

ANDREA VS TOWN OF DARKNESS

FADE IN:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

THREE BOYS (8,9, 10) stand in a loose circle around ANDREA REFUGE (8, long blonde hair, glowing grey eyes). They snicker, pointing at her.

BOY
(sneers)
She has no friends.

BOY TWO
Yeah, she's all alone, just a
weirdo.

BOY THREE
(smirks)
Look at her, so weird. Like, what
even is she?

Andrea stands still, lowering her head. Sadness flickers in her eyes, but her fists clench behind her back, trembling with tension. The boys keep jeering.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Why do they always make fun of me?
What did I do wrong?

She breathes in deeply, then suddenly ...

EXT. PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

THUD! The three boys lie sprawled in the mud, faces bruised, groaning in pain. Blood trickles from their noses and lips.

BOY
(whimpering)
Sorry - for bullying you. Please -
just leave us alone.

Andrea stands above them, breathing heavily, her fist still clenched. She doesn't smile. She doesn't speak. She just stares down at them with calm intensity.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I don't like being provoked. I was
only defending myself. I didn't
mean for it to go that far - I
think.

EXT. PHOTO STUDIO - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: *BOULDER, COLORADO - PRESENT DAY*

ANDREA (V.O.)

Every family wants to act like they're normal. Like they've got it all figured out.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

A busy, old-fashioned PHOTO STUDIO, bustling with families. Kids laughing, cameras flashing. Inside, ANDREA REFUGE (16) stands beside her brother, JACK REFUGE (12, short black hair, hazel eyes that gleam in the sunlight).

The family is posed, somewhat stiff. JACK nudges Andrea in the ribs.

JACK

I'm not touching you, 'Drea.

ANDREA

(playfully)

The hand that touched boogers?

She shoves Jack lightly. Jack sways with exaggerated flair, holding his side like she wounded him.

PAPA REFUGE (70s, Italian, grizzled, with a slight limp, speaks in a low, hushed tone) watches them from behind, his brow furrowed.

PAPA

Alright, you two. Knock it off.

ANDREA

He started it, Papa.

JACK

(shrugs)

She didn't have to shove me.

MAMA REFUGE (50s, blonde, Italian, with a mix of kindness and sternness) pats Andrea on the shoulder, giving her a soft but warning look.

MAMA

Please, Andrea and Jack, let's behave. We want to send something nice to the relatives.

Andrea nods, her eyes softening.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You know how hard it is for them to approve anything, considering you know, the age difference between your Papa and me.

She glances at Jack. He sticks his tongue out playfully, then grins. Andrea rolls her eyes.

ANDREA (V.O.)

I'm sorry Mama, Papa, Jack - I know we're supposed to look happy.

The family in front of them finishes up and walks off. The PHOTOGRAPHER waves them forward.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)

Next in line, please!

Andrea dashes forward enthusiastically.

PAPA

Wait your turn, Andrea.

Jack runs up beside her, wiggling his fingers like claws.

JACK

(grinning)

Manners, just like Papa said.

Andrea grabs a PLASTIC WAND off the nearby prop table and brandishes it like a sword.

ANDREA

(playfully)

Stay back, you monster!

Jack holds his hand out, lurching forward like a zombie.

JACK

Yes, master - I obey.

Papa watches, limping closer, shaking his head with amusement.

PAPA

I don't need to fall and not get back up because of you two.

Mama sighs, her arms crossed, watching the scene unfold.

MAMA

Andrea, keep an eye on your brother. You know how he gets.

Andrea lowers her "sword," giving a mock salute.

ANDREA
I'll always keep an eye on him,
Mama.

Mama gives her a small, approving smile.

MAMA
That's a good sister.

She leans in and kisses Andrea on the cheek. Andrea makes a face and wipes it off.

ANDREA
Yuck!

The Photographer snaps his fingers impatiently, motioning for them to line up. The Refuge family arranges themselves. Andrea and Jack in the front, Mama and Papa in the back. They force smiles.

PHOTOGRAPHER
(flatly)
Pretend you're a happy family.

Click. The camera captures the moment.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Everyone knows that photographs
lie. We're not perfect - but we
love each other, even when things
feel broken

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

A RED CAR pulls up to a rundown apartment building. The car's door creaks as Papa steps out slowly, favoring his bad leg. Mama gets out on the other side.

MAMA
Help your Papa up the stairs, Jack.

JACK
(immediately)
Yes, Mama.

Andrea rolls her eyes but follows.

ANDREA
(grumbling)
Fine.

MAMA
What was that, Andrea?

Papa waves them off with a gruff chuckle.

PAPA
I'm fine, really. I'm not that
unstable. Yet.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is small and cramped. A stove hums in the corner next to an old bed. PAPA is at the stove, stirring a pot of stew. Jack darts past him, almost knocking into him.

ANDREA (V.O.)
This is how I remember everything
going down.

Jack laughs but suddenly freezes. His eyes dart to the walls, which seem to squirm. GIANT COCKROACHES, SPIDERS, and EARTHWORMS crawl everywhere, grotesque and crawling toward Papa.

PAPA
*This place can go up in flames if
we're not careful.*

JACK
(alarmed)
Don't the giant bugs bother you?

Andrea bursts into the room, eyes wide at seeing the massive insects. Without hesitating, she grabs a KNIFE from the counter and swings at the bugs.

ANDREA
Get back, you fifthly things.

PAPA
(wincing)
*Careful! I don't want to spill the
stew-*

He ducks just in time as Andrea's knife narrowly misses his head, instead lodging into a cockroach. SPLAT! Green goo bursts out, splattering onto Mama, who sighs in exasperation.

MAMA
(wiping herself off)
*Andrea, dear, we're having your
Papa's favorite meal tonight. It's
his birthday, remember?*

ANDREA
That's right.

MAMA
It's a celebration. And the bugs -
well, they add flavor.

Andrea pulls the knife from the insect with a grimace.

PAPA
I hope it still tastes good.

Mama wipes her fingers on the cockroaches and licks them.

ANDREA
(taken aback)
Add flavor?

Andrea pulls the knife from the insect with a grimace.

Mama licks her finger where the green blood hit her.

MAMA
(smiling)
This one tastes like honey. It'll
be fine.

Papa snorts, stirring the pot again.

PAPA
I hope it still tastes good with
all the extra protein.

Andrea gives the bugs a wary glance but taps her knife in the
pot and tastes the broth.

ANDREA
(tentative)
Still - tastes good, Papa. I guess
we'll have to - wipe out the rest
somewhere else.

MAMA
Bugs are good for protein, you
know.

Papa waves them away, his patience thinning.

PAPA
Enough of this. Out! Out! I need to
finish prepping for tonight!

Jack races out, but Andrea lingers by the door, looking over
her shoulder at Papa.

ANDREA
 (softly)
 What if - what if you're not here
 when we come back?

Papa looks up from his cooking, meeting her gaze.

PAPA
 (smiling)
 We'll always be here, Andrea. This
 is our home. We're not going
 anywhere.

MAMA
 (nodding)
 That's right. We won't disappear.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 You're probably wondering what's up
 with the giant bugs... it's a long
 story.

FADE OUT

EXT. MOUNTAIN - FLASHBACK

Snow falls thick and fast. The wind HOWLS as CARSON SMITH (45, heavy blue jacket, brown pants, green fedora) and Papa stand on a steep mountain. They pull ice picks from their backpacks and hammer them into the frozen ground. The CRACK of ice is heard beneath their strikes.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 Papa is an explorer. He and his
 buddy Carson opened a gateway to
 another world.

Suddenly, the ice beneath them shatters—CRACK, CRACK—splintering in every direction. A bolt of electricity WHOOSHES from the ground, followed by a loud RUMBLE. KABOOM! Electric currents shoot in all directions, and Papa and Carson are suspended in the air.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 But before they could close the
 gateway, monsters, and giant
 insects came through. Papa didn't
 seem to mind, in any case.

Their eyes widen as dark creatures crawl through the rift.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. APARTMENT PORCH - DAY - PRESENT

JACK opens the door and steps out onto the porch. In the distance, a ROAR echoes through the city.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Now, Jack and I have to fight those creatures every day.

JACK
Let's get this over with.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Papa once told us about a conversation he had with Carson. It was a turning point for them.

INT. LABORATORY - FLASHBACK

Dim lighting and unsettling shadows move across the walls. A long, dark tentacle slithers past Papa, narrowly missing him.

PAPA
That was way too close.

CARSON
If we can figure out what this is, we might find a cure for all the world's diseases.

PAPA
Even if you do, what stops them from taking over everything?

CARSON
They won't. Relax.

The tentacles writhe ominously in the background.

ANDREA (V.O.)
That portal is still open. Papa wants to take me there one day. He says I should see it for myself—but he's also scared of the sentinels that came through. I'm not frightened. I can handle it.

END FLASHBACK

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Papa, Mama, and Jack sit around a table—bowls of soup before them. The mood is tense.

PAPA
Have you taken your medicine yet,
Andrea?

Andrea shakes her head.

ANDREA
I don't need it.

MAMA
Honey, you know I don't like that
stuff either. But it helps you see
things clearer.

Andrea looks at them both, then stands abruptly.

ANDREA
I'm fine. I want to go outside.

She darts out of the room. Jack follows quickly behind.

Mama and Papa exchange a weary look.

EXT. APARTMENT STAIRWAY - DAY

Andrea climbs the stairs, a long stick in hand. The stairs are infested with bugs. WHACK. She swats a bug off the railing, SPLAT. Jack leaps past her, bounding up the stairs with excitement.

JACK
'Drea, wait for me!

ANDREA
These bugs are everywhere!

JACK
I bet you can't catch me!

ANDREA
Jack! Slow down!

Jack laughs, speeding up. Andrea, determined, picks up the pace.

Mama and Papa step outside just in time to see Andrea chasing Jack down the street.

INT. PARK - DAY

Andrea is running full speed through an open field. She's determined to catch Jack.

ANDREA

I'm coming for you, Jack!

Suddenly, a small bee lands on her arm. She pauses, staring at it curiously. Another bee lands on her hand, then one on her leg.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

What's going on?

More bees land on her as if drawn to her energy. The buzz of wings fills the air. A GIANT BEE descends before her, and she freezes, eyes wide—her heart pounds.

GIANT BEE

Do not be afraid.

Andrea's breath catches. She trembles slightly.

ANDREA

What do you want?

The Giant Bee hovers in the air, its wings flapping silently.

GIANT BEE

I've seen the destruction that the portal has caused. I cannot bear to watch another world fall. I offer you a refuge.

Andrea steps back, but the bees surround her, holding her in place. She shakes her head, unsettled.

ANDREA (V.O.)

Why does anyone want to help me?

The Giant Bee lowers itself, almost bowing before her.

GIANT BEE

When the sentinels come, seek me out. It will be the only way to save your world.

JACK'S VOICE echoes from across the park.

JACK (O.S.)

'Drea, where are you? You're supposed to be chasing me!

The bees suddenly scatter, flying off of her. Andrea spins around to find Jack waving at her from a distance. She looks back, but the Giant Bee has vanished.

She takes off running toward Jack but accidentally bumps into Papa.

PAPA
Andrea, there's been an emergency.
We have to leave.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The family— Papa, Mama, Andrea, and Jack—wears their Sunday best. A lightning bolt strikes in the distance, casting a shadow across the mountain.

Andrea waves to the shadow.

JACK
Who are you waving at?

ANDREA
Carson. He's up there, on the
mountain.

Papa frowns, clearly disturbed.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The pews are empty except for Papa and Mama. Photos of Carson are spread around. Papa, eyes wet, stares down at the images. Mama sits beside him, her expression cold.

PAPA
He was my best friend.

MAMA
It's for the better.

Papa clenches his fists.

PAPA
I could've kept both of you in my
life.

MAMA
After what he did? After what she
saw?

PAPA
He made a mistake.

MAMA

His mistake got him killed.

PAPA

It wasn't on purpose. He just got reckless.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Papa, Mama, Andrea, and Jack stand in a cluttered office, a tense silence lingering in the air. A *KNIGHT STATUE* in the corner suddenly creaks and moves.

KNIGHT STATUE

Boo!

The family jumps back, startled.

PAPA

What the hell?

KNIGHT STATUE

I didn't mean to scare you. Carson wanted to give you, his home.

ANDREA

Are you a talking statue?

PAPA

Quiet, Andrea. We don't even know where he lived.

KNIGHT STATUE

On the other side of the Rockies.

Papa's eyes narrow.

PAPA

So, you're what Carson was working on?

KNIGHT STATUE

Yes. He transferred his mind into me.

PAPA

I've never been that far into Colorado.

ANDREA

That's through the portal. It's too dangerous.

MAMA

It's a fresh start. We need that.

ANDREA

This can't be real.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT

Andrea lies in bed, staring at the ceiling.

ANDREA (V.O.)

That night, everything changed.

Suddenly, BAM! BAM! Gunshots ring out. Andrea bolts upright, heart racing. THUMP, THUMP. She creeps out of bed, her feet touching the cold floor.

Her hands tremble as she reaches for the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andrea peeks into the hallway. Above her, a hatch in the ceiling.

VOICE (O.S.)

Is someone else here?

VOICE TWO (O.S.)

I'll check.

ANDREA

Oh no -

She sees SENTINELS in hazmat suits moving down the hallway toward her.

SENTINEL

There she is. Stop her!

Andrea darts forward, diving between the legs of the Sentinel and sprinting down the hall.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Andrea bursts into the open air but finds herself trapped in a dead-end alley. She's cornered, and the sound of footsteps grows louder. She presses her hands against the brick wall, searching for an escape.

Suddenly, her fingers find a hidden latch. She pulls it open, revealing a dark stairway leading up to the attic.

She takes one last look behind her, then darts up the stairs.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Andrea is shaking, scanning the room in a panic. Her eyes dart from corner to corner, desperately seeking a hiding place. Her hand trembles as she closes the latch with a WHAP. It clicks, locking her in. SHE HEARS FOOTSTEPS nearby.

SENTINEL (O.S.)
She couldn't have gone far.

SENTINEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She went to the left.

The FOOTSTEPS grow faint, moving away. Andrea exhales, her breath shaky.

VOICE (O.S.)
I told you they would come.

Andrea spins around, startled.

ANDREA
I'm scared.

A GIANT BEE hovers nearby, its massive wings vibrating softly. Its many eyes glisten in the dim light.

GIANT BEE
You'll be safe here.

Andrea sinks to the floor, curling up in a ball, her body trembling-tears well in her eyes.

ANDREA
What's happening?

GIANT BEE
I promise everything will be okay.

The light in the attic fades slowly, leaving Andrea alone in the darkness.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Andrea wakes up on the hard floor, disoriented. Sunlight filters through the cracks.

VOICE (O.S.)
*It's been three days since you
grabbed food.*

Andrea sits up, surrounded by empty food wrappers. She blinks at the Giant Bee, now hovering closer, smaller bees swarming around it.

ANDREA
*I just... I'm not sure those things
are gone.*

Andrea swats at a bee buzzing near her face. She catches it mid-air. It buzzes frantically in her hands.

BZZ

Without thinking, she brings the bee closer to her mouth.

CRUNCH.

The Giant Bee watches her almost impassively.

GIANT BEE
Hm.

ANDREA
What? Bees have nutrients.

GIANT BEE
*You need to check on your brother,
your parents. Find out where they
are.*

Andrea stands, moving aimlessly around the attic.

ANDREA
Yeah... I guess.

The Giant Bee's antennae twitch.

GIANT BEE
Plus, you stink.

Andrea sniffs herself and gags, the realization hitting her.

ANDREA (V.O.)
*Damn, I need more than a change of
clothes. I need a change of life.*

Andrea unlocks the hatch, takes a deep breath, and steps outside.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Andrea emerges from the hidden latch. There is silence. She turns around to see... nothing. It's just a blank wall. She sighs as the wind whips through the empty lot.

ANDREA

Sigh.

The wind blows faster, and Andrea pulls her coat tighter, walking towards her apartment. From the stairs, JACK, her younger brother, comes barreling down.

JACK

'Drea! You're alive!

Still in a daze, Andrea looks at him, wind whipping her hair.

ANDREA

Jack?

Jack grabs her in a tight hug.

JACK

Those people... they took Mama and Papa in Hazmat suits. They tied me up. I got loose after a day, but... but they're gone.

Andrea's eyes widen.

ANDREA

You don't think they would...?

JACK

I hope they didn't go through the portal.

Andrea shakes her head, the weight of everything sinking in.

ANDREA

We need to talk to Carson.

Jack's face falls.

JACK

'Drea, Carson's dead.

Andrea looks away, unsure of what to believe.

ANDREA

No. That was a ruse. Papa wanted to get his house so we'd have more space.

Jack sniffs, wiping his nose with his sleeve.

JACK
You need a shower first.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The lights are out. Andrea, wrapped in a towel, steps gingerly on police tape stretched across the floor. From the bathroom, the sound of running water echoes. Jack sits on the couch, nervously bouncing his leg.

JACK
How do we even find Carson?

Andrea stands, deep in thought.

ANDREA
Papa mentioned him living in the mountains. Somewhere remote.

Jack's face drops.

JACK
That's... that's a fifteen-hour walk.

ANDREA
Then we need to pack. Now.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

A blizzard rages. Snow whips through the air, almost blinding. JACK and ANDREA trudge through the storm, bundled in heavy coats, barely visible against the white landscape.

SUPER: ROCKY MOUNTAINS

They stumble upon the entrance to a dark cave, its mouth vast and ominous.

ANDREA
This has to be it.

Jack, panting, pulls his scarf tighter against the cold.

JACK
You better be right, 'Drea.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I knew I was right. Carson was
still alive. I could feel it.

INT. CAVE - DAY

The interior is surprisingly cozy. There's a bed, a small kitchen setup, and framed pictures on the walls. CARSON, a rugged man in his 40s, paces back and forth, his eyes wild with energy.

CARSON
The Sentinels... They're from the other side of the portal—Inception Heights.

Andrea looks at the pictures—Carson and Papa, smiling like brothers.

ANDREA
Why take Mama and Papa through the portal?

Carson stops pacing, his eyes narrowing.

CARSON
Your Papa... he captured one of them. One of the creatures. We planned to dissect it. Learn its secrets. Maybe even find a cure for what's wrong with this world. We would've been rich.

JACK
But it backfired, didn't it?

Andrea sighs.

ANDREA
Papa hated the apartment. Of course, he wanted more money.

Carson grabs a heavy jacket from a nearby hook and pulls on a fedora.

CARSON
Stay here. I'm going to send the creature back through the portal. It's too dangerous for you.

ANDREA
No. We're coming. We're going to rescue Mama and Papa.

Jack looks at a picture—Mama standing in the background, frowning behind Carson and Papa.

JACK
Mama hated you, Carson.

Carson looks away, guilt flashing across his face.

CARSON
I know. But I'm sending the creature through. I have to.

He pulls a blanket off something... a mass underneath it twitches. A tentacle slithers out.

ANDREA
If something goes wrong, Mama and Papa could die. I won't risk it.

JACK
Yeah, and I'm too young to be left alone.

Carson sighs, shaking his head.

CARSON
If it all goes wrong... someone has to stay alive. We need a resistance.

Andrea steps forward, determined.

ANDREA
I have to see them.

Jack steps up next to her, standing tall.

JACK
We've always had each other's backs. I'm coming too.

Carson hesitates but eventually nods.

CARSON
Fine. Suit up. We need supplies first.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DAY

Andrea, Jack, and Carson battle through the wind, each step against the roaring snowstorm—the cold bites at their skin.

ANDREA

Is the portal up here?

Carson points ahead.

CARSON

*We thought there'd be treasure here—
guaranteeing a better life.*

ANDREA

*Our life wasn't miserable, Carson.
We were fine.*

CARSON

*But with more money, your Papa
could've afforded your medication.*

ANDREA

*That medication made me forget
things. I don't need it.*

Carson squints into the storm.

CARSON

The portal's just over that ridge.

ANDREA

Let's get this over with.

The snow falls faster, and Jack stumbles a bit.

JACK

This weather's getting worse.

CARSON

We're almost there. Hang tight.

*Suddenly, a low GROWL echoes through the wind. A massive,
GLOWING GREEN TIGER steps into view, its eyes blazing red,
foam dripping from its jaws.*

CARSON (CONT'D)

Stay back—approach with caution.

*The Tiger's eyes lock onto Jack, and it LUNGES. Andrea leaps
in front, pushing Jack aside.*

JACK

'Drea, watch out!

*Andrea rolls out of the way as the Tiger swipes at her. It
turns its attention to Carson and POUNCES, knocking him
towards the cliff's edge.*

Carson stumbles, teetering on the brink. His feet slip on the ice, and with a final SWAT from the creature, he falls over the edge.

ANDREA

No!

The Tiger turns back towards Jack, growling.

JACK

What do we do?

Andrea grabs Jack's arm, pulling him along.

ANDREA

Run! Run like hell!

They disappear into the storm, the Tiger GROWLING as it gives chase.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Andrea plunges into the blue water, her body hitting the surface with a splash. She struggles to stay afloat, gasping for air as her legs kick frantically.

ANDREA

No, no!

From the depths below, a hand suddenly grabs her ankle. She jerks her leg, panicking, fighting to keep her head above water.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

You will not pull me down!

The hand tightens its grip, dragging her under the surface. Andrea thrashes wildly, bubbles rising as she fights for every inch. Another hand grips her other leg, pulling harder. She's being dragged deeper into the darkness.

EXT. STREET - DAY

WHAM! Andrea slams into the ground, landing hard on her side on a street paved with gold bricks. She groans, rolling over in pain. Her fingers brush against her forehead, feeling a rising lump.

ANDREA (V.O.)

Ouch! I didn't stick the landing on that one.

Shivering, she tries to steady herself, the wind's chill biting through her clothes. Slowly, she pushes herself to her knees, wincing as she straightens. The cold bites deeper, making her hug her body for warmth.

A large sign looms in front of her: "WELCOME TO INCEPTION HEIGHTS, YOUR IMAGINATION, OUR REALITY."

Andrea stares at the sign, then cautiously rises to her feet. Beyond the sign, she catches a glimpse of movement – a foot shifting in the distance.

ANDREA

Who's there?

She quickly ducks behind the sign, her heart pounding. The foot moves again, accompanied by a low, agonized moan. Her eyes widen.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Jack?

She moves cautiously toward the figure, recognizing the familiar shape. As she gets closer, she sees it is indeed Jack, slumped on the ground, barely conscious. Without hesitation, she darts to his side, grabbing and shaking his arm.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Come on, stay awake, Jack!

Jack's eyes flicker open, a weak smile forming on his lips.

JACK

This -

(he coughs)

- this is already a nightmare.

Andrea pulls him up, her hands trembling slightly. She hooks her arm around his shoulder, helping him stand.

ANDREA

Did you go through water, too?

Jack leans heavily on her, squinting through the pain.

JACK

No. After the portal grabbed us, I ended up in some kind of hallway.

Then -

He winces, clutching his ribs.

JACK (CONT'D)
*I kept getting hit by something,
like an electric shock. Next thing
I knew, I was falling and*

He gestures weakly to the ground.

JACK (CONT'D)
I landed here.

Andrea glances around. The eerie stillness of the golden-bricked road stretches out before them. No signs of life, no sounds except for their labored breathing.

ANDREA
We need to head into Inception Heights. Mama and Papa, they're here somewhere. I can feel it.

Jack frowns, looking around skeptically.

JACK
This place. It's too quiet. Just listen.

The silence presses in on them, the unnatural stillness making Andrea's stomach churn. She starts biting her nails, and a nervous habit resurfaces.

ANDREA
It's like... something's waiting to happen. I don't like it. If we stay here too long.

Her voice trails off, but the unspoken fear lingers in the air. Jack nods, his face pale but determined.

JACK
Right, let's keep moving.

Together, they start walking. As they crest a ridge, their eyes widen at the sight before them.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

A picturesque town lies before us, filled with paved roads, charming buildings, and lush trees. Oddly, the sun and moon occupy the sky, casting a surreal glow over everything.

ANDREA
(eyes wide)
Unbelievable.

JACK
 (grinning)
 All we had to do was walk over the
 ridge.

Andrea turns, her gaze drawn to the encroaching darkness
 behind them.

ANDREA
 What the—

She steps back in disbelief as the road behind them dissolves
 into shadows.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 This is strange.

Jack spins around, peering into the dark.

JACK
 It's like the path just...
 disappears as we move forward.

ANDREA
 (gripping Jack's arm)
 We can't turn back. We have to keep
 moving. Our parents are out there
 somewhere.

They turn to face the shimmering path ahead, the darkness
 creeping ominously behind them.

JACK
 Right. Forward it is.

As they walk, a VINE, blooming with vibrant flowers, slithers
 out from the side and extends toward them.

JACK (CONT'D)
 (raising an eyebrow)
 That's... odd.

VINE
 (suddenly animated)
 Frank, I found them!

Another vine joins, curling around Jack and Andrea.

ANDREA
 (eyes widening)
 Wait, the vines can talk? This is
 trippy.

JACK
Is this what being high feels like?

VINE TWO
I say we take them now!

ANDREA
(taking a step back)
Hold up! You're not taking us
anywhere!

VINE
You're the ones with the human
parents?

ANDREA
Do you know where they are?

VINE
We can take you to them... after
the meal. You are hungry, aren't
you?

Jack steps forward, his stomach rumbling.

JACK
(nodding)
I am.

ANDREA
No way. We're not going anywhere
with you until we find our parents.

Suddenly, the Vines wrap tightly around Jack, who struggles
against their grasp.

VINE TWO
Come for a ride instead.

VINE
Dinner is going to be good tonight.

VINE TWO
I love a human entrée!

ANDREA (V.O.)
(thoughts racing)
This is insane. They can't eat us;
they don't even have teeth!

The other Vine encircles Andrea, squeezing tighter with each
futile struggle.

JACK
*'Drea! They said they can take us
 to Mom and Dad!*

ANDREA (V.O.)
 (determined)
*I don't trust them, Jack. I trust
 myself.*

EXT. STREET - DAY

*The Vines suddenly release Jack and Andrea, sending them
 tumbling onto the road.*

VINE
 (confused)
*I don't get it. Why can't we eat
 them now?*

ANDREA
You're not eating us. You can't!

VINE TWO
No, we must wait for the boss.

JACK
What boss? Is this a video game?

*Andrea glances up, her eyes landing on a wrought iron gate
 reading "EVILTON ESTATES."*

ANDREA
 (shaking her head)
*I'm not going in there. Just the
 name... No way.*

JACK
 (eyes wide)
Nope. Not happening.

The Vines rise ominously above their heads.

VINE
You must. It's where the feast is.

ANDREA
*You said you'd take us to our
 parents!*

VINE TWO
 (smirking)
After the feast.

JACK
It looks creepy!

Suddenly, the Vines sprout menacing thorns.

VINE
We'll stab you here if you refuse.

VINE TWO
Yes, that's appropriate!

With a quick stab, the thorns poke Jack and Andrea, making them yelp in pain.

ANDREA
Ow! Knock it off!

JACK
Stop! Please!

VINE TWO
You must eat!

With determination, Andrea reaches for the gate, but as she grasps the handle, she's struck back by a branch, landing hard on the ground.

ANDREA
(groaning)
Hey! What gives?

The Crooked Tree, a twisted entity, looms over her, oozing a sticky sap.

JACK
What are you doing to my sister?!

CROOKED TREE
(deadpan)
I'm the guardian here. You cannot enter. That's just not allowed.

Struggling to her feet, Andrea finds her vision blurring, the world spinning around her.

ANDREA
(voice fading)
Why?

CROOKED TREE
The Executioner lives here. If you cross his path, he'll kill you.

JACK
 (whispering)
 'Drea, that's our cue to run!

Andrea glares at him, her resolve hardening.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 I'm not leaving your side, Jack. I
 won't abandon Mom and Dad.

The Crooked Tree blocks their path, its branches looming like
 prison bars.

CROOKED TREE
 You are not allowed to proceed.

Desperate, Andrea lunges for the door again. The Crooked Tree
 retaliates, sending her sprawling to the ground.

ANDREA
 (shouting)
 What the hell?

The Crooked Tree's branches lash out, hitting her with a
 thick sap.

JACK
 (yelling)
 Get away from her!

CROOKED TREE
 (unfazed)
 I don't like humans. I just helped
 you because the Executioner asked
 for a favor.

Andrea's eyes widen.

ANDREA
 Why would the Executioner do that?

CROOKED TREE
 He wants all humans out of here.
 The faster you find what you're
 looking for, the better off you
 are.

ANDREA
 (frantic)
 Are they inside? Can we see him?

The Crooked Tree leans against the house, blocking their way.

CROOKED TREE
I can't let you do that.

ANDREA
(pleading)
We need to find my parents!

The Crooked Tree looms closer, its bark-like face stern.

CROOKED TREE
If you cross the Executioner's
path, he will kill you instantly.

JACK
(nervous)
'Drea, let's go! This is bad!

ANDREA (V.O.)
I wasn't going to leave Jack. I'm
not going to leave Mom and Dad.

*The Crooked Tree's branches block the door firmly against
their wishes.*

CROOKED TREE
You are not allowed.

Andrea lunges for the door, only to be battered back again.

ANDREA
(frustrated)
Why are you doing this?

*The Crooked Tree injects her with sap again, sending her
reeling.*

CROOKED TREE
You have no idea what you're up
against.

EXT. HOUSE - FLASHBACK

*The sun dips low, casting long shadows. ANDREA (22,
determined but vulnerable) stands outside her childhood home,
looking deeply concerned as she watches through the darkened
window.*

CROOKED TREE (V.O.)
Can you make out Eric Jones?

ANDREA
 (squinting, anxious)
 I recognize him. Hey, Eric! He's
 one of my closest friends.

As she speaks, ERIC JONES (23, cloaked in shadow) approaches,
 his demeanor tense, his eyes wild.

CROOKED TREE (V.O.)
 This has already happened.

JACK (V.O.)
 (urgent, panicking)
 'Drea, nobody is here.

ANDREA
 (voice trembling)
 Jack, I can see him. He's heading
 towards the front door!

Jack's voice crackles through the static, fearful.

JACK (V.O.)
 He tried to strangle his family.

ANDREA
 (voice breaking)
 No, Eric was different. He was
 broken!

Eric glances around nervously, his hands trembling as he
 jiggles the front door handle.

CROOKED TREE (V.O.)
 I was sleeping. I didn't have time
 to stop Eric.

With a swift movement, Eric pulls out a lock pick, deftly
 unlocking the door. Andrea's eyes widen in horror as she
 races towards him.

ANDREA
 (yelling)
 Stop! It's a trap!

But as she lunges, her body phases through Eric as if he were
 made of mist.

ERIC
 (turning, half-smirking)
 Easy.

Andrea stumbles back, her heart racing. She watches
 helplessly as Eric steps through the threshold.

JACK (V.O.)
'Drea, come back to reality.

CROOKED TREE
 (somberly)
She can't.

Suddenly, PHILIP (O.S.), an ominous figure lurking in the shadows, speaks up, his tone dripping with disdain.

PHILIP (O.S.)
You are not the most intelligent person, are you?

As he enters the dim light, a chilling smile spreads across his face.

PHILIP (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are we breaking into the house of a person called the Executioner? We hate humans in this place.

ERIC (O.S.)
 (defiantly)
This is where the evil stems from in this town. It must be destroyed.

Suddenly, a LOUD CRASH echoes. BAM! BAM! Gunfire erupts, splattering blood against the window. Eric goes flying through the glass, collapsing to the ground outside.

ANDREA
 (screaming)
 ERIC!

She rushes to the window, her heart in her throat as she sees Eric, lifeless and riddled with bullets. She falls to her knees, tears streaming down her cheeks.

The window shatters, and in an instant, Eric and the blood vanish into thin air, leaving Andrea breathless, alone, haunted by the echoes of what just transpired.

SNAP. Eric vanishes, as does the glass

END SEQUENCE

EXT. HOUSE - PRESENT

The sun hangs low in the sky, casting eerie shadows over the old house. Andrea (22, fierce determination mixed with fear) shakes her head as if trying to clear her thoughts.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 I felt like I was injected with
 drugs.

Suddenly, a sinister presence looms. The Crooked tree,
 ancient and gnarled, stirs ominously.

CROOKED TREE
 (deep, rumbling voice)
 Leave this place now.

Jack (18, anxious, glancing around) shifts nervously.

JACK
 Where's our Mama and Papa?

As if answering, a SHADOW CREATURE emerges from the darkness
 of the tree, its red eyes glowing, claws sharp and ready to
 strike.

ANDREA
 (gasping)
 What is that?

JACK
 Whatever it is, it isn't friendly.

The Crooked tree chuckles, its voice dripping with malice.

CROOKED TREE
 I told you, you aren't getting into
 that house. So I might as well kill
 you instead.

The Shadow Creature growls, scurrying toward Andrea with
 menacing intent.

ANDREA
 (voice trembling but
 fierce)
 It's ready to do some damage.

JACK
 Let's get out of here!

Andrea locks eyes with Jack, her resolve hardening.

ANDREA
 If Mama and Papa are alive, we must
 find them. They could be in that
 house.

Jack hesitates, torn between fear and loyalty. He looks back
 at Andrea, then dashes away.

JACK

You said you have my back!

The Shadow Creature lunges toward Jack with a deafening howl. Andrea's heart races as she sprints to save him.

ANDREA

(shouting)

You have the power to stop this!

The Crooked Tree sneers.

CROOKED TREE

I always like deals in return.

Andrea pushes through the fear, running faster toward Jack. She tackles the Shadow Creature to the ground, catching it off guard.

ANDREA

(fiercely)

I will kill this thing where it stands!

The creature growls, surprise flashing in its red eyes. It swipes at Andrea with its claws, but she holds it down. The Crooked Tree sighs heavily, annoyance in its tone.

CROOKED TREE

(whistles)

Release the beast.

Reluctantly, Andrea lets the creature go. It spins around and lunges for Jack, its teeth glistening with drool, ready to strike at his neck.

CROOKED TREE (CONT'D)

Come and get some food!

Confusion washes over Andrea. "Is she the food?" she wonders.

The Shadow Creature ignores her, barreling past and grazing her arm as it lunges for Jack.

ANDREA

(frustrated)

I would've killed it!

The creature races up to the house's roof, disappearing into the shadows. Andrea runs over to Jack, who is shaking with fear.

JACK
 (voice trembling)
This place, this whole town, is dangerous. I want to go home.

ANDREA
We can't just yet. We have to find Mama and Papa.

Jack wipes tears from his eyes, desperation in his voice.

JACK
Can we let that go? It can be the two of us, 'Drea.

Andrea's heart breaks as she shakes her head.

ANDREA
 (crying)
I can't. Not until I have them. We can be a family again.

JACK
 (sighs, nodding)
Okay.

Andrea pulls Jack into a tight embrace, both holding on to the hope of what could be. After a moment, she breaks away and walks back toward the Crooked Tree.

ANDREA
 (determined)
Get me in that damn house.

CROOKED TREE
It's not that easy.

Andrea, fueled by frustration, punches the tree. Her knuckles bleed, but she stands her ground.

ANDREA
Let us in!

The Crooked Tree bends slightly, its branches shaking with disapproval.

CROOKED TREE
All you will do is hurt yourself.

The wind carries the whispered words, "Hurt yourself." Andrea glances back at Jack, who looks increasingly worried.

JACK

'Drea, let's get out of here. This tree will be wood chips shortly.

CROOKED TREE

(mockingly)

I'm going to be around for a long time.

Andrea, a spark of defiance in her eyes, scans the yard and spots a rusted metal rod. She grabs it with newfound resolve.

ANDREA

Let's make a deal.

She jabs the metal rod into a hole in the tree, a glint of mischief in her eyes.

CROOKED TREE

(startled)

What are you doing?

ANDREA

I assume you get lightning here.

Crooked Tree lunges to grab the rod, but she holds it firm.

CROOKED TREE

Take it out!

ANDREA

Get us into the house and arrange a meeting with the Executioner.

The Crooked Tree pauses, considering.

CROOKED TREE

Fine, but to avoid getting executed, you have to get captured. Now remove this damn thing.

Andrea glances at Jack, determination etched on her face.

ANDREA

(resolute)

Then, let's get captured.

INT. GAME ROOM - DAY

The room is dimly lit, filled with the sharp sounds of a dartboard, the clink of pool balls, and the thud of a bowling ball rolling down its lane.

Andrea (17, determined, fiery) and Jack (15, protective, anxious) step into the game room, surveying the strange environment.

JACK
(glancing around)
It's a trap.

ANDREA
(narrowing her eyes)
We have to find out where Mama and Papa are.

Suddenly, the lights flicker and go out. A tense silence fills the room.

PHILIP (O.S.)
(voice echoing, dripping
with menace)
You wanted to meet the Executioner.

JACK (O.S.)
Let go of me!

ANDREA (O.S.)
Jack!

The lights flicker back on, revealing Jack tied up on the dartboard, eyes wide with fear. Andrea stumbles, trying to keep her balance on the bouncy floor beneath her.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Let my brother go!

PHILIP EVILTON (45, bald, piercing blue eyes, wearing a blood-red suit coat) strides in, circling Andrea like a predator eyeing its prey.

PHILIP
(smirking)
I need some assurance that you're not going to attack me.

Andrea, fueled by adrenaline, takes a step forward.

ANDREA
(voice steady, determined)
Where's my Mama and Papa?

Philip chuckles darkly, picking up a dart, and with a flick of his wrist, he throws it, narrowly missing Jack.

JACK
(panicking)
'Drea!

PHILIP
(voice dripping with
cruelty)
Your parents are being
dissected-examined, to understand
what makes them tick. We need to
learn how to take over your world.

Andrea's face flushes red with anger.

ANDREA
Why my parents?

Philip brushes his chin, a wicked grin spreading across his face.

PHILIP
Because your Papa disturbed our
town when he found our portal.

With a sinister wave of his hand, the dart magically shifts, now hovering dangerously close to Jack's neck.

ANDREA
(frantically)
Let my brother go! Give me back my
parents! Let us leave, and we won't
disturb you again.

Philip cracks his neck, relishing the moment.

PHILIP
You break into my town, my home,
and expect me to let you go?

He snaps his fingers. The dart suddenly pierces Jack's neck, causing him to gasp.

JACK
(choking out)
No.

Enraged, Andrea leaps into action, her fists clenched. She rushes at Philip, throwing a punch, but he sidesteps, moving with an unnerving speed. With a swift motion, she manages to land a punch on his nose, drawing blood.

ANDREA
I will destroy you.

PHILIP
 (snarling, unimpressed)
 Now, I'm just getting impatient.

His hand morphs into a claw, and he slashes at Andrea's leg, causing her to cry out in pain.

ANDREA
 (gritting her teeth)
 Aargh!

She falls to the floor, struggling to crawl toward Jack, who's trying to catch his breath.

PHILIP
 Foolish girl. I was going to let you leave and forget about this place. Now? Now, I'll feast on you.

ANDREA
 (pleading, desperate)
 Please... give me back my Mama and Papa.

Philip's eyes glow an ominous yellow as he revels in her fear.

PHILIP
 You have awoken the beast within me. Prepare for my feast.

Andrea feels the wound on her leg and winces.

ANDREA
 (determined)
 Damn.

As Philip begins to transform, his mouth elongates and sharpens, teeth growing menacingly. Andrea glances at Jack, her heart racing.

PHILIP
 (with a sinister grin)
 I love catching my meals.

He hurls three darts at Jack. They hover in midair, time seeming to stretch.

ANDREA
 (eyes wide)
 Are those darts in slow motion?

JACK
 (voice strained)
 'Drea, whatever you do, don't
 forget about me when you rescue
 Mama and Papa!

PHILIP
 (laughs, controlling the
 physics of the room)
 I take care of the physics here.

Suddenly, Andrea spots a bowling ball on the floor. Summoning all her strength, she grabs it and stands, swinging it with all her might. The ball slams into Philip's face.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
 (dazed, staggering back)
 Do you think that hurts?

He crashes to the ground, unconscious. But the darts remain inches from Jack, who is still incapacitated.

ANDREA
 (breathing heavily)
 Somehow, the physics here are all
 screwed up.

JACK
 (softly)
 I love you, 'Drea.

Just then, Andrea rushes forward, using the bowling ball to knock the darts down before they can harm Jack.

ANDREA
 There's no way I'm letting you go!

She unties Jack from the dartboard, and he drops to the ground, rubbing the wound on his neck.

JACK
 (winces, but relieved)
 It's not too deep.

Andrea's leg is still bleeding. She frantically scans the room for anything to help.

ANDREA
 (desperately)
 Can anything in here be used for
 the wound?

Her eyes land on a chalky cue stick.

JACK
Can we use this stuff?

Andrea quickly grabs the chalk, wiping it over her wound.

ANDREA
It's okay for a quick fix.

Jack stands, cracking his neck.

JACK
(feeling better)
It feels better.

ANDREA
That's great.

JACK
Where to next?

Andrea looks up, determination burning in her eyes.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I knew we were in the basement but
had to get upstairs somehow. They
said something about experimenting
on Mama and Papa.

With renewed resolve, Jack and Andrea leap toward the door.
Suddenly—

BAM!

Philip springs up, slamming a bowling ball into ANDREA's gut.
She collapses, gasping for air.

PHILIP
It takes much work to escape.

He towers over her, a malevolent glint in his eyes.

ANDREA
(voice strained)
Please don't eat us.

PHILIP
You expect not to die here?

Andrea can barely focus on his claws and teeth as she
struggles to breathe. As all seems lost, Jack lunges forward,
brandishing a sharp metal pole. With a fierce determination,
he stabs Philip in the side. The monstrous figure howls in
pain and collapses.

JACK
 (rushing to Andrea)
 Come on, 'Drea! We can do this.
 Don't lose me!

Overwhelmed with emotion, Andrea rolls her eyes back, fading into unconsciousness.

BLACKOUT

INT. HOUSE - FLASHBACK

The screen is in BLACK AND WHITE, giving it a dreamlike quality. Jack lies motionless on the ground, his body limp. Andrea rushes over, panic etched on her face.

ANDREA
 (kneeling beside Jack,
 shaking him gently)
 Jack! Come on, please! You have to
 be alive!

She presses her hands against his chest, desperately willing him to respond—her heart races.

FLASH TO:

INT. BASEMENT - PRESENT

Andrea walks around, the lights flickering ominously overhead.

ANDREA
 I feel... heavy like my bones are
 made of lead. What's happening?

Suddenly, a RADIO crackles to life, the cheerful melody clashing with the eerie atmosphere.

RADIO (O.S.)
 (singing)
 If you are to survive, I will stay
 in the light. That is how you stay
 alive. Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin'
 alive, stayin' alive!

Andrea perks up, a spark of recognition igniting her resolve.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 (voice filled with hope)
 Mama's workout song. They're
 close... I can feel Mama and Papa!

JACK
(frowning)
When I stabbed the Executioner, he mumbled having pets. We don't want to run into them.

A brisk wind suddenly sweeps through the room from the door at the top of the stairs. Andrea shivers, her instincts kicking in.

ANDREA
Cold...

They both dash toward the light coming from a window across the room. Suddenly, a Shadow Creature lunges at them, claws glinting dangerously.

JACK
(eyes wide)
Not again!

ANDREA
(calculating)
I wonder if it's too blind to see the light? Quick, let's go!

Andrea and Jack sprint towards the small patch of light. The Shadow Creature sniffs the air, its head swiveling as it searches for them.

JACK
(breathing heavily)
The shadow can't see the light.

ANDREA
(keeping her voice low)
We should be safe as long as we stay still.

JACK
(trying to lighten the mood)
Can't you wrestle it again?

ANDREA
(with a hint of sarcasm)
Yeah, right. With those claws? It would shred me!

JACK
(grinning)
You're always so bright.

ANDREA
 (smirking)
 Thanks, I appreciate that.

The RADIO suddenly plays another tune, shifting the atmosphere once again.

RADIO (O.S.)
 (singing)
 You ain't nothing but a hound dog.
 And you ain't no friend of mine.

ANDREA
 Uh-oh.

JACK
 (eyes narrowing)
 The radio again? Don't you think
 they're calling for backup?

As if on cue, two more Shadow Creatures appear, their claws dragging along the concrete floor with a dreadful CREAK.

Heavy lighting and THUNDER crash outside, the bright light above dimming.

ANDREA
 Damn, this weather!

They exchange worried glances as the creatures close in.

JACK
 (voice trembling)
 This is not good.

ANDREA
 (thinking fast)
 Maybe it's like that dino movie. If
 we stay perfectly still, they won't
 notice us.

Andrea grips Jack's arm, squeezing it for comfort as the creatures inch closer.

JACK
 (nervously)
 I'm trusting your instinct here.

ANDREA
 I'll trust yours, too.

The creatures come into full view, their translucent skin shimmering eerily in the dim light.

Their red eyes gleam with hunger, and foam drips from their snarling mouths as they wag their tails, stalking their prey.

JACK
(voice dropping)
It's not working...

ANDREA
(breath hitching)
We need a new plan.

They back themselves against the wall, desperation.

JACK
(urgently)
'Drea, think of something quick!

Andrea notices the creatures' eyes fixated on her, their anticipation palpable.

ANDREA
(determined)
We have to reach those stairs. When I say run, you bolt!

JACK
Are you insane?

ANDREA
(firmly)
You're not allowed to call me that!

As the Shadow Creatures creep closer, Andrea slowly removes her right shoe, her heart racing.

JACK
(confused)
What are you doing?

ANDREA
Get ready-

She peels off her right sock, doing it painstakingly slow. The Shadow Creatures watch, entranced, drool pooling.

JACK
(whispers)
'Drea -

ANDREA
(urgently)
Now!

In a swift motion, Andrea throws her sock to the far side of the room. The Shadow Creatures dart after it, giving them the opening they need. Jack and Andrea race up the stairs, tripping and tumbling as they go.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Go, go, go!

Just as they reach the door at the top, Andrea shoves Jack out into the hallway.

JACK
 (panicking)
 What are you going to do?

ANDREA
 (breathless, determined)
 Just trust me!

Andrea spins around, running back just as the Shadow Creatures get close to the door. She slams it shut behind her with a BANG!

CLUNK! CLUNK! The creatures tumble down the stairs, their yelps of frustration echoing in the dark.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

The sun shines brightly on a yard full of vibrant flowers, green grass, and towering trees. Andrea and Jack stand at the edge, enjoying the serene beauty around them.

ANDREA
 (sighs deeply, feeling the warmth)
 We need to return inside and go to the second floor, where Mama and Papa will be.

JACK
 (pointing toward a ladder lying in the grass)
 That shouldn't be a problem. Look!

Andrea approaches the ladder, but snowflakes drift down from the sky as she does.

ANDREA
 (sneezes)
 Great, winter's here early.

JACK
 (wiping his nose)
 That's not snow. Those are
 dandelion seeds!

The seeds float to the ground, and suddenly, they sprout. From the ground, WEED CREATURES emerge—yellow dandelions that open their mouths to reveal sharp, jagged teeth.

WEED CREATURE
 (hungrily)
 Feed us human flesh!

The creatures make a noise reminiscent of a vacuum, sucking in the air around them. Andrea's eyes widen in horror.

ANDREA
 (urgently)
 Jack, grab that ladder!

The air-sucking intensifies, becoming a whirlwind around them.

JACK
 (trying to stay grounded)
 This feels like a tornado!

Suddenly, a BIRD flies overhead and gets sucked down into a Weed Creature's mouth. The sound of CRUNCHING echoes as the creature devours it.

WEED CREATURE
 (gleefully)
 Animals make an excellent snack!
 But I want human flesh for dinner!

Jack's stomach churns.

JACK
 (retching)
 I think I'm going to be sick.

He bends over and vomits. The vomit splatters into the mouths of the Weed Creatures. Andrea grimaces, her face turning green.

ANDREA
 Gross! That's not good.

The air pressure increases, and Jack and Andrea are slowly lifted off the ground.

JACK
 (panicking)
This can't be the end!

ANDREA
 (clenching her fists)
Not like this!

As they float upward, Andrea shouts to Jack.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Find something to hold onto!

Jack is swept away, heading towards a Weed Creature's mouth.

JACK
 (desperate)
Goodbye, 'Drea!

With all her strength, Andrea pushes herself towards Jack, kicking him out of harm's way just in time.

ANDREA
Not this time, Jack!

The ladder gets caught up in the whirlwind and is sent flying into the pack of Weed Creatures, BEHEADING most of them in one swift motion. The wind dies down, and Andrea and Jack hit the ground hard.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (stomach growling)
I could eat anything right now.

They glance at the two remaining Weed Creatures, still writhing on the ground.

Andrea lunges at one, biting its head off.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (wiping her mouth)
Ugh, that's better than nothing.

JACK
 (hungry)
I could go for some chocolate.

ANDREA
 (smiling through the chaos)
Bubble gum would be excellent, too.

They share a moment of laughter amidst the madness.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
(standing up)
We better keep moving.

JACK
Mama and Papa are on the second
floor, right?

ANDREA walks over to the ladder.

ANDREA
Jack, can you help me?

She turns around, but Jack is frozen, as if time has stopped.
Philip suddenly appears next to him, a smug grin on his face.

PHILIP
(mockingly)
My dear, he belongs to me now.
Those darts I used? They marked him
as my property.

Jack stands motionless, blood seeping down his face.

ANDREA
(voice trembling)
What did you do to him?

Philip glances at Jack, then back to Andrea.

PHILIP
You entered my world. I might as
well add a pet.

Jack covers his face with his hands, and blood pours through
his fingers.

JACK
(despondent)
I'm so sorry, 'Drea. I messed
everything up.

Andrea rushes toward Jack, but the closer she gets, the
further he seems to drift away.

ANDREA
What is this?

Jack's hands drop, revealing eyes that are now pitch black.

DARK JACK
(with a chilling calm)
Hello, 'Drea.

Andrea stares, horrified.

ANDREA
What's happened to you?

DARK JACK
Nothing. I'm becoming something...
new. It feels... freeing.

Andrea lunges again, but Philip raises a hand.

PHILIP
You won't get far, matter how hard
you try. I can tell you a story.

ANDREA
(determined)
I don't want your stories!

PHILIP
(smirking)
I could end your brother's life
right here. Just a snap of my
fingers.

He snaps, and Dark Jack collapses to the ground, lifeless.

ANDREA
(screaming)
No!

Philip snaps again, and Dark Jack rises, now levitating.

DARK JACK
(gloating)
Look at me. I can fly!

Philip nods, proud of his control.

PHILIP
When you first came here -

EXT. MOUNTAINS - FLASHBACK - BLACK AND WHITE

Andrea and Jack get hit by a bolt of electricity. Jack is thrown backward, slamming into an icy crevice—his neck SNAPS with a sickening crack.

DARK JACK (V.O.)
I was dead.

Andrea watches in horror as a red portal swallows JACK, pulling him beneath the snow.

PHILIP (V.O.)
Death is my specialty.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Andrea collapses to her knees, heartbroken.

ANDREA
(choking back tears)
My brother is dead...

Dark Jack hovers above, taunting her.

DARK JACK
I'm not dead, 'Drea. I'm reborn.

Philip claps his hands, relishing the chaos.

PHILIP
A better body, better mind—cheaper
than the competition!

Andrea covers her face in despair.

ANDREA
Why make me suffer through this?

Philip steps closer, a sinister glint in his eyes.

PHILIP
I have a proposal for you. I'm
feeling generous today.

Andrea rises, defiant.

ANDREA
What do you want?

Philip grins.

PHILIP
Your brother and parents in
exchange for you.

Dark Jack floats down beside her, powerful and confident.

DARK JACK
I don't want to go back. I feel
more powerful than ever.

Philip laughs heartily, and Andrea, trembling with rage, paces around.

ANDREA

This seems more manageable, but—

She glances towards the gate.

PHILIP (O.C.)

Take your time, but remember: the longer you wait, the more dangerous it gets.

Andrea steels herself, determination filling her voice.

ANDREA

*I'll find a way to see my parents.
I'll leave if you show them to me.*

PHILIP (O.C.)

*(taunting)
You might not like what you see.*

ANDREA

*(eyes burning with fury)
I'll hunt you down if you don't show them!*

PHILIP (O.C.)

Through the gate, my dear.

Andrea opens the gate, stepping forward, ready to confront whatever lies ahead.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A vibrant neighborhood street bustling with life. Children play, and dogs bark in the distance. Amid this normalcy, Andrea (20s, disheveled and panicked) sprints into the frame, her face a mask of desperation.

ANDREA

*(voice shaky)
I'm sorry. Have you seen my parents?*

JOHN (45, rugged but kind) and JENNY (45, warm but frazzled) are huddled over a MAP, squinting at it. Startled, they turn towards Andrea, who has just collided with them.

JENNY

Oh my god, don't be! We're the sorry ones. Are you okay?

JOHN
You looked frightened.

ANDREA
(panicked, shaking her
head)
Humans? No, this isn't right!

JOHN
(supportively)
Hey, it's all right. You're safe
here. Sometimes, a map helps in
situations like this.

Jenny steps closer, her eyes softening.

JENNY
We can help you.

ANDREA
(warily)
Who are you?

JOHN
(rubbing the back of his
neck)
That's my bad. I took a wrong turn
in Boulder. Whoops.

ANDREA
(realizing)
My old neighbors? I remember you.
Hang on.

Jenny chuckles, trying to ease the tension. Suddenly, the vibrant colors around them fade to BLACK AND WHITE, as if the world is losing its essence.

JENNY
Never marry a guy terrible with
directions, you know.

ANDREA
(smiling faintly)
John was always getting lost.

JOHN
(musing)
As we get further in here, my
memory is getting hazy.

Andrea's smile fades, uncertainty creeping back.

JENNY

That happens a lot with him. Not just here, so he's okay.

ANDREA

(teasing)

Your wife wanted a divorce.

Jenny pauses a thoughtful look on her face.

JENNY

(smirking)

Come on, John. Grab the car.

John fumbles in his pockets, searching for his keys.

JOHN

(frustrated)

I don't remember where I parked it.

ANDREA

(pacing)

She's going to kill you, John. Remember, man!

JOHN

(tapping his head)

The car is on top of the hill.

JENNY

(laughing nervously)

Insane in the membrane.

ANDREA

(hastily)

John, let's go!

Suddenly, Jenny snaps her fingers, and COLOR FLOODS BACK into the scene, but it's not the vibrant colors of before; it's dark and ominous.

JENNY

Tsk, tsk. You won't find your parents here. You'll find monsters that lead to your and John's death.

Andrea freezes, dread washing over her.

ANDREA

(voice trembling)

What does that mean?

JOHN
 (confused)
 Honey, what are you talking about?

In an instant, JENNY'S BODY becomes engulfed in a thick, ominous TAR that seeps from the ground, wrapping around her like a living entity.

JENNY
 (voice distorted, almost
 seductive)
 The longer you stay, the more you
 lose your mind.

Jenny lunges toward John, biting his neck.

JOHN
 (yelling)
 Aargh!

TAR flows into his wound, drowning him.

JENNY
 (cackling)
 Don't you want to feel like
 drowning in tar? It's exciting.

Andrea's eyes widen in horror as the tar begins to FILL THE STREET, bubbling and boiling like a sinister sea.

ANDREA
 (panicked, running)
 Can't touch me?

The tar sends a wave, attempting to breach the sidewalk. Andrea leaps onto the concrete, narrowly avoiding the advancing sludge.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (running)
 I can't let this be the end!

She sprints, dodging the dark waves as the tar HUNGRILY CHASES HER.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 I just need to find my family.

JOHN
 (struggling)
 Help me, Andrea!

Andrea looks back, her heart torn.

ANDREA
 (determined)
 No! I can not get trapped here!

She pushes forward, the sounds of John's struggle fading behind her. The TAR splatters against the sidewalk, leaving a dark stain that seems to whisper her name.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (breathing heavily)
 I won't let this place win.

As she runs, she glances around, looking for any escape, and spots an ALLEYWAY ahead.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 (hopeful)
 There!

She veers sharply into the alley, the shadows stretching ominously behind her. The tar crashes against the entrance, but she manages to slip inside just in time.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Andrea(17, determined) sprints down a quiet street, glancing back at the ominous tar that consumes everything in its path. She dodges between houses, their windows contorting into grotesque faces, peering out like watchful eyes.

The tar inches closer, tendrils reaching for her. Andrea spots the playground just ahead, a sanctuary where the darkness cannot touch her.

ANDREA
 (exhales deeply)
 Phew!

Children (8-10) play nearby, laughter ringing out. Andrea pauses, her heart racing. The laughter stops as three boys encircle her, grinning mischievously.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - FLASHBACK - BLACK AND WHITE

Three boys (8, 9, 10) lay on the ground, faces bloodied and bruised.

BOY
 We're sorry!

EXT. PLAYGROUND - PRESENT

Everything bursts back into color. The boys, now playful, giggle at Andrea.

ANDREA

What do you want?

Suddenly, a loud FIRECRACKER sounds. The boys flinch back. Distant and dark, Dark Jack (17, a twisted version of her brother) drops before her, blocking her escape.

DARK JACK

They are mine. They do what I tell them to do.

ANDREA

Am I dreaming?

DARK JACK

This is all real, 'Drea. If you want any hope of survival, leave this place.

Andrea paces, her eyes darting around, calculating.

ANDREA

I can't take that deal. I want to find Mama and Papa. We can still win you back.

Dark Jack smirks, amusement flickering in his eyes.

DARK JACK

I'm going to remain Jack.

ANDREA

(pleading)

Let's team up and find Mama and Papa. Get out of here!

Dark Jack shakes his head, his smirk fading.

DARK JACK

I'm not leaving with these abilities. I'm staying put. Mama and Papa are dead.

Andrea feels a stab of anguish but fights to maintain her composure. She steps forward, eyes fierce.

ANDREA

That's not true! If you can't see it for yourself, then you know.

Dark Jack's expression shifts slightly, a flicker of doubt crossing his face.

DARK JACK

*You're a fool. With all hope lost,
you still don't want to believe it.*

Andrea crosses her arms defiantly, not backing down.

ANDREA

*You're not my brother. My brother
would have my back. No questions
asked.*

Dark Jack rises, towering over her.

DARK JACK

*I am better and stronger than your
brother. Your brother died, and I
am your brother reborn.*

Andrea looks around nervously, her determination flickering.

ANDREA

You won't help me?

DARK JACK

That's right.

*With courage, Andrea strides toward one of the boys
encircling her.*

ANDREA

I will ask you again.

DARK JACK

*(alarmed)
What are you doing?*

Andrea suddenly punches the boy's stomach.

BOY

*(gasping)
Ow!*

*The boy collapses, clutching his gut. Andrea steps back,
breathing heavily.*

ANDREA

*Do you feel that? I can't attack
you because I think Jack is still
in there. But your Children?
They're all fair game.*

Dark Jack darts around, flapping his arms in panic.

DARK JACK

*That hurt! You don't have it in you
to hurt any more children.*

Andrea looks around, haunted by memories.

ANDREA (V.O.)

*Remember what happened? Mama and
Papa had to lock me away.*

*She approaches a GIRL (9) standing nearby, and with a sudden
burst of adrenaline, she punches the girl squarely in the
face. Blood trickles from the girl's nose, and Dark Jack
winces in pain.*

DARK JACK

(shocked)

*Why would I help you destroy this
town? It's given me strength.*

ANDREA

*Why wouldn't you? I feel I've given
you little choice.*

Dark Jack dives down, barely avoiding the ground.

DARK JACK

'Drea, why?

*Andrea grasps a child and throws them onto the ground. Dark
Jack stumbles back, stunned.*

ANDREA (V.O.)

*I know you are in there. I know we
can rescue Mama and Papa. I will
get you to help me.*

*Dark Jack clutches his head. Confusion etched across his
features.*

DARK JACK

*I don't understand this. You're
draining my powers.*

*Andrea strides over to Dark Jack, determination blazing in
her eyes.*

ANDREA

*Are you going to join me? Or are
you going to stay here and do
nothing but goof around?*

Dark Jack's expression shifts. His eyes flicker, struggling against the darkness.

DARK JACK
I don't have much time.

ANDREA
Jack? It's you.

She reaches out, helping Dark Jack to his feet.

DARK JACK
I'm being controlled. It's like I'm Philip's puppet.

All the children on the playground collapse, eyes shut, shadows hovering above them.

ANDREA
Can we break the controls so I can have you back?

Dark Jack shivers, fear evident in his voice.

DARK JACK
I don't know for how long. I'm feeling normal again.

Andrea scans the surroundings, hoping to ignite within her.

ANDREA
We can find a portal for you! Go back, and I'll join you with Mama and Papa.

Dark Jack shakes his head vigorously.

DARK JACK
I feel more in control of myself.

Andrea breathes a sigh of relief as all the children rise to their feet, turning toward her.

ANDREA
Are you doing this?

DARK JACK
That's not me.

Suddenly, the children join hands, emitting BLUE SWIRLY SOUND WAVES that resonate like distant cries. The force sends Andrea flying backward.

ANDREA
(screaming)
Jack! I'm coming toward you!

A LOUD BOOM echoes as Philip (18, menacing) strides into the chaos.

PHILIP
I hate having to fix things.

He grabs Dark Jack and pulls him to his feet.

ANDREA
(defiantly)
Stay away from him!

The sound waves cease, a tense silence settling over the playground.

PHILIP
It's almost too easy.

Philip shoots Dark Jack in the stomach. In stark black and white, Dark Jack gasps, clutching his wound. Color floods back as Andrea reaches out in desperation.

ANDREA
(screaming)
No! It feels like all over again!

Tears stream down her face as Dark Jack collapses, his strength waning.

PHILIP
I told you to go home. Forget about
your rescue mission.

Andrea's rage ignites, fueling her steps as she lunges at Philip.

ANDREA
You are a monster! But I will kill
you!

Philip bares his teeth, revealing sharp, werewolf fangs.

PHILIP
I am.

Andrea falls to her knees, defeat washing over her.

ANDREA

I want my Mama and Papa. I want this all to go away. Give them back!

Philip lingers, contemplating her anguish, his drool glistening at her despair.

PHILIP

Do you agree to go home if I take you to your parents?

Andrea pauses, hope flickering amid her tears.

ANDREA

(cautiously)

Why would you do such a thing?

PHILIP

Mutually beneficial. This world is broken, partially because you have survived for this long. I get you out of my hair. You get to see your parents. We all win.

With gritted teeth, Andrea struggles to her knees, determination rising again.

ANDREA

I will kill you if I have the chance.

PHILIP

You never will, but I will kill you to end the madness of our system being out of whack. Do you want to see your parents or not?

Andrea clenches her jaw, blood trickling from her mouth as she contemplates Philip's proposition.

FADE OUT

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

The sun casts long shadows over the gravestones as Andrea, the late 20s, strong yet visibly shaken, carries Dark Jack's lifeless body towards a freshly dug grave. Philip, a disheveled specter with an unsettling grin, hovers just behind her, his eyes glinting with a strange hunger.

PHILIP

(Smirking)

You can bury your brother if you like. But let's be honest—I'm not ready to say goodbye yet. A puppet-like him? I'll probably bring him back for some fun.

The screen momentarily goes *BLACK AND WHITE* as Andrea gently lays Jack in a shallow grave, the epitaph reading: "Jack Refuge 2012-2024." She brushes dirt off her hands, her face mixed with disbelief and sorrow.

ANDREA

(Voice trembling)

I don't believe it. How is this even possible?

Color floods back in, but it feels dull, washed out. Philip watches her, his expression oddly amused.

PHILIP

You know he's been dead, right? That's what led you here in the first place.

Andrea spins around, anger igniting within her.

ANDREA

You promised you would take me to my parents! Where are they?

Suddenly, a *WHITE RABBIT* darts past, drawing Philip's attention. He licks his lips, captivated.

PHILIP

(Oblivious)

Dinner.

Andrea slaps him across the face, her frustration boiling over.

ANDREA

Don't you dare get distracted!

Philip shakes his head, regaining focus.

PHILIP

You're right. But I've got some bad news about your Papa.

He gestures towards a nearby grave. The stone reads: "PAPA REFUGE 1954-2024."

ANDREA
 (Stunned)
 He's dead? No, it can't be.

PHILIP
 (Laughs darkly)
 Like the day he opened that
 portal—he knew.

Andrea's world begins to spin as everything fades back to BLACK AND WHITE. She drops to her knees, tears streaming down her cheeks.

ANDREA
 (Whispers)
 Papa's dead, too?

Philip coughs, the sound echoing in the graveyard's eerie silence.

PHILIP
 I can take you to see your Mama.

Still in shock, Andrea slowly lifts her head as the color returns, though it feels muted.

ANDREA
 I need a moment. This... this can't
 be real.

Philip shrugs, his insensitivity palpable.

PHILIP
 I didn't think about your feelings.
 I'm feeling hungry.

Andrea grabs him by the collar, desperation written all over her face.

ANDREA
 (Choking back sobs)
 Please.

Philip bows mockingly.

PHILIP
 (With a twisted grin)
 I'm a monster, but I get it. Give
 yourself time. I'll be waiting
 outside to take you to your
 Mama—then out of Inception Heights.

Philip strolls out of the graveyard, leaving Andrea kneeling in front of the grave, trembling.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 (Pleading)
 Papa, how did you die?

A VOICE, haunting and distant, echoes from the grave.

VOICE (O.S.)
 You don't remember?

Andrea's heart races as she scans the graveyard, confusion, and fear swirling within her.

ANDREA
 (Shaky)
 Hello?

A BLOODY HAND thrusts up from the earth, followed by a decayed figure rising—Papa, disheveled and grotesque, his face marred by lesions, hollow eyes staring blankly.

PAPA
 (Weak, strained)
 Why did you follow us here? This battle was mine to fight—for you.

The words echo ominously, chilling Andrea to her core. She stares, frozen.

ANDREA
 (Voice cracking)
 I—I don't understand. Your—Your...

Papa grins, his expression twisted, as he fixes his crooked nose, then sneezes, unleashing BLACK SNAKES that slither from his mouth.

PAPA
 (Playfully sinister)
 What's the matter? Can't you recognize good ol' Papa?

The black snakes slither around Andrea, hissing menacingly. She gasps, fear washing over her.

ANDREA
 (Desperate)
 You're—You're dead.

PAPA
 (Smirking)
 The dead can still have fun while we decay.

The snakes inch closer to Andrea's face.

ANDREA
 (Frantic)
 Get off me!

With sheer will, Andrea yanks the snakes away, throwing them aside. Papa inhales deeply, reclaiming the snakes with a sickening glee.

PAPA
 (Whispering)
 She's busy dying. Now, why don't
 you join your Papa?

Andrea rises, determination igniting her spirit.

ANDREA
 (Firmly)
 I can't and won't do that. There's
 no way.

PHILIP
 (Cruelly amused)
 No saving him. Are you sure you
 don't just want to go home?

Andrea glances back at Papa, who steps forward, dragging his feet through the dirt.

ANDREA
 (Pleading)
 Papa, why don't you come with me?

Papa shuffles closer, his voice dripping with mock tenderness.

PAPA
 I can do that.

PHILIP
 (Interjecting)
 Don't worry. You will end up dead
 eventually.

As she bolts from the graveyard, panic surges through Andrea, her heart pounding.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Andrea races up the steps of an old church, breathless. Papa follows closely behind, his twisted smile revealing teeth made of tiny skeletons.

ANDREA

(Desperate)

Come on, Papa! You're sick. Don't
you remember how I took care of
you?

*She halts on the church steps, the weight of her plea hanging
in the air.*

PAPA

(Laughing darkly)

Do you think this measly church
will save you? I'm undead, not
unholy.

Andrea shakes her head, determination hardening her resolve.

ANDREA

(Resolutely)

I know you, Papa.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

*The kitchen is warm and filled with the aroma of soup. Young
Andrea, about 10, is serving her Papa, hunched over at the
table.*

ANDREA

(Concerned)

You're sick. You've got to eat.

*Papa coughs, his eyes distant as if lost in thought. Andrea's
gaze drifts, hinting at a memory fading.*

PAPA

(Perplexed)

Where'd you go?

*Papa snaps his fingers, pulling her back. Andrea picks up a
spoon with a steely resolve and brings it to his lips.*

ANDREA

(Softly)

Sorry. I had to fight some
monsters.

PAPA

(Smiling gently)

It's all in your head, sweetheart.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 (Reflective)
 I've started to realize, Papa.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CHURCH - PRESENT

Andrea stands on the church steps, fear and determination warring within her. She glances back at the graveyard, where shadows seem to loom larger, whispering dark promises.

ANDREA
 (Defiantly)
 I won't let this be the end.

With newfound resolve, Andrea steps forward, ready to confront her past, her family, and the haunting darkness that threatens to consume her.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Rain pours down, creating puddles that reflect the darkening sky. Andrea stumbles backward as Papa lunges at her, falling hard on the wet ground.

ANDREA
 (frantically)
 No, Papa! Please, try to remember me!

Papa hovers above her, eyes wide and unrecognizing, teeth sharpened like daggers.

PAPA
 (with a twisted grin)
 What's funny is you can't reason with the unwell, Andrea.

He opens his mouth wide, sucking in a deep breath. Andrea's face is caught in his gaping maw, and her features blur.

ANDREA
 (struggling)
 No! It's me, your daughter! You know me!

Her face becomes more distorted, and she reaches out, desperate.

PAPA
 (darkly)
 You could always be a part of me.

The rain intensifies, causing steam to rise from Papa's body as if he's smoking from the inside. He rolls off of her, gasping as he looks down at himself.

ANDREA
 (confused and terrified)
 What is happening to you?

A PRIEST appears, extending a hand toward her, face stern yet compassionate.

PRIEST
 Come now, my child, into the light.
 Let's get you out of here.

Andrea shakes her head defiantly, scrambling to her feet.

ANDREA
 Not without my Papa!

The Priest, firm but gentle, grip her arm.

PAPA
 (mocking)
 You can't defeat the undead, little girl. I already died once.

Two other PRIESTS appear, armed with super soakers filled with holy water.

PRIEST
 (with determination)
 We'll see about that. The power of holy water!

They spray Papa, who hisses and smokes more, his left leg bursting into flames.

PAPA
 (in agony)
 You're all fools!

PRIEST
 That should hold you for now.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Andrea finds herself seated in the pews, trembling. The Priest sits across from her, eyes narrowing.

PRIEST

*That was quite a foolish move,
don't you think?*

ANDREA

(defiantly)

*You sacrifice for your family.
Isn't that what you're supposed to
do?*

*The Priest studies her, a hint of admiration creeping into
his gaze.*

PRIEST

*You feel a bit warm. Why don't I
give you a little something for
that?*

*Suddenly, Andrea is at the altar, her head held under holy
water. Smoke billows up, rising like a cloud.*

PRIEST (CONT'D)

*We have to exercise a little of the
death out of you.*

*Andrea struggles, her head bobbing above the surface as she
gasps for air.*

ANDREA

(choking)

I can't breathe!

*She coughs violently, expelling a torrent of black mold into
the water.*

PRIEST

*That's it, my child! Let the
deathly thoughts leave you.*

ANDREA

(voice strained)

What the hell is this?

PRIEST

A journey through madness.

Andrea's vision blurs, panic swelling inside her.

ANDREA

(faltering)

*What happens after we die? I think
I'm going to find out.*

The Priest stays calm, reassuring her.

PRIEST

We are detoxing your sense of death.

Andrea kneels, her body trembling.

ANDREA

I feel so much pain. Why haven't the monsters infected you yet?

The Priest nods thoughtfully.

PRIEST

We have protections in place.

Slowly, Andrea stands, feeling her throat clear as the water drains away.

ANDREA

(breathing deeply)

I remember being in a place like this... for a funeral. The only time I was here.

The Priest watches her closely, nodding.

PRIEST

This place offers a chance to say goodbye.

As Andrea wanders, she spots a picture of Carson and Papa, framed and dusty.

ANDREA (V.O.)

It was Carson's funeral. Did he die before? No, we saw him tumble off the mountain.

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - DAY

Andrea walks cautiously down a long, dimly lit hallway, the walls lined with closed doors. The Priest walks beside her, his expression severe but serene.

ANDREA

(curious)

Are these rooms filled with people?

PRIEST

(shaking his head)

Not exactly. Each of these rooms is a sanctuary for the dead.

Andrea's eyes widen with a mix of excitement and apprehension.

ANDREA

I guess I'll have to put something about my family here.

The Priest nods, his gaze steady.

PRIEST

You just acknowledged that your family may be gone.

Andrea's expression falters. She shakes her head, covering her eyes as tears threaten to spill.

ANDREA

I'm not sure about that. I just... I don't want to forget them.

The Priest gently taps her shoulder, directing her attention to a room with pictures of various families.

PRIEST

Your mind creates the best pictures.

Andrea takes a step closer, her voice barely above a whisper.

ANDREA

Sometimes, they tried to make me forget in this place I remember.

The "Get me to forget" echo resonates, and Andrea looks around nervously.

PRIEST

Fear not, my child. Nobody can enter this room. It's very safe. This sanctuary is open to every human. If any monsters dare step foot here, our squad will take them out.

Andrea gulps, her anxiety palpable.

ANDREA

I hope to God you're right.

As they continue down the hallway, the light dims ominously.

PRIEST

The darkness helps you sleep better.

Andrea inhales deeply, her nerves flaring.

ANDREA

I don't know... it's making me nervous.

The Priest nods, understanding.

PRIEST

Even in a town filled with magic and rules, there's no changing the past.

ANDREA

That's what this place represents for me.

The Priest pauses, his expression grave.

PRIEST

If you try to change the past, things can get uglier.

Andrea exhales heavily, feeling the weight of his words. The Priest begins to rub her back, offering comfort.

ANDREA

(softly)

That feels good.

PRIEST

Are you sleepy? You can rest for a bit. You'll feel better when you wake up.

FADE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

Bacon sizzles in a frying pan. Papa (regular) hums a tune as he flips the bacon.

PAPA

(cheerfully)

Andrea! It's time for breakfast!

END FLASHBACK

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT

Andrea jolts awake, excitement flooding her face. Suddenly, a red blinking light flashes ominously.

Panic sets in as she realizes she's still in the Church. She carefully swings her legs out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The lights flicker overhead, casting eerie shadows. All the doors are slightly ajar, creating an unsettling atmosphere.

PAPA (O.S.)
Aren't you hungry, my dear?

Andrea hesitates, her heart racing. She inches her way down the hallway.

ANDREA
I have to be careful not to catch a case of death again.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Andrea bursts into the main church area. She sees the Priest hunched over a vat of holy water, but there's something off—his head is covered in black mold.

PRIEST
(turning slowly)
Why don't you come a little closer?

Andrea shakes her head vigorously, dread creeping in.

ANDREA
I can't do that.

The Priest faces her, his features grotesquely hollowed out, eyes sunken, nose crooked, skin burned.

PRIEST
(grinning)
I've caught a case of death. It's not so bad once you try it.

Andrea stumbles back, horror flooding her senses. She glances around—the holy water is black, and the church is enveloped in mold.

ANDREA
(voice trembling)
Stay back.

PRIEST

*Death is better because it's final.
You even forget about your
mistakes.*

Suddenly, the Priest lunges toward her. Andrea gasps.

ANDREA

I'll take that trip home now!

The Priest's teeth gleam—a horrific smile.

PRIEST

It's too late for that.

Andrea spins around, only to find Papa blocking her path.

PAPA

(playfully)

*I love hide-and-peek. Now, it's
time to seek your death.*

Andrea screams in desperation.

ANDREA

This isn't what I wanted!

*Andrea finds herself cornered. Philip stands by the church
door, watching.*

PHILIP

*I was wondering why you hadn't gone
home.*

Andrea's eyes widen.

ANDREA

You can stop all this!

The Priest and Papa advance menacingly.

PHILIP

(shrugging)

I can't control wild animals.

Andrea glowers at him.

ANDREA

You're just a nuisance.

PHILIP

*I could show you where your father
is. But I never said to interact
with him.*

Papa grins wider.

PAPA
It's time for dinner!

PRIEST
(grinning)
This is going to make an exciting meal.

Both the Priest and Papa lunge toward Andrea. She closes her eyes, bracing for impact.

ANDREA
(whispering)
There's no place like home...

PHILIP
(coldly)
I'm not the wizard, and this isn't Oz. Goodbye, Andrea.

The Priest and Papa collide in a grotesque struggle, each biting at the other's face, blood squirting everywhere.

ANDREA
(horrified)
Jesus.

Philip turns to her, unfazed.

PHILIP
It's time to go home, I suppose.

Andrea glares at him, anger bubbling to the surface.

ANDREA
Is the black ooze flammable?

Determined, she grabs a candle from a nearby altar and lights the ooze.

PHILIP
(shouting)
What have you done?

The church ignites in flames, consuming everything in a brilliant, terrifying blaze.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The sun is bright, but an ominous energy fills the air. Andrea bursts through the church doors, her heart pounding.

She rolls on the ground as the SOUND OF SHATTERING GLASS echoes behind her, showering the area.

ANDREA (V.O.)

I'm ready to go home.

She gasps for air, relief washing over her. Philip stands inside the church, a smirk on his face as he snaps his fingers. Suddenly, PEOPLE IN HAZMAT SUITS swarm in, grabbing Andrea and restraining her on a gurney.

PHILIP

I lied. I want to kill you instead.

Andrea struggles, thrashing around on the gurney.

ANDREA

Let me go! I want to see Mama!

PHILIP

I gave you a chance. This game of back-and-forth bores me.

In a sudden burst of energy, Andrea breaks free from the gurney and punches the nearest Hazmat Suit person. The suit staggers back, but another grabs her arms.

HAZMAT SUIT

She's got much fight in her.

PHILIP

Did you do what I asked?

Fueled by desperation, Andrea continues hitting the Hazmat Suit person on the ground.

ANDREA

This isn't part of the deal!

Philip watches a mix of annoyance and amusement on his face.

PHILIP

There is no deal. I'm out of patience. Finish her already.

One of the Hazmat Suit members produces a large syringe, its contents gleaming menacingly.

HAZMAT SUIT

This should do the trick.

He injects the syringe into Andrea's neck. She gasps, feeling the sharp sting.

ANDREA
*I will find every one of you. I
 will destroy this town!*

PHILIP
*Angry people. Jeez, I can't stand
 humanity.*

*Andrea stumbles, tripping over a rock and falling to the
 ground with a loud SPLAT. The Hazmat Suit walks over.*

HAZMAT SUIT
She's gone, sir.

PHILIP
*I can see that. Take her parts. I
 want to eat her skin.*

HAZMAT SUIT
You got it, sir.

Philip claps his hands, a twisted excitement sparking.

PHILIP
*One more thing. Next time, bring
 out the syringe right away. Don't
 waste time.*

*Philip lifts the Hazmat Suit guy off the ground, a look of
 irritation on his face.*

HAZMAT SUIT TWO
Understood.

INT. BATHROOM - FLASHBACK

*The scene shifts to black and white. A young Andrea (14)
 stands before a mirror, sharp scissors glinting in her hand.*

ANDREA
*I'll show them. They can't control
 me.*

*Determined, she raises the scissors above her head, rapidly
 moving them towards her stomach.*

END FLASHBACK

INT. BODY ROOM - DAY

*Andrea wakes up abruptly, her body strapped to a gurney.
 Confusion fills her eyes as she realizes where she is.*

ANDREA (V.O.)
What is wrong with this place?

She quickly loosens the straps and rolls off the gurney, landing on the cold floor with a thud. As she stands, her eyes widen at the horrifying sight around her—body parts scattered across the room.

ANDREA
Oh God...

She covers her mouth to stifle a wave of nausea.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Nope.

Suddenly, she loses her battle with her stomach and vomits all over the floor, her sick splattering against a collection of detached eyeballs.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
The horror...

TWO HAZEMAT SUIT PEOPLE enter, chatting casually.

HAZMAT SUIT 1
This is where I put her.

Hazmat Suit 2 scans the room, confusion evident on his face.

HAZMAT SUIT 2
Are you sure? Remember, last time
you mixed up the rooms.

Andrea crouches in a corner, attempting to make herself as small as possible. She holds her breath, hoping they won't notice her.

HAZMAT SUIT 1
This time, I put her in here.

Hazmat Suit 2 looks at the empty gurney.

HAZMAT SUIT 2
She isn't here unless she got up on
two legs and moved out after death.

ANOTHER HAZMAT SUIT enters, dragging a frozen dead body behind him.

HAZMAT SUIT 3
This is my room. Did you need
something?

Hazmat Suit 1 and 2 exchange glances, both looking uneasy.

HAZMAT SUIT 2
Nope. Just the wrong room.

HAZMAT SUIT 1
My bad.

Hazmat Suits 1 and 2 exit, leaving Hazmat Suit 3 alone with the body. As he examines it, Andrea shifts slightly, making a noise that echoes ominously.

HAZMAT SUIT 3
That's what I forgot.

Hazmat Suit 3 turns, looking around.

As soon as he leaves, Andrea takes a deep breath, shaking off the nauseous feeling, and quietly staggers out of the room.

INT. FREEZER ROOM - DAY

In a stark, cold room lined with frozen jars filled with body parts, Philip stands impatiently with the Hazmat Suits.

PHILIP
Where is she?

Hazmat Suit 1 looks around, his face pale.

HAZMAT SUIT 1
I think I misplaced her.

PHILIP
You filled the syringe full,
correct?

Suddenly, a LOUD SNAP echoes through the room.

INT. MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

Philip is now dressed sharply in a suit. The Hazmat Suits have transformed into DOCTORS, their demeanor more serious.

One of the doctors nervously rubs the back of his head.

DOCTOR 1
Three-fourths.

Philip rubs his temples, stress etched on his face.

PHILIP

The goal is to knock her out long enough so she doesn't harm herself or others. Three-fourths will only knock her out for an hour or two.

The doctor looks concerned.

DOCTOR 2

I was worried the full syringe would kill her.

Philip's frustration boils over.

PHILIP

Find Andrea! I want to see if we can fix her. If she was asleep long enough, we could go into her brain, rewire her, make sure she is not a threat.

The doctor's hands tremble.

DOCTOR 1

This is dangerous, sir. I worry we are making her more dangerous.

Philip's anger flares.

PHILIP

We are making her whole! Somewhere her childhood got messed up. We can fix her.

He picks up a jar and hurls it against the wall, causing it to shatter.

DOCTOR 2

She couldn't have gone far.

PHILIP

I would think not. She's killing the medical staff!

DOCTOR 1

We'll find her.

Philip's eyes narrow, his tone sharp.

PHILIP

What kind of look is that for our highly-rated hospital? We'll be the first hospital to rewire someone's brain physically.

INT. MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

The door creaks slightly ajar. ANDREA's eyes peek through, filled with fear and resolve. Philip's hands morph into claws, a chilling transformation.

HAZMAT SUIT 1
We will kill her.

Philip's eyes glow yellow, his voice a low snarl.

PHILIP
Excellent.

EXT. MEDICAL LOBBY - DAY

Andrea races through the lobby, glancing over her shoulder as the sounds of chaos erupt behind her.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I'm going to be sick again.

She swallows hard, forcing herself to stay focused.

Rushing towards an EXIT DOOR with a latch, she opens it.

ALARM (O.C.)
Escapee in progress!

A SIREN blares, echoing throughout the hallways.

HAZMAT SUIT (O.C.)
That's got to be her!

With a final burst of adrenaline, Andrea bolts.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL - DAY

Andrea sprints down the stairwell, hearing the door at the top swing open.

HAZMAT SUIT 2 (O.S.)
You remember what the boss said!

She races down the stairs, her heart pounding, and reaches the bottom only to find the exit door LOCKED.

ANDREA
Oh shit! What do I do?

Panic sets in as she spins around. In a corner, she spots a severed arm, freshly cut, its long fingernails glistening.

With trembling hands, she reaches for it, trying to steady her shaking.

Footsteps echo closer. They're closing in.

Andrea touches a finger, using the fingernail to unlock the door. It unlocks. She runs out.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

A harsh, flickering light cuts through the dimness of the parking garage. Andrea (20s, disheveled, haunted) walks cautiously toward the light, her footsteps echoing in the eerie silence.

A SHADOW lurks behind her, creeping closer, its presence ominous. Suddenly, it latches onto her shoulder.

ANDREA
(whirling around, alarmed)
Get off of me, you horrid wrench!

She spins to face the SHADOW, revealing Mama, grotesquely transformed, her body a patchwork of mismatched body parts.

MAMA
(in a soft, haunting tone)
It's me, sweetheart. You're safe.

Andrea stumbles backward, fear etched on her face.

ANDREA
(voice trembling)
Mama? What did they do to you?

Mama looks away, shame washing over her.

MAMA
(distant, pained)
My beauty is gone. They performed experiments on me.

The faint sound of FOOTSTEPS grows louder. Andrea glances over her shoulder to see a group of HAZMAT SUIT PEOPLE advancing behind her.

ANDREA (V.O.)
(sorrowful)
I'm sorry I wasn't able to get here sooner.

With a mechanical movement, Mama extends her aluminum skeleton arm to feel Andrea's face gently.

MAMA

There, there, sweetheart.

Andrea's heart races as she watches the Hazmat Suit people stop in their tracks, sensing Mama's unsettling power. Mama gives them a knowing look, nodding slightly. They retreat, uneasy.

ANDREA

(breathless)

They're with you?

MAMA

(with eerie calm)

*Philip said you wanted to see me.
He was going to dissect you and put
you back together.*

As Mama steps into the light, Andrea recoils at the sight of her jagged stone legs, sharp and menacing.

ANDREA

(voice rising in panic)

No! I thought you were still you!

Mama laughs, the sound of a horrific symphony of angry hornets.

MAMA

*Oh, I am still me—just in a
superior form. Isn't that
important?*

Andrea backs away instinctively as the Hazmat Suit people step closer.

ANDREA

(firmly)

Stay back!

Mama steps forward, her demeanor suddenly more assertive.

MAMA

*(to the Hazmat Suit
people)*

I will take care of this.

*(turns to Andrea, voice
soothing)*

*Sweetheart, we can make you
better—brilliant, wise, superior.*

Andrea hesitates, battling conflicting emotions.

ANDREA (V.O.)
(wistful)
*I want to go back to the way things
were.*

Mama's impatience grows as she rubs her arms restlessly.

MAMA
*Can't you see? When you get here,
the path is blocked. It's dark,
meaning there's no going back.*

*Andrea lowers her gaze, the weight of MAMA's words pressing
down on her.*

ANDREA
(softly)
If I could change the past...

*Mama's eyes glisten with deep black tears, a reflection of
her suffering.*

MAMA
*I can tell you're remorseful for
everything you did.*

Mama latches onto Andrea's shoulder, her grip vice-like.

ANDREA
(winces)
That hurts.

MAMA
(apologetic but firm)
*I'm sorry, sweetheart. Initially,
it's a little uncomfortable, but
you'll get used to it.*

*Andrea struggles against the lock of her Mama's grip, feeling
the oppressive weight of her transformation.*

ANDREA
(pleading)
This isn't you, Mama!

*Mama's laughter reverberates through the garage, menacing and
filled with madness.*

MAMA
*Oh, it's more than just me. There
are many people in here.*

*Suddenly, Mama's legs lurch forward, thrashing dangerously
close to Andrea.*

ANDREA
 (terrified)
 Mama! What about all the good times
 we had as a family?

Mama's expression twists in pain as she turns away as if the memories are a physical blow.

MAMA
 Oh, I remember, all right. Yet,
 they were able to cover up that
 part of the brain.

HAZMAT SUIT PERSON
 (impatiently)
 I want to grab her already. I've
 got a syringe filled to the brim
 this time.

Andrea fights against Mama's grasp, desperation creeping into her voice.

ANDREA
 I know part of you is still in
 there!

Mama shakes her head, a chilling finality in her eyes.

MAMA
 (coldly)
 This is a new and improved Mama.
 Nothing old, nothing about the
 past. It's all gone.

In a moment of clarity, Andrea pulls out a WHITE FLAG from her back pocket, holding it up.

HAZMAT SUIT PERSON
 (mockingly)
 She's finally giving up.

Mama loosens her grip, intrigued by the flag, and Andrea falls to the ground, rubbing her sore shoulder. Mama studies the flag, her expression shifting.

EXT. FIELD - FLASHBACK

Everything is BLACK AND WHITE. Mama, Papa, Jack, and Andrea stand together, looking at a brilliant FIREWORKS display shaped like a flag.

MAMA
 (with joy)
 Happy 4th of July!

ANDREA
 (eyes wide)
 There are so many shapes!

PAPA
 Remember this moment.

JACK
 (cheerfully)
 Yeah, 'Drea. This is it!

END FLASHBACK

INT. PARKING GARAGE - PRESENT

Mama's head spins, her eyes darting as if grappling with the memories.

MAMA
 (voice shaking)
 The old family? Wait...

Black blood oozes from her face, a horrific sight.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 (hopeful)
 Mama's remembering.

Mama looks around the garage, her expression flickering between recognition and despair.

MAMA
 (urgent, panicked)
 Get out of here while you have the chance. Leave me!

Andrea stands slowly, determination surging.

ANDREA
 We can go together, Mama.

MAMA
 (shouting)
 Negative! They will kill you. I will turn on you. That's the way in Inception Heights. Now go!

Mama screams, a cacophony reverberating through the garage, as Andrea claps her hands over her ears. The Hazmat Suit people surge toward Andrea.

ANDREA
(frantic)
Shit!

Andrea scrambles to her feet, dodging the outstretched hands of the Hazmat Suit people.

HAZMAT SUIT PERSON
(snarling)
I promise you, your old life will
be a thing of the past!

One of the Hazmat Suit people grabs Andrea, pulling her toward him.

ANDREA
(struggling)
Get off of me!

Suddenly, GUNSHOTS ring out, echoing in the enclosed space. Each shot hits a Hazmat Suit person with precise accuracy. Andrea kicks the one holding her, breaking free as another bullet strikes the assailant in the face.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
(stunned)
Oh?

Mama stands in the light, her features twisted with fury and sorrow.

MAMA
(screaming)
Finish me, damn you! Finish me as
well!

A bullet pierces Mama's head, tearing through flesh and bone. She collapses to the ground, lifeless.

ANDREA (V.O.)
(screaming, heartbroken)
Mama? No! I'm sorry! I tried to fix
all this!

A GROUP OF MERCENARIES bursts through the garage entrance, clad in tactical gear, their weapons drawn. The GROUP LEADER, MAX REFUGE (30s, rugged, mustache, beard), strides forward, removing his helmet as his eyes lock onto Andrea.

MAX
(steading his breath)
Identify yourself.

ANDREA
(voice shaking)
Please... don't shoot me.

Max raises his hand, signaling for his team to lower their weapons.

MAX
I recognize you. Let's get you to safety.

ANDREA
(urgent)
I want out of here. Now!

EXT. MERCENARY HIDEOUT - DAY

A grassy field unfolds, surrounded by an imposing electrical fence with a **WARNING: HIGH VOLTAGE** sign flapping in the breeze. A pair of orange jumpsuits stand out against the green landscape: Max, a rugged mercenary in his 30s, and Andrea, a young woman with a fierce determination in her eyes.

MAX
(leaning against the fence)
Are you enjoying the food?

ANDREA
(savoring a taco)
It was my favorite growing up. It tastes like freedom.

Max smirks, intrigued by her response.

MAX
So, you know where we are?

Andrea finishes her taco, wiping her hands on her jumpsuit.

ANDREA
(shrugging)
I'm just off to head home. Who the hell are you?

Max extends his hand earnestly.

MAX

I'm Max. But you can't just go there, Andrea. You're locked up for a reason. I'm trying to help you.

Andrea shakes her head, frustration mounting.

ANDREA

(voice rising)

Philip promised me a way home. He said—

MAX

(interrupting)

He lied! He wants to experiment on you! I've been there, trust me.

Andrea's expression shifts as she processes his words.

ANDREA

(sighing)

I wish I had known the bloody curse this place was. I lost everything.

Max snaps his fingers, his intensity rising.

MAX

You caused this, but I can help you fix it. Together, we can fight against this place's savagery.

ANDREA

(eyes narrowing)

Why don't you come with me?

Max nods, eyes fierce with determination.

MAX

(smiling)

Because we're home. But I need you to fight Philip with me.

Andrea looks up, hoping to ignite in her eyes. Suddenly, with a SNAP, a dilapidated barn materializes behind Max. He's now clad in tactical gear: a bulletproof vest and camo pants.

ANDREA

(eyes widening)

You saved me.

INT. BARN - DAY

Inside the barn, the walls are lined with weapons. Mercenaries practice shooting on a range, the crack of gunfire echoing through the air as Andrea and Max walk by, soaking in the intensity.

ANDREA

(grinning)

Quite the facility. Safety, at least. Why not leave Inception Heights for yourself?

Max looks solemn, his gaze distant.

MAX

Because we're scared. We don't want to lose each other. Only a few of us will make it to the other side.

Andrea's expression softens as she processes his vulnerability.

ANDREA

(whispering)

I get it. It's better to have a family than anything.

Max locks eyes with her, a flicker of admiration passing between them.

MAX

That's it. We can do so much, but at the same time, so little. These guys—

(pauses, gesturing around)

—took me in and trained me when I was displaced.

ANDREA

(looking thoughtful)

Who are you?

MAX

(smirking)

I'm Max.

ANDREA

(earnest)

Can you train me, Max?

MAX
(raising an eyebrow)
Do you want to learn how to fight?
Use weapons?

ANDREA
(serious)
There's not a good chance I'll get
to waltz back home. Yes.

Max nods, resolve hardening in his eyes.

MAX
All right, rest. Your training
begins in four hours.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Andrea holds a rifle, staring down the scope at a target. She pulls the trigger, but the recoil sends her flying backward into the wall.

ANDREA
(rubbing her shoulder)
Hmm. Maybe not.

INT. AXE THROWING ROOM - DAY

She stands in front of a target, a hefty axe in hand. She throws it with all her might, but the axe bounces off and flies straight back, landing inches from her face.

MAX
(grinning)
I take it that's something you
don't want to experience again.

Andrea shakes her head, wide-eyed.

INT. SWORD ROOM - DAY

In a room lined with swords, Andrea runs up to Max, who's in a combat stance, sword drawn. The sound of metal clashing fills the air as their blades meet.

MAX
(leaning in)
You have an affinity for this.

ANDREA
(smiling)
This feels right.

They engage in an exhilarating sword fight, exchanging blows. Andrea takes a deep breath, her focus sharp. Max advances, stopping inches away from her ribs.

MAX
(serious tone)
Remember, in a sword fight, you can't rest. Your opponent will take advantage.

INT. RED ROOM - DAY

Max and Andrea sit in a room bathed in red light, a rhythmic humming filling the space like butterflies fluttering.

ANDREA
(voice quiet)
Can I make it through to get home?

Max looks at her, his expression grave.

MAX
No. It's hazardous. But I've made a decision. I'm willing to help you, and so will my men.

Andrea reaches out, running her fingers along Max's beard. A few golden strands come off in her hand.

ANDREA
(chuckling)
Strange.

MAX
(shrugging)
Sometimes I shed. It happens.

ANDREA
(teasing)
Thanks for the rescue. What time are we moving out?

MAX
(focused)
Let me get my people ready for the fight ahead.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Steam rises from the shower as Andrea hums a soft tune, her voice echoing gently down the hall. The sound of FOOTSTEPS grows closer, but she's blissfully unaware. She invigorates as the water shuts off, wiping steam from the mirror. Suddenly, a chill runs down her spine.

INT. BARN - DAY

Andrea enters the barn, fully dressed, and sees mercenaries sprinting past her. The atmosphere is tense, filled with anticipation.

ANDREA
(playfully)
So, are you ready to suit up?

The men pause, exchanging glances. Max steps forward, his expression serious.

MAX
(gravely)
Once you do this, there's no turning back.

ANDREA
(nods)
Understood.

Max surveys his team, all in tactical gear, bracing for what lies ahead.

MAX
Out there? It's the worst of the worst. Creatures that will devour you in seconds.

ANDREA
(with determination)
I appreciate your help.

Max looks down, his tone darkening.

MAX
A lot of us aren't coming back. But we can help you leave.

Andrea shakes her head, the weight of the situation dawning on her.

ANDREA
I know this means you're all stuck
here.

MERCENARY
(firmly)
We've faced worse. We feel a duty
to protect those in need.

The other mercenaries nod in agreement, a show of solidarity.

ANDREA
(with resolve)
Excellent.

Max checks his gun, making sure it's locked and loaded.
Andrea grips her sword at her side.

MAX
(seriously)
One more thing—we need to destroy
the house to open the portal.

Andrea freezes, horror etched on her face.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Not Evilton Estates.

MAX
(softly)
Evilton Estates.

ANDREA
(voice trembling)
That's what started this mess.

Max meets her gaze, determination shining through.

MAX
It'll be fine. I'll be right here
with you.

Andrea fidgets nervously, a storm of thoughts swirling.

ANDREA
We got past his pets, but I have no
idea what's upstairs.

MERCENARY
(reassuringly)
That's where the main room is.
Destroy the main room, destroy the
house, and we leave this place.

Andrea looks at them, realization dawning.

ANDREA
 (with regret)
*How could I be so stupid? Philip
 wasn't going to let me go. He
 planned to use me and then kill me.*

EXT. RIDGE - FANTASY

Andrea stands over a hill, Philip looming behind her like a dark shadow.

ANDREA
 (tearfully)
You showed me, Papa.

PHILIP
 (shakes his head)
*You must have missed it. Your Mama
 is buried next to your Papa.*

Andrea's eyes glisten with unshed tears.

ANDREA
Please - send me home.

She reaches out with desperate arms. Philip raises his rifle, the click of the gun echoing ominously.

PHILIP
*You're not going home, but you
 won't have to worry about here
 anymore.*

BAM! BAM! BAM! Three shots pierce the air, striking Andrea in the back. She gasps, stunned.

ANDREA
 (whispers)
Damn.

She collapses to the ground, the darkness closing in.

END FANTASY

INT. BARN - PRESENT

Andrea wakes up screaming, panic flooding her senses.

MAX
(concerned)
What's the matter?

Andrea looks around, trembling.

ANDREA
(nervously)
Nothing - just my imagination.

MAX
(empathetically)
It happens to the best of us. This
place has a way of doing that.

Suddenly, the lights in the barn flicker, plunging them into
darkness. The shutters slam shut.

ANDREA
(panicking)
What's happening?

RIPPING sounds echo around them as if something is
growing—something monstrous.

MAX (O.S.)
It's so painful!

MERCENARY (O.S.)
We can't stop it!

Philip's voice booms ominously from the shadows.

PHILIP (O.S.)
Oh my god, you're not dead yet?
Good lord. Well, you will be soon
enough.

ANDREA (O.S.)
(defiantly)
I'm going to kill you.

PHILIP (O.S.)
No, my dear, you're not. But I
won't kill you either. I'll leave
that up to them.

ANDREA (O.S.)
They like me.

PHILIP (O.S.)
They can't control themselves.

ANDREA (O.S.)
 (confused)
 Why are you like this?

PHILIP (O.S.)
 No human has survived the town of
 darkness for centuries. That won't
 change now.

The lights flicker again, and Andrea catches a glimpse of Max's golden hair in the darkness.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 Max? My old dog.

INT. YARD - FLASHBACK - DAY

The sun hangs high, casting a warm glow over the yard. A GOLDEN LAB sits anxiously on the grass, ears drooping as TWO ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS approach, each wielding a muzzle. Andrea, around eight years old, notices the commotion and rushes toward her parents, her heart pounding.

ANDREA
 (voice trembling)
 What are they doing with Max?

Papa, a sturdy man with a gentle demeanor, kneels to Andrea's level, his eyes filled with compassion and regret.

PAPA
 (somberly)
 Andrea, they're taking him away...
 They're putting him down.

Andrea's face crumbles, tears brimming in her eyes.

ANDREA
 Why? He's never hurt anyone!

Warm yet firm, Mama crouches beside them, brushing a loose strand of hair behind Andrea's ear.

MAMA
 He bit someone, sweetheart. He was
 scared.

Andrea's lips quiver, and she wipes her cheeks with her tiny hands, struggling to comprehend.

ANDREA
 (sobbing)
 But he was my friend!

Papa pulls her into a tight embrace, his voice soothing but filled with the weight of reality.

PAPA

I know, pumpkin. But we can get you
a rabbit instead.

Andrea's gaze falls to the ground, the words barely reaching her through the fog of her sadness.

ANDREA

But... Max is special.

The officers lead Max away, his tail between his legs, and Andrea's heart breaks as she watches him vanish into the vehicle.

END FLASHBACK

INT. BARN - DAY

Lights flicker erratically, casting ghostly shadows on the wooden walls. Andrea stands in the center, breathing heavily. She glances around, the memories flooding her mind, and then—

From the corner of the room, a massive, fully-grown GOLDEN WEREWOLF named Max steps into the chaotic light, his eyes piercing through the darkness. The other MERCENARIES, too, have transformed into fierce beasts. They snarl, their eyes glinting in the dim light.

MAX

(grinning menacingly)
Run as fast as you can, little
girl. You'll never outrun us.

Panic grips Andrea as she stumbles, desperately searching for an exit. The barn feels like a twisted maze, every flickering light amplifying her fear.

MERCENARY

(taunting)
You know werewolves have night
vision, right?

Andrea's breath quickens, heart racing as she pushes through the chaos, dodging the swirling shadows and trying to find a way out.

ANDREA

(voice strained)
Come on, where is it?

The lights flash brighter, overwhelming her senses. She fumbles toward the exit, each step heavier than the last.

EXT. BARNYARD - DAY

Bursting through the barn doors, Andrea stumbles into the sunlight. Her eyes adjust for a moment, but she finally draws in a deep, refreshing breath.

ANDREA
(relieved)
I'm safe...

But her relief is short-lived. Max crashes through the door, tackling her to the ground with his robust frame, pinning her down.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
(looking up, incredulous)
So Mama and Papa didn't put you
down, Max? Did you escape here?

Her voice trembles with disbelief, memories of love and loyalty battling against the beast before her.

MAX
(voice low, filled with
rage)
I found this portal.

Andrea, filled with desperation, instinctively raises her hands, blocking her face.

ANDREA
(panicking)
This world turns everything into
monsters. Can't you help me?

Max growls, frustration radiating from his powerful body.

MAX
(eyes blazing)
You left me to die, little girl!
You left me with nothing!

Her heart aches at his words, the guilt flooding back. She gathers her resolve, pushing against the weight of his body.

ANDREA
(breathlessly)
That wasn't my choice! Get a hold
of yourself. It was Mama and Papa!

Max shakes his head, drool dripping from his jaws, and a haunting howl escapes his lips, echoing in the open air.

MAX

*(voice trembling with
hunger)*

*You could have fought for me! It
died for me! You could have
sacrificed yourself in my place!*

Andrea feels a pang of pain at his accusations. She scrambles back, trying to crawl away, her mind racing.

ANDREA

(sternly)

*You were an animal! You still are!
Look at you!*

Max howls again, a chilling sound that reverberates in the air. His hunger is palpable, and Andrea feels fear and anger.

MAX

(snarling)

*I feel this hunger, Andrea! I want
more food in my system!*

Desperately, she inches toward a nearby fence, but Max lunges forward, dragging her back quickly.

ANDREA

(screaming)

I don't deserve to die!

Max's teeth sink into her leg, and pain shoots through her body, making her scream. She writhes beneath him, instinctively fighting back.

MAX

(coldly)

*It's over. If I don't eat you, the
others will.*

Max lunges forward, sharp teeth aimed at her eyes. In a desperate moment, Andrea grabs a WOOD SPLINTER from the ground and thrusts it toward Max's eye.

ANDREA

(defiantly)

Bad dog!

The splinter pierces Max's brain, and a spray of blood erupts, splattering Andrea's face. Time seems to freeze as Max's body goes rigid, shock coursing through him.

FLASH. Max appears in an orange jumpsuit, a memory surfacing in Andrea's mind.

MAX

(fading voice)

It wasn't me, but Philip, you were supposed to kill.

With a surge of adrenaline, Andrea kicks Max off her, using all her strength to shove him aside. She stumbles to her feet, bleeding from her leg, each step a struggle.

ANDREA

(grimacing)

Aargh, that bite -

Max collapses, rolling onto his side. His tongue lolls out, and the curse lifts, revealing his human form beneath the monstrous exterior. He turns to dust, leaving behind only memories.

The MERCENARIES revert to their human forms, confusion etched on their faces.

MERCENARY

(with a heavy heart)

We can't help you.

ANDREA

(snarling)

Fuck off!

In a daze, Andrea drags herself away, gripping her bleeding leg. She stumbles through the grass, the weight of exhaustion pulling her down. Eventually, she finds herself back on the BRICK ROAD, sitting by the town's side, overwhelmed.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Andrea lies on the operating table, flanked by TWO SURGEONS in scrubs, their faces tense with concentration. Machines beep rhythmically, and the sound of a flatline echoes ominously.

SURGEON

(frantic)

We're losing her!

Andrea's consciousness hovers above her body, confusion swirling around her as she witnesses the urgency in the room.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 (softly)
 Where am I? Wait... am I?

SURGEON
 (shouting)
 Get me that AED! We've got to shock
 her!

As the scene intensifies, Andrea feels a pull, an urgency to return.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BRICK ROAD - PRESENT

Andrea stands in the middle of a desolate brick road, dazed, her leg bleeding profusely. Shadows flicker around her, and suddenly, Dark Jack materializes before her, ghostly figure.

DARK JACK
 (softly)
 'Drea? 'Drea?

Andrea blinks, stunned, taking a moment to process.

ANDREA
 (voice trembling)
 How are you still alive? You can't
 be. Did Philip bring you back?

Dark Jack shakes his head, a hint of sorrow in his eyes.

DARK JACK
 I'm not alive. It's complicated.
 You summoned my spirit.

Andrea winces, shifting uncomfortably as more blood trickles from her leg.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 I don't get to go home after all.

She closes her eyes, leaning over as memories begin.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Two SURGEONS stand over Andrea's still body, their expressions grim as they work frantically.

SURGEON
 (frantically)
 We're still losing her!

SURGEON TWO
 (looking closely)
 She's fighting the treatment.

The first surgeon shakes his head, determination in his eyes.

SURGEON
 No, I feel a blockage. I can
 release it!

END FLASHBACK

INT. BRICK ROAD - PRESENT

Dark Jack slaps Andrea's face, snapping her to reality.

ANDREA
 (rubbing her cheek)
 I felt that hit.

DARK JACK
 (urgently)
 You'll feel a lot more if you don't
 stay with me. There's so much to
 fight for, 'Drea.

Andrea looks around, her gaze drawn to birds soaring above. A faint smile crosses her lips.

ANDREA
 I don't have to worry or fight
 anymore.

Dark Jack shakes his head, his expression serious.

DARK JACK
 Do you remember how you used to
 slice and dice your dolls, mixing
 and matching them?

Andrea chuckles softly despite the situation, the memory warming her.

ANDREA (V.O.)
 That's a fun memory.

DARK JACK
(intently)
*You can see anything like that, but
 you have to want it.*

Andrea closes her eyes again, a deep breath escaping.

ANDREA
Everything is lost.

She slumps over, her strength fading.

DARK JACK
(urgent)
*Philip is going to bring me back. I
 need you to fight. Your brother is
 still here. I promise I'm still in
 here!*

INT. OPERATING ROOM - FLASHBACK

The flattering sound of the machine fills the air. The surgeons exchange panicked glances.

SURGEON
(grimly)
 Time of death 0-

But suddenly, the machine beeps! A faint rhythm returns.

SURGEON TWO
(in disbelief)
She's breathing! It's a miracle!

SURGEON
(incredulous)
 The treatment may be working.

SURGEON TWO
(hopeful)
*Hopefully, she changes her ways. I
 hope Philip was right about this.*

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BRICK ROAD - PRESENT

*Andrea's eyes snap open, fire igniting within them. She grips
 Dark Jack's arm, determination surging through her.*

ANDREA
I have to find my brother!

But suddenly, darkness washes over her, and she blacks out. Dark Jack, filled with urgency, lifts Andrea into his arms, carrying her toward Inception Heights.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Andrea awakens in a dimly lit classroom, lying atop a desk. Surgery scars mark her arms and legs. She glances around, confusion painting her features.

*DARK JACK
(gently)
Easy now.*

Andrea shakes her head, disbelief lingering.

*ANDREA
You said you were just a
projection.*

Dark Jack meets her gaze, shaking his head slowly.

*DARK JACK
You willed me to life. But I'll
only survive for a little longer.*

Andrea grits her teeth, pushing herself to her feet and testing her wounds.

*ANDREA
It's time for me to get Jack.*

*DARK JACK
(anxious)
You ought to open that portal
first. It can lure Philip out.*

Andrea stretches, determination fueling her movements.

*ANDREA
Philip won't let me go.*

Dark Jack's form flickers, a sign of his fading strength.

*DARK JACK
He won't let your brother go.*

Andrea's face hardens, her resolve firm.

*ANDREA
This isn't going to be easy.*

Dark Jack shivers, losing more color.

DARK JACK

*The stronger you become, the weaker
I become.*

Andrea ponders for a moment, a glimmer of hope emerging.

ANDREA

Could I take my brother out of you?

Dark Jack's fading form grows weaker, his voice shaky.

DARK JACK

*I'm getting weaker. Time is running
thin. You should go.*

Andrea reaches out, feeling the coolness of Dark Jack's hand.

ANDREA

*Can we extend your time and bring
Jack here?*

Dark Jack lies down a resigned look on his face.

DARK JACK

*Let me die, 'Drea. It's what's
best.*

*Andrea, refusing to accept this, takes a pair of scissors
from the desk and lies down beside it.*

ANDREA

*I want to see my brother if I have
to will him here.*

Dark Jack's form begins to flicker more intensely.

DARK JACK

(weakly)

*There's one way. The children -
they have more control. They can
make him appear.*

Andrea's eyes light up with determination.

ANDREA

So I don't have to cut myself.

Dark Jack begins to fade, urgency creeping into his voice.

DARK JACK

*We will be enemies the next time I
see you.*

Dark Jack disappears completely, leaving Andrea alone in the classroom. She struggles to her feet, adrenaline fueling her resolve.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Andrea stumbles into a bright yet eerie playground, her gaze drifting over the swings and slides. A group of CHILDREN stops their play, eyes wide with curiosity and suspicion.

CHILDREN
(whispering)
What is it?

Andrea steps forward, her voice trembling but resolute.

ANDREA
I wish to speak with my brother.

The children huddle together, exchanging doubting glances.

CHILDREN
You hurt us earlier. Why should we
help you?

Andrea takes a breath, considering her words carefully.

ANDREA
I'm willing to destroy the
Executioner. Free you all.

The children murmur among themselves, their whispers echoing in the air.

CHILDREN
The Executioner can never be
killed. The last person who tried -
was killed instantly.

Andrea straightens, a fierce determination in her eyes.

ANDREA
I stand before you, a survivor of
trauma. I can outwit and kill
Philip and bring him to his knees.

The Children continue to whisper, their resolve wavering.

CHILDREN
We want to play all day. We can
never grow old. That's all we want.

ANDREA

Let me speak to my brother.

The Children nod slowly, hesitantly.

CHILDREN

I call upon thee, Jack Refuge. Come to life!

A thick mist rises above the playground, transforming the sky into a blood-orange hue. Lightning crackles, illuminating the scene. Jack materializes from the fog, looking bewildered.

JACK

'Drea. I thought I died.

Andrea rushes to him, a mix of relief and sorrow.

ANDREA

You did. I feel responsible.

Jack shakes his head, a soft smile forming on his lips.

JACK

You couldn't have done that.

They move to a bench, the nostalgia-heavy in the air.

ANDREA

I'm so glad I could see you and say goodbye.

JACK

No. You're leaving?

Tears well up in Andrea's eyes.

ANDREA

I can't stay. I must kill the Executioner and then leave, or I'll become a monster.

Jack lowers his head, the weight of her words sinking in.

JACK

God. This playground looks so familiar. It's like the one we went to -

Andrea's smile brightens as she looks around.

ANDREA

Right by our house. There's the blue jungle gym.

With a pointed finger, the jungle gym shifts to a vivid blue.

*JACK
The red swing set!*

Jack gestures, and the swing set changes to a bright red.

*ANDREA
And the piss slide.*

Andrea points at the jungle gym's top, where a tube slide appears. Jack chuckles.

*JACK
That was a great place to do it
when you had to go.*

Andrea laughs, a lightness in her heart.

*ANDREA
This is such a wonderful feeling.*

But Jack's demeanor turns serious.

*JACK
Even without me, you can do good
here. You're freeing everything
from the enslavement by the
Executioner.*

Andrea's expression shifts, shadows creeping into her heart.

*ANDREA
I wish there were a way to bring
you back permanently.*

*Behind them looms a field darkened by shadows, a tunnel of
darkness threatening to swallow everything.*

*JACK
You realize there's no going back
to the past. But your present can
be so much brighter.*

Andrea looks down, uncertainty flickering in her eyes.

*ANDREA (V.O.)
Without you, Jack, a big piece of
me will be missing.*

Jack gently holds her hand, their bond palpable.

JACK
I know 'Drea. Hold onto our
memories. That's important.

Andrea ponders, her voice softening.

ANDREA
Do you disappear?

Jack laughs lightly, his eyes sparkling.

JACK
Are you trying to get rid of me
that easily?

Andrea stands, a newfound determination sparking within her.

ANDREA
I was wondering if I could use you.

Jack cracks his neck, intrigued.

JACK
What do you have in mind?

Andrea grins mischievously.

ANDREA
Do you have any flight ability?

Jack tilts his head, a playful smirk crossing his face.

JACK
Like a superhero?

Andrea nods, excitement bubbling.

ANDREA
Dark Jack.

Jack's eyes widen, realization dawning.

JACK
Hmm...

EXT. HOUSE ROOF - DAY

Jack sweeps Andrea into the air, soaring to the roof of their childhood home. Andrea surveys the area below, determination etched on her face.

ANDREA
Right there, that's perfect.

Jack gently sets her down.

JACK
You got it from here?

Andrea hesitates, glancing at him.

ANDREA
Not exactly. Stay with me a little longer.

Three GARGOYLE figures perched on the ledges turn their attention to Andrea.

GARGOYLE
Feeding time, finally.

Andrea steels herself.

ANDREA
It's time for me to go home.

GARGOYLE TWO
Fast food.

The second Gargoyle rushes at Andrea. She expertly flips him over her head, delivering a powerful punch to his chest. His head pops off, landing in the abyss. Jack stares wide-eyed.

JACK
You've learned some new moves.

ANDREA
I ran into that old dog of ours. He taught me a few things.

Without missing a beat, Jack hurls a shard of glass into the third Gargoyle's neck, its head rolling away into darkness.

JACK
The children wanted me to say thank you.

The last Gargoyle, now enraged, snarls.

GARGOYLE
This is unacceptable.

Andrea and Jack encircle the remaining Gargoyle, a fierce energy crackling between them.

ANDREA
No, you're going to let us go.

Suddenly, Jack begins to fade.

JACK
Thanks for the last adventure,
'Drea.

Andrea looks at him, tears glimmering in her eyes.

ANDREA (V.O.)
Goodbye, Jack. Thanks for the
memories.

As Jack disappears, the Gargoyle laughs mockingly.

GARGOYLE
You are all alone in an unfamiliar
place.

Andrea glares, her determination solidifying.

ANDREA
I have survived.

The Gargoyle charges at her, hunger driving it forward.

GARGOYLE
Prepare to meet your doom.

Andrea braces herself as the Gargoyle rushes at her.

ANDREA
This is your last chance.

GARGOYLE
You cannot see. There is nothing
you can do.

Andrea spins around, grabbing the Gargoyle's claws and pressing her hands into them.

ANDREA
I'm trying to be kind.

GARGOYLE
No kindness. You lose.

With a fierce determination, Andrea presses harder. The Gargoyle sinks to one knee, shaking.

ANDREA
There's nothing wrong with reaching
out for help.

GARGOYLE

I refuse.

ANDREA

Then you will be destroyed.

The Gargoyle trembles, its instincts battling against Andrea's resolve.

GARGOYLE

It is in my nature to feed.

With a surge of strength, Andrea lifts the Gargoyle above her head.

ANDREA

I gave you a chance at life.

With one swift motion, she hurls the Gargoyle over the edge. It crashes down, shattering into countless pieces.

Andrea scans the roof frantically, searching for an escape.

ANDREA (V.O.)

Eureka, a way back home!

She spots a hatch and leaps down into it.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is dimly lit, shadows creeping along the walls. Andrea moves cautiously toward her bedroom. Each creak of the floor sends shivers down her spine. She grips the door handle tightly, taking a deep breath.

With a slow turn of the handle, she opens the door-

BOOM!

An explosion throws her back, rolling her down the stairs. The hallway erupts in chaos.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

WHACK! Andrea hits the tiled floor hard, scrambling to regain her footing. Her eyes dart to the front door, a glimmer of hope.

ANDREA

Come on, legs. Work with me now.

She lunges for the front door, her heart pounding. Suddenly, a GIANT SPIDER, its body glistening, drops from above and lands on her, knocking her to the ground. It spits out its web, ensnaring her.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
You are going to eat me?

The spider's sharp legs stab toward her. She rolls away, barely escaping its grasp. It SCREAMS— a horrible sound like air escaping a balloon. Andrea cringes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
I got to get out of this.

With every ounce of strength, she kicks and wriggles against the web. The spider, frustrated, lands beside her, its legs poised to strike.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
That's the chance.

Seizing the moment, Andrea escapes the sticky web and scrambles to her feet.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
I forgot about the giant bugs.

The spider lunges again, shooting webbing. It misses her, and she laughs triumphantly.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Ha!

Andrea darts under the spider and bolts towards front door.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

As she bursts through the door, the house EXPLODES behind her, sending her sprawling onto the street. Dazed, she shakes off the debris and sees a swirling PORTAL forming amid the destruction.

ANDREA (V.O.)
It's over.

Dark Jack (30s), looming and sinister, drops Philip (20s) in front of Andrea. Philip's eyes glint with malice as he flicks his wrist, sending Andrea flying backward but somehow landing on her feet.

PHILIP
I'm not going to let you go home.

His eyes glow yellow, and he HOWLS.

ANDREA
Get out of my way.

Philip lets out a chilling laugh. Dark Jack swoops in, effortlessly lifting Andrea into the air.

DARK JACK
Back off, Philip. She's mine.

PHILIP
Do not fail me. Kill her.

DARK JACK
I'm a more robust, better Dark Jack. Philip has shown me the light. Your brother is dead.

ANDREA
I know you are still in there.

Andrea meets Dark Jack's blazing red eyes, fear and hope colliding.

DARK JACK
I'm new and improved.

ANDREA
Where are you taking me?

Dark Jack smiles a twisted grin.

DARK JACK
We are going to a special feast I prepared. It's where all the monsters will gather.

Andrea wiggles in his grasp, desperation flooding her voice.

ANDREA
You don't want to drop me.

Dark Jack suddenly lets go, sending Andrea plummeting toward the pavement. Panic grips her as she braces for impact.

DARK JACK
I wouldn't mind that at all. It would be too easy, however.

ANDREA
Why me, Dark Jack? I can go home and be out of your life.

Dark Jack shakes his head, resolute.

DARK JACK

*Negative. No human has survived in
Inception Heights, and it won't
start now.*

Andrea's mind races, searching for an escape.

ANDREA

Why don't you and I fight then?

Dark Jack raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

DARK JACK

I would demolish you.

Andrea smirks defiantly.

ANDREA

So you're afraid?

EXT. INCEPTION HEIGHTS TOWN CENTER - DAY

*Dark Jack lands with a thud, dropping Andrea to the ground.
The air is tense as GARGOYLES, ZOMBIES, and GIGANTIC INSECTS
gather, their eyes glinting with hunger.*

DARK JACK

I know you are all starving.

*The crowd erupts in a cacophony of cheers, their voices
echoing like a distorted hospital machine.*

ANDREA

Such horrid noise.

Dark Jack steps forward, addressing the crowd.

DARK JACK

She challenged me to a duel.

*The crowd goes silent, uncertainty washing over them. Andrea
seizes the moment.*

ANDREA

I'll take all of you on.

*The crowd growls in response, sounding like nails scraping
against a chalkboard. Andrea covers her ears, trying to block
out the noise.*

DARK JACK

I have decided to accept the challenge. Once I defeat her, we can feast on her flesh once and for all.

Excitement ripples through the crowd, their anticipation palpable.

ANDREA

If I win, you let me go home.

Dark Jack snickers, dismissive.

DARK JACK

Which won't happen.

Andrea glares at him, determination igniting within her.

ANDREA

Don't be so sure.

Dark Jack crosses his arms, smirking.

DARK JACK

What are the rules for the duel?

Andrea pulls out a rifle with a flick of her wrist, firing a shot into the air.

ANDREA (V.O.)

Max taught me a few things.

A throwing axe materializes in her hand in the blink of an eye. She hurls it toward Dark Jack with all her might.

ANDREA

I've learned a lot.

The axe buries itself in Dark Jack's side, and bullet holes blossom across his body. He stumbles, momentarily stunned.

DARK JACK

You defeated me -

Andrea stands tall, a triumphant smile.

ANDREA

I'm going home.

In a rage, Dark Jack pulls out the axe, his eyes narrowing.

With a swift movement, he strikes Andrea in the side. Blood spills and both of them collapse, breathless.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Two SURGEONS work frantically over Andrea's unconscious body.

SURGEON

Third attempt to fix her.

SURGEON TWO

Damn.

Suddenly, Andrea springs up from the table, panic in her eyes. She grabs a scalpel and stabs one of the surgeons in the neck. He gasps, struggling for air.

ANDREA (V.O.)

I need a way out of this place.
It's evil.

She pulls the scalpel free and points it at the other surgeon, who raises his hands in surrender, retreating.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. INCEPTION HEIGHTS REHAB CLINIC - FLASHBACK

The large, circular building is peeling. The white paint has faded, revealing patches of gray concrete beneath. Graffiti sprawls across the wall: "DARK JACK WAS HERE." The words seem to pulse with their own life in the dim light.

INT. INCEPTION HEIGHTS REHAB CLINIC - FLASHBACK

In a sterile, brightly lit room, Mama and Papa sit nervously across from DOCTOR Philip Evilton, a man in a lab coat with a clinical demeanor. His office is filled with strange instruments and papers, creating an air of chaos amid the sterile environment.

MAMA

(voice trembling)

She killed my son. You have to do something.

PAPA

(rubbing his temples)

I hate to admit it, but my methods—the pills—aren't working.
What security do you have here?

MAMA

She needs to be kept away. That dangerous side of her can't escape again.

PHILIP

(leaning forward, earnest)
We're implementing experimental treatments. There are no pills this time. We use surgery instead—a way to fix the brain chemistry.

PAPA

(frowning)
I don't love that idea. Sounds risky.

MAMA

Those pills only made things worse! They turned her into a monster.

PAPA

(sighing)
But the pills kept her... normal.

PHILIP

(firmly)
I assure you that this program can and will work. We've had success before.

EXT. YARD - PRESENT

The chaotic scene erupts as POLICE CARS screech to a halt. SIRENS blare, and FIRE AMBULANCES pulse with light, painting the night in red and blue. Officers pour out, guns drawn, their faces set in grim determination.

POLICEMAN

(shouting)
It's over! Drop the knife and put your head on the ground!

Andrea stands at the center, blood dripping from her hands. In her grip is Philip's severed head, a gruesome trophy of her chaotic victory. A WOMAN screams nearby, crumpling to the ground in despair.

WOMAN

(crying)
My husband! Philip!

POLICEMAN
(urgently)
Andrea Refuge! Come with us—now!

Andrea shakes her head, disbelief mingling with defiance.

ANDREA
(softly, almost confused)
Huh?

The Police handcuff her, and she screams in protest.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
No! You don't understand!

The officers shake their heads in disgust, treating her as just another criminal.

EXT. YARD - ANDREA'S POV

Andrea's vision blurs as she gazes down at her hands, now splattered with blood. In her mind, shadows and outlines of grotesque creatures swirl around her, whispering threats and promises.

ANDREA
(to herself, resigned)
I guess I'm supposed just to give
up and let you have me.

The shadows converge, wrapping around her like a suffocating blanket.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I terrorized a small town after
escaping from the Inception Heights
Rehab Clinic in Boulder.

The memories flood back. The chaos she wreaked. The destruction.

ANDREA (V.O.)
I took the head doctor at the
institution hostage, and it ended
tragically. His name was Philip
Evilton.

Police shove her into a squad car, the metal clanking shut behind her. The darkness envelops her as the reality of her actions settles in.

ANDREA (V.O.)

I was the monster. They tried to reform me. A part of them knew I was dangerous. Yet Philip always insisted he could fix me—make me docile and less dangerous.

The echo of his confidence rings hollow now.

ANDREA (V.O.)

It failed.

EXT. APARTMENT STAIRWAY - FLASHBACK

Mama stands at the top of the stairs, her back to Andrea, who looks up angrily and hurt.

ANDREA

I'm not a freak.

MAMA

(firmly, without turning)
You killed my favorite child.
You're a monster now.

ANDREA

(voice rising)
You need a little help with understanding me!

In a sudden burst of rage, Andrea shoves Mama down the stairs. Mama flies backward, hitting her head against the stair post. A sickening CRACK echoes in the silence.

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

The sun streams through the window, illuminating the kitchen. It looks ordinary, but there's an undercurrent of tension. Andrea meticulously mixes something in a pot.

ANDREA

(sweetly)
I'm sorry for everything, Papa.

Papa enters a hint of weariness in his eyes.

PAPA

It's okay. The two of us can be better alone.

Andrea serves the soup, her expression masking the malicious intent beneath.

ANDREA
Here, try it!

Papa tastes the soup, and his face contorts in disgust.

PAPA
(spitting it out)
What the hell is this?

ANDREA
(forcing it closer)
You don't like it?

She shoves the spoon toward him relentlessly.

PAPA
(choking, panicked)
What are you doing?

Andrea lights a match, the flame dancing between them.

ANDREA
You're a ticking time bomb, Papa.

The tension snaps as the flames flicker dangerously close, the past colliding with the present.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The squad car drives down a dark, unlit street, the headlights piercing the gloom. Inside, Andrea leans against the window, lost in her thoughts.

ANDREA
(whispering to herself)
I'm Dark Jack. I'm Mama. I'm Papa.

INT. INCEPTION HEIGHTS REHAB CLINIC - NIGHT

Andrea is dragged down the sterile, white halls by LARGE SECURITY GUARDS. She glances at the closed doors, shadows lurking behind the glass. Her eyes narrow as she passes by a familiar room.

ANDREA
(softly)
Eric's room -

GUARD 1
(grunting)
The other one who escaped?

GUARD 2

He got shot on Philip's property.
That incident was kept quiet.

GUARD 1

(curiously)
How'd she know about that?

The guards exchange glances, unsure of her insights.

INT. INCEPTION HEIGHTS REHABILITATION CENTER - NIGHT

Andrea lies on a soft mattress in a padded room, staring at the white ceiling. Papa and Mama stand on either side, looking down at her with concern. Dark Jack hovers above, a dark, foreboding presence.

ANDREA

(defiant)
None of you are real.

Dark Jack smirks, his eyes glinting with mischief.

DARK JACK

If we weren't real, how could we
help you escape? You must get back
to Inception Heights immediately.
We need your help.

The room begins to spin as Andrea mind races, caught between reality and her twisted fantasies.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END?