

ECHO SCREEN

Written by

Dan Tonkin

BLACK SCREEN.

SUPER:

Around 550,000 adult offenders were cautioned, convicted or released from custody between July 2010 and June 2011.

Around 140,000 of them committed a re-offence.

In an effort to target these re-offenders the government is about to sanction a new law that demands all recently released convicts complete a test of mental rehabilitation that demonstrates their ability to be reintegrated into society.

They call this test the Echo Screen.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

GREY (early 30's) dressed in a prisoners jump suit awakens on the floor of an empty corridor, completely unaware of how he got there.

GREY (TO HIMSELF)
What the f-?

As Grey finds his feet the whole environment seems to shiver mysteriously, disrupting every inch of his vicinity.

GREY (CONT'D)
Hello?

Silence.

Grey looks towards the end of the empty corridor, finding an exit with bright light outside and starts walking towards it.

Placing one hand on the door, he opens it, blinding him and raises his hands to block the sun out.

A loud ringing noise rings his ears, fighting to block everything out he falls to his knees, wrenching.

EXT. A FOREST - DAY

The sun's powerful glare has reduced and the ringing stops.

Grey lowers his hands and takes in his surroundings, again with no clue how he got there.

A voice.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (V.O.)
Subject three... He is the closest
hope we have of getting this law
passed... Do not lose him.

GREY
Who the hell are you, come on out!

The environment shivers before his very eyes again, Grey notices it.

DOCTOR STRAUSS
Grey...? You're journey to freedom
is finally within your reach. You
have no idea how valuable you have
become to us.

Grey grabs a nearby rock in his hand, ready to throw it.

GREY
What the hell are you talking
about?

A female voice makes Grey jump in fright and turn.

EVE
Your echo screen.

EVE (early 20's) is stood in front, wearing prominent white clothes as if pulled fresh out of the laundry, complete with white hair band and white shoes.

GREY
Who the hell are you?

EVE
I'm your Eve, I've been assigned to
guiding you through your echo
screen.

GREY
My Eve?

EVE
Echo Virtual Entity, they have been
prepping you out for quite some
time. Please... Follow me.

Eve turns and begins to walk off.

Grey hesitates, taking one more look around him then follows her, dropping the rock.

The environment sharply distorts and transforms into a different location.

INT. LECTURE THEATRE - NIGHT

An large empty auditorium, with Grey sat within a row of seats, with Eve at the bottom, stood at a technical podium.

Grey Looks around and see's the room flicker and shimmer similarly to the way he's experienced already but pays it no mind, more focused on his new location.

EVE

Are you ready?

GREY

I volunteered, didn't I...? Let's get this over with.

Eve ignores him and flicks a switch that starts playing a small video clip on the room's projector.

There is a video of a woman JILL (early twenties) laying on an empty road, with blood dripping from her mouth and her hair all tangled as she lies in an uncomfortable position.

Grey recognises the woman straight away upset and sighs in depression.

EVE

Welcome to your echo screen.

The environment flickers strongly.

EXT. CAR PARK - EVENING

Grey jumps as he finds himself in a new environment, having being projected into the location he was just watching.

Grey stands a fair distance away, scared of Jill's lifeless body.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (V.O.)

Go over to her... Beg for forgiveness, do it.

Eve materialises next to Grey and places one hand on his shoulder.

GREY

Don't drink and drive... I've lived with this image in my head for so long, what does forgiveness matter to me now?

DOCTOR STRAUSS (V.O.)

Do it!

EVE

This is how you can get it out,
this is what has been prepared for
you, only proceed when you're
ready.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (V.O.)

Subject thirteen... You will
proceed now.

Grey apprehensively nods, ashamed and starts his approach.

Eve looks up at the sky, the direction of Doctor Strauss'
voice, displaying a dismissive reprimand.

GREY

All the guilt, the shame, the
judgements, the tears...

Eve watches Grey approach, watching as if trying to decide
something for herself.

Grey drops to his knees by Jill's side, waiting for a moment
before lifting the ragged hair away from her eyes, left wide
open in her last moment of terror.

Grey is fighting tears back.

GREY (CONT'D)

I'm not ready for this, I-

Eve paces over to Grey's side.

The environment shudders repeatedly, disrupting the moment.

Eve attempts to place one hand on Grey's shoulder again,
which he fights off.

GREY (CONT'D)

Oh my God, she's so beautiful, I
jus-

Grey begins to cry.

GREY (CONT'D)

I need time, I can't take it.

Eve finds it too unsettling to watch.

EVE

Your subject isn't ready, keep on
trying to crack him, he'll end up
like the others, requesting more
time.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (V.O.)

Out of the question, he just needs
some encouragement.

A short moment passes and the sharp ringing sound sensation from before pains Grey's ears, making him writhe onto his back in agony.

EVE

No, don't!

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Grey finds himself with his back on the corridor still in agony and Jill's body still laying in the same position close by.

Suddenly, Jill starts moving, hair thrown in front of her face, shrouding it as she jerks her head about like a canary in search of Grey then holds the stare on him.

Grey's eyes widen in terror, frozen and unable to speak.

Jill cracks her broken palms into place, followed by her ankles then starts a predatory crawl towards Grey.

The sound of Grey's pounding heart grows.

Grey starts breathing hard and panicking, trying to crawl backwards from his once victim now tormenting nightmare.

EVE (V.O.)

You're pushing him too hard, you'll end up killing him too.

DOCTOR STRAUSS

Nonsense...

The torturous pursuit between Jill and Grey continues.

Grey's heart rate is through the roof, until he is backed up against a wall. No way out.

Jill draws nearer, gaining speed.

The immediate vicinity starts pulsing violently, in parallel with Grey's heart rate, shaking the room and overshadowed in ever shade of darkness.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (V.O) (CONT'D)

Beg forgiveness, like you've never begged before.

GREY

Get me out of here, get me out!

DOCTOR STRAUSS

Beg!

Jill is right in Grey's face as he blocks it with his arms, crying in fright.

GREY
FORGIVE ME! FORGIVE ME! I'm sorry,
please.

EVE (V.O.)
STOP!

INT. SEATING AREA - NIGHT

A room with two one-person sofas sat at opposite sides of a simple coffee table, on one side Grey and on the other, Eve. On top of the coffee table sits a glass of fizzy liquid and a red pill.

Grey is sobbing, trying to get his head straight, his face still covered with his arms.

EVE
Are you okay?

GREY
'Course I'm not okay, what the hell was that...? You guys are sick, you think I've not suffered enough... What the hell do you know about taking someone's life? It consume's you, it made me want to take my own on several occasions. The harder I try to hide it, the harder it gets.

Suddenly a voice speaks nearby.

From a television screen placed on a nearby table to one side of the room, a hooded DOCTOR STRAUSS appears, with only his mouth visible underneath a robe he wears.

Eve keeps her focus on Grey whilst his attention wanders over to the doctor.

DOCTOR STRAUSS
Did you not feel absolved?

GREY
Absolved...? No, unfortunately, I was too busy being scared out of my wits, trying not to wet myself, does that count?

DOCTOR STRAUSS
Well in any event, I'm happy to say Grey, you've completed your echo screen, congratulations. With this evidence we can get the program sanctioned and soon look forward to helping others on their road to absolute rehabilitation.

Grey looks baffled, he glances over to Eve, who has started looking sorry for herself, his eyes dart over the room then back over to Doctor Strauss.

GREY

That's what this was all about...
Getting the stamp of approval to
unlocking the nightmares of ex-
cons?

DOCTOR STRAUSS

Stop being so short-sighted, don't
you see, we are going to pioneer
the solution to overcrowded prisons
everywhere, don't you crave a more
peaceful world with no crime?

GREY

With this?

Grey springs up, off his chair in a rage.

GREY (CONT'D)

Manipulating my nightmares enough
to give me a heart attack?

DOCTOR STRAUSS

It was necessary... What do you
care...? Now you're free.

Doctor Strauss points over to the glass and red pill on the coffee table.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (CONT'D)

Once you take that pill with that
tonic, you will be revived and your
new life can begin.

Grey takes a look at the glass and the pill and watches them in disbelief.

DOCTOR STRAUSS (CONT'D)

You can put all this behind you.

Grey approaches the glass and pill on the table and takes his seat once more.

A moment passes whilst Grey considers the situation.

GREY

She wasn't real... Was she?

Eve looks up at Grey, staring at his glass.

DOCTOR STRAUSS

Times wasting, Grey, your past
quenched by your thirst for a
future.

Grey studies the glass some more.

GREY

Jill Winters, age twenty-three,
born in Canada, raised in England,
a two-one in a social sciences
degree, brown hair, blue eyes.

He puts the glass down.

GREY (CONT'D)

It's you I should be thanking
doctor... I can see now, I can never
go back.

DOCTOR STRAUSS

Take the damn pill, Grey or I swear-

GREY

-You'll what? Resurrect a fake Jill
corpse on me again...? Do it...
With any luck you may actually kill
me this time... Go on!

Doctor Strauss is speechless, powerless to project words.

Eve stands up in admiration, offering the pill to Grey,
making him turn.

Grey takes the pill in his hand, poised to throw it.

DOCTOR STRAUSS

You lose that, there's no going
back.

Grey smirks tosses the pill up in his hand and catching it
again.

GREY

It's my life!

Grey throws the pill at the screen.

The whole room violently shakes into a blur of previous
scenes accompanied with the same high-pitched deafening noise
from earlier before finally submitting into a black screen.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN.

CREDITS ROLL.