!

Prince hanging his cloak on a snag.

PRINCE
 But we are always small to our parents, at any age. That gives them an excuse to forbid us everything!

RITA

But your father doesn't forbid you
from living on the moon, does he?

The Prince walks to the water's edge, lifts his head, and
looks at the starry sky.

PRINCE

He just never flew that high.

CLOSE UP STAR-STUDED SKY

A full moon in a bottomless sky littered with stars!

The Prince sits on the sand by the sea, looking into the
distance. He is stripped to the waist, hugging his shoulders.
The swing, brightly lit by the moonlight, stands nearby in
the sea. Rita approaches the Prince from behind and throws a
large white towel over his shoulders. His wreath lies nearby,
slightly covered with sand.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

Thank you! But why didn't you say
you had a towel right away?

RITA

But it wasn't there before!
Everything is like that here: what
wasn't there suddenly appears, and
what was there can disappear! For
instance, the refrigerator with ice
cream disappeared. It's a shame! I
wish it had appeared instead of the
towel
(sighs and throws up her hands).
Then Rita looks around and sees the
Prince's crown in the sand.

RITA (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Look, your crown might disappear
too! Why is it lying there in the
sand?

PRINCE

Oh, forget it! I'm tired of it!
Want me to give it to you as a
gift?

RITA

(shakes her head
negatively)

You'd better leave your swing for
me!

PRINCE

Sorry, I can't! It's not just a swing; it's my throne. Lots of star fragments fall onto the moon, and I can decorate a new crown with them. But what will I make a throne out of?

They sit in silence for a while, looking at the sky.

RITA

Listen, aren't you tired of constantly staring at the starry sky? I'd die of boredom!

PRINCE

But you yourself like looking at the sea, don't you?

RITA

The sea is different! It's always changing, but your stars shine the same way.

PRINCE

You think that because you've never torn yourself away from the earth and never tried to rise to the stars!

RITA

And what am I supposed to do there? I'm waiting for my mom here. When she comes, we'll go home! And by the way, where is your dad? He said he was coming to see you! After all, you only see each other once a year!

PRINCE

He won't come! He never comes! He only promises.

RITA

So he lied?

PRINCE

Adults always lie! All adults are liars!

RITA

That's not true! My mom is not like that!

PRINCE

How do you know? She's not here with you, is she? Let's fly to the moon together! It will be more interesting there, just the two of us!

RITA

No, I can't. I have to wait for Mom. And I also want to swim in the sea, and Mom will bring me a swimsuit! That's that!

PRINCE

Suit yourself... But I have to go, excuse me. The moonlight has started to fade. See - the moon's reflection in the sea has become blurred?

The Prince stands up and, entering the water, begins to walk slowly towards the swing.

RITA

The moon's reflection is always blurred in the water!

The Prince stops for a second, turns his head, and says

PRINCE

She won't come, you'll see.

58 INT. REANIMATION WARD - DAY (B&W)

CLOSE UP - RITA LIES ON THE BED

Rita lies on the bed with her eyes closed. The CAMERA pulls back, and we see that sensor contacts are attached to her hands and head. An electrocardiograph showing her heart function is on the table next to the bed. Peter sits next to Rita in a white coat, carefully studying her cardiogram.

59 EXT. STREET NEAR THE DOG OWNER'S HOUSE - GLOOMY RAINY DAY

It is raining. Aggressive dog barking is heard inside the house. Ann walks with a confident stride toward the house; she is wearing a black leather jacket and jeans, and she has a pistol in her hand.

CLOSE UP ANN'S FACE

Ann's face radiates aggression; there is vengeance in her eyes! Raindrops are on her face! She is breathing heavily.

Suddenly, Ray appears! He emerges from Ann's side and, with a fast, professional move, snatches the pistol from her hand! Ann, taken by surprise, doesn't have time to react, but a moment later, recovering, she strikes Ray in the face! A fight breaks out!

ANN

Give me my "gun," you jerk!
Goddammit!

RAY

(warding off Ann's blows)
Stop it, Annie! You can't help your
daughter while sitting in prison!

Ann slips on the wet ground.

CLOSE UP LYING ANN

Ann raises her gaze. Raindrops mixed with dirt are on her face. She rises to her knees and looks at her dirty palms.

Ann first speaks quietly, then screams hysterically.

ANN

What is this? Dirt? Goddamn dirt!
Dirt, motherfucker!!!

Ray approaches Ann and offers her his hand so she can stand up. Ann obediently accepts his help.

CLOSE UP PUDDLE

A vague reflection of Ann is
visible in the puddle, raindrops
falling into the water.

ANN (O.S.)

(through the noise of the
rain)
My whole life is one big dirt!!!

Then we see Ann's boot step into the puddle, as if she is trampling on all her past life!

60

INT. DOG OWNER'S ROOM (B&W)

The dog barks near the door. Then the dog runs into the owner's room. The CAMERA follows it. We see the legs of the owner sitting in an armchair, and a used syringe lying near his feet. The camera moves up.

He sits in the armchair, one arm limply hanging down. The dog runs up and licks his hand, but the hand does not react at all. The camera moves up further, and we see that the Dog Owner's head is thrown back, and there is foam around his mouth. Overdose! He is dead! He is a young, VERY handsome guy, 25 years old, with long hair and dark circles under his eyes. His eyes are OPEN and seem to be looking somewhere.

A lyrical blues song begins to play. The CAMERA shifts focus to the wall, which is covered with many rock band posters. The music is suddenly drowned out by the terribly melancholy HOWL of the dog! After a few seconds, the howling stops.

CLOSE UP DOG

The dog lies down on the floor and rests its head on its front paws. The lyrical blues song continues to play.

61 EXT. STREET NEAR THE DOG OWNER'S HOUSE - GLOOMY RAINY DAY
(B&W)

Ray, supporting Ann, who is covered in mud after her fall, helps her into his car. She abruptly pushes his hand away and silently gets into the car by herself.

RAY

You need to take a shower. You can't go to the hospital looking like that.

Ray closes the car door and hears the howling of the dog in the distance, deep inside the house. Ray looks toward the house for a second, then quickly gets into the car.

62 INT. REANIMATION WARD - DAY (B&W)

Rita lies on the bed with her eyes closed. Doctor Peter and Ann stand next to her. Ann is wearing a white coat; there is a kind of detachment in her gaze.

PETER

(in a soothing voice)
The injury the girl sustained during the fall was not dangerous. The damage is only a slight hematoma. The diagnosis of her body shows that all organs are working flawlessly. We also diagnosed her brain - we did an MRI and a positron emission tomography and found no abnormalities.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Moreover, the electroencephalography we performed showed normal electrical activity of the brain. Your daughter's brain is functioning! I think the cause of the coma is not related to the blow to the head during the fall.

Ann approaches the daughter's bed, kneels down, and takes Rita's palm in her hand.

CLOSE UP HANDS

Ann's hand is trembling! For the first time, her hands are trembling!

63 INT. REANIMATION WARD - DAY

Peter gently takes Ann by the shoulders and raises her.

PETER

Don't, Ann. Don't. Let's hope for the best. The brain is a very understudied area of the human body. This is a big problem, but in this lies our hope.

Peter takes her hand and offers her to sit on a chair, and he sits down next to her as well.

PETER (CONT'D)

Let's sit down, Ann. You know, this situation might be reminiscent of a power surge, when a fuse trips to prevent a short circuit in the system and cuts off the electricity. Something similar happened to your daughter's brain. Seeing a furious Rottweiler running after her favorite poodle, and then seeing her grandmother attacked by this fierce dog..

CLOSE UP ANN'S FACE

Ann covers her face with her hands.

PETER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(putting his hand on Ann's hand)
(MORE)

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

I tell you, Ann, even an adult man who saw such a scene, where a beast bites a living person, would surely receive a serious psychological shock! And Rita is just a small child. Apparently, that very "fuse" tripped in her brain! — trying to protect her nervous system. Therefore, she might wake up tomorrow, or maybe even in an hour...

The CAMERA moves away from Ann's face. She takes her hands away from her face and says in an emptied voice:

ANN

Or never...

PETER

In this situation, you, more than anyone, must keep hope in your heart. Do you believe in God?

Ann shrugs indefinitely. She looks around, and there is still a kind of detachment from the whole world on her face. Everything that is happening seems like a bad dream to her.

PETER (CONT'D)

(smiling restrainedly)

You know, I also have doubts, and sometimes it seems to me that... I've heard from faithful people that a mother's prayer to God is very powerful! More powerful than any other prayer!

ANN

I was in the war. And even when bullets whizzed over my head, I didn't think about God.

PETER

(with unfeigned interest
and sympathy)

And what were you thinking about then?

ANN

I wasn't thinking about anything. I was part of that bloody mess, interspersed with fire and dust from the explosions. And I wasn't praying. I was screaming...

Peter leans closer to Ann, listening to her words with even greater attention. Meaning appears in Ann's eyes, as if she is beginning to come to her senses. She turns her gaze to Peter and, seeing a silent question in his eyes, continues to speak:

ANN (CONT'D)

I was swearing!

Peter cautiously puts his arm around her shoulders.

ANN (CONT'D)

(pausing for a second)

However...

(pause and turning face-
to-face with Peter)

When I was bandaging my comrade's
wound, I remembered God. Once...

PETER

You are very unlike your mother-in-
law. Unlike Maria.

ANN

How is she feeling?

(and then in an uncertain
voice)

Should I visit her, perhaps?

PETER

Maria's life is not in danger, and
her nervous system turned out to be
very strong. She didn't even go
into shock. Of course, her right
arm was badly injured by the dog's
bite, but fortunately, the dog's
owner managed to quickly pull the
animal away. So, you don't have to
visit her at all. She needs
complete rest right now and doesn't
need anything.

ANN

Can I stay next to Rita?

PETER

Of course, Ann! But first, you need
to go home! You need to get a good
night's sleep - you will still need
strength. But tomorrow - come.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

I already said that the processes in the human brain are less researched by scientists than the Mariana Trench in the ocean, and some processes are unknown in principle. You, Ann, can take a children's book, sit next to your daughter, and read quietly! Or even better - talk to her! Recall some vivid events that the two of you had - joint trips, walks, birthdays, finally! Any positive memories will not be superfluous. The bond between a daughter and mother is very strong!

ANN

(standing up from the chair)

Memories?

(with a sad, ironic smile)

What if there are almost none of those memories? We didn't have trips together, Doctor. There's nothing to remember...

The CAMERA moves and focuses on the window behind which the rain is falling. Then the camera shifts focus to the corner of the wall, and we see a deep CRACK.

CLOSE UP PETER'S FACE

Peter lowers his gaze.

64 INT. REANIMATION WARD - DAY

Ann walks towards the door and, turning back, says.

ANN

Perhaps I should visit Maria after all? She is receiving treatment somewhere nearby, isn't she? In the next building?

Peter also stands up from the chair and, shuffling his feet nervously, says

PETER

You see, Ann...

Peter runs a hand over his unshaven face, showing signs of fatigue.

PETER (CONT'D)

The thing is... The thing is, your mother-in-law doesn't want to see you. She asked that you not be let in to her. I don't know the reason for this, maybe it's just nerves... (spreads his hands and takes a step toward Ann)

ANN

You yourself said that her nerves are very strong. I know the reason... Well...

Ann takes a step toward Peter and rests her palm on his shoulder.

ANN (CONT'D)

I am very grateful to you, Peter! I will definitely come to Rita tomorrow!

(a faint smile))

And...

(pause))

I'll bring a good children's book with me!

A smile appears on the doctor's face. Ann opens the door and leaves the room. Peter takes the doll "Juliet" from his briefcase and places it next to Rita. Then Peter searches for something in his briefcase and pulls out a book!

CLOSE UP PETER'S FACE

There is emotional pain in his eyes! He runs his hand over his eyes and addresses Rita, lying in a coma:

PETER

Well now, my girl - we're going to read a book! (smiles)

The CAMERA pulls back, we see Peter sitting with a book in his hands.

PETER (CONT'D)

I won't read you naive children's fairy tales, Rita. I'll read you a book about a little boy who lived on the moon, and this story is written for ADULTS! You're already an adult, aren't you?

CLOSE UP BOOK

In Peter's hands is a book. The title on the cover is The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. He opens it.

65 EXT. STREET. DOG OWNER'S HOUSE - GLOOMY DAY.

The heavy rain has turned into a drizzle. Undertakers carry the body of the "Dog Owner," covered with a blanket, out of the house on a stretcher. A police car and two police officers are standing nearby, talking to each other.

POLICE OFFICER 1
So, no relatives were found?

POLICE OFFICER 2
(shrugging)
His father has been in prison for a long time. The judge sentenced him to about two hundred years
(with a smirk)
His mother died long ago, he had no wife, but distant relatives will be found when it's time to divide the property. The house is not bad, so don't doubt it - they will show up!
(with irony)

Besides, there wasn't much time to look. When his neighbor called us, the guy had already been dead for a few days! And the dog was next to him.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Animal Control took the dog's body yesterday.
(and then with a smirk)
Animal Control took the dog's body yesterday.
(and then with a smirk)
A medical examiner isn't needed for her, after all.

POLICE OFFICER 2
(with a chuckle)
What if he is needed? You don't know what the dog died from! Maybe she had an overdose too?!

Both police officers laugh! The funeral service vehicle drives away from the house. The CAMERA follows the car as it drives along the street past the houses.

66 EXT. STREET - GLOOMY DAY. (POV)

A light rain is falling. An unknown person (POV) wants to cross the road. The funeral home car drives past him on the road. The unknown person (POV) watches it drive away and crosses the road, then approaches a house.

67 EXT. NEAR THE HOUSE - GLOOMY DAY.

A light rain is falling. A young teenager, about 14 years old, in a hooded jacket, is standing near the house and ringing the doorbell.

68 INT. HARRY'S ROOM - DAY

The room is very bright, with many posters - superheroes, movie stars, rock bands. The upholstery of the soft furniture is multicolored. Everything suggests that a teenager lives here. The teenager, Harry 14 years old, sits on the bed with his legs tucked under him, holding an acoustic guitar and playing the motive of Eric Clapton's song "Tears in Heaven." The teenager has long hair and a crumpled T-shirt with a ketchup stain. The doorbell rings, but Harry continues to play the guitar.

LOUD FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Harry, are you deaf? Someone is here for you!

(sound of the door opening)

The teenager who was standing near the house enters the room, holding a puppy. He has removed his jacket and is wearing a light sweater with the inscription "Don't worry! Be happy!" and a Bob Marley print.

GUEST

Hi, man!

He puts the black puppy down on the floor, and it runs to the teenager-guitarist. The teenager immediately puts the guitar aside and starts to play rough with the puppy.

HARRY

(laughs)

Wow! Bro, you bought a real monster! Look how he bites! A fighting dog!

The puppy gets funnily angry and tries to grab the boy's hand, with which he is teasing it.

GUEST

That was a cool tune you were playing! Is that Clapton? Cool!

HARRY

Yeah!

(continuing to play with the puppy)

Nevaeh taught me how to play, the chords, and everything!

GUEST

(takes a chair, sits down and laughs)

I know that guy! He's got a funny name - "heaven," if you read it backward! He was a cool musician, but now he's a "junkie."

GUEST (CONT'D)

No one has seen him for a week! He probably "shot up" and is lying in his "den" "passed out"! He flew to heaven!

Both boys laugh!

CLOSE UP PUPPY

The very funny puppy continues to try to bite the boy's hand and growls "fiercely"!

69

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY, DIMLY LIT (B&W)

Ann walks with a determined stride out of her daughter's room and confidently closes the door behind her. She takes a few steps and SUDDENLY HER LEGS GIVE WAY! Ann grabs the wall, her strength leaves her, but she clings to the wall and slowly moves forward. A lamp hangs from the ceiling. The lamp begins to flicker. The camera focuses on this lamp.

CLOSE UP LAMP

The lamp crackles, flickers, and then goes out. The area is dimly lit for a couple of seconds. Then the lamp lights up again.

Maria stands in the middle of the dimly lit corridor with her right arm bandaged.

CLOSE UP ANN

Ann pushes herself away from the wall and, straightening up, takes a few steps forward. She looks at Maria, not knowing what to say. Then, gathering her courage, she addresses her

ANN

Am I a very bad mother?

CLOSE UP MARIA'S FACE

There is no anger and no judgment on Maria's face. There is pain and regret in her eyes. Regret simultaneously for the unfortunate Rita and for Ann, who is lost on her life's path. Maria is silent.

ANN (CONT'D)

(approaches Maria)

I know that I threw my life into
the garbage.

SUDDENLY, Ann bursts into sobs, as if a waterfall of feelings that had been a prisoner in a rusty water pipe for many years burst from her soul! Maria gently touches Ann's head with her left hand, and Ann falls onto her chest, continuing to cry. Maria embraces her.

MARIA

Perhaps your life started precisely
today. A real life!

The hospital entrance door opens, and Ray walks in.

CLOSE UP ANN'S FACE

Ann raises her head, tears on her face. She awkwardly, like a small child, wipes them with her sleeve.

CLOSE UP RAY

On his kind face, there is a barely
noticeable smile. Behind his back,
the sunlight breaks through. The
rain has ended.

The CAMERA focuses on the sunlight behind Ray.

The bright sun shines INTO THE CAMERA! A blinding sun!

70

EXT. SEASHORE - BRIGHT SUNNY DAY.

A blinding sun! Then the camera pulls back, and we see the dawn in a bright pink glaze of the cloudless sky, under which is a gentle sea! The camera focuses on the shoreline. Soft yellow sand and waves rolling onto the shore.

CLOSE UP RITA'S FACE

Rita squints from the sunlight; there is a carefree, childlike smile on her face. The CAMERA pulls back from the girl; we see her sitting near the shore, her small legs tucked under her. A refrigerator stands on the sand nearby, and Rita holds an ice cream cone in her hand. Credits with the title of Part 3 and the entire film: "LIVE!"

THE AND.