

PURGATORY

Episode I - The First to Fall

by

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TEASER

ON BLACK:

*I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe:  
such a one will go in, and out, and will find pasture.*

- John 10:09.

FADE IN

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - HOSPITAL - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

A MAN lies sweating and trembling on a cot, dark hair  
bloodied, neck worn and red. Pain in his bloodshot eyes:  
remnants of crying.

He does not blink.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF TEASER

(CONTINUED)

ACT ONE

FADE IN

DREAM SEQUENCE

A mountain of mirrored glass, surrounded by darkness.

ALEX CINDERLY (20s) limps to the base. His platinum hair is dirtied, a kind and innocent face disheveled by grief.

He stares at his reflection, reaching out to touch it-

The glass CRACKS. Alex steps back as-

The glass SHATTERS at his touch-

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY - CONT.

Alex JERKS AWAKE, rubbing at bloodshot eyes: 'that dream again'.

He WINCES, grimacing at a trembling palm.

He turns over, staring at an empty space next to him.

He eases up, joins his hands, and kneels in prayer, shrouded in dim sunlight.

INT. BATHROOM

Alex WEEPS in the shower, cloaked in steam.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Alex enters, smart-casual, hands wrapped in bandages. He stares over at-

The man from the cot, asleep on the sofa: ISAAC ROSTHORNE (30s). He's weak and restless, dark hair and pale skin stark against faded marks on his wrists and neck.

Alex steps closer, carefully pulling a blanket over him.

INT. KITCHEN

Alex packs a satchel with pharmacy forms and bottled water.

INSERT: A shopping list, forgotten on the fridge.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - BUSY STREET - DAY

Alex treads alone, passing happy couples and families.

A PROMOTER, blue-white attire, hovers on the corner, handing out books and pamphlets from a table. There's a seven-tiered mountain on the covers, a shining pinnacle at the peak.

PROMOTER

Give me your mind, and I will speak  
of Heaven! Be the first to fall,  
and you will know of the Divine  
Pinnacle: endless thoughts of  
infinite skies, for poor souls and  
innocent eyes!

The promoter holds up a newspaper-

INSERT: 'FIRST FALLEN ENQUIRY CONTINUES'

PROMOTER (CONT.)

Believe not the hearsay in these  
pages, but trust the truth you do  
not see. Trust the goodness and  
kindness you have seen in us! Trust  
the health and good will to man,  
woman and child!

A PASSERBY KICKS the table, spilling pamphlets. The promoter bends to retrieve them-

Alex quickens his pace, head down-

The promoter looks up. Their eyes meet.

PROMOTER (CONT.)

The Light has left you.

Alex hurries off, the figure staring after him.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - ALTAR - DAY

A CHOIR practises before a PRIEST, HEAVENLY VOICES ringing over the pews.

Alex plays PIANO, gazing at a cross hanging from a pillar-  
BUM NOTES. Alex halts. The choir and priest stop, staring.

ALEX

My fault.

His trembling fingers hover over the keys.

PRIEST (CONT.)

From the top. One, two, three, and-

INT. CHURCH - CRISIS GROUP - DAY

A circle of churchgoers: all walks of life, all look pathetic.

INAUDIBLE CHATTER, followed by EXHAUSTED CLAPPING.

Alex sits nearby, scrawling weary in a notebook-

INSERT: 'WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?'

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - COMPLEX - FOYER - DAY - CONT.

Alex gazes around, clearly out of place, as VANESSA, the receptionist, signs him in.

VANESSA

Cinderly collecting for Rosthorne.  
You've been here every week for six  
months, I could raise your guest  
pass to permanent?

ALEX

No. Thank you.

VANESSA

Sure. How is he?

ALEX

Still recovering.

VANESSA

Good. Last supply's in his office.  
Does he mean to keep ordering or-

(CONTINUED)

ALEX  
Yes. He needs it.

INT. SEVENTH FLOOR - ISAAC'S OFFICE

Alex packs a white box on a wide glass desk. He looks around, staring out a floor-to-ceiling window at the city, as if seeing it for the first time.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - HOSPITAL - PHARMACY - DAY

Alex sits surrounded by patients. Dim, grey, cold; like the room. A TICKING CLOCK on the wall gets LOUDER and LOUDER, until-

Alex heads to a counter. A DISPENSER taps at her phone.

ALEX  
Excuse me?

TAP TAP TAP. Alex shifts.

ALEX (CONT.)  
Excuse me?(!)

TAP TAP TAP. Alex flexes his hands, CRACKING the joints. The dispenser looks up unnerved.

ALEX (CONT.)  
Sorry. How much longer will it take?

DISPENSER  
We're still waiting on restock.

ALEX  
Well it's just, it's been nearly an hour.

DISPENSER  
I'm sorry Sir.

Alex glances to a shelf lined with meds: green pills and blue ointment boxes.

ALEX  
Those meds there, they're what I need. Can't I do a fast-track payment?

(CONTINUED)

DISPENSER

Those meds are reserved for donation funders of the First Fallen. You can only do fast-track if you're a member.

ALEX

Is there any way you could make an exception?

DISPENSER

Look, I sympathise, but there's a lot of people here in the same boat. You'll have to wait your turn.

Alex tenses, fists clenching.

ALEX

I really don't want to be here.

DISPENSER

You're not the only one.

ALEX

I need to be with him.

DISPENSER

I understand-

ALEX

No you don't! Every minute I'm here I don't know what he's doing, what he's thinking, or-

DISPENSER

Sir, please calm down or I'll have to call Security.

ALEX

You think I fucking care?!

RAYFORD (60s) approaches the counter: smart attire, with a voice you could spill secrets to.

RAYFORD

Woah woah woah, hey now. There's no need for that. What's really upsetting you?

Alex looks around at staring patients. BEAT. He sags, defeated.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Now breathe: in 1 2 3 4, out 4 3 2  
1. Come sit down.

He leads Alex back to the chairs.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Trust me, the number of times I've escaped five minutes, someone's taken my place and I suffer another twenty. I remember years ago, these rooms were empty. And now, everywhere I look everybody's got something. Young ones mostly, like yourself. What even happened?

Alex shrugs, gazing up at the TICKING CLOCK.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to bother you.

ALEX

It's not you, I'm just, I've got-

RAYFORD

'Someone you need to be with'?  
I couldn't help overhearing-

ALEX

I'm fine, thank you(!)

BEAT. Rayford unwraps and chews a pink candy. He holds out a piece...Alex takes it, quickly unwrapping and chewing, eyes watering. He swallows. BEAT.

ALEX (CONT.)

What happened is, everyone's moved on. Too much to do and not enough time to care.

RAYFORD

Running like clockwork, no sight of the clock. It's a nightmare.

ALEX

I've had worse. So er, what's wrong with you?

Rayford holds up a shaking hand.

(CONTINUED)



RAYFORD

Give it a few months, I'll put my name on paper, hang it in a museum and have everyone call it a masterpiece.

He gazes at Alex's bandaged hands.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Let me guess. Second degree; antibiotics, coagulants, steroids and, silver dressings?

ALEX

Yeah. Exactly.

RAYFORD

Just be careful. Too much too often and you'll get dependent.

ALEX

Right. Thank you. Are you a doctor? I've never seen you here.

RAYFORD

You could say that. I'm a counsellor, private practise. 'One of those dicks.'

ALEX

What do you treat?

RAYFORD

All sorts really. Depression, anxiety, identity crisis. Any trauma really. But my focus is relationships. Anyone who's losing friends, family, work, money, home. Love. I help whoever I can.

Alex sits up. The TICKING CLOCK gets LOUDER.

ALEX

Do you work with couples? That sort of focus?

RAYFORD

I have a history.

ALEX

Are you available?

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD  
Door's open all the time.

Alex glances around.

ALEX  
You don't know who I am, do you?

RAYFORD  
One stranger to another. Do you  
need help?

The TICKING CLOCK becomes DEAFENING...then STOPS-

ALEX  
Definitely.

The dispenser motions to Rayford. He hands a card and orange  
candy to Alex.

RAYFORD  
Here. Call when you're ready.

Rayford heads to take his prescription.

ALEX  
Wait, I don't know your-

RAYFORD  
It's all on the card!

He disappears out the exit. Alex looks at the card.

INSERT: DR. V. RAYFORD, Psy.D.

A silver pine and gold cypress logo.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY - CONT.

Alex, shopping in hand, stares at his front door.

INT. APARTMENT - HALLWAY

Alex enters, LOCKING behind him, and unpacks Isaac's  
supplies.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Alex KNOCKS SOFTLY on an office door.

INT. OFFICE

Dim, littered. Isaac sits hunched, sketching intricate designs. The door OPENS-

ALEX

Isaac?

Isaac STARTLES, turning around, eyes bloodshot.

ALEX (CONT.)

I've got what you need.

Isaac eases up, treading to take the supplies.

ALEX (CONT.)

Have you ate recently?

ISAAC

I'm OK.

ALEX

No Valium on its own, remember?

ISAAC

You forgot the shopping list.

ALEX

I remembered on the way back.

Isaac treads back to his desk, picking up a pencil.

ALEX (CONT.)

Would you like some tea?

Isaac sets the pencil down.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - CONT.

Isaac SHOWERS, turning the dial colder and colder.

INT. KITCHEN

Modern decor, faded by misery.

Alex sits drinking tea. A full mug sits cold nearby, next to dry toast, green pills and pamphlets. An empty milk dish on the floor: 'JULIUS'.

Isaac limps in, staring at the table. He takes his mug and two pills, ignoring the toast.

ALEX

I can make you a new-

ISAAC

I'm OK.

Isaac downs the whole thing. He picks the pamphlets up one by one. Sifts through them. Throws them down.

ALEX

You draw anything today?

ISAAC

Lines. Blurs. Crosses.

Isaac rubs his throat. Scratches his thigh.

ALEX

How are you feeling?

ISAAC

Cold. Damp. The itch is back.

ALEX

Did you use the ointment?

Isaac's grip clenches.

ALEX (CONT.)

You don't have to keep using-

ISAAC

I know.

ALEX

I can help you-

ISAAC

No!

Isaac's grip slips. The mug SMASHES on the floor. He freezes. Alex stands, hands up.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX  
It's alright. You're alright.

ISAAC  
I'm sorry. I-I'm sorry-

Isaac flees. A door LOCKS. Alex kneels to clean up the mess.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Alex leans on the office door.

ALEX  
Ise? It wasn't your fault. Can you  
open up?

BEAT.

ALEX (CONT.)  
I'm gonna stay here, OK? Until  
you're ready. I won't leave you.

FOOTSTEPS. The door UNLOCKS. Isaac steps out red-eyed. They each raise a hand, locking fingers, as Isaac rests his head on Alex's shoulder.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The duo are watching a NATURE DOCUMENTARY. Alex glances at Isaac, taking out Rayford's card and candy.

ALEX  
I met someone today. He gave me  
these.

He sets them down. Isaac reads the card, WHISPERING-

ISAAC  
(The trees). Can you keep this?

ALEX  
Sure. Do you want to share this?

ISAAC  
Maybe.

Alex splits the orange candy, chewing his half...he stops, eyes wide. He grabs Isaac's hand-

ALEX  
Don't eat it.

ISAAC  
Why?

ALEX  
You won't like the flavour.

ISAAC  
It's pumpkin, isn't it?

ALEX  
I'm sorry. I-I thought it was  
orange-

ISAAC  
It's fine(!) Just throw it away.

Isaac shifts away, TURNING UP the TV-

DOCUMENTARY NARRATOR (O.S.)  
Along with courtship feeding, the  
blue jay can defend itself against  
potential predators through a  
series of ritualised calling-

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONT.

Alex removes his hand bandages. He applies antiseptic,  
WINCING through the sting.

Isaac peers in, staring at the bottle on the drawers.

ALEX  
Wounds only. No mouthwash. OK?

Isaac takes the bottle and leaves. A HARSH GARGLING comes  
down the hall. Alex cringes.

INT. BATHROOM

Isaac rubs a thin scar on his temple. He picks up a blue  
ointment box, BREATHING DEEPLY. He grips his underwear-

INT. BEDROOM

Alex sits on the bed, inspecting Rayford's card again.

BANG! CLATTERING. Alex leaps up, running out-

INT. BATHROOM

Isaac steadies himself on the sink. Alex peers in-

ALEX  
What happened?

ISAAC  
I'm OK. Just slipped. Panic over.  
You can go to bed. Goodnight.

ALEX  
You don't have to keep using-

ISAAC  
Goodnight Alex.

INT. BEDROOM

Alex lies alone in the dark, staring at the empty space next to him.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY - CONT.

RINGING. Alex STIRS, grabbing and answering his phone.

ALEX  
Hello? Yes. Yes, why?

BEAT. Alex leaps out of bed, dashing from the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Isaac is gone. Nothing but a note on the couch-

INSERT: 'I'M READY AGAIN'.

INT./INT. - SAN FRANCISCO - COMPLEX - FOYER / FLOORS - DAY -  
CONT.

Alex rushes in barefoot, coat over pyjamas. Vanessa stands to meet him.

ALEX  
Where is he?!

VANESSA  
Someone called down, he's still in his office.

He runs to the stairs, Vanessa following. Down corridors, up more stairs. A THUDDING sounds, getting LOUDER AND LOUDER-

ALEX  
Is anyone with him?

VANESSA  
Door's locked, we can't get in. Took the spare key too.

ALEX  
God's sake, why didn't anyone stop him?!

VANESSA  
No-one saw him come up, he must've slipped past again-

ALEX  
Slipped past?! You're right there, how could you not see him?!

VANESSA  
I'm sorry, I only left a moment, and he-

ALEX  
Why'd he have to be at the fucking top?!

VANESSA  
Well should I call the police? Maybe they-

ALEX  
No! No police! Don't call anyone! I'm the only one he needs.



INT. SEVENTH FLOOR

They reach Isaac's office: the THUDDING comes from inside. Several EMPLOYEES huddle around.

ALEX  
Everyone get back!

Alex presses on the door, peering through the window.

ALEX (CONT.)  
Isaac? It's Alex. I need you to  
open the door.

The THUDDING STOPS. Alex listens, as-

CRACK! Isaac STRIKES the glass. Alex lurches back.

ISAAC  
I'm ready again! Let me be here!

ALEX  
Isaac if you don't open the door,  
I'll have to open it for you!

SILENCE. SOFT CRYING. The door UNLOCKS. RAPID FOOTSTEPS.  
Alex opens the door-

INT. ISAAC'S OFFICE

The room is strewn with files, dented shelves, broken glass. Right in the middle, a suited Isaac trembles on his knees, blood dripping from his forehead.

Alex steps in, bare feet CRUNCHING on glass. He reaches Isaac, watching as-

Dark blood seeps from Isaac's back, staining his shirt.

ALEX (CONT.)  
What did you do?

ISAAC  
I don't know how I got here.

Isaac hides his face. Alex kneels, staring helpless at a blood-stained pencil on the floor.

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

ACT TWO

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Isaac sits, band-aid on forehead. Alex kneels opposite. Between them-

INSERT: Rayford's card and Alex's phone on the table.

Isaac DIALS, and hits VIDEO-CALL. The phone RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

ISAAC

This is ridiculous. How much longer-

The call CONNECTS: Rayford appears on the screen.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

Good morning, Dr. Virgil Rayford speaking. How can I help?

ALEX

Dr. Rayford? My name's Alex, we met in the pharmacy?

RAYFORD (V.O.)

Of course! Silver dressings. How are you Alex?

ALEX

I think I need an appointment.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

Very well then, let me take your details. Full name?

ALEX

Cinderly. Alex Cinderly.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

And do you have a referral?

ALEX

No. Sorry.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

No problem. Do you require psychotherapy, general health therapy or relationship counselling?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX  
All of the above?

RAYFORD (V.O.)  
Very well. How soon do you require?

ALEX  
As soon as possible. We need it.

RAYFORD (V.O.)  
'We'?

ALEX  
Isaac. He had a breakdown. They've happened before but, this was the worst I've seen him so, enough's enough.

RAYFORD (V.O.)  
I see. Well privacy policy dictates I receive direct consent from both clients. Is Isaac with you now?

ALEX  
Yes. He's right in front of me.

Alex holds up the phone. Isaac stares anxious at the smiling doctor.

RAYFORD (V.O.)  
Hello Isaac.

ISAAC  
Erm, hi?

RAYFORD (V.O.)  
You've heard our conversation. Do you offer consent for a dual-client appointment?

Alex looks encouraging.

ISAAC  
Yes. I consent.

RAYFORD (V.O.)  
Excellent. Based on urgency, how's 10 o'clock tomorrow morning?

ISAAC  
Sure. Fine. Thank you.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

You're very welcome. You'll need to bring I.D., social securities and any medical documents relevant to your current needs. If you change your mind, just call me back.

ALEX

Yes, of course. Thank you again.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

One last thing, Alex: part of our private services are funded through the First Fallen donation scheme. Are you with the movement?

Alex sets the phone down.

ALEX

No.

RAYFORD (V.O.)

No problem. I'll see you tomorrow. Goodbye.

ISAAC

Goodbye.

Isaac stabs END CALL, staring at Alex as the line GOES DEAD.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - PSYCHOTHERAPY - RAYFORD'S OFFICE - DAY

Sterile tones. A blue light above a white door. It opens, and Alex and Isaac enter.

Behind a wide glass desk, Rayford stands to greet them.

RAYFORD

Gentlemen, good morning. Great to see you again. Make yourselves comfortable.

Isaac sits near the door. Alex follows.

RAYFORD

Water?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Please.

Rayford pours three glasses from a cabinet, hands shaking.

RAYFORD

Nothing added, nothing nasty.

Rayford drinks. Alex follows. Isaac remains still.

The counsellor opens a file, flicking through.

RAYFORD

Let me see. Alexander Cinderly and Isaac Rosthorne. How are the hands Alex?

ALEX

Still sore. Still shaking.

RAYFORD

Let's hope you heal soon. And Isaac, glad to meet you in person.

Isaac nods, head down.

ALEX

Can I just say thank you again for seeing us so quickly?

RAYFORD

Not at all. I'm ready and willing to help however I can.

Rayford records the time: 10:09.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Now, I'll need enlightening. Who'd like to start?

Isaac glances urgently at Alex.

ALEX

I'll go first.

RAYFORD

Of course.

ALEX

We've been together a year and a half. And honestly, this is the first time we've ever been truly 'stuck'.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD

In a rut?

ALEX

No. Worse. Much worse.

RAYFORD

Right. What can you tell me about yourselves before this 'stuck'?

ALEX

We were both working. Isaac does structure designs.

RAYFORD

Anything I might have seen?

ALEX

The church at Park Presidio?

RAYFORD

I know it. Beautiful windows.

ALEX

They've stopped until Isaac can go back. I play for the choir there actually. And the crisis group.

RAYFORD

The creator and the Samaritan. Have you lived together all this time?

ALEX

No. Isaac's always been here but I only moved in a while back. Made myself comfortable.

RAYFORD

Not too far to travel, I hope?

ALEX

Not too far.

RAYFORD

Good. And you adjusted alright?

ALEX

As well as I could. Working around each other, taking up new space.

RAYFORD

But no major difficulties with work, money, friends? Family?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX  
No. Not until this.

RAYFORD  
So what happened?

Alex shifts. Isaac stares at the floor.

ALEX  
It was six months ago. We went out to eat, we had a good night. Then we walked home. But I didn't lock the door. Someone broke in.

RAYFORD  
I see. So you were robbed or, did they attack you or-?

ALEX  
They intruded on us.

RAYFORD  
'Intruded'?

ALEX  
They bound us. Hurt us. Isaac was-

ISAAC  
Wait(!) I'll say it. I don't wanna go into detail yet but...I was assaulted. Badly. And I'm in pain. I can't walk properly. I feel weak. I'm just not myself really.

Isaac drains his glass. Rayford notices the marks on his neck and wrists.

RAYFORD  
I gather this assault was of a sexual nature?

BEAT.

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
Alright. I assume you've already contacted police and medical services about this?

ALEX  
Yes. We've had scans, medications. Questioning. I have the documents?

Alex hands over forms from his satchel. Rayford reads through them, face filling with concern.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD

It's clearly had a detrimental effect. And in six months you've had no prior referrals for therapy?

ALEX

No. Nothing we could afford, at least.

RAYFORD

No insurance policies in place, no family ties?

ISAAC

I'm not letting my parents pay for that. No way.

RAYFORD

And yours Alex?

ALEX

That wouldn't be possible.

RAYFORD

Right. You said you work in a crisis group. Has Isaac been there?

ALEX

Once, and that was enough. 'Too many eyes'. I tried to talk him into trying again but, the only time he's left the apartment is when he tries to go to work again.

RAYFORD

You mentioned on the phone, the last time was the worst?

ALEX

He doesn't remember it all. Only writing a note and leaving home. A blank space. Then wrecking his office. He cut his head open. And his back.

Rayford notes the band-aid on Isaac's forehead.

RAYFORD

Are these 'blank spaces' common?

ISAAC

Since that night. Happens when I go to work. Last time was my best. But

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



ISAAC (cont'd)  
then the night came back and I  
freaked out. I can't remember  
everything before that night, and  
what I can isn't like it was.

RAYFORD  
I see. Isaac, have you wanted help  
for a long time? And you didn't  
feel ready until now?

Isaac nods, rubbing his temple.

ISAAC  
I'm messed up. There's no real  
order. No routine to anything.

ALEX  
We don't sleep together anymore.  
We're not as close as we were. We  
just need help.

Rayford folds his hands, eyes shining with sympathy.

RAYFORD  
You clearly love each other a great  
deal. There's an intensity. I can  
see it. So it's my assured notion  
that, to heal devastation, you must  
retreat to a place where fears,  
hopes, ideas, and all that remains  
of your lives can collect and  
harmonise. And that place lies  
within the depths of your own  
minds.

Rayford retrieves a blue volume, setting it down-

INSERT: P.I.T. HOMING - REHABILITATIVE PURPOSES. The same  
silver pine and gold cypress logo.

ISAAC  
P.I.T.?

RAYFORD  
Psychotherapeutic Isolation  
Treatment.

ALEX  
This is the memory programme.

RAYFORD

That's right.

ISAAC

The one endorsed by the First  
Fallen?

RAYFORD

And co-opted and funded, yes.

Alex sits back unnerved.

ALEX

I wasn't sure they still did this.  
Are you even allowed to do this  
privately?

Rayford opens the volume to-

INSERT: a shaded diagram of a modern two-storey house.

RAYFORD

My establishment receives funding  
in return for donations to the  
movement. Not just P.I.T. but  
resource channel referrals,  
medication approvals, even plain  
old talk sessions. Frankly they've  
helped me a great deal.

ISAAC

So everything comes back to them?  
Great(!)

ALEX

We've heard a few stories. They  
made us doubt the practice.

RAYFORD

Understandable. I'm a little  
likewise myself. So I prefer to  
keep interactions limited.

ALEX

Good. So is this like sleep therapy  
or-?

ISAAC

It's more like VR.

RAYFORD

In a way, you're both right. Only  
you're not awake, and everything

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD (cont'd)  
within is as real to the senses as  
life happening in front of you. Let  
me show you.

Rayford places a large grey cube, a bottle of pills and two  
faceless dolls on the desk. Alex and Isaac stare bemused.

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
I've had child patients who need to  
talk about their bodies. They come  
in handy.

ALEX  
Makes sense.

Rayford retrieves graphs and a model of a brain, pointing to  
various areas.

RAYFORD  
Now these areas of the brain are  
responsible for visualising,  
processing and storing information  
as memories. They let you know  
what's real and imaginary. And all  
memories are composed of  
'fragments': individual elements of  
conscious and subconscious memory.  
People, objects, places, times,  
symbols. Experiences divided into  
moments.

He points to the cube.

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
This is the Structure: the core of  
everything we do here. It's where  
we create our Conscious Aligned  
Virtual Environments. Or CAVES.

Rayford draws blue figures on strips of paper. He holds up  
the dolls-

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
These dolls are you right now-  
-then the strips.

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
And these figures are you in a  
CAVE.

He pushes two pills into each doll's head, one white and one  
blue.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Now the conscious has two attributes: being awake and being aware. The P.I.T process inhibits waking-

He removes the white pills.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

-and subjects your awareness to the CAVE, all while recording your conscious thoughts.

He attaches the strips to the blue pills, and places the dolls in the cube.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

It's like a coma, except you're aware enough to think you're awake.

ISAAC

So nothing in these CAVEs are real?

RAYFORD

In a sense. It's just not physical. You and everything around you would be a projection. A couple is admitted, they bring any essentials they need. Other than that the surroundings are minimal: cellphones don't work, TV and wi-fi don't work. As for the therapy, we break down your memories, assign numerous values to each fragment and code what they mean to you. If you require hinting or urging in a certain moment, the correct fragments are processed into your CAVE to witness and interact with.

Isaac tenses, looking at the floor.

ISAAC

And that includes the worst memories?

RAYFORD

It would, yes.

ALEX

So what makes this better than real therapy? Better than this, I mean?

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD

Anyone can say they're remembering. But people get events mixed up, forget important details. And when you're trying to manage a couple's recollection in real time, the process can be more time-consuming and less impactful than if it were attempted this way. The idea is with reduced everyday interference, you limit your boundaries and focus on reliving your relationship as it was first conceived and experienced, including the original trauma. Not to mention a dedicated team at my disposal would offer multiple viewpoints and opinions.

ALEX

You'd have people watching us?!

RAYFORD

Just a few researchers and technicians.

ISAAC

They just sit and watch information all day?

RAYFORD

You'd be surprised at their commitment. Especially with couples. And that's exactly why I chose them.

ISAAC

More action I guess?

RAYFORD

Depends on the couple. All CAVEs are unique to their subjective experiences, which gives the programmers more to work with. They could be mapping a cabin on a mountaintop, a treehouse in a rainforest, even a palace.

ALEX

Was there a palace?

RAYFORD

Not yet. We're hopeful though. I can't lie, few have tried this in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD (cont'd)  
the past. But those who did were  
all shown to benefit in many ways.

He flicks through to Testimonials, marked in green and blue.

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
Not to brag, but 'life-changing  
experience' comes up very often for  
this course.

ALEX  
It seems intensive.

RAYFORD  
Typically I'd agree but, given the  
severity of your situation, I truly  
encourage you to pursue *this* as the  
affirmative option.

ALEX  
How long does this last?

RAYFORD  
It can vary, but a week is minimum.

ALEX  
A week?! Well can we see the place  
first?

RAYFORD  
We prefer your CAVE to be  
unfamiliar on arrival. Gets you out  
of your comfort zone.

Alex stares at the cube.

RAYFORD (CONT.)  
I'll give you some time.

Rayford heads from the room. BEAT. Alex flicks through the  
volume.

ALEX  
'Life-changing'. 'Life-changing'.  
'Life-changing'. He's not lying(!)  
Though not knowing what we're going  
to see is-

ISAAC  
I want to do it.

Alex looks at Isaac.

ALEX

A-are you sure?

ISAAC

'Reduced interference'. That means no noise, no distractions. And right now, that's exactly what I need. And not just that.

ALEX

What?

ISAAC

Hear me out on this, because I'm in two minds. On one hand, this is funded by the First Fallen, and I'm not fond of the First Fallen. So the idea of using something they get a cut from makes my throat go tight. On the other hand, Rayford doesn't make me uncomfortable; he's explained it all clearly; and I think he knows what he's talking about. And above all, the idea of getting answers from this therapy; getting better; knowing it came from something they were using feels like...a victory. Like I've wasted their time. I could win using it for something better than 'true existence'.

ALEX

It's not a game, Ise. This isn't our only choice.

ISAAC

I wanna do it.

ALEX

Isaac-

ISAAC

Just(!)-I know you're supposed to do what you used to, but it's too much. I'm sick of overthinking, not looking at anyone, not sleeping right. He said this was best. 'The affirmative option'. How often do you hear someone say that about anything? Do this for me. Please.

Alex looks torn. Rayford returns, sitting behind the desk.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD

Hello again. Now, P.I.T.: is this something you would consider?

ALEX

This is all legitimate, right?

RAYFORD

Absolutely. I'm SFPA-registered, all private practices were allocated grants recently.

ALEX

No extra meds? No side effects?

RAYFORD

Only what you've been prescribed and what we use to begin.

Isaac pleads with his eyes. BEAT.

ALEX

Alright. Lock us in.

RAYFORD

Very good.

Rayford takes back the volume, flipping to a blank form.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

You'll need to sign here as evidence of service. Feel free to read before binding yourselves to anything.

Alex and Isaac scan the form.

ISAAC

What's the cost?

RAYFORD

Right now, nothing. If you decide halfway through this isn't for you, I'll rescind.

ALEX

You don't lose anything by that?

RAYFORD

I have regular clients. I don't really lose.

Isaac instantly signs. Alex follows. Rayford hands them Preparation booklets.

(CONTINUED)



RAYFORD

Very well then, we start Monday.  
Take the weekend to prepare for  
scanning.

ALEX

Scanning?

RAYFORD

Anything you want with you. All in  
the booklet.

ALEX

Right. And that's it?

RAYFORD

For now. Welcome to the beginning.  
I'll be glad to see you again.

Alex and Isaac stand and exit. Above the door, the blue  
light flashes-

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

ACT THREE

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY - CONT.

Alex packs separate suitcases, reading a list as he goes.

INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Isaac packs his ointment. He checks the door, before slipping the antiseptic in his pocket.

INT. BEDROOM

Alex checks the door. He reaches in a drawer, pulling out-

A thin white box. FOOTSTEPS. Alex shoves the box in his coat.

Isaac enters. He places an engagement ring on the pillows. Alex follows.

INT./EXT. - SAN FRANCISCO - APARTMENT COMPLEX/STREET - DAY

Alex climbs into a taxi. He looks back at-

Isaac, staring out anxious from the entrance. WHITE NOISE builds, until-

Isaac BOLTS out to the backseat. The taxi REVS, heading up the street.

FADE IN

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - PSYCHOTHERAPY - DAY - CONT.

Alex and Isaac follow Rayford down a thin hallway, nearly pitch-black, until-

INT. PSYCHOTHERAPY - STRUCTURE ROOM

Rayford opens into a wide monochrome room. TECHNICIANS and DATA ASSISTANTS sit surrounded by screens, monitors and wires. A vast cube before us: the Structure.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD

Here we are. Speechless?

Alex and Isaac nod, stunned for words.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Wouldn't be the first time. Now gentlemen, if you'll hand your belongings to the scanners?

They hand their cases to two WHITE SHIRT SCANNERS, while BLUE SHIRT ORDERLIES guide them across the room. Rayford retrieves a file of questionnaires.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

It'll take a while to complete; some items are harder to code if they're branded. Not to mention the editors are finalising your environment.

ISAAC

Still no sneak peek?

RAYFORD

Afraid not. But I can assure it's been designed purely on the answers you provided.

ALEX

Is it too late to change number 15, item 25?

RAYFORD

Food itinerary: pumpkin seeds?

ALEX

I don't why I wrote it down.

RAYFORD

I'll log an amendment. We'll need to run a standard physical before entry, so the orderlies can help you dress if needed, and I'll outline what you're seeing here.

ISAAC

I'll dress myself.

RAYFORD

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

Alex and Isaac are moved behind separate curtains with beds, cabinets, heart monitors and drips. Their orderlies hand them folded white gowns and pants.

The couple are silhouetted as they dress. The orderlies return with medical tools, beginning the assessments.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

We'll be checking your eyes, ears, nose, mouth, throat, lungs, heart and extremities, plus reflexes and reactions, and a short psych evaluation. Is there anything you object to?

ALEX

No.

ISAAC

Don't touch my back please.

RAYFORD

Absolutely. Have you suffered any sudden illness or symptoms akin to illness within the past week that could affect your physical and/or mental conscious projection over the course of this therapy?

ALEX

No.

ISAAC

I'm pretty fucked up already but, no.

RAYFORD

Other than prescribed medication, have you recently ingested any substances that could affect your conscious projection during the therapy?

ALEX

No.

ISAAC

No.

RAYFORD

Do you both understand and consent to the use of intravenous needles, nerve attachments and cranial-wave sensors in procedures throughout the course of this therapy?

(CONTINUED)



EXT. FOREST - DAY - CONT.

Alex blinks. He JUMPS in fright, staring around at-

A vast clearing of pine and cypress, enveloping the white sky above.

He climbs a hill, reaching a peak to see-

A silver two-storey cabin house, sat like a sleeping giant. Three stone steps to the front door. Two suitcases sit there: his and Isaac's.

FOOTSTEPS. Isaac appears across the clearing, also smart-casual. Alex waves unsure. Isaac waves back.

The front door opens. Rayford steps out smiling.

RAYFORD

Good. You're here in one piece.

INT. REHABILITATION HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Sleek interior, sterile tones. A table to the left; staircase on the right; a white door beneath the stairs, a black door adjacent.

Alex and Isaac follow Rayford in with their cases.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Here we are. As you can see, solid ground; fortified walls; a delicate air. A structure of your own designing.

Rayford motions to the doors.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

These may be the most important rooms in the house. The office behind you is for our weekly meetings; when I appear, you can each discuss your progression in private. The room behind me is a 'Blank Room', specially for you Isaac: if you feel overwhelmed, this room is your very own place of calm. An inhibition within an inhibition, to keep out the exhibition.

Isaac stares at the black door, already longing. Alex stares too, oddly envious.

(CONTINUED)

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Emergency landline's on the table.  
You pick that up and our coders  
will know you need to convey  
something urgent. I've also left  
schedules to help structure your  
time.

He steps closer.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

I'll stress now, it's essential you  
be as honest and forthright with me  
and each other as you can. Needless  
to say, healing takes time. This  
environment takes time. So settle  
in first. Start slow. Let it come  
naturally, and speak your minds  
when you need to. Don't argue;  
discuss. For communication builds  
trust, and so commitment, and so  
love. And before you go thinking  
being a conscious projection means  
'anything and everything', I'm  
afraid you can't unlock doors with  
your mind in here.

ALEX

That's no fun.

Rayford takes out a golden key, handing it to Isaac.

RAYFORD

Master key. Unlocks everything.

He gives one last smile, heading to the front door.

RAYFORD (CONT.)

Goodbye for now, gentlemen. And  
good luck.

He exits, shutting the door behind him.

CUT TO BLACK

END OF SHOW