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DREAM CRADLE

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1. INT. SYRIA'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Everything under 'IRIS' is YOUNG ALAIN'S POV. Young Alain is sitting on a sofa with a clear view of the entire room, which comprises of the kitchen, living room and entrance.

Alain opens his eyes. FADE FROM BLACK.

Syria's house is tidy and modest. Syria and Young Alain live there with their newborn baby Jessel. Only Syria and Young Alain are present in this room. There is a mild red motif to the apartment. Opposite 'Young Alain' is a second hand coffee table; a half empty bookshelf and a tattered green sofa with a cream throw over it.

On a peaceful Saturday night, Syria is in the kitchen humming while washing dishes. Her humming becomes muted as we FADE TO BLACK.

Young Alain blinks and multiple, overlapping screens of various shots of the apartment and Syria in random chronological order appear in one wave, like moving mosaics slowly, opening title:

"DREAM CRADLE"

The main door is next to the kitchen, within Young Alain's view. His hand reaches to wipe his nose. Syria's humming becomes muted as we FADE TO BLACK.

2. INT. OLDER ALAIN'S HOUSE. DAY.

OLDER ALAIN'S house is a cool GREEN and the conditions are disgusting. It looks like the inside of a spittoon if someone were to live in one. Take out containers are littered everywhere; plastic boats float in a half-filled aquarium, soiled underwear and laundry is scattered in piles everywhere. There is not one of each but multiple electronic appliances: radios, lamps, toasters and remote controls stacked on top of each other; hand-me-downs of part-time friends and strangers. An old fan whirs and hums ominously in the background where there is a cat sitting on a table, licking itself. Older Alain has his back towards us and is standing in front of a TV.

Older Alain is a MENTALLY ILL man in his early 40s; a walking gut with unkempt hair that extends across his face. He has a distinctive skull TATTOO with a worm crawling through the eyeholes high above his wrist. Older Alain is wiring one of his four DVD players to the TV. He

suddenly drops the wire he's holding in his shaking hands and lets out a sharp cry, pressing his hand to his swollen LEFT cheek. He has a terrible TOOTHACHE.

He stands, holding onto his cheek and walks back to sit on his sofa covered in newspaper. Out of nowhere he lets out a grotesque moan of pain, scaring the cat away. Alain winces in pain.

The camera tracks left.

3. INT. SYRIA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Someone's knocking at the door. FADE FROM BLACK. SYRIA goes to answer it. SYRIA is a 22yo woman, possibly younger. She's a moderate shell of a pretty girl - scraggly, with short hair, completely unassuming of BRENT who storms in before she can say anything. Brent is very drunk and hardly larger than her. He dons a tacky leather jacket, not very suited for the weather. Brent pushes the door open and cups his hands over Syria's eyes. Syria screams in shock but stops herself so as not to wake the baby in the next room.

BRENT

(Laughing) Guess who? Guess who?

4. INT. JESSEL'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.

JESSEL is the 22 year-old cover boy of innocence with the presence of an aggravated beast. He's got his phone pressed to his ear.

LANEY (V/O)

... leave a message after the..

Jessel hangs up and calls again. With short brown hair, his eyes search through the room frantically as he paces up and down. It's ringing. He looks like he hasn't slept in a while. The phone stops ringing.

LANEY (V/O)

Hi! You've reached Laney's phone...

5. INT. JESSEL'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Jessel's bedroom has cameras and artwork hanging from the walls. He's rubbing his face out of frustration. Laney's still not answering.

LANEY (V/O)

... Laney's phone, I'm sorry I'm
not here right now. Please...

Jessel throws the phone on the bed and it falls over the side.

JESSEL

Bitch!

Jessel pulls the curtain over the window behind his bed. In the dimmed room, he takes his shirt off and jumps into bed, frustrated.

6. INT. SYRIA'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Brent takes his hand off Syria's face. She tries to get away from him but he gets a hold of her wrist and pulls her back.

BRENT

(Sarcastic) I'm just joking,
darlin', come here...

SYRIA

Brent, go away... you're drunk.

BRENT

Bet you thought no one would
find you. I knew where you were
the whole time... didn't say a
word. (Pause) Fuck, you look
hot.

BRENT uses his fingers to open up her eyelids to look at her pupils. Syria smacks his hand off and he slaps her head back as an immediate reaction.

BRENT (CONT'D)

The fuck is wrong with you?!

7. INT. ALAIN'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Alain is sitting on the sofa. The unbearable pain makes him fidget.

ALAIN
(Frustrated) Ahh...

A sea of black ants crawls on the coffee table over some leftovers. Alain takes it out on them and smears the sea of black ants off his table with his left hand. He grins, amused and wipes the goo onto his pants.

BRENT (V/O)
Look at your man...

8. INT. SYRIA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

FADE FROM BLACK and close again. It's so hard to stay awake. Syria's very irritated. BRENT clumsily stumbles towards the sofa where Alain is sitting.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Can't even wipe his own...
ass.

SYRIA
He's not well. Leave him alone.

Brent walks up to the table and presses his finger onto some powder on the table and rubs it between his fingers.

BRENT
(To Syria) He's well and good,
girlie. He's having a ball!!

Brent fakes reaching out to shake Alain's hand.

BRENT
How are you doing, buddy?

Brent's handshake is a fake. He slaps Alain instead. He pushes Alain back onto the couch and punches him hard, twice. The slow sound of waves splashing ashore is of blood rushing to Alain's head. The noise drowns Syria's cries.

SYRIA
Brent, STOP!!!

Syria pulls Brent back, who turns and grabs her wrist.

BRENT

WHAT did I say? Maybe I should
tell your mum and dad where you
are... they miss you.

He pulls Syria close and runs his fingers through her hair. She's defenseless against him and tries to pull back but he locks his large hands on her jaw, trying to grab her attention. All she wants to do is rush to her boyfriend.

SYRIA
(Panicked) Al??

Alain winces in pain. He is drifting in and out of consciousness. His hearing is becoming muted.

BRENT
Hey, I missed you, too.

Syria shivers as she tries to fight Brent off. Brent kisses her on the mouth.

SYRIA
(Screams) Alain...

Alain is fading in and out of consciousness. He can just see them struggling.

SYRIA (O.S.)
(Crying) Alaaaaaiin...

BRENT
Fucking shut...

The sound of struggle ends with a dull thud of human flesh and bone on a hard object.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Up!!

9. INT. EMPTY NEIGHBOURHOOD. DAY.

Out of darkness, you hear a door slam shut and Jessel's eyes open. He is standing in the middle of a street. We are in his dream.

In his dream everything is slightly overexposed yet the weather is gloomy. A gust of wind blows through his hair. It looks as though it is about to rain. Jessel looks up and we tilt up to see three giant NAUTILI fly across the

sky. Tilt back down, a set of three CHALKS, green, red and white, are floating in front of him. He reaches out and chooses the white. He stands - looking confused, chalk in hand and realises he's standing on the first box of a hopscotch board drawn on the sidewalk drawn with GREEN chalk, ending with 'HOME' at the top of the board. He walks out of the board and walks till he hears an omnipresent voice coming from an unknown direction.

MOM (V/O)

Jessel?

Jessel looks around to see where the voice is coming from. He squints from the brightness of the sun. There seems to be no source for the voice.

JESSEL

(Pause) Mom?

10. INT. SYRIA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

SYRIA

Alain? Ohh...

Young Alain is barely conscious. Syria's face is bruised and she is crying on her knees when she puts him back upright. Looking very pale, Syria caresses Alain's face to see the damage Brent has done on him.

SYRIA

(Sobbing) Fucking Brent...

She lies on his lap. Brent is gone.

SYRIA

I can't let anyone see me like this. Some days I just want to give up...

CUT TO BLACK.

11. INT. ALAIN'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Older Alain stands over the kitchen counter. The water has just boiled and he pours it into a mug to make a cup of tea. He is too distracted by the pain to realise how hot the mug is. He picks it up, jumps back and drops it. The water pours everywhere.

Alain stands over the shattered mug, holding his shaking, scalded hands out. Looking at the mess, he painfully squats to pick up the shattered pieces with a kitchen cloth.

12. EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD SIDEWALK. DAY.

Jessel squats in the same position as Alain from the former shot. He is on a road, drawing a line with his WHITE chalk and it comes out BLUE.

MOM (V/O)

You look good, Jessel.

JESSEL

You keep saying my name.

MOM (V/O)

(Laughs) Well I never got to say it much.

Jessel is perplexed looks at the WHITE chalk. He draws a line with the chalk once more, it still comes out BLUE and this time the line slowly continues to draw itself across the pavement, out onto the horizon.

MOM (V/O)

I'm sorry, Jessel.

JESSEL

Don't be.

JESSEL

I've fucked things up so much.

Jessel looks up.

MOM (V/O)

No, you haven't.

JESSEL

No, I'm pretty sure I screwed up.

Jessel stands.

JESSEL (CONT'D)

There's still so much I haven't done.

A SMALL MAN appears out of nowhere. He is about a foot shorter than Jessel and his eyes are placed far apart on his face. He blinks as he speaks in MOM'S VOICE.

SMALL MAN/MOM

You can still...

The small man puts the tips of his fingers together and takes a step towards Jessel. His hands move erratically as though they constantly need to be busy. Small Man is almost unaware that he is there, as though he is nothing but a channel. He takes the chalk out of Jessel's hand without moving and breaks it between his fingers. Jessel notices this but leaves it.

JESSEL

And if I fuck this up?

SMALL MAN/MOM

You wake up tomorrow with one more day to make things right.

Small Man drops the broken chalk.

FAT MAN/LANEY (O.S.)

Hi this is Laney's phone, I'm not here right now...

Jessel looks to his right and the camera pans to a FAT MAN sitting on a lawn chair in the background. Fat man is the antithesis of a cute girlfriend - donning a wife beater and boxers. He's fanning himself with one hand and holding a cocktail with an umbrella while fanning himself. He is wearing sunglasses and has his head cocked back to the sky, looking fast asleep. His mouth gapes open to lip-sync Laney's voice. His body is a capsule.

FAT MAN/LANEY

Please leave a message after the beep and I'll get back to you shortly. Thank you!

Fat Man scratches his belly. Jessel turns his attention back to the small man and the camera pans back to them.

JESSEL

I'd be throwing my life away.

SMALL MAN/MOM

Dreams are best realized when
you're awake, when you have
your eyes wide open.

SMALL MAN/MOM (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid. We all wear
masks...

The small man reaches his hands to the back of his neck and looks as though he is about to peel the FLESH right off it. Before it comes off, cuts to:

13. EXT. EMPTY FIELD. DAY.

Jessel is standing in an empty field. In the background, there is a large tree with RED BALLOONS tied to the branches. The balloons gently sway in the wind. White lawn furniture and a crowd of sleeping people in colourful day clothes are sparsely spread throughout the field. Jessel cradles a sleeping baby in his arms.

MOM (V/O)
You want so much from yourself
and that's all right. Life is a
cradle of dreams, swinging on a
fragile bow. Don't rock it, let
the wind blow... Poor baby, I
wish I could have been there.

Jessel protectively secures the child's blanket.

JESSEL
You were, mum. You are.

MOM (V/O)
It's beautiful that you still
call me mum.

Jessel has found peace. He doesn't take his eyes off the child at all.

JESSEL
You always will be.

14. INT. JESSEL'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Jessel is curled up in bed and he murmurs in his sleep, "you always will be."

15. INT. ALAIN'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Older Alain is lying on the floor where we left him, holding a kitchen towel to his sore cheek, staring into nothing with great despair.

16. INT. SYRIA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

FADE FROM BLACK.

Syria is lying on Young Alain's lap, one hand holding her head. She looks so tired. Her face is shockingly pale and sweaty. Young Alain pets her head and finds that she is bleeding.

ALAIN

Syr?

SYRIA

Don't leave me. We'll be fine,
Al... we'll all go.

CUT TO:

WS of Young Alain wearing a light green shirt has Syria's head in his hands. He has the same distinctive SKULL TATTOO as his older self. He lifts Syria's lifeless head. His hands are covered in her blood. There is blood on his shirt. It's getting everywhere.

ALAIN

(Panicked) Syr?

O.S. is the sound of a BABY crying loudly. Alain looks up and doesn't know where to go. Crying continues into next scene.

ALAIN

Syr?!

17. EXT. EMPTY FIELD. DAY.

The baby crying in the background fades. Jessel is no longer holding the baby, there are no people sleeping in the field. He is alone, savouring hearing his mother speak. Pacing the field, looking to the sky to find her voice.

MOM (V/O)

You're doing fine, Jessel. I'm proud of you. I'm sorry things didn't turn out the way they should have. I love you. You should go visit your father sometime! I hear he has a terrible toothache.

18. INT. JESSEL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Jessel is still fast asleep in his bed. He turns over. Sleeping sound.

-END-