

THE SUBSTANCE

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"EVERYTHING FLOWS, NOTHING REMAINS"
- HERACLITUS

*"DON'T YOU KNOW PUMP IT UP
YOU'VE GOT TO PUMP IT UP"*
- DANZEL

FADE IN ON A HIGH ANGLE TOP SHOT OF...

1

A RAW, UNCOOKED EGG LYING ON A FLAT SURFACE.

1

The round yolk stands proudly in the center of the transparent and gelatinous egg white.

A syringe needle enters the frame and slowly approaches the egg before planting itself in the middle of the yolk and very slowly injects a fluorescent yellow product inside of it.

After a moment, the egg begins to shake and move as if something were happening inside of it.

Little by little, a small growth begins to emerge on the side of the yolk... which grows bigger... and bigger... until it starts to form a second egg yolk which emerges out of the side of the first one... before finally detaching itself to become independent.

Both egg yolks now stand side by side.

The second yolk is rounder, shinier, fleshier.

In other words: more perfect.

Long beat on both egg yolks which stand side by side.

BLACK

The sounds of jackhammers, traffic jams, jigsaws, coming from a construction site in the middle of the city...

We FADE IN on a STATIC TOP SHOT OF...

2

EXT. WALK OF FAME SIDEWALK - DAY

2

A SIDEWALK MADE UP OF LARGE GREY SLABS. Only one slab appears to be missing like a big gaping hole right in the middle of the pavement.

In the same static shot, WORKER'S HANDS appear within the frame and start to carefully set in place thin sticks of wood, nailing them to one another.

The linked sticks soon form a wooden frame shaped like a star which stands out in the muddy hole of the pavement.

Little by little, the hands start to place various different elements inside the star shaped frame: brass block letters which begin to form a name: E...L...I...Z...A...B...E...T...H... S...P...A...R...K...L...E Underneath, the small round crest containing the logo of a camera appears.

A pink marble slab slides into the golden edges of the wooden frame... sealing the pink star into the terrazzo pavement which we now understand to be the famous HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME.

Still in the same static shot with the star in the center of the frame, workers' hands come in and out making final tweaks, then remove the plastic protective film. A broom sweeps back and forth shining up the now finished star - in the middle of which the golden inscription proudly stands:

ELISABETH SPARKLE

After a moment, still in the same shot, a buzz of excitement from the crowd and camera flashes start to multiply as the feet of a YOUNG WOMAN enter the bottom of the frame. Wearing vertiginously high heels and with a conquering walk, she poses for the cameras before kneeling down and placing her hands underneath the star.

More flashes and voices trying to attract the attention of the lucky lady: "Elisabeth!" "Over here Elisabeth!" "Right here Elisabeth!".

The flurry of feet around the high heels and the way they move tells a story of their own: flattery, fawning, happiness, recognition, ambition, success etc.

Then the young woman's feet and those of the crowd gradually disappear one by one, just like the camera flashes, which also grow rare and finally disappear, leaving the static frame empty and silent, with only the star and its name:

ELISABETH SPARKLE

After a long beat on the star and still in the same shot, a leaf flies across the screen, the wind brushing it past.

Then the feet of passersby which enter and exit the frame, walking across the star in a pace that quickens as the days go by and life carries on.

More and more feet enter and exit. A few marks and scratches appear on the star, the concrete aging little by little as time goes by, to the pace of more walking, more pedestrians, tourists, alternating rain and sun, changing fashions, pigeons landing on the ground, shopping carts being pulled over it in an uninterrupted flow of everyday foot traffic.

Some feet occasionally stop to look down at Elisabeth's star, then less and less, then almost none at all as we notice new stars appearing at the corners of the frame, which start drawing people's attention away.

Finally, the white sneakers of a tourist wearing shorts that walk lazily across the now worn and patinated star, clumsily dropping a round burger bun, which falls on the ground, smearing the star with a large ketchup stain.

The guy lowers his hand in a half-hearted attempt to clean up the stain with a greasy piece of burger paper, then with the big sole of his sneaker, thus leaving a large, disgusting red trail across the star. The feet walk out of the frame, helplessly, above all showing very little interest in cleaning the whole thing up.

The star remains in the center, now aged and stained with the red ketchup:

ELISABETH SPARKLE

Long beat over which we hear the aggressive and exhausting cacophony of traffic then, little by little, music is heard in the distance, stressed by the dynamic accents of a female voice growing louder and clearer:

Keep moving! That's great! YOU GOT IT!

Walk it back! Couple more! YOU GOT IT!

Again from the very top!

SMASH CUT TO:

3

INT. TV STUDIO / SPARKLE YOUR LIFE SHOW - DAY

3

PAIRS OF FEET WITH FLUORESCENT DANCE LEGGINGS stomping the floor.

A BLINDING WHITE LIGHT.

A small blinking red dot indicates that this is being filmed and recorded.

We're inside a TV Studio, in the very middle of an aerobics class.

Lights full on and flashy-colored aerobic outfits.

Fluorescent leotards.

Muscles tightening under each step.

Ultra forced smiles.

Super happy music broadcasting ready-made happiness.

In the foreground of this fluorescent group, high on vitamins, ELISABETH SPARKLE, now close to fifty, leads the class, with a wide, bright smile.

Her ultra-sculpted body strictly primed against the smallest bit of flab or excess.

In the background, a large morning show title is visible:

SPARKLE YOUR LIFE

With Elisabeth

Keep moving! That's great! You got it!

All the pairs of fluorescent leggings beat up and down in rhythm like perfect soldiers and Elisabeth never stops smiling as if her bright smile were etched to her jaw while she motivates her audience with an energetic voice:

ELISABETH

I know it's hard! Walk it back!
That's great, couple more ladies!
Think about your bikini this
summer! You don't want to look like
a giant jellyfish on the beach, do
you? So keep moving! Couple more...
we're almost there... aaand...

The music ends on a final synchronized movement made by all the dancers.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

... give yourselves a hand! That
was a GREAT workout!

The troupe applauds while Elisabeth faces the camera with a great big smile:

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

I'll see you next week to work more
on the lateral abs, those are the
hardest to sculpt. In the
meantime... Take care of yourself!

She blows a kiss to the camera.

The cameras stop rolling, and the soundstage lights fade.

Elisabeth's smile fades instantly as she relaxes her body.

She's covered in sweat. Out of breath.

Really out of breath. She winces briefly as she massages her knee.

An assistant brings her a towel and a bottle of water.

We follow her from behind...

4

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

4

...as she walks down the long backstage corridor of the tv station with an energetic stride.

EVERYONE she meets or bumps into wishes her a "**Happy Birthday**" with a broad smile. Elisabeth smiles back and cheerfully thanks them.

Walking down the corridor she passes by dozens of framed posters displaying her smiling face and shapely body from every season of the show:

SPARKLE YOUR LIFE

On the successive posters, Elisabeth displays the exact same bright smile but the colors and looks change as her physical appearance alters over time, the hairstyles becoming less and less frizzed and her face more and more photoshopped.

Elisabeth walks to the ladies room at the end of the corridor but it turns out to be closed for cleaning. She glances round to check she's alone and finally... walks into the men's room next door.

5

TV STUDIO - MEN'S ROOM

5

Nobody inside.

She leans over the sink, splashes water over her face, making the most of the moment to refresh herself after the physical effort.

She then enters one of the toilet stalls.

Static shot of the row of sinks in the empty men's room.

The neons cast a perfectly white and unchanging light.

Long, silent beat.

Soon to be broken by the sudden, loud arrival of A STOUT MIDDLE-AGED MAN, his ear glued to a cellphone, face red with anger:

MAN

I don't care if we have to see
EVERY FUCKING YOUNG GIRL in town in
the next couple of weeks. We need
her YOUNG. We need her HOT. And we
need her NOW.

This is HARVEY, the TV network director. Mid-50s, large belly and wearing a loose suit, he comes to stand right in front of the camera under which we guess is an out of frame urinal. His phone wedged between his ear and shoulder he continues his logorrhoea while unbuttoning his pants to take a piss:

HARVEY

I mean, how the old bitch has managed to stay this long in the first place is a fucking mystery!
(the person at the other end of the line tries to say something but is immediately cut off)
Oscar winner my ass! When was that? Back in the 30s for KING KONG?!
(he "shakes" himself off)
I don't give a fuck what we promised her! This is TV, not a charity! So find me somebody NEW.
NOW.

He flushes the urinal and closes his fly.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Did you know that women's fertility starts to decrease from the age of 25?

He leaves without washing his hands....

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Yeah I know...(he chuckles)...How old is Elisa?

His voice drifts away as the bathroom door slowly closes with the automatic closing system.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

...Ha ha so hurry up!

His laughter trailing off in the distance until the room is completely silent again.

A beat on the empty room.

The white sinks.

The neon lights casting the unchanging light.

Then, the sound of a toilet flushing.

The door to one of the stalls finally opens slowly and Elisabeth walks out.

She remains still for a moment in the middle of the immaculate room, her reflection infinitely repeating in the mirrors in front and behind her.

Her fluorescent leggings now seem ridiculously out of place.

She walks very calmly towards a sink, washes her hands slowly and knowingly, her eyes focused on the water flowing out of the tap... then she stops the water in one swift gesture.

She looks up slowly...

A beat, alone, facing her reflection in the mirror...

ELISABETH

The noise of plates and glasses that progressively grows louder...

FADE IN:

6

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

6

Greasy fingers that rip the head off of a shrimp: SHLACK!

The thick sweaty nape of a man's neck, on which a fly sporadically lands. A pudgy hand tries to flick it away.

It's Harvey's hand. Facing camera, he is in the midst of another logorrheic monologue as he peels and shells the juicy shrimp before stuffing them into his mouth...*slurp*...in between two words...

HARVEY

...but it's like when you've got someone farting on screen...
slurp... People LOVE that! I'd rather talk about RENOIR or GAUGUIN but *slurp*... that's how it is.
C'est la vie... People are just... people. And I have to give people what they want. *slurp*... That's what keeps the shareholders happy.
slurp... And let me tell you something: people always ask for something NEW. *slurp*... RENEWAL is inevitable. It's nature's way. You either RENEW or you disappear.

"RENEW" seems to explode out of his mouth in a splutter of shrimp.

He stares at a young waitress' ass, which seems to RENEW his appetite.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

At 50, it stops. And that's not me saying so. That's biology.

We finally discover Elisabeth, facing him.

ELISABETH
What stops?

A beat.

HARVEY
What?

ELISABETH
What stops?

HARVEY
...? The... you know the... the...

Suddenly really uncomfortable, he makes a circular gesture with his hand...

Then he brushes it all aside with a sweeping gesture.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Anyway! Lots of wonderful things await you afterwards, you'll finally have time to enjoy your private life. Kids, they put a big smile on your face and you forget about everything else!

ELISABETH
I don't have kids.

A tiny, empty beat in Harvey's dull eyes.

He jumps to his feet grabbing his phone, looking terribly busy, and calls out to a MAN (60) at the back of the room.

HARVEY
GEORGE!
(to Elisabeth)
I've gotta run.

He walks away, hitting on the young waitress as he passes her by and opening his arms towards a man in his sixties at the back of the room, grandiloquent:

HARVEY (CONT'D)
*GEORGE!! These ratings are insane!
You're a fucking genius!*

Elisabeth is left alone sitting at the table.

Inside the wine glass, which she's barely touched, the fly is drowning. It's wriggling all around desperately fighting to escape this sweet, liquid trap...

Elisabeth stares at the fly, which twitches as if having an epileptic fit, its movements growing slower... and slower... until finally it is completely immobilized.

Dead and disgusting.

DISSOLVE TO:

7 **OMITTED**

7

8 **INT. CRAIG SILVER MANAGEMENT OFFICE - DAY**

8

A huge picture of Elisabeth with an ultra bright smile, praising the merits of a whitening toothpaste:

**WITH TOOTHBRITE (*check clearance*)
YOU GOT IT!**

The smile is swallowed up as a hand closes the magazine containing the ad.

CRAIG
TOOTHBRITE is ending your
ambassador's contract.

CRAIG SILVER, 40, sits behind a big desk, facing Elisabeth.

ELISABETH
But we just renewed it a month ago!

CRAIG
I know. But they are within their
right to do so considering the
*"significant change in your public
notoriety"* with the end of your
show...

Elisabeth, speechless, her eyes glistening with the tears she is trying to hold back.

ELISABETH
So what's our next move? Maybe a
reality show? Or I was thinking
even a cooking show...or why not
a...

She stops when she sees Craig, visibly ill at ease, wiggling about in his seat.

CRAIG
Listen... I know this is not the
best moment to tell you this but...
we are forced to cut back on the
number of clients we represent at
the agency and...

...

ELISABETH
"We"? Who is "we"?

CRAIG
Well you know... CRAIG SILVER
MANAGEMENT.

ELISABETH
Sorry what's your name again?

CRAIG
What?

ELISABETH
What's your name?

CRAIG
C'mon...Lizzie

ELISABETH
What's your fucking name?

CRAIG
Craig Silver-

A beat on his contrite face. We hear the door slam violently

9

EXT. AVENUE - DAY

9

Elisabeth is at the wheel of her car.

We can almost hear the billion thoughts firing through her mind, knocking back and forth.

She's speeding along a road lined with palm trees.

The noise of the traffic seems to be getting louder and louder.

She drives past a big billboard flaunting her photo:

WITH TOOTHBRITE

YOU GOT IT!

She turns her head, trying to see the new billboard that **two workers** are putting up in her plac-

WHAM!!! A car hurtles right out of a crossroad and SMASHES straight into her car. The window explode as the car spins violently, tires screeching against the asphalt.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Elisabeth is in the ER.

She's sitting on the side of a bed wearing a disposable paper hospital gown tied up in the back, with her legs dangling in front of her. A slew of x-rays are on a backlit x-ray viewer.

A DOCTOR comes in accompanied by a YOUNG MALE NURSE.

DOCTOR

Well it's your lucky day Ms.
Sparkle! We've X-rayed you from
head to toe and there's not even as
much as a cracked molar. So you're
good to go!

The young male nurse hands him a file. The nurse is wearing a surgical mask that only allows us to see his piercing eyes of an extreme azure blue.

He appears to be stunningly handsome.

Elisabeth is in her own distant and muted bubble while the doctor goes over her file, checking everything for the last time and signing off on the paperwork.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

...vaccinations...ok... not
currently on any medication... By
the way my wife is a huge fan...
blood type... date of birth... oh,
it's your birthday happy birthd-

He doesn't have time to finish- Elisabeth bursts into tears.

Long beat on Elisabeth, hunched over and shaken by hiccups as she sobs.

ELISABETH

(muttering to herself)
It's over...

The doctor looks at her, uncomfortable.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

It's all over...

A long awkward beat.

Beep beep - the doctor glances at his beeper clipped to his belt.

DOCTOR

(relieved for the excuse
to get away)
An emergency, I have to run.
Have a good... euh ...bye.

He leaves. Elisabeth remains sitting on the examination table.

After a long moment, she wipes the tears from her face and is about to stand u-

MALE NURSE (O.S.)

One moment.

She turns around, surprised to see that the nurse is still there. His striking, piercing blue eyes looking out from behind his mask.

MALE NURSE (CONT'D)

There's just one last exam to perform.

ELISABETH

Oh? Didn't he say I was good to g-

He separates the open flaps of her paper hospital gown and places his stethoscope on her back.

While he moves the stethoscope around her back, we notice that he has a small strawberry birthmark on his forearm.

We hear noises coming from inside her body, amplified by the instrument: **Boom boom... boom boom...boom boom....**

His hands start to palpate along her backbone, the fingers of his latex gloves following the length of the prominent vertebrae, stopping and palpating each vertebra with great attention, as if his probing fingers were measuring the resistance of her spinal column.

Elisabeth is taken aback by this unusual exam...

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

Is there a problem...?

MALE NURSE

(still focusing on her spine)

No it's perfect, you're a good candidate.

(catching himself)

I'm mean, you're good to go.

He goes to the coat rack to take her coat- the coat rack sways and falls to the floor. *Oops, sorry let me get that...* he rummages among the coats and finally picks up her yellow coat which he places on her lap.

MALE NURSE (CONT'D)

Have a good day. I wish you the best.

He leaves and Elisabeth is left there, in silence.

Confused by what just happened.

Just the noise of the swinging doors *Thump-clomp, thump-clomp*, which finally come to a stop.

11

EXT. HOSPITAL. - DAY

11

Elisabeth walks out of the hospital. A beat to breathe in the fresh air.

An ear-splitting chorus of car horns and traffic.

She puts her hands in her coat pockets as if to comfort herself.

She frowns, feeling something inside her pocket.

She takes her hand out, holding... a folded paper packet with something inside. She unfolds it and finds a USB stick, which she is manifestly discovering for the very first time.

Written down on the back of the stick:

THE SUBSTANCE

Scribbled on the crumpled piece of paper: "It changed my life."

She takes a moment to look at the USB stick amidst the racket caused by the traffic...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

...*Lizzie??...* *Lizzie Sparkle??*

She looks up: A RATHER UNPREPOSSESSING-LOOKING MAN in his fifties, with just a crown of hair left on his balding head, is looking at her with a wide smile on his face as he adjusts his glasses on his nose.

MAN

OMG I can't believe it!

An embarrassed silence, she visibly doesn't recognize him.

MAN (CONT'D)

...Fred from 10th grade homeroom!

...

She widens her eyes, making us understand that time has not been kind to him...

ELISABETH

...Oh... Fred...of course...

He passes his hand over his bald head.

FRED (CONT'D)
What do we have here... ok this
will do.
(he scribbles on one of
the sheets)
Please don't look at my cholesterol
levels, they're a disaster...

He rips off the end of the paper with his number written on
it... and it flies off and lands in a puddle of mirky water.

FRED (CONT'D)
Oh God...
(clumsily picking it up
and wiping it)
Programmer's hands... Aren't much
good away from the keyboard!

The taxi honks. He slaps the paper into Elisabeth's hand.

FRED (CONT'D)
Now you've got it!

He chuckles, proud of his joke and jumps into the taxi as he
mimes the telephoning gesture: "call me!"

12

INT. ELISABETH'S APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM - END OF AFTERNOON

12

Elisabeth is standing in front of an oversized picture window
with a magnificent view of the city in a spacious, elegantly
decorated living room.

Hanging on the wall opposite the window is a huge full-length
framed poster of her. She's sporting a sexy pose in a blue
leotard with a big conquering smile on her face.

A bouquet of flowers still wrapped in plastic sits on the
table. On the small card attached we read: "**Thank you for all
these years with us. You were amazing!**". The word "were"
seems to stand out like a punch in the face.

Elisabeth plugs the USB stick into her television screen and
sits on the couch.

AN ENTIRELY BLACK SCREEN

After a moment, a MALE VOICE : it is deep and slow.
Underneath a very slight, almost inaudible crackling sound.

Have you ever dreamt of a better version of yourself?

The screen remains completely black as the voice continues:

**We are merely the expression of a genetic code that freezes
at a precise moment.**

But your DNA conceals billions of other possibilities.

Inside of you, there is another you. Or should I say, billions of other "yous."

One single injection unlocks your DNA, starting a new cellular division, that will release another version of yourself.

Younger. More beautiful. More perfect.

This is...

The title appears full screen at the same time as the voice pronounces:

THE SUBSTANCE

A long silent beat over the title.

It then disappears. Silent beat on the BLACK screen.

And at long last, an image...

A yellow ball (like blu tack) upon a white surface (high angle top shot like in a lab demonstration).

You are the matrix.

The ball is slightly dented and irregular.

Two male hands enter the frame and start slowly pulling on a section of the blu tack ball.

Everything comes from YOU.

The hand pulls... and pulls... until the piece detaches itself from the original ball.

And everything IS you.

THE HAND ROLLS THE NEW PIECE TO FORM A PERFECTLY ROUNDED SECOND BALL WHICH NOW SITS NEXT TO THE ORIGINAL, THAT IN CONTRAST SEEMS ALL THE MORE IMPERFECT.

This is simply... a better version of yourself.

Each hand presents one ball on its open palm:

You just have to share.

The left hand closes over the left ball making it disappear.

One week for one.

Before re-opening while closing the other hand.

And one week for the other.

Both hands re-open. Silent beat on the two small balls side by side.

A perfect balance of 7 days each.

The one and only thing not to forget...

YOU ARE ONE

BACK TO THE TWO BALLS.

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOURSELF

The two hands slam the two balls together-SMACK!

THE VIDEO ENDS.

Elisabeth remains still for a moment, watching the screen in silence.

She then removes the USB stick, heads into the kitchen... and throws it into the trash can.

BLACK

A muffled, distorted noise as if we were underwater...

FADE IN:

13

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE BAR - NIGHT

13

EXTREME CLOSE UP SHOT OF AN OLIVE FLOATING inside a transparent liquid.

The olive is suddenly pierced by a wooden toothpick in a muffled, distorted sound, like a heart pierced by a sword, pieces of its slashed flesh floating in the liquid.

Back to a medium shot which shows the olive swimming inside a Martini glass... Which Elisabeth brings to her lips... and empties in one gulp... before putting the empty glass down... next to the two others on the bar counter in front of her.

In a wide shot we discover that she is sitting at a bar, a cosy speak-easy type cocktail lounge.

The mood is dark and classy, blanketed with black-velvet surfaces and jazz music.

She glances around, looking at the different couples hidden in the alcoves on dark couches...

It's late.

She's alone.

She signals the barman to serve her another drink.

14A **INT. APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 14A

THE BIG FRAMED PHOTO OF ELISABETH SMILING in the living room plunged in darkness.

The sound of somebody throwing up.

On the table, the roses are now wilted, asphyxiated in their plastic prison.

14B **INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT** 14B

From the dark long corridor, we can see Elisabeth kneeling over the toilet.

She stands up and goes to the sink. Splashes water on her face, then carelessly wipes it with a towel making her makeup run; she stares for a moment at her reflection in the mirror.

The black lines of mascara running down her cheeks make her look even more like a sad clown.

14C **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 14C

Elisabeth stands in front of the big picture window. She stays there looking at the city lights.

The lights continue to shine. The world continues to spin.

Without her.

Her eyes dart back and forth between different objects and keepsakes lined up on the edge of the window sill. An Oscar has pride of place among the other statues and awards, framed photos and souvenirs where we see her smiling surrounded by various people.

She picks up a snow globe with a small figurine version of herself inside. The tiny figurine stands on a small pink star, a replica of the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

She shakes the globe: golden confetti floats around inside the liquid, creating a magical golden rain around Elisabeth's figurine replica.

A suspended moment on the sparkling confetti lingering weightlessly...

All of a sudden, Elisabeth turns around and hurls the globe with all her strength against the wall: **BAM!!!** The globe smashes and shatters into pieces against the framed poster, splattering everything in the process.

The smiling face on the poster is now dribbling the slimy, transparent liquid; the glass is cracked right over one of her eyes, as if she had gotten punched in the face.

Elisabeth grabs the wilted flowers from the table, heads to the kitchen and...

14D **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

14D

... throws them in the trash can.

BLACK

A long silent beat.

CLACK - LOW ANGLE SHOT FROM INSIDE THE TRASH CAN WHICH OPENS AGAIN- revealing Elisabeth's face framed by the black can.

She leans over, sticks her hand inside the black bucket...

... and retrieves the USB stick, covered in sticky residue.

15A **INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT**

15A

Elisabeth sits on the side of her bed on the phone, lit only by the small bedside lamp whose soft glow lights her face.

The sound of the line ringing. Slow. Regular. The line crackles slightly.

After numerous rings, someone finally picks up the phone.

A moment of silence.

Then a masculine voice, deep and cavernous:

Yes?

The sound of heavy breathing on the other end of the line.

Elisabeth hesitates, then finally jumps in:

ELISABETH
I'd like to... order?

A beat. Then the deep, terse, deadpan voice:

Address?

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
1057 North Beverly Drive.

Please note: 35 North Byron Alley. (TBD)

Caught unprepared, she grabs a pen and scribbles the address on the palm of her hand.

The line goes dead.

Elisabeth remains for a moment without moving on her bed.

BLACK

15B **INT. BEDROOM / CORRIDOR - DAY**

15B

A steady whirring sound that grows louder and louder...

Bits of light appear and disappear... Elisabeth opens her eyes with a start.

She realizes that she fell asleep on her bed still dressed. She's dazzled by the sunlight that floods her bedroom.

She sits up and swings her legs over the side of the bed... ouch... a major hangover.

She walks down the hallway dragging her feet where A CLEANING LADY IN HER FIFTIES is running the vacuum.

ELISABETH
Hello Maria.

MARIA
Hello Ma'am.

16 **INT. SHOWER. DAY**

16

HISSESSSSSSSSSS TOP SHOT OF THE POWERFUL JET OF WATER spraying Elisabeth's head and back, flattening her hair, water streaming down her numb body. She looks up and the jet slowly washes away the traces of makeup on her face.

CUT TO:

17 **INT. KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - DAY**

17

SISSESSSSSSSS - AN EFFERVESCENT ASPIRIN TABLET drops into a glass of water.

Elisabeth sits at the kitchen table, wearing a white terry cloth bathrobe.

The bubbles rise to the surface of the glass.

In the background in the living room, we see Maria vacuuming slowly, crossing the frame in a straight line from left to right.... then from right to left... like a small foosball figurine moving straight in its axis.

Elisabeth picks up the newspaper that has been dropped on the table with the mail, and quickly leafs through it.

She can't help but take a quick look at the classified ads... where she discovers the casting call to replace her.

A moment to regroup... then she throws the paper into the **wastepaper basket** and sifts through the rest of her mail - advertising fliers, a few bills... and stops on a white envelope with her address written by hand. The envelope is sealed with an "S" on the back. No stamp, no postmark, as if someone had dropped it off there.

Elisabeth opens the envelope, and finds enclosed a white plastic card that is simply marked: **503**.

She looks at the back of the card: nothing.

She stares at the card for a moment... then at the palm of her hand with the address almost entirely erased by her shower.

In the background, the excruciatingly insistent noise of the vacuum cleaner

18A **EXT. STREET (ELISABETH AREA). DAY** 18A

We follow Elisabeth from behind with a hand-held camera as she walks down the street.

Her mustard yellow coat is a spot of color that keeps us riveted to her and her gait.

18B **EXT. STREET (LESS NICE STREET). DAY** 18B

Still following Elisabeth from behind as she walks (her surroundings are a little less pleasant)

19A **EXT. AVENUE / DEPOSIT BUILDING (SKID ROW). DAY** 19A

Elisabeth arrives at the given address: on the avenue, a small seedy metal shutter door without any signs or nameplates.

Just a small magnetic card reader on the side of the door. She waves her card and the shutter starts to rise...then gets stuck, halfway open. She waves her card at it again but the shutter remains half shut. She looks around... before crouching down to pass under the shutter...

19B INT. DEPOSIT / LONG NARROW CORRIDOR - DAY 19B

She's now in a long narrow decrepit hallway. On the other side of the shutter door, a notification flyer from a pest control company.

Nice...

She goes down the long corridor..., which leads to...

19C INT. DEPOSIT / LOBBY 19C

...a small, windowless lobby, harshly lit with neon lights, with letter boxes, like post office boxes, on the wall.

Elisabeth scans the letter boxes... One at the bottom is marked 207... and then another box, higher up, is marked 503.

She waves her card to unlock her letter box. **BEEP.**

CUT TO:

20 INT. APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM - END OF THE DAY 20

A CARDBOARD BOX MARKED 503 sits on the coffee table.

Everything is now tidy and silent in the apartment.

Elisabeth sits on the couch, looking at the parcel.

She finally opens the box and starts taking out what she finds inside. She lays everything out on the table.

A small yellow fluorescent vial upon which is written:

ACTIVATOR
(single use/discard after use)

A plastic kit containing elements that look like needles and syringes with the label:

STABILIZER
other self

Something which would appear to look like a sewing kit: surgical scissors. Compresses. Surgical thread. Disinfectant.

A transparent perfusion pipe with a label marked **SWITCH.**

And two transparent perfusion bags filled with a thick yellow liquid upon which are written:

| FOOD | FOOD |
|--------------|--------------|
| MATRIX | OTHER SELF |
| ----- 7 | ----- 7 |
| ----- 6 | ----- 6 |
| ----- 5 | ----- 5 |
| ----- 4 | ----- 4 |
| ----- 3 | ----- 3 |
| ----- 2 | ----- 2 |
| ----- 1 | ----- 1 |
| ---SWITCH--- | ---SWITCH--- |

At the bottom of the box, a small white note card with instructions and icons:

«YOU ACTIVATE» - only once (intravenous)

«YOU STABILIZE» - everyday (intramuscular)

«YOU SWITCH» - every 7 days without exception. She turns the card over and reads the inscription on it:

REMEMBER YOU ARE ONE

A moment on the equipment spread out on the coffee table.

21A

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

21A

Elisabeth, naked, faces her bathroom mirror.

She looks at the sight the mirror reflects back at her without clothing and makeup.

Her breasts. Her belly. Her face.

She slides her hand over her beauty mark with its singular shape next to her belly button.

She's still a very beautiful woman but doesn't seem happy by what she sees. We can sense a hidden anguish. Generalized. Immense.

Basically she's just aging... and everything and everyone around her leads her to believe it is the end of the world. The end of *her* world.

As she looks at her reflection in the mirror, we hear the man's deep resonating voice:

You are the matrix.

On the side of the sink, the equipment is carefully placed upon a small silver tray.

Everything comes from YOU.

And everything IS YOU.

She picks up the syringe and fills it with the fluorescent yellow liquid from the small ACTIVATOR vial.

This is simply... a better version of yourself.

She looks at herself in the mirror again.

Then she takes the tourniquet strap provided with her kit.

She makes a tourniquet on her arm, which she tightens with her teeth.

She disinfects her arm with a cotton pad soaked in alcohol.

She taps her forearm to find a vein.

We can sense she's nervous. She ends up taking a deep breath, sinks the needle into the vein and slowly empties the contents of the syringe.

She waits for a few moments, tensed.

Nothing happens.

A beat. She breathes in deeply.

Still nothing.

She sighs... This is bullshi-

She turns away from the mirror and everything suddenly starts spinning. She falls...

21B BAM! head first against the floor tiles.

21B

She's folded in two on the floor, violent abdominal pains shooting straight through her stomach. The pain is excruciating.

Her skin seems to come alive all of a sudden. As if something were growing and moving underneath it.

She starts to sweat. Her eyes fill with sheer terror.

The pain is now unbearable.

The growth under her skin.

Sounds grow muffled. As if she were hearing inside of herself. There is something moving... evolving...

Extreme close up of her pupil dilating...

...Deforming...

...DIVIDING ITSELF INTO TWO inside her iris...

She curls up into a foetal position under the unbearable pain.

Her eye rolls upwards and for a moment we fleetingly see... A SECOND EYE INSIDE THE CAVITY before it disappears behind the ocular globe...

On her back, her skin deforms itself and then starts rippling like waves, as if something strange were moving inside of her.

The skin covering her spine starts to crack... and split open. Under the opening skin... we see a SECOND SPINE...

As if ANOTHER BODY were locked up inside her own body.

The skin parts in two and lets THE SECOND BODY APPEAR.

The sound is muffled, her pupil dilates like a black hole, a ringing noise creeps up in her ears, growing more and more deafening...

We enter her pupil, a tunnel of fluorescent light moving at full speed towards a small white spot which grows bigger and bigger with **AMAZING SPEED**...

BLACK

21C Silence.

21C

A long beat.

Very long beat.

Of silence.

And darkness.

And suddenly.

The subliminal shot of a heart on fire, blazing.

Boom BOOM... Boom BOOM... Boom BOOM...

The image returns, slowly but surely.

Flickering like the batting of eyelids...

Slowly coming back to life...

At first we only see white tiles.

We soon realize that this is Elisabeth's POV, waking up on the bathroom floor. Her vision is blurry, she is trying to focus...

She turns to the other side and sees...

Elisabeth... lying on her back, unconscious on the white tiles.

... ?

If Elisabeth is lying down on the ground in front of her... Who is she??

Her POV: She lifts up her hand into her field of vision. The nerve network is still being constructed making its blue veins bulge slightly. The edges of her fingernails perspire a mixture of fluid and blood.

She heads towards the sink and faces the steamed up mirror. She attempts to focus. She wipes the mirror with her hand to take the condensation away and discovers... A MAGNIFICENT YOUNG WOMAN IN HER TWENTIES... perfectly formed... incredibly beautiful... and young.

Her features are different from Elisabeth's, but there is a distant family resemblance.

She looks completely dazed.

All the sounds are muffled as if she were in cotton wool. As if she can hear the inside of her body.

She approaches the mirror to look at her eye. She pulls down her lower eyelid: inside of her iris, traces of yellow fluorescent pigment are resorbing and forming a few small, irregular yellow stains.

She slides her hand over her face, her hard nipples, filled with life... Super hard pointy nipples like when she was twenty.

She notices that her singular beauty mark is now on her right breast, while her tummy is unblemished.

She turns to one side, exaggerates the curve of her back upon which her long hair cascades down... like a Venus emerging from the water... a creature of almost supernatural beauty.

She looks down... and sees her old self lying on the floor.

The matrix.

She's lying still, her eyes frozen, staring into emptiness...
...in a puddle of fluid and blood.

The matrix's back along her spine shows the traces of a slot-like opening, already half closed.

As if the shock of this vision were too violent for her, everything spins and she throws up a yellow, fluorescent liquid on the white tiled floor.

She then tries to get ahold of herself... the matrix is pale and can't seem to breathe anymore.

21D She opens up the sewing kit and forces herself to get it together. She starts sewing up the slit in Elisabeth's back. 21D

The needle and thread start suturing the huge wound along her spine...

Once the suturing is finished, she picks up the perfusion bag upon which is written:"FOOD/MATRIX" and sticks the intravenous needle into Elisabeth's arm.

A small bubble floats up through the perfusion pipe...

After a beat... the matrix starts breathing again and the thick yellow liquid begins to empty very slowly along the gradation of the plastic bag which indicates

FOOD

MATRIX

----- 7

----- 6

----- 5

----- 4

----- 3

----- 2

----- 1

---SWITCH---

She sits down on the edge of the bathtub. She's shaking. Gathering her thoughts.

The camera tracks back slowly and reveals them side by side for the first time together.

The MATRIX is spread out on the tiled floor.

SHE, the "new she," is sitting on the side of the bathtub.

Now they will have to share...

She stays silent and immobile for a moment.

22

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

22

NewElisabeth at the kitchen table in her bathrobe.

We see her sitting from behind, perfectly still.

Then we hear her start to make guttural sounds, which run up and down the scale: bass / treble / bass hhh...hel...
Hiiii...heee...llo...oooo... which trigger a coughing fit.

She spits something into a napkin: fluorescent yellow mucus.

She tries again, this time her voice is clearer:
Hello...hello...hello

23

OMITTED

23

24

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

24

TOP SHOT on NewElisabeth lying in the large bed, staring at the ceiling.

A million things are spinning inside her head.

She finally closes her eyes.

After a few moments, we see her turning over.

And over again.

After a while, she turns the light on and gets out of bed.

CUT TO:

25

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

25

The bathroom light switches back on, revealing the matrix in stasis on the floor, who hasn't moved an inch.

NewElisabeth looks at her for a moment. She then kneels and tilts her very carefully to lay her on her back.

She takes a terry towel which she folds in four and gently places underneath the matrix's head.

She readjusts her position to make her comfortable. Gently puts her hair back in place and brings her ear close to her face to check her breathing.

Everything is fine. After a beat looking down at her... she turns off the light again.

BLACK

FADE IN:

26 INT/EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW / PALM TREE - DAY 26

A SHINY-LEAVED PALM TREE standing out against the BLUE SKY.

27 INT. TOP SHOT SHOWER. DAY 27

HISSESSSSSSSSSSSS - THE POWERFUL JET OF WATER sprays down the small of NewElisabeth's back, flattening her long blond hair. She runs her hands along her waist ... her belly ... her thighs ... as if to appreciate her new shapes and forms.

28A INT. BATHROOM. DAY 28A

POV FLOOR LEVEL - naked feet come out of the shower and walk past her former body still in stasis on the bathroom floor; a few drops of water land on the matrix.

She wraps her bathrobe around her and stands in front of the mirror. Facing the mirror, her voice is now perfectly clear and controlled:

NEW-ELISABETH
...HELLO.

Strange feeling discovering her new voice.

She starts drying her hair off with a towel. A slight tinnitus starts buzzing in her ears.

Ping.

A drop of blood has just fallen onto the white sink.

NewElisabeth brings her hand to her nose and looks at the end of her index finger, which is blood red.

She opens the little door to the cabinet over the sink and takes out the kit marked:

STABILIZER
Other self

The little card reads:

you stabilise

EVERY DAY

She takes out of the kit: a long puncture needle... and a sort of plastic tube containing individual, but interlocking, mini-vials (clipped on the inside) numbered 1 to 7, making up the whole of a compartmentalized syringe.

She looks at the instruction card... her eyebrows shoot up when she sees the diagrams, a bit uneasy...

Ping, ping, ping, the drops of blood fall more quickly and persistently forcing her to react.

She kneels down next to the matrix and gently turns her onto her side.

She approaches the oversized needle... and starts lightly jabbing the sutured skin... it resists... she pushes with a bit more strength... it still resists... she pushes again and... Swik!... it slides right in.

Extremely concentrated while trying to ignore the piercing tinnitus that never stops, her eyes watch the long puncture needle that progressively sinks into the spinal column.

The needle all the way in, she clips on the series of compartmentalized vials (forming a barrel) and pulls lightly on the plunger... progressively draining a transparent liquid and filling the individual vials.

Once all the vials are filled, she carefully removes the needle, unclips the first vial marked **DAY 1** and Swik! Gives herself an intramuscular injection in the thigh.

HER PUPIL DILATES - A beat while her body diffuses the fluid.... the tinnitus diminishes in intensity... and finally disappears.

The bleeding has stopped. Everything's ok.

She breathes out to calm herself

But she's distracted by a noise...

She strains her ears... is it the... sound... of...

A KEY IN THE LOCK??!!

After a suspended moment where everything freezes, her mind processing the information...

28B

...she rushes down the hallway towards the opening door and throws all her weight against it, violently slamming it back shut on the person who was trying to get in. She double locks the door. CLICK- CLACK. 28B

After a beat to collect her wits, she looks through the peephole and discovers: MARIA, her bag toppled over on the floor, not understanding what has just happened...

NewElisabeth's thoughts are racing. NewElisabeth rummages through her coat pocket, takes out her phone and writes a text message.

28C She looks through the peephole. *Ping.* Maria takes out her cell phone and reads the message... frowns, looks surprised, but finally picks up her things and leaves. 28C

Relieved, NewElisabeth lets go of the peephole cover.
SHLICK...

28D **INT. FRIDGE - DAY** 28D

The fridge door opens. NewElisabeth puts in the tube containing the six remaining doses of Stabilizer.

29 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY** 29

NewElisabeth, in panties and t-shirt, faces the picture window overlooking the city.

She turns around and looks at the big framed photo of Elisabeth hanging on the wall, frozen in her blue leotard and imperturbable smile.

She goes to stand in the middle of the room.

A beat standing completely still.

Then, perfectly straight on her central axis, she starts sliding her two legs apart... her feet slowly sliding in opposite directions on the hardwood floor... even more, until she is in a full split with what seems to be disconcerting ease.

Her knee no longer troubles her in the least.

She then turns into a straddle split position and leans her torso forward, easily reaching the floor with her nose, arms extended.

LOW ANGLE SHOT of the poster of Elisabeth on the wall... soon to be blocked out by NewElisabeth's upper body reappearing in the frame while she straightens back up.

She leans her torso to one side, making Elisabeth's smiling face reappear behind her... then returns to her central axis, masking Elisabeth's face again, before leaning over to the other side... like a metronome covering and uncovering Elisabeth's image to the rhythm of her stretching routine.

A beat. And the her eyes fall upon the wastepaper basket with the newspaper thrown by Elisabeth before.

30 **OMITTED** 30

31 **EXT. STREET (ELISABETH AREA) - DAY** 31

We follow NewElisabeth from behind, walking in the street.

Her mustard yellow coat pulled tightly around her waist, but the coat is now too big for her new, thinner and slender frame, giving her a shapeless silhouette.

Her step is unsteady, very much aware of all the surrounding sensory stimuli. The air on her skin. The wind in her hair. The sound of her steps on the pavement.

Everything seems sharper. Heightened.

CUT TO:

32 **I/E. SHOP WINDOW / STREET - DAY** 32

POV FROM INSIDE A STORE - NewElisabeth is standing in front of a shop window and looking at something off screen.

We track back to gradually reveal ...

... THE PERFECT ASS OF A PLASTIC MANNEQUIN, molded in a FLASHY PINK leotard and frozen in a sensual hip sway position with its hand on its hip.

A moment on the mannequin's perfect ass in the foreground... then on NewElisabeth in the background who looks at her plastic counterpart for a long moment... before disappearing from the screen as she enters the shop.

33 **EXT. STREET (SHOP EXIT) - DAY** 33

We follow NewElisabeth again from behind as she walks down the street, now wearing a pink and white varsity jacket, a pleated miniskirt and white sneakers. A sports bag over her shoulder.

Her long hair undulates in rhythm with her steps. Her walk is now more assured, swaying.

And with this outfit, which highlights her new silhouette, heads start to turn as she walks by...

34A **EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY** 34A

Establishing shot.

34B **OMITTED** 34B

The slender legs of a girl in the foreground through which we see a small desk in the background, where the CASTING DIRECTOR and his ASSISTANT are sitting next to a small camera on a tripod.

CASTING DIRECTOR
We'll let you know by next week.

GIRL
Thank you so much... I'm just DYING
to get the part...

The legs walk off screen.

A moment of silence - wide shot. The two men behind their desk like two frozen points.

ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR
Great dancer.

A beat.

CASTING DIRECTOR
Too bad her boobs aren't in the
middle of her face instead of that
nose.

A beat. Then the other guy gives a grunt of approval.

ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR
NEXT!

Still focused on them, we hear the door that opens and closes, footsteps...

The two men look up:

A beat where their faces are frozen, as if something took their breath away... and the camera slowly pulls back to reveal...

AN ASS, frozen in the same sexy sway, hand on her hip and wearing the same FLASHY PINK LEOTARD as the mannequin in the store window... except this time it's a human ass.

NewElisabeth's perfectly formed ass.

CASTING DIRECTOR
Looks like everything sure is in
the right place this time...

ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR
Please say your
name/age/measurements

NewElisabeth is caught by surprise. Her mind goes blank.

ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
(a little louder)
Name??

The camera travels up her long legs...

NEW-ELISABETH (O.S.)
I'm...

...spirals around her slender waist and keeps traveling along the arch of her back...

CLOSE-UP ON THE ROUND, BLACK LENS OF THE SMALL DV CAMERA that is staring right at her like a compound eye...

NEW-ELISABETH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm...

(The little red dot flashes...)

...and the camera arrives on her face, her eyes sparkling as she looks straight into the camera and says:



36

36

BACK TO THE DV IMAGE THAT FREEZES PAUSED ON SUE'S FACE

Something instantly happens on screen.

She has an incredible presence.

ZZZZZZZZZZ THE HANDICAM IMAGE REWINDS and PLAYS again in a tighter shot on her magnetic face that pierces the screen.

SUE
I'm... SUE.

ZZZZZZZZZZ THE IMAGE REWINDS AGAIN AND GOES EVEN MORE TIGHT ON HER SPARKLING EYES.

SUE (CONT'D)
...SUE.

ZZZZZZZZZZ THE IMAGE REWINDS AND PLAYS EVEN CLOSER ON HER LUSCIOUS, CURVED LIPS.

WHICH REPEAT - WITHOUT ANY SOUND THIS TIME

SUE (MUTE) (CONT'D)
...SUE...SUE...SUE...

INT. HARVEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The shot widens and we discover that we are now in a large office where the CLOSE-UP IMAGE OF SUE'S LIPS is multiplied on a wall of screens.

Sue is standing in the middle of the room while we hear a thundering voice from afar:

HARVEY (O.S.)
WHERE IS SHE ??... WHERE IS SHE ??!

Harvey charges into the room, followed by THREE YOUNG MEN IN SUITS, and stops dead in his tracks... his eyes bright... ecstatic as if in front of a mystical revelation:

HARVEY (CONT'D)
WHAT...

He takes her hand and makes her spin slowly like a small figurine.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
...A GORGEOUS...

Makes her sit facing his desk.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
...LITTLE ANGEL.

He flops into his huge leather armchair behind his desk.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Why on earth did nobody tell me earlier about your existence? A lot of people are going to get fired for that believe me...

Sue, laughing flirtatiously... cheerfully soaks up the compliments, savoring all this new flattering attention surrounding her.

Harvey lights a cigarette. EXTREME CLOSE-UP on the flame which sets the tobacco ablaze like a furnace.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
I'll be brief.

He snaps his Zippo lighter shut - CLING!

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Primo: you're hired.

A puff of smoke exhaled from his mouth.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Segundo: we want something in your image: BEAUTIFUL and HAPPY. People want to be happy.

The embers of his cigarette light up again.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Tertio : We're airing in two weeks. So let's get to work. I'll let you organize everything else with my assistant....

(he snaps his fingers several times, as if trying to remember her name)

...

A voice echoes off screen.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Isabella.

The camera pans quickly towards ISABELLA (25/30) who is totally silent...then quickly pans back towards Harvey

HARVEY

(frowning, as if suddenly disturbed)

...?.....? Huh? I don't have time for that! Let's make it Cindy. It's shorter. Better. I'll let you organize everything else with Cindy.

As he's about to get up, Sue holds him back with a gesture.

SUE

Oh... before you go...

HARVEY

Yes princess?

SUE

I just have to mention... a small scheduling issue.

Harvey's eyes change slightly...

SUE (CONT'D)

I will need to be out of town every other week...

(a beat)

...to take care of my mother who's very sick.

Harvey looks at her fixedly:

HARVEY

Listen to me very carefully 'cause
I don't think you've heard me.

He comes over right next to her face, speaking very slowly:

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I WANT YOU for this show. So we'll
organize around whatever mother,
brother, fucking sick dog or rabbit
you need to take care of.

He stands and stares at her, his eyes sparkling.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Gorgeous and with a pure heart.
People are gonna LOVE that!

He crushes his cigarette out in the big crystal ashtray.
HISSSSSSS

MONTAGE SEQUENCE BEGINS to *RUNAROUND SUE* by Dion blasting at
top volume:

38 **EXT. STREET (FULL GLAM & POP) - DAY** 38

SUE FROM BEHIND WALKING DOWN THE STREET - there is a full
assurance in her swaying gait, she exudes a newfound
confidence. Heads turn outright as she passes by.

39A **INT. FRIDGE/KITCHEN - DAY** 39A

VIEW FROM INSIDE THE FRIDGE - the door opens revealing the
puncture syringe and five vials - Sue's hand grabs it.

39B **INT. BATHROOM** 39B

SUE'S HANDS UNCLIP A NEW VIAL from the syringe barrel and
SWIK! She gives herself an intramuscular injection in the
thigh.

CLACK the empty vial falls into the trash can where there are
now 4 other empty vials.

40 **INT. LIVING ROOM** 40

SUE'S HAND SIGNING "Elisabeth" on a note where we can read:
*Had to go abroad unexpectedly... this will cover the rest of
the year... thank you for everything...*. Sitting at the
kitchen table, Sue puts the note and cash in an envelope on
which she writes: MARIA

41A INT. WALK-IN CLOSET - DAY 41A

POV FROM INSIDE A WALK-IN CLOSET/SHLACK! ELISABETH'S WHOLE WARDROBE IS PUSHED TO EITHER SIDE OF THE CLOSET IN ONE SHARP GESTURE, revealing Sue in the middle, who hangs up her new, brightly colored clothing.

41B INT. BEDROOM. DAY 41B

SUE'S MANICURED HAND unwraps a new phone. She chooses LOUIS PRIMA - *When you're smiling* - for the ringtone, and puts the PINK telephone down next to Elisabeth's GOLD phone.

42 INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR / LANDING. DAY 42

POV THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE looking out the front door: MARIA reads the note and looks at the cash in the envelope. **SUE'S MANICURED FINGER** lets the peephole cover fall back down. *SHLICK.*

43 INT. BEDROOM. DAY 43

A BEDSHEET MADE OF POWDER PINK SATIN, flies above the bed, replacing the previous white cotton sheet. The shimmering fabric slowly falls back down towards the camera as Sue lets herself fall back against the powder pink satin which looks like the inside of a jewelry box.

TOP SHOT which tracks up Sue's feet... legs... belly... in OVERLAY THE GRADATIONS MARKED ON THE I.V BAG, which is slowly emptying... while the music progressively fades until it is no longer heard.

CUT TO:

44 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 44

An ORANGE AND GOLDEN DRAGON BREATHES OUT a gigantic flame.

The frame widens and we discover it's an embroidery on the back of a silk dressing gown worn by Sue; we see her from behind, facing the picture window looking at the city's lights.

In the middle of the room plunged in darkness, the dragon seems to be glowing as if symbolizing her newfound strength and soaring ascent.

A slight tinnitus starts buzzing in her ears...

45

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

45

On the floor, the last drops of liquid are sucked from the matrix's perfusion bag.

On the bathroom cabinet shelf, the syringe's compartmentalized barrel is now empty, the seven vials have been used.

Sue looks at herself in the mirror.

It's time...

She takes the pipe marked SWITCH and looks at the card that reads:

YOU SWITCH

every seven day no matter what

She takes off her bathrobe and kneels next to Elisabeth.

She looks at her for a while... She unclips the empty IV bag from the intravenous tubing... clips on the end of the small pipe instead... and sticks the needle at the other end of the pipe into her own arm.

She's a little nervous...

She waits... lightly twists and turns the needle inside her arm... After a short moment, blood starts to run through the transparent nozzle on one side, and then the other; blood starts to circulate between the two bodies.

Little by little, her vision blurs. As if life were leaving her body. As if she could feel the cold void of emptiness invade and overwhelm her. As if the world were losing its colors. And life its very spark.

All of a sudden, everything starts to distort HORRIBLY, her vision blurs, a HIGH-PITCHED buzzing noise blasts her eardrums and...

SMACK! THE TWO BLU TACK BALLS SLAMMED ONE AGAINST THE OTHER

WHAM! She collapses head first.

BLACK

46

MOTORCYCLE IMAGERY

46

A beat of silence over a black screen.

Then THE BLACK STARTS SHAKING, BECOMING A DIRTY GRAINY AND UNSTABLE IMAGE - where a tiny dot starts quivering in the far background at the center of the screen while a very weak beat starts echoing: *Ba boom.....ba boom.....ba boom..*

The small dot grows bigger and bigger... until it takes the shape of a ghostly motorcycle, like a photographic negative, which hurtles straight towards the camera lens... the only audible sound is the heartbeat, growing louder... **Ba boom... ba boom... ba boom...** the motorcycle hurtles **DIRECTLY AT THE CAMERA at full speed BaBoommBaBoom AND IS ON THE VERGE OF EXPLODING AGAINST THE SCREE...**

47

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

47

... and **AHAAAAAAAAA!** ELISABETH WAKES UP with a start, in her old body, lying on the bathroom floor!

She starts coughing uncontrollably. Like a fish straight out of the water whose gills have difficulty functioning.

Sue's lifeless body has collapsed right on top of her, which prevents Elisabeth from breathing. She tries several times before finally being able to make her roll over. Elisabeth stays in place for a moment, trying to catch her breath.

She removes the small pipe from her arm and gets up with difficulty.

She staggers abruptly as if her muscles were weakened. She regains her balance at the very last moment and leans against the sink.

She looks at her reflection in the mirror. She looks like a trainwreck. Her mouth is sticky and dry. Her eyelashes are stuck together. She rubs her painful knee and just stands there for a moment, head hanging down.

She twists and turns to look at the scar on her back. The stitches outline a long gash going down her spinal column from her neck all the way to her tailbone.

She puts on her bathrobe. Tightens the belt around her waist.

She's freezing. As if she were awakening from a heroin shot.

She looks down at Sue's body on the floor.

So young.

So perfect.

It's the first time that she sees her - that she sees HERSELF... from the outside.

She takes the second IV bag (FOOD / OTHER SELF) from the small bathroom cabinet and sticks it into Sue's arm.

She heads out towards the corridor.

CUT TO:

48

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

48

SIZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ - TWO raw eggs plopped into a frying pan.

Elisabeth makes something to eat. She's super hungry.

The hot oil in the pan makes a deafening sound.

The two egg yolks sizzling next to one another feel like a strange reminder.

The silent apartment is plunged in darkness.

FROM THE LONG DARK HALLWAY with the doorframe at the very end leading to the bathroom - we see Sue's body lying inertly on the tile floor.

IN THE KITCHEN - Elisabeth eats avidly as if to restore an energy balance.

Long silence. Only the small humming noise from the fridge.

In comparison to the energy she had before when she was Sue, everything now seems very silent and surrounded by a sluggish cloud.

BLACK

FADE IN:

49

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

49

THE STILL LIVING ROOM BATHED IN SUNLIGHT, with the big poster of Elisabeth in her blue leotard and imperturbable smile.

50

INT. SHOWER - DAY

50

HISSSSSSSSSSSSSSS THE POWERFUL JET OF WATER STREAMING DOWN THE LARGE STITCHES like thorns along Elisabeth's spinal column.

51

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

51

Elisabeth in her bathrobe at the kitchen table sifts through the mail where she finds a new white envelope.

She opens it and takes out a big white note card on which is written:

We hope you are enjoying your experience with
THE SUBSTANCE

Your two week refill kit has been delivered
to your deposit box

CUT TO:

52 **INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

52

Facing the bathroom mirror, Elisabeth twists and turns to look at the stitches on her back:

The scar tissue has healed. She picks up the surgical pliers and starts to extract the sutures (slightly painful and uncomfortable). She twists with difficulty and tries to grab the stitches one by one.

In the white sink, the black thread looks like spider legs. She gathers it all, and throws the threads in the trash can.

She puts scarring cream on the long pink scar.

A phone starts ringing. We follow Elisabeth as she walks towards the bedroom.

53 **INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

53

A short beat as she sees the name of the person calling on the phone: HARVEY. She sits down on the bed and picks up the phone taking on a confident voice.

ELISABETH

Hel...

HARVEY (V.O.)

I need you to come back.

Elisabeth straightens slightly all of a sudden. A fleeting glow appears in her eyes.

HARVEY (V.O.)

To empty your office. Whenever you want, no rush. This afternoon?

(without waiting for her to answer)

Great, See you then!

He hangs up.

A beat on Elisabeth who remains seated on the bed, the big, pink scar covering her back.

54 **OMITTED**

54

55 EXT. STREET (ELISABETH AREA) - DAY

55

Clack clack clack The sound of heels clicking on the pavement.

We follow Elisabeth from behind as she walks, wearing her mustard yellow coat.

She pulls up her coat collar several times to make sure the scar isn't visible.

Everything seems more aggressive. The noise of the cars higher pitched. People are even more in a hurry.

No one turns around as she walks by.

Lost in her thoughts.

56A EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

56A

Establishing shot.

56B OMITTED

56B

57 INT. STUDIO / BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - DAY

57

Close up on Elisabeth staring fixedly at something off screen.

From the reverse angle we see it's the long backstage.

All her photos which once hung like trophies have since been taken down.

A beat on the long corridor, which now seems stark naked.

Harvey appears at the other end, striding towards her, carrying a big cardboard box in his hands.

HARVEY

Aaaaahh, there's she is!!! Where have you been??! We wanted to all have a drink for your departure - something big to mark the occasion.

He dumps the box into her arms.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Anyway, I've gathered everything for you, to save time. And we all chipped in...

(proudly taking a wrapped gift out of the box)

...we bought you just a little something to keep you busy...

(MORE)

HARVEY (CONT'D)

You'll open it at home. It's French. My wife swears by it!
(looking at his watch)
Oops! I've got to run! But come and visit whenever you like! We'll always be happy to see you!

His excess of enthusiasm stresses the fact that he wants to get rid of her as soon as possible.

And before she even has time to answer, he has already left and disappeared down the hallway.

Elisabeth finds herself standing silently alone on the grey rug that runs down the middle of the empty corridor.

Glug glug glug...

The water fountain right behind her gurgles... as if to stress how pathetic the whole situation really is...

58A **EXT. STREET (STUDIO AREA) - DAY** 58A

Elisabeth walking with a slightly more stressed step.

58B **EXT. STREET (LESS NICE STREET) - DAY** 58B

Elisabeth, still walking, her surroundings are a lot less pleasant.

58C **OMITTED** 58C

58D **INT. DEPOSIT CORRIDOR - DAY** 58D

Elisabeth goes down the long narrow corridor

59 **INT. DEPOSIT LOBBY - DAY** 59

She waves her card over box 503, **BEEP.**

60 **INT. BATHROOM - DAY** 60

Sue's figure lying still on the tile in the darkness.

After a moment, Elisabeth walks into the bathroom and switches on the light.

She steps over Sue and puts a new small cardboard box on the sink. She opens it to find: two new IV bags and seven new empty vials clipped together.

She puts them away in the bathroom cabinet and closes the mirrored door where she sees her reflection staring back at her.

She looks at Sue lying on the floor.

And the IV bag indicating that there are still 4 more days to go...

61

INT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - DAY

61

Elisabeth sits at the kitchen table crossing out days on a monthly calendar in black.

She crosses out seven days in a row... then writes "SUE" in each of the next seven days... then the same thing again until she has covered the entire month.

She leans the calendar up against the wall, pensive.

She lightly taps the end of the pen against the table, bored.

She turns on the radio:

...at discount prices! It's fish of the sea month at COSTCO! SUPER COLOSSAL ALASKAN RED KING CRAB LEGS are only \$12.99 a pound, so come on down and reel in your catch! HEY BUT WHO'S THIS?! WHO'S WHAT? WHO'S ON TOP OF THIS? THE ASSURAN-

She switches off the exasperating commercials with a flick.

She remains seated in her chair for a moment.

Then she gets up and walks into the living room. She disappears from the frame and after a little while we see the TV turn on in the background.

Staying with the wide shot, the TV in the background, spitting out its programs.

BLACK

The sound of a TV show in the distance slowly gets louder.

62

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

62

GROUND VIEW OF THE BATHROOM TILES - The door opens and a beam of light comes through, shining on Sue lying on the floor.

We can see Elisabeth's feet and the hem of the white bathrobe standing still in the foreground.

The I.V bag indicates two more notches.

Two more days to get through...

Elisabeth's feet leave the frame and the door closes again.

BLACK

The sound of the TV dies down...

...comes back on with a new show... and dies down again...

Then rhythmic music, soft and muffled at first, slowly grows louder in the distance...

The volume increases, louder and louder ...

63

INT. KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - DAY

63

...AND BURSTS FULL BLAST as a door opens letting the light... into the fridge.

We realize that our POV IS FROM INSIDE THE REFRIGERATOR, while now it's SUE in underwear and a small tank top who bends over to put away the compartmentalized syringe filled with spinal liquid for the next seven days, the music blasting behind her in the apartment.

She grabs a soda can.

CLOSE UP ON HER MANICURED HAND AND RED NAIL POLISH, pulling off the can tab **KSHHHH...**

HER FLAT, MUSCULAR BELLY as she thrusts her hip to close the fridge door.

We follow Sue, stretching and drinking, swaying in rhythm to the music and enjoying the sensations of being in her new body.

While the time she spent as Elisabeth felt dull and pointless, now it's as though a bundle of irrepressible energy has taken over the apartment.

Sue walks into the living room and sees that the TV is still switched on. Her gaze falls upon the large armchair facing the TV with a slight concave impression in the cushion...

A barely perceptible scolding look flashes across her face.

She grabs the remote control, turns off the TV, and glances at the framed photo of Elisabeth on the wall as if reprimanding her - Tsk, tsk.

She heads for the bathroom.

68 INT. CASTING ROOM / DANCE STUDIO - DAY 68

BAM! GROUND-LEVEL VIEW of a dance studio rehearsal: a pair of legs lands in the frame on the wooden floor doing a split, followed by a dozen other pairs of legs doing the same thing.

CUT TO:

69 INT. SECRET ROOM IN CONSTRUCTION - DAY 69

BOOM! The sledgehammer hits the wall again, sprinkling plaster around and letting a beam of light pierce through the wall. In the hole that has appeared, we see Sue's face, wearing a dust mask and safety goggles.

CUT TO:

70 INT. CASTING ROOM / DANCE STUDIO - DAY 70

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! Hands clapping together in rhythm. Sue, in the foreground of the dance studio, leads the dancers who are wearing comfortable workout outfits.

CUT TO:

71 INT. SECRET ROOM / BATHROOM - DAY 71

BAM! BAM! BAM! The hole widens as Sue keeps hitting the bathroom wall with the sledgehammer, revealing a dark cavity behind it; big clouds of dust fly into the bathroom.

72 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 72

The matrix is lying in stasis in the middle of the living room, sheltered from the construction work.

She lies motionless under her large framed poster while the blows from the sledgehammer blare off screen.

CUT TO:

73 INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY 73

PROFILE of Sue's face in a photo studio.

SUE ON THE RIGHT! She turns her head towards the camera.

THE BLACK EYE OF A LARGE CAMERA

FLASH!

CUT TO:

74 INT. BATHROOM - EVENING 74

CRRRRRRRRR the crackling and dazzling light of a blowtorch welding elements in the wall cavity.

CUT TO:

75A INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 75A

POV SHOT FROM INSIDE A CARDBOARD BOX - Elisabeth's award statues, knickknacks, and photo frames are stored bit by bit by Sue, who then closes the flaps of the cardboard box: BLACK

CUT TO:

75B **DTTTTTTTT** the needle of a sewing machine runs up a shiny fabric at full speed. 75B

CUT TO:

76 INT. BATHROOM - DAY 76

BZZZZZZZZ A drill screws wall plugs into a wall.

BAM BAM BAM! BAM BAM BAM!

The drilling stops, and we hear someone banging on the front door.

77A INT. LIVING ROOM / HALLWAY - DAY 77A

Sue appears and opens it, finding herself face to face with her NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR (old bachelor in his forties) who yells at her immediately:

NEIGHBOR
WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO STOP THIS
NOIS...
(seeing her)
Oh... I thought it was Ms. Spar...

SUE
(standing in her
doorframe, devastating
smile)
She moved out.

A beat where he stares at her, flustered.

SUE (CONT'D)
I'm the new tenant.
(she stretches her hand
out)
Sue.

He stands there stupidly. Then, as if snapping back to reality, he wipes his sweaty palm against his pants and stretches it out to her, trying not to appear overly excited.

NEIGHBOR
(stuttering)
Ovl...Olivr...Ovlir...

SUE
You wanted to complain about something Oliver?

A long pregnant pause. And then, as if reconnecting his brain to his mouth:

NEIGHBOR
Oh no! No no... absolutely not... it's euh... great to have stuff going on in the building... I'm quite handy, if I could help with my tools... I have a big hammer and euh... I mean you know... Anyway! I live right next door, you know where to find me...
(gesturing to appear "cool")
...anytime...Day or...night.

He suddenly turns around and goes away, closing his apartment door behind him, completely at a loss.

Sue closes her door laughing to herself...

77B

INT. LIVING ROOM - JOUR

77B

...we follow her, swaying as she walks back down the hallway.

Entering the living room, we discover through the picture window that a PUBLICITY BILLBOARD WITH A HUGE PHOTO OF HER has been set up outside.

She's sporting a sexy pose in her flashy pink leotard with a wide smile and a hand on her hip:

NEW SHOW

coming soon

Sue walks towards the matrix lying in stasis on the floor, props the I.V bag up on her belly, grabs her by both arms...

.. And slowly drags her down the hallway.

77C Inside the empty living room, Elisabeth's large framed poster 77C still hanging on the wall is now facing Sue's publicity billboard in a bizarre face off.

Almost as if the two versions of herself were staring at each other like a static paper version of a cowboy standoff...

ELISABETH'S GLOWING EYES...

FACING SUE'S SPARKLING EYES...

78 **INT. HALLWAY - DAY** 78

Sue drags the matrix along the corridor. She noticeably handles her with a little less consideration.

The matrix's hip knocks against the corner of a piece of furniture and one of her arms grips onto something which slows her down. We can sense Sue can't wait to get this over with.

79A **INT. BATHROOM - DAY** 79A

She reaches the bathroom, opens the door to the secret room...

79B **INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY** 79B

...and drags the matrix to a dark and somber secret room created in the empty space behind the bathroom wall, which we now discover finished.

The new secret wall slides perfectly into the real one, invisible to outside eyes.

Only a small, almost imperceptible air vent allows the air to circulate. Otherwise, the room is dark, cavernous and completely pitch black inside.

80 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY** 80

IN THE LIVING ROOM the face off continues in increasingly tighter shots between Elisabeth and Sue's pictures.

SUE'S SUPER PEARLY WHITE SMILE...

FACING ELISABETH'S LARGE SMIL... which swivels all of a sudden and disappears out of the frame, leaving just the plain white wall.

81

INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY

81

Sue stores the large framed poster she took down next to Elisabeth inside the little secret room.

A moment with Sue staring at the matrix lying on the ground, before she starts to close the heavy secret wall.

We see the beam of light that slowly fades on the matrix's still body lying on the ground...

The beam fades... and fades...

...and then TOTAL DARKNESS sweeps over her in a deep, guttural sound.

BLACK.

A long moment of silence.

Then, a humming noise that slowly grows louder...

Much like a roaring sound...

Getting louder and louder...

82

INT. TV STUDIO / SUE'S SHOW "PUMP IT UP" - DAY

82

...As a big spotlight turns on and throws its full beam on:

AN ASS, molded inside a flashy pink leotard (the famous pose with the hand on the hip).

CUT TO:

A second ass, molded inside a blue leotard.

CUT TO:

A third ass in a yellow leotard.

The camera's huge eye.

The small red recording dot.

We follow FEET walking ahead in rhythm... past a pink, curved, glossy material, which we soon discover to be huge letter balloons through which we pull back to reveal a series of pink letters spelling out the title of the new show:

PUMP IT UP

With Sue

The shot continues to pull back revealing THE DANCERS surrounding Sue.

SUE

Hi everybody! I'm Sue and it's time
to PUMP IT UP! So here we go!

Her leg flies up in the air as the music starts, blasting away at full volume.

Asses start to sway in rhythm to the dynamic and bewitching music.

We track past the asses moving to the beat. To the left. To the right. Heads bend upside down revealing blondes, brunettes and redheads with long, abundant hair.

Thin WAISTS and PELVISES sway suggestively.

SUPER HIGH CUT flashy leotards, reveal perfectly waxed groins underneath.

Firm and BOUNCY BOSOMS compressed inside the lycra.

A concentrate of energy and sexy girls swaying in rhythm with provocative smiles inside the flashy and modernized scenery.

Everything now is younger, sexier and more dynamic.

Nothing in comparison with Elisabeth's outdated show.

Sue's face, enjoying the change in atmosphere.

It was clearly time for a makeover.

In the center of the action, she's magnetically beautiful.

She lets herself bask in the spotlight as she tightens her abs in rhythm.

Once.

Twice.

Ten times.

Thirty times.

Her gaze pierces the screen.

And every single pair of eyes is on her.

The cameramen.

The assistants.

Her face MULTIPLIED on the control room screens.

83 INT. HARVEY'S OFFICE - DAY

83

On the wall of screens in Harvey's office.

84 INT. TV STUDIO / SUE'S SHOW "PUMP IT UP" - DAY

84

The group moves in rhythm, a constant crescendo, until the music ends and in a final motion which freezes the group, perfectly synched...

SUE
WOO!! THANK YOU EVERYBODY!

Sue's chest rises up and down...

She's covered in sweat and out of breath, but this time it's because of the galvanizing effort she's just made with a body full of hormones and adrenaline.

SUE (CONT'D)
I'll see you all next week!

She is about to go but then suddenly she turns back to the camera as if she's forgotten something:

SUE (CONT'D)
Oh!
(eyes sparkling)
And in the mean time...

She winks and blows a kiss to the camera.

SUE (CONT'D)
... take care of yourself.

The lights switch off.

Silence returns on set.

A suspended beat, as if the air needed to cope with all the sexual and bodily energy that has been stirred.

A voice echoes from the control room:

And that's a wrap!

Everybody is suddenly bursting with happiness. WOOHOOHOO!!! They hug each other, lie down or bend over to catch their breath, in great relaxation and relief.

A thunderous and ecstatic voice rings out:

HARVEY (O.S.)
Where is she?? Where is she??

And Harvey charges in, opening his arms wide, grandiose, singing her praises.

An assistant brings Sue a towel and a little bottle of water.

85

INT. TV STUDIO BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - DAY

85

Sue steps into the backstage corridor with glistening eyes, stops to drink her little bottle of water as she walks past a big framed poster hanging on the wall advertising her new show:

PUMP IT UP

with Sue

The first of many to come...

Eyes glistening, she sets off again....

CUT TO:

86

INT/EXT. TV STUDIO EXIT DOOR / STUDIO LOT ALLEY - DAY

86

SLAM! The building's door opens out onto brilliant SUNLIGHT, a BLUE SKY AND PALM TREES reflected in Sue's sunglasses. Sue comes out of the building wearing her varsity jacket and sports bag over her shoulder. She walks towards the exit.

A voice echoes out from behind:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

*I'd be the happiest man on earth if
I had the chance to work with you..*

Sue's face freezes... as if challenged by this voice which sounds familiar to her... she slowly turns and finds herself facing... CRAIG. With a huge smile etched on his jaw, he proudly stretches out a hand to her.

CRAIG

I'm Craig Silver, from Craig Silver management.

(he hands her his card)

...You have so much potential, we could make great things happen together.

A different voice calls out as ANOTHER GUY steps into frame.

ALAN

And I'm Alan Weil from WEIL & CLARK MANAGEMENT.

(he also hands her his card)

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)
WE'LL bring you all the way to the
top!

Then a THIRD ONE...

BOB
Bob HASWELL from H&H MANAGEMENT
(agency name TBC)
(new card)
How come you've never been on our
radar? We'd be the perfect reps for
you!

Sue looks at the three men who each hold out their card to her... She ends up smiling at Craig... and takes his card.

Craig's victorious smile... yes!... which immediately turns into his jaw dropping when Sue tears his card into small pieces before stuffing them into his shirt pocket and tapping on it... She then arbitrarily chooses one of the other business cards.

SUE
Nice to meet you....
(looking at the card)
...Alan!

She immediately turns her back on the three men, walking away with a contented smile on her face.

BLACK

FADE IN:

87

INT. BEDROOM /HALLWAY /BATHROOM /SECRET ROOM - END OF DAY

87

POV FROM INSIDE A BIG RECTANGULAR BOX whose cover is being removed. Sue's face is looking inside it with sparkling eyes.

It's a leather catsuit that she slowly takes out from a big white rectangular box lying on the bed.

HER LOVELY FOOT WITH POLISHED TOENAILS slides inside the black and supple leather.

We film up her entire leg, the camera turns around her thigh and does an EXTREME CLOSE UP on the black and shiny material as she slips on the ultra tight suit, as if we are an integral part of the leather - as if the leather was becoming one with the body, allowing the body to express its full physical potential.

She slowly closes the zipper... the two swaths of leather uniting, swallowing up her spinal column in the aerodynamic casing.

She throws her blond mane of hair cascading down between her shoulder blades; we follow down the length of her flowing locks... then down her buttocks and leg, all the way to her black stiletto heels which start walking across the white carpet...

...then across the hardwood floor in the hallway...

... arriving on the tiled bathroom floor...

... and finally end their journey on the secret room's bare cement floor.

The high heels stand next to Elisabeth's IV bag that is almost empty. Just a few hours until it is time to switch.

88A **INT. BATHROOM / SECRET ROOM - END OF DAY**

88A

Sue looks at herself in the mirror, then we see IN EXTREME CLOSE UP the stick of bright red lipstick coloring her plump lips...

Her eyes glow from an inner fire...

An increasingly unbounded sensuality. Engulfing...

We hear horns honking outside...

Sue looks at herself for a moment in the mirror...

88B **INT. SECRET ROOM - EVENING**

88B

...then crouches down next to the matrix.

SUE

...I'm not coming back late... so
you just wait for me...

(she tries to spread out
the remaining food inside
the bag)

Don't eat too fast...

She closes the heavy door and now the only thing visible is the little square of light from the air duct, through which we can see the high heels gradually walking away across the bathroom tiles... then we hear the clack of the light switch, which leaves us in DARKNESS

CUT TO:

89A **EXT. STREET (ELISABETH BUILDING) - NIGHT**

89A

Ground level on a tarmac road, close-up on a SMOKY EXHAUST PIPE and THE BRIGHT RED TAIL LIGHT OF A CONVERTIBLE CAR.

The camera jibs up and reveals Sue getting into a convertible car filled with male and female dancers who welcome her with whistles and giggles. The car takes off in peals of laughter and screams, like a shooting cannonball ready to enjoy the pleasures of the night.

89B **INT. APT / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 89B

A moment on the silent and still living room.

On the wall, we can make out the outline where the old picture frame has been taken down.

BLACK

FADE IN:

90 **THE STILL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 90

The living room is still.

The moon ray on the white wall has moved - time has passed...

91 **INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT** 91

Elisabeth's body in stasis lying on the floor, her inert, empty and glazed eyes, staring into nothingness.

Attached to her arm, the nutrition bag is almost empty. The yellow liquid is slowly reaching the SWITCH mark.

A very slight muffled echo rings out in the distance.

92A **INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT** 92A

Top shot on stairwell.

It's Sue, walking up the stairs of her building, back from her night out, accompanied by a MAN (25-30), wearing a leather jacket and carrying a motorbike helmet.

They stop regularly to kiss each other passionately.

They stumble and laugh. We quickly understand that they're both completely drunk.

92B **INT. LANDING - NIGHT** 92B

In front of her apartment, he pushes her against the door and kisses her, grabbing hold of her ass with both hands. The ultra-tight leather of her catsuit seems to increase the sensations... Sue is overwhelmed with desire...

She finally frees herself gently from his embrace.

SUE
I have to go...

93 **INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT**

93

The last drops are sucked up from the I.V Bag. They go through the perfusion pipe and up into Elisabeth's arm.

A beat.

We hear the sound of the front door opening and closing.

Footsteps amplifying, which start to run then slow down.

Sounds of chairs moving. Glasses chiming.

A low voice. A high pitched voice. The sound of laughter.

Suddenly, SMASH! The sound of broken glass.

CUT TO

94 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

94

...A broken glass smashed into pieces at Sue's feet right in the middle of the living room's hardwood floor. The lights are now on and Sue looks up at the man who's holding up a whiskey bottle in one hand, as if frozen in his gesture...

She looks at him fixedly... before bursting into laughter.

They're completely hammered.

They let themselves fall back on the sofa.

A slight tinnitus starts buzzing in Sue's ears, but she ignores it, sits astride the guy and they start kissing. (we see the silhouette of them kissing in the mirrored visor of the motorbike helmet nearby)

The sexual tension soars. The man caresses Sue's crotch with his hand, brushing his lips over her neck. His tongue slides up the silky nape of her neck. Sue's skin tingles with goose-bumps aroused by all the new sensations bursting inside her.

95 **INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT**

95

A very slight plastic squeaking noise is heard. *Crrrrriiii...*

It's the perfusion bag which is now empty and starting to shrivel with nothing left to suck up.

96 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 96

They kiss more and more greedily... *plip* ... a drop of blood falls on the guy's white t-shirt...

But Sue decides to ignore it; her eyes glowing more feverishly every second, she takes off the guy's t shirt...

Slides her hands down his naked chest...

97 INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT 97

CRRRRRiiiiii The sound of plastic is increasingly high pitched as the empty perfusion bag crumples up more and more.

98 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 98

Sue's hands reach for the man's trousers... and unbuckle his belt...

99 INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT 99

CRRRRRiiiiiiiiiiiiii the perfusion bag desperately tries to suck something in...

100 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 100

Sue unbuttons his trousers and slips her hand into his boxer shorts...

Plip plip plip plip the drops of blood fall on the man's chest at an escalating rhythm...

THE SOUND IS MUFFLED. THE IMAGE FLICKERS as if a black veil were intermittently being thrown over the screen.

MAN
Are you alright?

Sue feels more and more overwhelmed... She starts hearing noises from inside her own body... *Boom BOOM... Boom BOOM...* her heartbeat accelerates.... *BoomBOOMBoomBOOMBoomBOOM...*

SUE
Give me a minute...

She gets up and we follow her as she hurries into the hallway with a staggering step *BoomBOOMBoomBOOMBoomBOOM BoomBOOMBoomBOOMBoomBOOM*

101

INT. BATHROOM / SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

101

She locks herself in the bathroom, and opens the door communicating with the secret room to discover what she already knows...

The nutrition bag is empty. It is now only a plastic compression shrivelled into itself as Elisabeth's body, increasingly pale, attempts to mechanically suck up what isn't there...

Sue hunches over the sink as the drops of blood grow more frequent; her tinnitus blares loudly inside her head, the pain is unbearable.

She HAS to switch.

FUCK! What shitty timing!

We can sense all her frustration explode, while she looks at Elisabeth's lifeless body on the ground.

This body that she has no desire to get back into...

MAN (O.S.)

Are you alright?

Sue looks at herself in the mirror... the camera slowly tightens on her shining eyes... as if an idea was taking shape in her mind...

SUE

YES I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!

She opens the small bathroom cabinet and looks at the puncture needle...

...the second nutrition bag...

Her foot presses down on the pedal of the trash can - CLACK - revealing the seven small empty vials at the bottom of the bucket...

She looks down at them for a long moment, her eyes shining...(she grabs the vial)

CUT TO:

102

INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

102

SUE'S MANICURED HAND clips one of the empty vials onto the puncture syringe...

She flips the matrix onto her side... AND SLOWLY LIFTS UP THE BANDAGE on her back...

After a short moment of hesitation during which she looks at the puncture site, contemplating what she's about to do... Sue casts aside her last doubts...

... AND SHE SLOWLY PUSHES THE LONG NEEDLE into Elisabeth's spinal column...

ELISABETH'S GLAZED EYE STARING INTO SPACE - her pupil slightly trembles while Sue pulls slowly on the plunger and the transparent fluid starts to trickle into the syringe...

SUE

Just a few more hours...

Once the vial is half full, Sue unclips it and SWIK! Jabs herself in the thigh, as she does everyday, when it's her week.

HER PUPIL DILATES - She closes her eyes for a few moments, as her body absorbs the shot... She can hear her heartbeat slowing down, the ringing in her head abates...

She hurries to plug in the second perfusion bag, which was normally meant for her, in Elisabeth's arm. A small gurgling sound... then a bubble rises up inside the pipe... and the thick liquid starts slowly making its way up the tubing...

Slowly but surely, Elisabeth's breathing becomes normal again.

CUT TO:

103

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

103

The man opens his eyes and Sue is once again straddling him, like an apparition, very close to his face.

MAN

Mmmm...

(needing a moment to
reconnect)

...what did you do? You seem even
more beautiful than befor-

She starts kissing him. More and more greedily.

THE MAN PLACES HIS HANDS ON HER THIGHS... kneading the leather while making their way to her ass...

104

INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

104

INSIDE THE DARK ROOM - Elisabeth's limp and heavy thigh lies still on the cold tiles.

Her foot dangling.

The second bag of food attached to her arm which slowly empties...

105 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 105

CROSS-DISSOLVE ON THE MAN'S HANDS as they work their way up Sue's ass to her waist...

106 INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT 106

IN THE DARK ROOM - The yellowish paste that makes it way up the IV tube with a small gurgling noise.

107 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 107

IN THE LIVING ROOM - THE MAN'S HANDS CLOSING AROUND SUE'S WAIST, SLIDING UP HER BACK... arriving at her neck and slowly pulling down the zipper of her catsuit.

The zipper slides slowly down Sue's back...and we see...

...ALL OF HER INSIDE ORGANS SPEW OUT OF THE SUIT AS THE ZIPPER GOES DOWN AS THOUGH IT WERE OPENING SUE'S BODY IN TWO...

HER ORGANS SPLATTER ON THE FLOOR IN A BLOODY MAGMA-LIKE MASS:

SPLOTCH!

108 INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY 108

AHAAAAAAAAAAAA ... ELISABETH wakes up with a start inside the secret room. She coughs, spits, clutches her throat... as though she had been asphyxiated.

Sue's body is lying next to her in stasis on the other side of the switch pipe.

It takes a moment for the horrific nightmare to fade as Elisabeth tries to gather her wits. Ouch... We can tell that her whole body aches and that she is in a fog.

She looks confused when she discovers... the small empty vial on the ground next to her... and the second perfusion bag which has already been emptied half a notch's worth.

She clips it onto Sue's arm and she goes into the bathroom.

She stares at her index finger.

The horribly withered skin.

The protruding and swollen blue veins.

The deformed knuckles.

She closes her eyes, tensing her face...and her expression hardens as what happened becomes progressively clear to her.

She looks at Sue's body on the floor.

The stranded empty vial next to her.

She lowers the back of her bathrobe and twists around, trying to see the reflection of her back in the mirror.

The puncture site is red, slightly swollen... and ouch... painful to touch.

She closes her eyes a moment, her hand clinging to the sink's edge, with this deformed finger that stands out against the white porcelain.

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck...

113

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

113

Elisabeth sits at the table, on the phone.

The insistent ringing tone...

Bri-ing...Bri-ing..

Through the picture window, Sue's gigantic billboard staring right back at her in silence.

Her bright, dazzling smile...

PUMP IT UP

Bri-ing...Bri-ing

Yes?

Elisabeth sits up straighter in her chair when the cavernous voice answers.

ELISABETH

Yes hi...

She winces a little, her back slightly in pain.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
(clearing her throat.)
This is Elisabeth Sparkle.

Silence on the other end of the line.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
...on Beverly drive?

Still nothing.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
...I am uh...
(hesitant)
...503?

Yes.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
Yes... Hi...

An embarrassed pause. She's gathering her courage as she stares at her deformed finger.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
Listen... there has been a
slight...

She's walking on eggshells, carefully choosing her words.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
...*misuse*... of The Substance...

She nervously rubs her index finger.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
A few extra hours were...
accidentally used...causing...
(a beat)
...an alteration.

Long silence at the other end of the line.

Nothing but the crackling.

Elisabeth wiggles, uneasy in her chair.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
So... what's the procedure to
reverse it?

A long beat. The line crackles.

What has been used on one side is lost on the other side.

There is no going back.

A beat.

Elisabeth's shock and dismay.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
No, but, listen I don't know what
she was thinking she was drunk
obviousl-

Remember there is no "she" and "you", you are one.

Elisabeth closes her eyes, tensing her face to try and put her thoughts in order.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
Right...

A beat.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
But I can't even remember what
happened during the extra time! So
there should b-

The balance is perfect at seven days.

Respect the balance and you won't have any more inconveniences.

A beat. The line goes dead.

Elisabeth doesn't move for a long moment, as if she were hit by a ton of bricks.

Then she gets up abruptly and starts automatically cleaning up after the prior evening's festivities, so as to try and channel her emotions.

She empties the glasses and the ashtrays.

Disgusting.

She goes to the picture window, rips off the post-it note.

She crumples the post-it into a ball, which she throws into the garbage.

She takes the trash bag out of the can and triple knots the ties.

She throws the motorbike helmet out on the landing.

VIEW FROM INSIDE THE TRASH CAN AS IT OPENS - she throws the trash bag inside, covering the camera and thus creating DARKNESS

114

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

114

It's night. Elisabeth, in her nightgown, looks at her reflection in the mirror with a harsh expression, as she brushes her teeth.

THE GNARLED FINGER ON THE TOOTHBRUSH brushing back and forth... mixing saliva and toothpaste... brush up... brush down... up... down. Elisabeth lost in her thoughts...

She gargles, spits and puts the toothbrush back in its glass. She picks up her night cream in a well-rehearsed ritual.

She puts it on her face, still absorbed in her thoughts as the white cream penetrates her skin;

She puts the cover back on the jar of cream and is about to put it back in place on the shelf... when she stops... she looks at the jar and focuses on the inscription:

ULTIMATE YOUTH

Intensive regenerating night cream

She slowly unscrews the jar top and stares at the glossy white cream inside...

And then slowly, takes her crooked finger and progressively dips it into the cream... She sticks her finger all the way in until it is completely covered.

She waits for a moment... carefully turning her finger in the white cream... and then slowly removing it; the finger now entirely covered in glistening white cream as though it was a poultice covering the skin.

With her other hand she searches through the small cabinet and takes out a crepe bandage, which she wraps and knots around the cream-covered finger.

Like a little doll in a cocoon at the end of her hand.

She presses lightly on the doll... which oozes cream.

Good. It's soaking in.

She looks in the mirror and shuts off the light : BLACK

115

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

115

Elisabeth lying in bed staring at the ceiling.

HER BANDAGED HAND carefully resting palm down on the sheets.

Her figure is entirely still in the darkness.

Dominated by the palm tree's black shadow in the night, which looks like a giant spider.

CUT TO:

116 I/E. BEDROOM / WINDOW PALM TREE - DAY

116

THE GREEN PALM TREE AGAINST THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

IN THE BEDROOM, the sheets are bathed in sunlight; we can see the outline of where Elisabeth was lying in the bed, and we understand that she stayed perfectly still the entire night.

CUT TO:

117 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

117

THE HAND WITH THE BANDAGED FINGER spreads out over the sink.

Elisabeth stays still for a moment, then she starts unwrapping the bandage... the anxiety in her eyes as she unrolls slowly revealing her finger...

The dried out cream leaves a type of plaster-like crust covering the skin.

She turns on the faucet and soaks her finger in the stream of water to dissolve the white crust.

She delicately wipes her hand with a terry-cloth towel and stretches her hand out over the sink to see the result...

Nothing has changed.

Her finger is still just as wrinkled and deformed by arthritis; brownish age spots are scattered on her skin.

Elisabeth's eyes fill with emotion which she does her best to channel as she tries to wrap her mind around this excrescence that is eating away at her hand.

Her hand starts shaking, betraying how upset she really is. Her last hopes - that she knew were in vain - are swept away for good.

CUT TO:

118 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

118

THE KITCHEN TABLE IN THE FOREGROUND where a new big white note card is found:

**We hope you are enjoying your experience with
THE SUBSTANCE**

**Your two week refill kit has been delivered
to your deposit box**

In the background, through the door that leads to the living room, we see the TV on, but we can't hear the sound, covered by a humming noise that grows *louder...and louder...*

...and Elisabeth is crossing the frame in the background as she's pushing the vacuum cleaner from left to right... then right to left... sweeping back and forth like a small foosball figurine moving straight in its axis...

CUT TO:

119

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

119

Elisabeth, concentrating on her vacuum cleaner sucking up the carpet as though hunting for the smallest piece of dust would help her avoid becoming overwhelmed by her thoughts.

She looks up, about to turn around in the opposite direction, when something catches her attention from afar...

She slows down, approaches carefully, and finally stops...her eyes engrossed, her pupils darting back and forth... the vacuum cleaner still humming... until she turns it off and pulsating music bursts out in its place:

DON'T YOU KNOW PUMP IT UP...

We discover that she is staring at the television screen...

...YOU'VE GOT TO PUMP IT UP...

Where SUE is energetically swaying her hips in her new show.

DON'T YOU KNOW PUMP IT UP...

Elisabeth has a moment of confusion. Befuddled.

YOU'VE GOT TO PUMP IT UP...

A disturbing vision of Sue in the place that used to be hers.

DON'T YOU KNOW PUMP IT UP...YOU'VE GOT TO PUMP IT UP...

Elisabeth grabs the side of the armchair to balance herself, slowly sitting down while watching Sue moving on the screen...

DON'T YOU KNOW PUMP IT UP...

Her dazzling smile.

Her firm and insolent breasts.

YOU'VE GOT TO PUMP I-

Elisabeth turns the sound off, but continues to watch the show, as if fascinated by the details of Sue's body moving in rhythm to the ghostly beat of the now muted music.

Her slender thighs.

Her suggestive hip movements...

Her abs tightening in a close up.

Once. Twice. Ten times. Thirty times...

On screen, with beaming and seductive eyes...

SUE

"In the meantime... Take care of yourself!"

...Sue blows a kiss to the camera, disarming her viewers with a devastating smile.

A suspended beat... as though the two women exchanged a look through the screen...

Click Elisabeth switches off the TV.

She remains silent for a moment.

Overwhelmed.

Her gnarled, deformed finger on the TV remote.

Sprawled across the armchair in her bathrobe.

She looks up: behind the turned-off TV, the billboard of SUE staring back at her through the glass window, smiling with all her pearly-whites:

PUMP IT UP

It's as if she were cornered from all sides.

BZZZZ

She jumps at the sound of the front door buzzer.

Who the hell is that...

BZZZZ BZZZZ

120

INT. APT ENTRANCE / APT CORRIDOR - DAY

120

She approaches the door without making any noise.

HER GNARLED FINGER opens the peephole cover, and she looks through it:

The neighbor.

Fuck. What does he want...

She doesn't move; doesn't make any noise.

BZZZZ BZZZZZZ

Go the fuck away, egg head...

BZZZZZZZZZZZZ

OLIVER (O.S.)

Sue?

He starts softly scratching the door.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

It's Oliver...

A beat.

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

I just saw you on TV... Holy moley makes me want to join your class! Do you give private lessons?

A long silence.

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

What about a drink at my place tonight?

Elisabeth stands without moving or making noise, her gnarled finger on the peephole.

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

I can see you standing behind there... don't be shy gorgeous!

(a long beat)

I'm into sports too, I can show you my chess trophies!

A long beat. Elisabeth doesn't move.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*Alright, no problem, take your
time... But it's a date!*

We see him finally waddling back inside his apartment,
humming along: *don't you know pump it up...*

THE WRINKLED FINGER lets go of the peephole cover. *SHLACK!*

CUT TO:

121 INT. SHOWER - DAY 121

HISSESSSSSSSSSS THE STREAM OF WATER FROM THE SHOWER HEAD
PUMMELS ELISABETH'S BACK.

Her hand against the wall for support, letting the water flow
down her body, as she stares at the ground, lost in her
thoughts, as if she were trying to regain her footing.

122 INT. APARTMENT / ENTRANCE - DAY 122

Elisabeth finishes slipping her coat on, turns up the collar
and puts on leather gloves to hide her problem finger.

She looks through the peephole. The coast is clear.

123A EXT. STREET (ELISABETH AREA) - DAY 123A

We follow Elisabeth from behind, walking quickly.

123B EXT. STREET (LESS NICE STREET)- DAY 123B

Elisabeth, from behind, who is walking down another street.

Her gait is jittery. Everything seems more harsh and
aggressive.

123C OMITTED 123C

123D INT. DEPOSIT CORRIDOR - DAY 123D

Elisabeth walks down the corridor.

124 INT. DEPOSIT/LOBBY - DAY 124

A wave of her card opens her locker. **Beep.**

She thinks she hears a slight noise behind her. She turns
around. Scans the lobby. No one.

She takes out the package and puts it in her bag.

125A **EXT. STREET (LESS NICE STREET) - DAY**

125A

Elisabeth walking in the opposite direction.

After a while, she has a strange feeling. As if she were being followed. She turns around... still no one.

She picks up the pace.

125B **EXT. STREE (DINER AREA) - DAY**

125B

Still from behind Elisabeth's back as she walks.

Turns around again. Still nothing.

She finally goes into a diner.

126 **INT. DINER - DAY**

126

She sits down in a booth. Moves to another. She's hot. Takes off her coat. Starts removing her glove... then decides against it, readjusting the right glove in particular.

WAITRESS (O.S)

What can I get you?

Startled, she jumps and looks up: a SEXY WAITRESS with a name tag that reads ALLISON is staring at her, notepad in hand.

ELISABETH

(random)

Uh...a...mocha latte.

The waitress leaves.

A beat: Elisabeth meticulously readjusts her glove.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

It's long, isn't it?

Elisabeth turns her head. At the next table is a SWEATY, OBESE MAN muffled up in a gray coat, staring right at her. He has a big strawberry birthmark on his face, whose shape is strangely familiar...

ELISABETH

Excuse me?

MAN

Seven days...

She stares directly at him... nonplussed...

MAN (CONT'D)

I know what "these weeks" feel like...

A beat. She is increasingly confused... she looks away from him pretending she has no idea what he is referring to.

ALLISON (O.S.)

Whipped cream?

The waitress is in front of her again, a can of whipped cream in hand, her coffee on the table.

ELISABETH

Uh...yes...

PZZZZZZZZZZT

Elisabeth stares at the whipped cream which slowly shrivels up, melting into the coffee.

She takes a spoonful, as if to comfort herself.

She watches the man from the corner of her eye as he picks up the menu to order. His wallet, which was on top of the menu, falls to the ground. As he leans over to pick it up, Elisabeth glimpses on the nape of his neck... the beginning of a thick pink scar similar to her own, which disappears under his shirt collar... He gathers up all the credit cards that have scattered on the floor: among them is a white plastic card with **207** on it. He puts it away in his wallet and sits back up.

A long beat where they stare at each other.

Everything muddles up in Elisabeth's mind...

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

...Did you follow me here?

MAN

I was just curious to see how things were going for you... And actually I wouldn't be against a little bit of company... It's just good to... talk to someone... you know. Each time you feel a little more lonely... don't you think?

A long beat where she stares right at him.

ELISABETH

I don't know what you're talking about. I'm fine, thank you. Everything is fine.

She turns her back to him and tries to make it look like she is engrossed in her coffee.

MAN (O.S.)
*It gets harder each time to
remember that you still deserve to
exist...*

The whipped cream that shrivels up more and more like a deflated balloon...

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*...That this part of yourself is
still worth something...
(a beat)
That you still matter...*

The melted whipped cream now looks like yellowish puke.

MAN (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself)
*He should-
(SMACK! He slaps himself,
almost like a tic)
I should never have given it to
you. But he's so (SMACK!
Another)...**shallow and
superficial!!***

Elisabeth's mind is a jumble of confusion. She searches in her bag, pays the check with a \$10 dollar bill to cut short and heads for the exit.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(loud, towards her)
Has she started yet?

Elisabeth turns around. A beat where they exchange a long look.

MAN (CONT'D)
...eating away at you?

A suspended moment... staring fixedly into each other's eyes... until Elisabeth turns abruptly on her heels and rushes for the door as fast as she can.

127A **EXT. STREET (DINRE AREA) - DAY**

127A

Elisabeth returns home with a hurried step...

127B **EXT. STREET (ELISABETH BUILDING) - DAY**

127B

...looking over her shoulder several times to check that she hasn't been followed when- BAM!

She violently slams into someone coming from the opposite direction. *CLANG clang clang...* A big biker's helmet falls to the ground and rolls away.

MALE VOICE
Fuck! Watch out!

Elisabeth, dazed and frantic, looks at the leather-clad guy who picks up his helmet and straightens up facing her: TROY.

She is so very stunned that she stays planted right there, staring at him.

TROY
WHAT?... You wanna mug shot?!?

Royally pissed, he gets on his motorcycle parked in front of her building, puts his helmet on and slams the visor shut: SHLACK! Elisabeth's haggard face is reflected in the mirrored visor.

He beeps his horn so she'll get out of the way.

TROY (CONT'D)
HEY! MOVE!

She finally steps to the side and he roars off on his motorcycle, revving its big engine: **VROOOOOOOOOOOOOOM**

128 INT. APARTMENT / ENTRANCE - DAY

128

Slamming her door shut behind her, Elisabeth leans back against it for a moment to gather her wits.

She stays for a long while this way, trying to channel all the thoughts and feelings jostling in her brain...

We can tell that her mind is racing (obsessively).

CUT TO:

129 INT. WALK IN CLOSET - DAY

129

POV FROM INSIDE THE CLOSET - SHLACK Elisabeth abruptly pushes all of Sue's clothing aside to reach her belongings at the very back in stacked-up boxes marked: ELISABETH'S OLD JUNK.

She opens different boxes and finally finds the one she is looking for: a box filled with her handbags. She shakes the bags upside down one after the other making the various forgotten objects fall out... coins, parking tickets, chewing gum... Ah! She finally finds what she is looking for: the torn piece of crinkled paper with **FRED'S** number on it.

Fred's smiling image appears superimposed:

FRED
**You are still the most beautiful
girl in the whole wide world!**

She holds the paper tightly against her chest, as if suddenly this was the most precious of her possessions.

130 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

130

Elisabeth starts dialing the number, slightly nervous.

Behind the picture window, her eyes glance inadvertently at the billboard.

PUMP IT UP

CUT TO:

131 **INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

131

Elisabeth has "isolated" herself in the bathroom, sitting on the closed toilet lid.

She dials the number. We hear the sound of the line ringing and after a beat someone picks up.

FRED (O.S.)

Hello?

ELISABETH

(forcing a cheerful tone)

Hi Fred, it's Lizzie!

Silence.

Nothing. She is immediately shaken.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

...Lizzie from tenth grade
homerom?

Silence again.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

...hello?

FRED

Sorry, I'm in shock... wow wow wow!

This reassures Elisabeth and makes her smile.

FRED (CONT'D)

**I thought I would never hear from
you again after sharing my dumb
toothpaste story...**

ELISABETH

Oh no...not at all, it's just that
I've been very... busy lately...

A beat.

FRED

***I heard about your show... how are
you dealing? It must have been so
difficult...***

ELISABETH

(faking confidence)

Oh no...You know, I kinda provoked
it in a way... I felt like.. I'd
seen and done it all... I needed to
move on.

FRED

***Oh... that's good to hear... so
what are you up to now?***

A beat. Elisabeth is still sitting on the toilet lid.

ELISABETH

I... I'm traveling... A lot. It's
great - there is so much to see!
One day here, the next there...
it's a tad exhausting, though...

FRED

***Oh wow...what an exciting life! I
envy you.***

A beat.

ELISABETH

So... I happen to be in town for a
couple of days and... I thought
maybe we could...

(moves her arm in a
gesture of self-
encouragement)

... go out and grab a drink? Or for
a walk, or... you know, the little
things that make life matter.

A beat. Long silence.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

Hello?

FRED

Sorry I'm in shock again.

Another smile. A wider one this time.

FRED (CONT'D)

Like...to-

ELISABETH

Tonight is perfect!

A beat.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

Oh...did you mean tomorrow?

Clearly.

FRED

*Euh...Tonight is fine as well. I
can book Luigi's at 8?*

ELISABETH

8 at Luigi's it is! See you
tonight!

She hangs up. Her eyes are shining, cheeks are flushed, like a teenager who has been asked out on her first date.

CUT TO:

132

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

132

Lots of activity in the apartment. All the boxes have been taken out - clothing, shoes, accessories are scattered across the bedroom floor.

CUT TO:

A zipper is pulled up following the pinkish scar on Elisabeth's back... the scar disappears as the zipper glides up a beautiful moiré silk dress.

Elisabeth looks at her back reflected in the bedroom's tall mirror. Impossible to see the long scar underneath. Perfect.

From the front, the V-cut neckline flatters her pretty cleavage.

She slips on long black satin gloves that hide her problem finger and add a touch of glamour.

Thus prettily dressed, she looks at herself in the mirror... and is moved by her reflection.

For the first time, in a very long time, she seems to like herself again.

To once again feel that she's worth it...

133

INT. BATHROOM - END OF THE DAY

133

She finishes putting on her make-up and checks the clock. She grows increasingly nervous as the time to meet her date approaches.

A last touch of lipstick, and she looks at herself, satisfied.

She tidies her hair and flashes a smile in the mirror - the lipstick is becoming to her smile. Good.

Before leaving she goes to close the secret room's door... and catches sight of Sue lying on the floor in stasis.

Her healthy complexion...

Her well-defined, plump lips...

Elisabeth turns to the mirror, her expression a little gloomy...

She suddenly has the impression that her entire face has just sagged.

But she forces herself to pull it together.

She adds a bit of lipstick, another stroke of blush to make her cheekbones rosier.

A beat.

More blush.

She forces a smile as she looks at herself.

Good.

Takes a deep breath... And turns off the light.

CUT TO:

134

INT. HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

134

She walks down the hallway, grabs her coat and handbag... searches for her keys... sees them on the table in the living room. Walking over to the table she looks up and her eyes fall upon... the huge billboard outside.

PUMP IT UP

A suspended moment standing face to face with Sue's gigantic overly-sexualized body:

Her perfectly round, perky breasts.

Her luscious lips...

Her gorgeous shiny hair...

CUT TO:

135

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

135

THE BATHROOM LIGHT TURNS ON - Elisabeth is back in front of the mirror.

A harsh expression as she contemplates her face: this won't do at all.

She pulls up the fabric on her dress to hide her cleavage which all of a sudden can't even compare. She throws a wrap over her shoulders to cover it.

And the lipstick is all wrong. She takes it off and puts on another.

She adds more blush. Brush strokes to her cheekbones, in an increasingly aggressive fashion.

She lets her hair down.

No, she puts her hair back up.

Ok.

More blush and a forced smile as she looks in the mirror.

She checks the clock, this time she really needs to get going.

She takes a deep breath to boost herself...

Good...

And she turns off the light.

BLACK

136

INT. CORRIDOR / ENTRANCE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

136

Walking down the hallway, she forces herself not to look in the living room... but just when she is about to open the front door...

Her face tenses... she is struggling as she is about to grab the big, round metal doorknob... where we discover that she can see her reflection.

She tries to disregard the distorted hamster face that is reflected by the metallic sphere.

Behind her the billboard looms... as if she could sense it even with her back turned: all that fresh collagen, that body overflowing with perfection...

She tries to stay strong... her eyes shut tight to not see her reflection as her hand approaches the doorknob...

CUT TO:

137 **INT. BATHROOM - EVENING**

137

Elisabeth in front of the bathroom mirror; a dour, accusatory look in her eyes as she looks at her reflection:

Disgusting.

She uses a cotton pad to wipe the lipstick off her face with a slow and harsh gesture, smearing it onto her cheek like a bloody gash.

138 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

138

Elisabeth is sitting in her bathrobe on the bed, her make-up removed and her hair down, her skin reddened from repeatedly putting her make-up on and taking it off.

We see her from behind, slightly stooped, facing the window.

Outside, the HUGE palm tree.

Its CRUSHING VERTICALITY.

On the night table, her telephone lights up with a slew of messages from "FRED" who has visibly been trying to reach her for some time.

FADE IN:

139 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

139

The living room plunged in darkness. A faint, flickering light from the television.

From behind the big armchair, we see Elisabeth's hand on the armrest.

A long moment on the TV, with its endless babbling...

*(off we hear the neighbor knocking at the front door t:
"Birdy? Birdy Sue?")*

Then, after a long while, the bathrobed figure gets up and crosses the living room, dragging her feet.

140 **INT. FRIDGE / KITCHEN - NIGHT**

140

POV FROM INSIDE THE REFRIGERATOR - THE DOOR OPENS: we see the bathrobe standing in front of the shelves filled with food. Not moving.

In the foreground, a roast chicken amongst other groceries.

The exasperating sound of the TV echoing from behind... Then the bathrobe grabs a plate with leftover quiche and closes the door, making everything go: BLACK.

FADE IN:

141A **INT. CORRIDOR / BATHROOM - DAY**

141A

HISSESSSESSSESS

FROM THE DARK LONG HALLWAY - through the bathroom doorframe we see the shower filled with steam. We hear the water running and can make out a figure inside the steamy shower.

CUT TO:

141B **INT. SHOWER - DAY**

141B

THE SHOWER HEAD SPITS OUT its powerful stream of water on... SUE.

A long moment during which she revels in the gush of hot water.

The pleasure she exudes being back inside her body, enjoying her shapely self that awakens with the hot water.

While lathering, she seems to feel something on her buttock...

She twists around to look at her butt cheek.... She lightly presses on it with her hand... which reveals... a small bulge under the epidermis surrounded by unsightly orange-peel looking cellulite that mars the skin... what the f...? She lets go... and the bulge disappears... Her skin is smooth and immaculate once again. She presses on the spot... but it's gone...

She waits a moment... then runs her palm over her butt, pressing on the area again... but everything is all right.

CUT TO:

142 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 142

Wearing a towel, we follow her into the bedroom.

She grabs her clothes, sits on the bed - and SPRINGS BACK UP immediately like a jack-in-the box. She felt something.

She brushes her fingers over her butt cheek and stands in front of the bedroom mirror, contorting herself to look at her buttock... but no, there is nothing. She stands in front of the mirror for a long while to check. Everything is ok.

Her impeccably shaped backside.

143 EXT. STREET (GLAM & POP) - DAY 143

We follow Sue from behind, walking with a lively step.

Everything is hot. Colorful. Enhanced.

144A INT. TV STUDIO / SUE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY 144A

Sue changes into her leotard.

She checks her ass in the mirror.

Impeccable.

144B INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY 144B

We follow her onto the soundstage.

145 INT. TV STUDIO / PUMP IT UP SHOW - DAY 145

She greets everybody, stretches to warm up.

A last glance at her ass to make sure she looks all right.

Perfect.

She places herself center stage among the dancers.

Everybody is ready to start taping the show.

The cameramen are in place.

The assistants.

The control room.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - PUMP IT UP SHOW
Ready Sue?

SUE
(big smile)
Ready!

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - PUMP IT UP SHOW
Ok, places everyone. Silence.
(counting down with her
fingers)
3... 2... 1...

Cameras on - recording.

Sue's face IMMEDIATELY FLASHES HER GREAT BIG TOOTHY SMILE

SUE
Hi everybody! I'm Sue and it's time
to pump it up! Are you ready? **LET'S
GO!**

The music starts.

Don't you know pump it up...

you've got to pump it up...

She goes right into her routine, accompanied by the dancers
to the rhythm of the fast-paced music.

Cameras traveling behind the group catch their backsides
contracting to the music.

Endless smiles and aerobic routines one after the other.

SUE (CONT'D)
Come on now... STEP! STEP!

Sue seamlessly leads them through the choreographed sequence.

SUE (CONT'D)
NOW SQUEEZE THOSE BUTT MUSCLES and
SQUAT! SQUAT! SQUAT!

Sue runs her hand over her butt to show the movement.

SUE (CONT'D)
SQUA...

She stops short, losing the rhythm; she's upset.

She felt something.

A pregnant pause. One by one, the dancers stop as well.

The cameras stop recording.

The music stops.

Everybody looks at her.

SUE (CONT'D)
I... I thought that...

She slides her hand over her butt cheek and discreetly looks at it.

There's nothing.

SUE (CONT'D)
Sorry I... something distracted me.

CONTROL ROOM VOICE
Not a problem. Let's get right back to it.

Everyone gets back in place.

Sue anxiously slides her hand once again over her butt cheek - everything is okay.

Everybody gets back in their places. The assistant mouths the countdown:

3...2...1

Recording:

SUE
Hi everybody! I'm Sue and it's time to pump it up! Are you ready? Let's go!

The music starts.

Don't you know pump it up...

The soldiers begin the choreography.

You've got to pump it up...

Still the same rhythm, over and over.

Don't you know pump it up...

You've got to pump it up...

SUE (CONT'D)
Come on now, STEP... STEP! CONTRACT THOSE BUTT MUSCLES!

Once again she puts her hand on her butt cheek to show the muscle she is working.

SUE (CONT'D)
AND SQUAT! SQUAT! SQUAT! SQUAT!

Everything goes smoothly this time. She goes through the choreography of movements.

SUE (CONT'D)

Come on now, KEEP IT UP! KEEP IT UP!

A long sequence where the series of movements are rolled out one after the other.

Don't you know pump it up... you've got to pump it up...

Don't you know pump it up... you've got to pump it up...

SUE (CONT'D)

And bend over, head between your legs!

She bends over and sticks her head between her legs...

Schlurrrp The bulge reappears, distorting her butt.

She abruptly straightens back up as if she'd been electrocuted... Fuck!

She loses her balance, almost falling over. A dancer catches her just in time. Everybody stops.

The music stops, again. The cameras stop.

This time everybody is a little bewildered.

Sue, dripping in sweat, discreetly checks herself out... everything is okay. What the fuck is going on?

SUE (CONT'D)

(increasingly stressed out)

I'm sorry... I... skipped a step.

CONTROL ROOM VOICE

Okay, everybody back in place, we can't afford to lose too much time, there's another show taping right after us.

The crew for the next show is already waiting backstage.

FLOOR RUNNER

(to Sue)

Can I get you something? Water?

SUE

No, I'm fine, let's get right back to it!

(motivating the troops and herself)

Ok, third time's a charm, this is it!

Sue's stress level is rising as she feels everyone's eyes on her, watching for the next trip up.

Everyone gets back in position. The cameras. The assistant who gives the countdown. 3...2...1

Recording.

SUE (CONT'D)

Hi everybody! I'm Sue and it's time to pump it up! Are you ready? Let's go!

They start again from the beginning. The music is increasingly unbearable.

Don't you know pump it up...

You've got to pump it up...

Don't you know pump it up...

You've got t-

The music stops.

Yet everything was going fine this time.

Sue gives a questioning glance: what's going on?

She sees the crew bustling about... Someone is giving instructions through a walkie-talkie. The info is passed from person to person, walkie-talkie to walkie-talkie.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - PUMP IT UP SHOW

Sorry, it's the control room now.

(listening to her ear
piece)

The director says he saw something bizarre on the monitor. He has to check it out.

(listening to her
earpiece)

Which one?

(to the stage hands)

Bring up the replay on camera 2!

Sue turns and sees that it's the camera... that is just behind her ass.

Her stress level is rising... she pulls down on her leotard bottom to better cover her ass, but the cut of the fabric just won't allow for it.

Sue keeps her back close to the wall so that nobody can see her ass in case the bulge returns.

They have started the replay: on a giant screen at the back of the scenery, images of the troop rewind at top speed, making them look like ridiculous little marionettes shaking their legs and asses.

SUE
Can I have my dressing gown?

SUE'S ASSISTANT
...sorry it's in your dressing room...

SUE
(in a burst of anger)
Well, then GO GET IT!!!

The video comes to a close up shot of Sue's ass.

She's increasingly nervous as the control room gives the time code for the problematic frame while everyone is watching her ass, frame by frame on the giant screen...

Sue's assistant finally returns with her cover up, which she throws on nervously before suddenly rushing down the hallway.

SUE (CONT'D)
I need a 5-minute break.

146 **INT. TV STUDIO / BACKSTAGE HALLWAY. DAY**

146

We follow her as she walks with a hurried step down the long hallway.

147 **INT. TV STUDIO / DRESSING ROOM - DAY**

147

She comes to her dressing room, shuts herself inside and looks in the mirror.

Slowly, she lifts the fabric of her leotard to discover... the bulge which has returned to the same spot as in the shower earlier... but bigger and uglier this time.

What the hell...

It's like an internal growth that is deforming her butt cheek... as though something were stuck under her skin.

She lightly presses on the bulge and realizes that she can... move it... she pushes and palpates all around it... and with a small suction noise the bulge starts slowly moving under her skin - up her buttock and towards her waist.

FLOOR RUNNER (O.S.)
(softly knocking on the door)
(MORE)

FLOOR RUNNER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sue, do you want some coffee or something?

She doesn't even answer. She is completely obsessed with the mass under her skin, which she pushes between her fingers sliding it around.

...the fatty lump moves slowly under her skin towards her waist...

she pushes it again, guiding it around to her stomach...

...leading the fatty lump to her belly button.

As the bulge approaches the skin under her belly button, she starts to see something in the center of her belly button... a sort of... like the end of a... she sticks her two fingers into her belly button to try and grab... sticking her fingers further in, she spreads apart the sides of her belly button in order to dig deeper to try and grip the end of whatever it is... she grabs the end and starts to pull it out... discovering little by little... an oblong shape that she slowly extricates... it's a...

**...ROASTED...CHICKEN DRUMSTICK...
dripping with grease that she
slowly extracts from her belly
button with an icky slimy
sound:SLUUURPUH!!!!**

**AND HER BELLY BUTTON CLOSES BACK UP
LIKE AN ANUS WITH A SUCTION NOISE!!!**

148

INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

148

AHAAAAAAAAAAAA...AND SUE WAKES UP WITH A START!!!!!!!!!!

SWEATING BULLETS IN THE SECRET ROOM

FUCK!

The matrix in stasis is lying on the floor at the other end of the switch pipe next to her.

Sue is bathed in sweat. She checks her stomach... her ass... both are impeccable and perfect, trying to regain her wits as this horrible nightmare fades.

WHAT A MINDFUCK... A goddamn mindfuck...

She throws an accusatory look at Elisabeth who is on the floor, and we follow her...

149 **OMITTED** 149

150 **INT. HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 150

...as she goes down the corridor.. Entering the living room she stops... and stares at something that is right in front of her.

Close up low angle shot that shows the anger rising in her harsh eyes...

In reverse angle we see what she is staring at...

A BIG CHICKEN CARCASS entirely picked to pieces on the coffee table. Chicken bones and potato leftovers smeared on a plate. An empty pint of ice cream. Chocolate bars recklessly munched down to the last square.

She looks at the deeper imprint left on the big armchair...

Traces of greasy fingerprints on the TV remote control.

Big slippers left on the carpet.

She totters a little and sits in the armchair to collect herself.

Fuck, what a total lack of control...Revolting...

She nervously rubs her belly, thighs, hunching over, sticking her head between her knees.

We can sense how much it disgusts her that she is increasingly letting herself go as Elisabeth.

Sue abruptly grabs the plate and walks out of the living room.

151 **INT. GARBAGE - NIGHT** 151

LOW ANGLE SHOT FROM INSIDE THE TRASH CAN WHICH OPENS revealing Sue's face. She throws all the leftovers down - the chicken bones and the chicken rain down and cover the camera.

BLACK

CUT TO:

152 **INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT** 152

Sue tips the matrix over onto her side.

As she sticks the long needle into her back to fill seven new vials, her eyes focus on details of Elisabeth's body...

Her gnarled and deformed finger, covered in grease.

The long scar that snakes up her spinal column.

She finds this body increasingly ugly.

Flabby.

Unattractive and USELESS.

CUT TO:

153

EXT. STREET (GLAM & POP) - DAY

153

THE GREEN PALM TREES that pass by like KNIVES SKEWERING the BLUE sky.

We follow Sue walking briskly while on the phone.

The piercing sound of the line ***Bri-iiing Bri-iiing***

Yes?

SUE

THIS BALANCE IS NOT WORKING!

Her gait is agitated and she seems to be looking for reassurance in the eyes of others as she passes them by.

SUE (CONT'D)

Why do we have to keep it even?! I mean, we clearly don't have the same needs! I barely have the time to enjoy myself while SHE wastes seven days STUFFING HER FACE in front of the TV!

Remember there is no she and y-

She hangs up on him. F..! And represses the impulse to bash her phone against the pavement.

CUT TO:

154A

INT. TV STUDIO / SUE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

154A

POV FROM INSIDE A LOCKER IN THE DRESSING ROOM. THE LOCKER DOOR OPENS - Sue finishes getting into her leotard, appearing increasingly pensive and perturbed.

154B **INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY** 154B

We follow her from behind walking towards the studio.

155 **INT. TV STUDIO / PUMP IT UP - DAY** 155

She opens the door energetically:

SUE
Hello everybod...

NO ONE IS THERE.

THE SET IS EMPTY. THE LIGHTS ARE OUT.

A wave of panic sweeps over her face.

She sees a STAGEHAND putting away the last cables.

SUE (CONT'D)
What's happening? Where is
everybody?!

STAGEHAND
The taping has been cancelled.

SUE
What?! Why?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Sue?

Startled, she jumps and turns towards a FLOOR RUNNER standing behind her with a serious look on his face.

FLOOR RUNNER
Harvey wants to see you in his
office - immediately.

Sue is increasingly shaken...

SUE
I... I'll go change and-

FLOOR RUNNER
He said NOW.

156 **INT. HARVEY'S OFFICE - DAY** 156

Sue arrives in the office.

Harvey's armchair is turned towards the plate-glass window;
we can only see the imposing back of his chair.

The three men in suits are there, staring at her. One of them is sitting on the couch. Another is leaning on the corner of Harvey's desk. The third stands by the plate-glass window.

Harvey swivels around to face her:

HARVEY
We've discovered your little
secret.

Dead silence.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
I couldn't believe MY EARS!
(staring right into her
eyes)
ELISABETH SPARKLE?!!

SUE
Listen I-

HARVEY
You can't actually be living in ...
(weird grin)
..ELISABETH SPARKLE'S APARTMENT??!

Sue's face...

HARVEY (CONT'D)
It's too much of a coincidence! I
sack her and BAM! Here she is again
trying to stick her foot right back
in the door!
(he chuckles)

An enormous burden is lifted from Sue's shoulders, relieved that it's "only that..."

SUE
Uh...yes we...we briefly met when
she was moving out of town... she
asked me if I was looking for a
place to rent... which I was so...
there you have it.

Silence.

HARVEY
Oh she left town?... where did she
go?

A beat.

SUE
Uh... ... Costa Rica I think.

A long silence.

One of the men in suits.

SUIT #1
It's great for taxes.

Silence.

Harvey raises his eyebrows with a grunt of approval before slamming his two hands down on his desk.

HARVEY
ANYWAY! That's not why I wanted to see you.
(suddenly very serious)
I'm going to get straight to the point: we can't keep you on the morning show.

Dead silence. Sue can't breathe.

SUE
But WHY?? I've j-

HARVEY
Ratings are through the roof.

A beat. Lost. Sue's emotional roller coaster is palpable.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
We started at 42. We're now at...
(he gestures to one of the men)

SUIT #2
216.

HARVEY
That's phe-no-me-nal. We've never seen such figures in all the network's history! PEOPLE LOVE YOU! THEY ADORE YOU!

Sue, suddenly overcome with emotion...

HARVEY (CONT'D)
That's why we've decided we want you to host... THE NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW.

A beat.

SUE
...you mean... The...

HARVEY
...network's biggest show! 50 million viewers... LIVE. You can't get any higher ...
(MORE)

HARVEY (CONT'D)
(a beat with a glassy look
in his eye)
Well, except if you die... then
you'd go...
(he gestures towards the
ceiling)

A beat, as if behind his glassy eyes he were suddenly engaged in a deep metaphysical reflection... then he abruptly comes back to the point:

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Anyway, I'm taking a huge gamble on
you and these men can tell you I
talked you up to the shareholders
'til my last drop of saliva,
convincing them this is the way to
go. It's going to be intense. We
have only a few months to pull it
off, but I know we can do it.
(to Sue)
So? What do you say?

A long beat on Sue.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Are you in?

Sue's gleaming eyes...

BLACK

157

INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

157

For a long moment.

Then a ray of light appears through the gap of a door that slowly opens...

And Sue's head appears in the gap.

We are inside the secret room looking towards the door.

A long moment on Sue who looks inside the room with shiny eyes...

We can feel her inner dilemma...

Then she walks into the secret room and slowly kneels down behind Elisabeth's back.

A beat...AND HER MANICURED HAND clips one of the empty vials onto the puncture syringe... AND LIFTS UP THE BANDAGE - revealing the slightly swollen puncture site.

SUE

If you don't open the door when opportunity knocks, you won't get another chance...

AND SHE SLOWLY PUSHES THE LONG NEEDLE into the puncture site...

SUE (CONT'D)

You of all people know this...

Elisabeth's pupil slightly flinches while the needle slowly drains the liquid.

BLACK

158

INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY

158

A long silence.

And the ray of light appears again.

Sue, in a new outfit, once again appears in the half-opened door.

We can see several empty vials strewn on the floor, next to Elisabeth.

She hesitates before entering stealthily.

SUE

Just one more. Then I have a week off, and we can switch.

THE MANICURED HAND lifts up the bandage - the skin has visibly grown even more swollen at the puncture site.

We can tell that Sue feels increasingly uneasy. She manipulates the Matrix with growing disgust.

Jabbing the needle into the swollen skin is a little more difficult.

BLACK

A long beat...

159

INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY

159

AND THE DOOR OPENS AGAIN...

and Sue walks into the room in a new outfit...

She takes off the bandage - there's a little pus oozing from the puncture site, which is now infected.

(there are more and more empty vials strewn across the floor)
She clips on an empty vial.

We can tell that she is increasingly terrified by what she sees and also feels guilty... but she can't help it.

SUE
I've got some amazing news...
(kneeling behind her)
We are doing the cover of Vogue!

She fiddles with it, making circular movements to try and dig a way through the inflamed flesh on Elisabeth's back.

SUE (CONT'D)
It's just one more day, it's not a big deal...

BLACK

FADE IN:

160A INT. BATHROOM - DAY 160A

THE EMPTY, STILL BATHROOM, where we can only see the door to the secret room open ajar.

Nothing moves.

Then we hear a big breath being taken: **AHAAAAAAAAAAAAA**

A long silence.

And a bloodcurdling scream tearing through the secret room:

ELISABETH (O.S.)
NOOOOOOO.....

160B INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 160B

...WHICH ECHOES IN THE STILL LIVING ROOM WITH A VIEW ON THE SMILING BILLBOARD

ELISABETH VOICE (O.S.)
....NOOOOOOOOOOO

CUT TO:

161A INT. HALLWAY / BATHROOM - DAY 161A

HISSSSSSSSSSS THE ROAR OF THE WATER LIKE A BURST OF THUNDER

THE LONG DARK HALLWAY - at the end of which is the open bathroom door - the shower is filled with steam from the hot water.

161B

INT. SHOWER - DAY

161B

THE SHOWER HEAD SPITS OUT its powerful stream of water on...

ELISABETH. A dazed look in her eyes as she stares at the ground.

REVERSE ANGLE ON THE SHOWER FLOOR where we see the water streaming over... ONE OF HER LEGS THAT HAS AGED TERRIBLY.

Varicose veins crisscross her leg, protruding under the parchment-thin wrinkled skin reaching all the way to her groin.

She brushes a lock of hair behind her ear, uncovering a swath of atrociously aged skin around her right eye, like a black eye made of wrinkles.

The water falls on her back where the swollen and infected red area around the puncture site has grown larger, her spine stooped by her vertebrae's twisted alignment.

Leaning her palm on the wall for support, we discover that her entire right hand has aged all the way up to her elbow.

ELISABETH

Not a big deal??....THIS IS NOT A
BIG DEAL?????!

The sound of the phone ringing which grows increasingly louder as if it was going to FUCKING PIERCE OUR EARDRUMS.

Bri-ing, Bri-iiing...

162

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

162

THE ATROCIOUSLY OLD FOOT WITH ITS HARDENED YELLOWED NAILS paces back and forth.

Bri-ing Bri-iiing

On top of the table is the Vogue issue with SUE, ALL SMILES ON THE COVER:

THE RISING STAR

Bri-ing Bri-iiing

Yes?

Elisabeth, ready to burst, stuttering in her haste:

ELISABETH

SH-SHE D-DID IT AGAIN!!!!

She winces from the violent pain shooting up her back.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

The...the...GROWTH... - cause if I'm the matrix what came out of me can only be called the GROWTH! THE GROWTH didn't respect the balance. AGAIN. SHE'S STEALING MORE AND MORE TIME FROM ME completely disregarding the consequences. She is irresponsible! She is totally short sighted! Sh-SHHA-SHHA...

She angrily throws the magazine.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

...SHHHHALLOW AND SUPERFICIAL!!!!

A beat.

If you don't want extra time you simply have to stop taking it.

Elisabeth makes a dreadful grimace, closing her eyes, struggling against her impulse to implode.

ALL DECISIONS ARE YOUR DECISIONS. You're simply making them from different sides of yourself.

Everything is getting all too Kafkaesque...

Would you like to stop?

Elisabeth is taken aback.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

...Stop?

You are the Matrix. Your other side depends on you to survive but you don't. If you are not satisfied, you can put an end to the experience whenever you want, and go back to being just you on your own.

A moment of silence. Then again, like a mantra:

Would you like to stop? To go back to being just you on your own?

Elisabeth seems lost...wrapping her bathrobe tighter around herself.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

Will...will everything return to what it was before? I mean... as I was before?

We feel all of her vulnerability as she waits for the answer.

The line crackles.

What has been transferred won't come back.

We have made that clear already.

But you can stop the experience as of now.

A beat.

Would you like to stop? To go back to being just you on your own?

Her eyes fall upon her horrifically aged leg... then look beneath her bathrobe, towards what we imagine must be left of her breasts...

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

NO!...no no no...I don't want to stop...

(she pulls the fabric of her bathrobe tighter around her body)

I can't stop... I can't stay LIKE THIS... SHE has to- (She gives herself a SMACK!)... "I" have to- (SMACK! Another slap!) **THE BALANCE HAS TO BE RESPECTED!!**

A long beat. The line crackles.

So respect it.

A beat.

We see her back droop.

Let us know if you need anything else. We will be happy to answer any of your requests. We are at your disposal.

The line goes dead.

Elisabeth remains slumped over the table.

We can see her stooped back shaken by little hiccups as she starts sobbing.

THEN: *When you're smiling, when you're smiling...*

It's Sue's telephone, the Louis Prima ring tone a glaring reminder of how tragic things have become.

...the whole woooooorld smiles with y-

Her twisted finger pushes a button to send the call direct to voice mail.

She stands with difficulty and starts walking away...
ping!... she stops... a beat... she turns around and sees the
voice mail notification. She hesitates... and can't stop
herself from going back to listen to it.

ALAN (V.O.)
**SUE!! Holy fuck?! Are you sitting
down? Please go sit!**

She lets herself fall back down into the chair like a sack of
potatoes.

ALAN (V.O.)
**Are you ready to hear this? Ok this
is huge. TOM GRANT wants you in his
next movie! YES, YOU HEARD ME
RIGHT. TOM FUCKING GRANT. He saw
you on the Vogue cover this morning
and he's DYING to meet you. CALL ME
AS SOON AS YOU GET BACK.**

A beat.

And then suddenly she gives herself an enormous slap: SMACK!

ELISABETH
STOP IT!

SLAP! Another.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
YOU HAVE TO STOP IT!

SLAP!

SMACK!

SLAP!

SHE HITS HER HEAD REPEATEDLY WITH HER FISTS AS THOUGH THAT
WOULD MAKE THE MESSAGE ENTER HER BRAIN ONCE AND FOR ALL.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT...

The small note "it changed my life," hanging on the wall...

BLACK

FADE IN:

163

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

163

The silent apartment plunged in darkness.

IN THE LIVING ROOM we see Elisabeth from behind huddled up in
the big armchair.

The TV is on, but she isn't even watching.

She sits silently for a long while, staring into space.

Then something changes in her expression... as though she has seen something that caught her attention in the bookcase facing her.

She tries to get up but her aged leg won't straighten... she is stuck in the big armchair.

A beat. She looks at her severely deformed knee.

Stiff and swollen with arthritis.

She remains in place, staring... tries again to unbend her leg... we see the intense effort this requires... but her knee, ravaged by arthritis is blocked in a bent position.

Elisabeth's expression is increasingly harsh as she focuses on trying to unbend her knee...

She grabs her leg with both hands, trying to force it straight...but it won't budge...

She pushes harder, harder... She grits her teeth... her expression betrays increasing agony as she relentlessly tries to force the knee to unbend...

CRAAAACK - Her kneecap dislocates finally unbending **AAAAHHHHH**- a scream of victory and pain.

She does as best she can to push her deformed body to get up - her dowager's hump is larger and painful, and there's a stain made by the oozing pus on her bathrobe in the area of the puncture site.

She limps all the way to the bookcase, leaning on the shelves to catch her breath, as though she had just run a marathon.

Then her arthritic hand grabs something forgotten that is stuck between two books: Harvey's departure gift.

She looks at it. *Harvey's chubby smiling face appears superimposed on the wrapping paper.*

HARVEY

To keep you busy. It's French. My wife swears by it!

The gnarled fingers tear off the wrapping paper revealing a thick book of recipes:

FRENCH CUISINE from A to Z

26 recipes from the greatest French chefs!

On the cover is a very hefty looking CHEF WITH RED CHEEKS and a great big smile.

She has to get very, very close to the page to see it as her vision has gotten much worse. She leafs through the pages of recipes accompanied by full-size pictures of the dishes:

AUBRAC ALIGOT

BRISSAC BLOOD SAUSAGE WITH APPLES

CAEN STYLE TRIPES

CHRISTMAS BRESSE POULTRY STUFFED WITH FOIE GRAS

FADE IN:

164

INT. LIVING ROOM / TALK SHOW STUDIO - NIGHT

164

Dazzling white. As the camera pulls back, the white very slowly becomes large white squares... pulling back further, the white squares form a big toothy smile... we pull back even more to reveal that the smile is Sue's pearly-white smile on a pixelated TV screen facing a zestful TV HOST:

TV HOST

...that's right!...You popped up on our screens out of nowhere like a tornado. I think no one was really prepared for this whirlwind...

SLOTCH SLOTCH SLOTCH SLOTCH

165

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

165

CHEESE BUBBLING IN A SAUCEPAN

Elisabeth's DECREPIT FOOT shuffling back and forth across the kitchen floor.

TV HOST

It all started with the morning show... rumor has it that you are up for Tom Grant's next movie... and ...just a minute... I'm just being told that you have been chosen to host the NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW!! Can you confirm this?

SUE

Yes that's right.

The audience applauds.

ELISABETH'S VOICE (O.S.)
(mimicking Sue's nasal
voice)
"Yes that's right"

EXTREME CLOSE UP on the thick, greasy melted cheese that is slowly poured onto a plate like molten lava...

Elisabeth is pouring the aligot to look exactly like the photo in the recipe book.

She is in the kitchen surrounded by piles of dirty dishes, the cook book open on the stained and greasy counter, as she navigates between different recipes that she is cooking at the same time.

TV HOST
WOW WOW WOW THIS IS BIG NEWS! I
can't wait to find out what you are
cooking up for us!

ELISABETH TURNS A PAGE *SHLACK!*

BRISSAC BLOOD SAUSAGE WITH APPLES

(he encourages the audience to applaud. Sue laughs, flattered)

Elisabeth leans over the book getting as close as possible to read the recipe.

TV HOST (CONT'D)
So tell us a little about yourself.
Where are you from? How did you get
discovered?! I want - WE want to
know EVERYTHING!!

HISSESSSS TWO BLOOD SAUSAGES LAND IN A SAUTE PAN making the hot oil jump and sizzle.

SUE
(playing demurely with the audience)
Oh, there's not very much to tell,
really... I'm just a girl from a
very small town in... Indiana.

As the oil gets hotter it pops and splatters in the pan.

Elisabeth wipes her brow on her forearm.

SUE (CONT'D)
I'm sure you've never heard of
it... in fact, it's not even a
town... I'm not really sure you
could even call it a village... A
farm perhaps? (She laughs with the public).

Elisabeth mocks Sue's shrill laugh while she deglazes the pan in a CLOUD OF SMOKE *HISSESSSSSS*

SUE (CONT'D)

...But for as long as I can remember, it has always been my dream to be on screen...

ELISABETH

MY dream!

SUE

...as a child I used to put on shows for my family...

THE GNARLED FINGERS TURN A NEW PAGE *SHLACK!*

CHRISTMAS BRESSE POULTRY STUFFED WITH FOIE GRAS

Elisabeth opens the refrigerator door and grabs a large uncooked turkey.

INSERT - the GNARLED FINGER follows across each line of directions in the cook book: *eviscerate the turkey.*

TV HOST

How sweet... So everyone is aware that you replaced Elisabeth Sparkle and no doubt about it you stepped in, turned up the volume and ROCKED THEIR WORLD! (the audience cheers) Were you a fan of her show?

Elisabeth puts the chicken on the table and pauses - she's attentively listening to Sue's answer.

SUE

Well, I can't really say I actually watched her show because... well you do know that we're not exactly the same generation... (everybody laughs)

Utter disbelief on Elisabeth's face. HER FINGERS TENSE AND FREEZE ON THE TURKEY SKIN.

SUE (CONT'D)

...And you have to admit that it was a bit old fashioned - Jurassic Fitness really - it needed a change...

ELISABETH VIOLENTLY SHOVES HER HAND INSIDE THE TURKEY'S INNARDS IN RETALIATION.

ELISABETH

"Jurassic fitness"...

She pokes around the turkey's cavity...

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
I'll fucking show you Jurassic
fitness.

Pushing and pulling, poking and thrusting, she finally pulls
out the giblets - SPLOTCH!

SUE
*...But my mother was a huge fan of
hers. Every morning, rain or shine,
"Sparkle your life" was on TV.*

She breaks a series of eggs on the rim of a big glass bowl.
They land at the bottom : all of these egg yolks side by side
as though they had multiplied themselves... making for a
strange reminiscence...

SUE (CONT'D)
*So in a way I grew up with her -
whether I liked it or not!
(laughter from the audience)
I guess that's why I can say we
have some sort of connection.*

ELISABETH
"Some sort of connection?!"

ZZZZZZZZ She grabs the electric beater as though it were a
chain saw.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
Without ME YOU DON'T EVEN **EXIST!!!**

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ Elisabeth savagely destroys the egg yolks
which splatter her bathrobe.

TV HOST
Goodness yes, and WHAT A CHANGE!

Elisabeth shuts off the beater and catches her breath.

TV HOST (CONT'D)
*...And now for our final question,
the one we ask each and every one
of our guests...Would you share one
of your little beauty secrets with
us?*

All of a sudden, Elisabeth darts in a hurried limp over to
the TV, placing herself right in front of it.

TV HOST (CONT'D)
*One little trick of yours that
helps you look so incredibly
stunning! I mean just look at you!*

ELISABETH FACES THE SCREEN as if the TV Host was speaking directly to her, in her dirty grease and egg yolk-stained bathrobe. On the talk show, Sue pauses before answering him:

SUE

Oh... let me think...

Elisabeth points an accusatory finger towards Sue like a preacher in a trance.

ELISABETH

SAY IT!

TV HOST

(as an aside)

We won't tell anyone... (laughter from the audience)

ELISABETH

SAY IT!!

(facing the tv, opening her arms in a wide exaggerated gesture, waddling back and forth)

Go ahead, show them your little secret!

We see Elisabeth's face grow increasingly somber as she listens...

SUE

I guess it's that I just try... to be myself... to be sincere and grateful for all that I have and to always-

SPLAT! AN EGG HAS JUST BEEN THROWN AT THE SCREEN.

SPLAT! AND NOW A TOMATO!

THE VISCOUS YELLOW YOKE AND BLOOD RED PULP DRIP DOWN OVER SUE'S PEARLY WHITES.

Elisabeth is looking at the billboard outside, she grabs a newspaper, takes out a page and BAM! She slaps the paper on the window, right over its wide-smile of a mouth.

166

INT. HALLWAY /BATHROOM - NIGHT

166

THE LONG DARK HALLWAY at the end of which we see the bathroom. Elisabeth, wearing Sue's silk bathrobe, paces back and forth in front of the mirror, making faces and mocking Sue's nasal voice and affected mannerisms. She simpers and gestures in an increasingly grotesque caricature:

ELISABETH

"I just try to be myseeeelf... to be sinceeere and graatefuuuul for all that I haaaaave..."

Facing the mirror, pointing her crooked fingers at her reflection.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

YOU'RE TAKING IT FROM ME!! That's your secret!! **YOU'RE TAKING IT ALL FROM ME!!**

SMACK! She gives herself a massive slap.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

STOP IT!

SMACK! Another

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

STOP IT!

She pummels her head with her fists, growing increasingly violent.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

YOU HAVE TO STOP IT!!!

CUT TO:

167

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

167

HISSESSSSSSSSSSSS - Elisabeth is hunched up in a fetal position on the shower floor. THE STREAM OF WATER IS LIKE A MACHINE GUN pelting her deformed back. Her vertebrae are increasingly prominent, like a dinosaur.

ELISABETH

(pleading, in a whisper, over and over again)

Stop it stop it stop it you have to...

CUT TO:

168

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

168

SUE (O.S.)

(HOWLING)

...CONTROOOOL YOURSELF!!!

SUE's harrowing howl which echoes all the way to the oversized living room that we now discover in daylight.

The picture window has been covered with newspapers to hide the billboard outside.

So has the television.

Leftovers and poultry carcasses are everywhere, the walls are smeared with grease and sauces, dirty dishes overflowing in the sink... melted cheese on the floor...

A savage wreckage.

We see Sue, busy, nervously making her way through the different rooms, muttering to herself.

SUE (CONT'D)
I can't go back inside her...

169

INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY

169

POV FROM INSIDE THE SECRET ROOM - Sue's feet going back and forth, carrying a variety of containers, glass jars and empty bottles that she gathers in the room.

SUE (O.S.)
I just can't...

She looks at Elisabeth's decrepit body stranded on the floor in her silk dressing gown.

The delicate silk material on that horribly old and disgusting leg...

SUE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She's GROSS...

She brutally rips the dressing gown off her - Elisabeth's head falls back down heavily on the tiled floor: *THUD!*

SUE (CONT'D)
Fat...

With her foot, she pushes her over onto her side in order to reveal the inflamed, swollen, pus-oozing puncture wound.

SUE (CONT'D)
Old...

SHE VIOLENTLY RIPS OFF the bandage from her back.

SUE (CONT'D)
Disgusting.

She violently stabs the needle into her back and starts draining the fluid...

Draining...

Draining...

She fills up the glass jars and bottles one after the other...

The camera pulls back, towards the darkness as if the secret room was getting bigger, damper and more isolated.

BLACK

A LONG MOMENT OF SILENCE

Then a soft, damp, distorted and cavernous noise that grows louder.

As though marking the passage of time and decay in the dark room which seems to have sunk into oblivion...

Then a faint music, slowly growing louder...

FADE IN ON

170

A TV COMMERCIAL FOR THE NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW (6 MONTHS LATER)

170

Flashy colors and lively voices:

Tomorrow 9PM don't miss Sue and her crew for an unforgettable New Year's Eve Show!!

CUT TO:

171

INT. NYE FITTING ROOM - DAY

171

The camera pans up A MAGNIFICENT PRINCESS DRESS IN TAFFETA, chiffon and rhinestones that sparkles gloriously.

Sue is in the fitting room.

Her hair is different, time has passed.

Her agent (Alan) is there, as well as Harvey and the whole gang of suits. Everyone is bubbling with excitement.

The STYLIST finishes lacing the corset up Sue's back.

STYLIST

...And there you go...I just have to take it in a bit here and here, otherwise we are all set for tomorrow.

Sue's emotion is tangible as she sees her reflection in the mirror.

HARVEY

The dress is WONDERFUL!! IT'S
PERFECT! A real princess!

He takes the stylist to the side in the foreground.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

And I was thinking... all the other
dancers could have feathers
sticking out of their asses.

Hesitation on the part of the stylist.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Well not "literally" in their
asses... You know more like just
above the... rump... like a tail...
you know. It's New Year's Eve!
People want to have fun. They want
joy. Happiness. Feathers are
joyful. They're fun.

STYLIST

Otherwise I planned on using lemon-
colored short-shorts...

HARVEY

Feathers are more fun.

Discussion over. And Harvey starts to rally the troops.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Ok everybody out! Everybody needs
to rest up for tomorrow!

(to Sue)

And especially you! You get your
beauty sleep!

172

INT. LIVING ROOM REDECORATED - EVENING

172

We discover the redecorated living room, plunged in darkness.

Everything is clean, zen and organized.

On the table is a magnificent bouquet of blossoming red roses
in a large vase.

On the white note card placed next to it:

BREAK A LEG!

THEY'RE GOING TO LOVE YOU

Sue stands in front of the picture window facing a new
billboard, where she's wearing her princess dress.

NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW

TOMORROW 9PM

We see the silhouette of A MAN (30) appear from behind in the frame and wrap his arms around her.

BOYFRIEND

You coming to bed?

SUE

(smiles serenely at him)

Yes, I'll be right there.

The man leaves.

After a moment, a slight tinnitus starts buzzing in her ears. Sue glances one last time at the picture window and the bouquet of roses.

173

INT. CORRIDOR / BATHROOM / SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

173

Then she calmly walks towards the bathroom (we can tell that this is a well-rehearsed routine), starts taking off her makeup as she enters the secret room (where we catch sight of hundreds of shriveled up IV bags and empty vials littering the floor like a junkie's den).

After a while she comes out with the syringe in which there is only a little thick brownish disgusting-looking fluid... what the fuck?!

With the tinnitus growing increasingly louder, we follow her...

174

INT. CORRIDOR / LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

174

...hurrying back down the hallway in the opposite direction, frantically searching through the drawers in the living room, and finally finding the USB stick with the telephone number on it.

She locks herself in the kitchen so no one can hear her calling.

Bri-ing... Bri-ing...

Tap tap tap... her foot taps nervously on the floor...

Bri-ing... Bri-ing...

Pick up the fucking phone...

Bri-ing... Bri-i...

Yes?

SUE
(whispering)
Yes! Oh my god, thanks! This is an
emergency... there is no more
stabilizer fluid!

Silence.

SUE (CONT'D)
Hello?!

Silence

SUE (CONT'D)
(in a screaming whisper)
...IT'S FUCKING 503!

Yes.

Ping... a drop of blood on the kitchen tile.

SUE (CONT'D)
I'm telling you this is urgent!!
There's no more stabilizer fluid!

The phone line crackles.

It means you've reached the end.

A beat.

SUE (CONT'D)
What do you mean..."the end?"

The phone line crackles.

You've drained it all out. It's dry.

A beat.

If you want more, you must let the fluid regenerate.

Ping, ping, ping... the bleeding gets worse.

SUE (CONT'D)
SO JUST TELL ME HOW TO DO IT!!!!
I NEED TO STABILIZE MYSELF RIGHT
NOW!!

You simply have to switch.

A beat. Total. Silence.

Sue freezes. As if someone had just asked her to stick her head in a bucket of shit.

SUE (CONT'D)
Ex-cu-se me?

The switch reboots the fluid secretion process. So you can continue to enjoy the experience.

SUE (CONT'D)
No no no no, I can't...
(disgusted)
...**"switch"**.

Outside, the billboard:

NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW

TOMORROW 9PM

SUE (CONT'D)
AND ESPECIALLY NOT NOW!!

Ping, ping, ping, the bleeding is even worse, SUE'S POV : THE IMAGE GROWS DARKER AND HER EYESIGHT BLURS... She tries to regain her balance, reaching for a chair, but she misses and falls heavily to the ground.

There is no other option.

She tries to get up on all fours while her vision increasingly blurs.

SUE (CONT'D)
No no no... PLEASE I JUST NEED ONE
MORE DA-

The line goes dead.

On all fours on the kitchen tile, the piercing tinnitus drilling through her brain, she no longer has the choice... she gathers her last strength to get up but everything spins like a loop-the-loop... and she collapses again a bit further along in the living room.

She crawls, dragging herself through the hallway...

175

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

175

...all the way to the bathroom, using her last bit of strength to hoist herself up, grabbing onto the sink to try and reach the switch pipe on the shelf...which she grabs with the tip of her fingers... and collapses to the ground making all her beauty products crash to the floor in a loud SMASH!!

176 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 176

IN THE BEDROOM her boyfriend sits up in bed and puts the light on.

BOYFRIEND

Sue?

CUT TO:

177 INT. BATHROOM / SECRET ROOM - NIGHT 177

THE EMPTY AND STILL BATHROOM.

The door to the secret room open ajar.

A beat. Nothing moves.

And suddenly

Rahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...a hoarse groan from beyond the grave echoes out in the secret room.

CUT TO:

178 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 178

The man sits on the side of the bed, not sure what he has just heard.

BOYFRIEND

Babe?

A beat.

The hollow echo of a phlegmy cough.

The man knits his eyebrows, increasingly perplexed...

He stands and we follow him stepping into the hallway.

BOYFRIEND (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

CUT TO:

179 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 179

POV FLOOR LEVEL ON THE BATHROOM TILES

A beat... AND A HORRIBLY DECREPIT FOOT WITH NECROSED TOES, appears in the foreground, taking a first step on the bathroom tiles like the first step on the moon...

CUT TO:

180 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 180

THE MAN'S FEET WALK ALONG THE DEEP PILE CARPET...

CUT TO:

181 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 181

A second ravaged foot takes a second step.

We can feel how difficult it is for her to stand and move forward...

CUT TO:

182 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 182

THE MAN'S FEET WALKING DOWN THE HALLWAY...

BOYFRIEND

Stressed out about tomorrow?

The man is about to reach the door and walk into the bathroo-

BAM! THE DOOR SHUTS VIOLENTLY RIGHT IN HIS FACE!

He is bare-assed facing the door.

BOYFRIEND (CONT'D)

Sue? Is something wrong?

(he sees a few drops of
blood on the carpet)

...a little cranky because of your
lady business?

183 INT. BATHROOM / CORRIDOR - NIGHT 183

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR the shot pulls back along a decrepit hand pushing against the door with all its diminished strength... the camera pulls back further along a bony and wizened arm... down a saggy breast that hangs like an old washcloth... arriving at a big deformed dowager's hump, going down a flabby, wrinkled and MILDEWED buttock, pulling out more to discover Elisabeth's entire decrepit hunchbacked figure like a Gollum, leaning back on the door with all her might.

TWO NAKED ASSES SEPARATED BY THE BATHROOM DOOR.

BOYFRIEND

Sue?!

(knocking at the door)

Sue open the door - it's not funny
I need to take a piss!

Elisabeth, petrified and mortified on the other side.

She turns her head towards the mirrored cabinet over the bathroom sink... it reflects a puny, wizened, dreadfully wrinkled old woman...

SLOW ZOOM IN on her heavily wrinkled face ... thin, stringy gray hair with bald spots... it takes her a moment to understand that this horrible old wrinkled thing whose eyes are reddened from conjunctivitis is...

HER.

BOYFRIEND (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(banging on the door)
Sue! Open the door!

Stark naked, he pounds on the door, louder and louder

BAM! BAM! BAM!

VERY SLOW ZOOM IN - WHICH SHAKES ON ELISABETH'S REFLECTION... the knocking on the door emphasizes the horrific image she sees reflected in the mirror... **BAM BAM BAM!**

And suddenly she starts screaming in a hoarse and cavernous voice:

ELISABETH
**GET OUT!! GET THE
FUCK OUT OF
HERE!!!!**

(an enormous wet cough filled with phlegm)

184A INT. HALLWAY / BATHROOM - NIGHT

184A

IN THE HALLWAY - the man jumps back, almost toppling over in surprise.

He pauses for a moment.

BOYFRIEND
WHAT THE FUCK....
Who's this? Who the fuck is this?!

ELISABETH
(starts pounding on the door, screaming)

**LEAVE ME
ALONE!!!!!!!!!!**
(MORE)

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

**GET OUT OF MY
HOME!!!! LEAVE ME
THE FUCK
ALOOOONE!!!!!!!!!!**

A horrible noisy phlegmy cough, she spits out mucous again.

BOYFRIEND

What the fuck!?

Finally, totally flipped out, the man rushes into the bedroom, grabs his things and takes off without a word, SLAMMING the door behind him. BAM!

184B

INT. CORRIDOR / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

184B

Elisabeth opens the bathroom door and hurries down the hallway. She trips and falls like an old bag of bones. Gets up and goes into the living room where she rushes to the telephone.

Her gnarled and deformed fingers push on the phone buttons with great difficulty.

The line rings.

Yes?

She can't hear anything - and starts speaking super loudly like the hearing impaired.

ELISABETH

**THIS IS 503 I WANT TO
STOP!!**

A beat.

Are you sure? Once you stop you can't go ba...

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

I FUCKING **WANT TO**

STOOOOOOOP !!!!!!!

The words are roared as though her guts were about to spill out of her mouth.

A beat.

We'll deliver.

184C INT. HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

184C

Elisabeth has just pulled the huge framed photo of herself into the living room - her blue leotard and happy smile on her face, she props it back up against the wall. She looks at it for while.

185 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

185

Daytime now. Elisabeth feverishly finishes getting dressed: gloves, thick skin-colored tights, a shawl wrapped like a turban around her head, and oversized sunglasses. Bundled up in her yellow coat over her bathrobe, she wraps a blanket around her neck like a scarf, although outside the sun is shining brightly.

Sue's phone rings on the table. *When you're smiling...When y-*

Elisabeth picks up.

ALAN (V.O.)

**HEY HEY HEY! HOW IS MY STAR TODAY?
READY FOR THE BIG NIG...**

ELISABETH

She's not here. She's gone. This is over.

ALAN (V.O.)

What do you mean she's gon...

ELISABETH

**THIS IS OVER SHE'S NOT COMING
BACK!!!!**

BAM! SHE HURLS THE PHONE ACROSS THE ROOM.

186A INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

186A

At the very moment that she steps into the hallway outside her front door, her neighbor's door opens as if half-stalking her.

NEIGHBOR

How about we g-

ELISABETH

FUCK OFF!

186B INT. STAIRWAY - DAY

186B

She hurtles down the stairs like a lunatic while the neighbor immediately scurries back inside his apartment, bolting his door shut.

187A **EXT. STREET (ELISABETH AREA) - DAY** 187A

THE BLINDING LIGHT OUTSIDE. ALL THE EXTERIOR STIMULI ARE LIKE A PHYSICAL AGGRESSION.

WE FOLLOW THE LIMPING YELLOW COAT IN EXTREME CLOSE UP.

187B **OMITTED** 187B

187C **INT. CORRIDOR DEPOSIT - DAY** 187C

The yellow coat goes along the corridor.

187D **INT. DEPOSIT / LOBBY - DAY** 187D

CLOSE UP ON THE CARD THAT OPENS THE DEPOSIT BOX. **BEEP.**

187E **OMITTED** 187E

188 **INT. APARTMENT ENTRANCE - DAY** 188

She makes it back home.

SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT.

HER GLOVED HAND DOUBLE LOCKING EACH BOLT.

(she takes off a few layers of clothing - scarf, blanket)

CUT TO:

189 **INT. SECRET ROOM / BATHROOM - DAY** 189

ELISABETH'S GLOVED HAND closes around Sue's delicate ankle. Elisabeth pulls her out of the secret room.

190A **INT. HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - DAY** 190A

The camera follows Sue's body at floor level as she is quickly dragged down the hallway. Her head violently bumps against a piece of furniture: **BAM!**

Elisabeth drags her into the living room right into the picture window's full light.

She brutally tears apart box 503 with her old, shaking hands and takes out: A BIG WHITE NOTECARD which reads:

***We are sorry you didn't appreciate your experience
with The Substance***

With the note card is a small vial filled with a black liquid marked "**TERMINATION**" for an intra-cardiac injection.

She touches the spot where the needle needs to go into Sue's heart.

Holding the syringe, she lifts up her arms high above her and is about to...

Are you sure ?

Elisabeth jumps and looks around...

... before realizing that the voice is inside her head...

...Once you stop you can't go back...

Her eyes are more and more focused on Sue's chest going up and down peacefully...

You will simply remain on your own...

She shakes her head in order to keep her concentration...

But the voice inside her skull rings out even louder...

JUST ON YOUR OWN...

ELISABETH
SHUT THE FUCK UP !!!!

JUST ON YOUR OWN...

BAM! Elisabeth jabs the needle right down into Sue's thorax!

Trying not to waver in her determination, she presses slightly on the plunger to release a notch of the product.

CLOSE-UP ON THE SYRINGE AS IT SLOWLY BUT GRADUALLY EMPTIES. Sue's heartbeat slows down:

Ba boom.....ba boom.....baboom..

AND SUDDENLY ELISABETH'S EYES FREEZE on something facing her... her eyes mist over... shining with tears... as we discover what she is looking at:

The note card sitting next to the bouquet of red roses:

"THEY'RE GOING TO LOVE YOU"

Tears well up in her eyes, they escape and roll down her cheeks... And suddenly Elisabeth wavers... collapses to the ground next to Sue, bursting into tears, letting all her pain come out.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
I can't...I can't...
I **HATE** myself...I need you..
(shaking her)
I need you!!!

She starts to panic, leans in very close to her face to try and make out any sign of breathing. Nothing.

She starts CPR on Sue.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
(one two three four...)
Forgive me I was out of my mind...
(one two three four...)
YOU're the only interesting part of
me. You're the perfect one.

Blood starts to trickle then run out of Sue's nose.

No no no no...Elisabeth rushes into the bathroom to grab the switch pipe, hurrying back... she kneels down next to Sue.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
WE HAVE TO GET YOU READY... THIS IS
OUR BIG NIGHT!

She hooks up the switch pipe. The blood starts circulating...
But nothing happens.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
C'MON!!! THEY'RE GONNA LOVE YOU!!

She removes the needle from Sue's arm... and BAM! She jabs it right into Sue's chest for an intra-cardiac injection, screaming:

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
C'MON!!!

The blood circulates AND SUDDENLY Sue's rib cage heaves in a spasm; she coughs blood up right on Elisabeth's face.

Taken by surprise, Elisabeth is completely lost.

She takes several steps back, shocked.

Sue's eyes are... OPEN.

So are Elisabeth's.

Completely rattled, Sue doesn't seem to understand what's going on.

They look at each other for a short moment, both frozen in disbelief.

Both of them are activated at the same time...

A long beat on the two women, staring at each other... they both seem to be trying to fathom each other's soul...

Sue sees the "termination" vial on the floor.

A suspended beat...

190B

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

190B

And all of a sudden Sue throws herself at Elisabeth... who dodges her in the nick of time and runs away inside the apartment. Elisabeth throws something right at Sue's face before running away from her again: fuck fuck fuck... she stumbles and gets back up again as fast as she can... Sue runs right after her.

Elisabeth grabs a trophy and tries hitting Sue on the head with it... but Sue ducks at the last minute, avoiding the object and violently disarms Elisabeth.

Suddenly, Sue runs right at Elisabeth, kneecapping her in the plexus, which sends Elisabeth flying right against her huge framed poster on the wall.

The fight between the two of them is UNBELIEVABLY VIOLENT.

Brutal. Carnal. Like a survival instinct pushed to its fullest.

Creator versus creature...

Sue runs for Elisabeth and starts to strangle her... throttle her...Elisabeth chokes... suffocates...

With her convulsing free hand, Elisabeth fumbles around, desperately searching for something... anything... and grabs a... lamp and BAM! She smashes it atop Sue's head.

An electric shock shoots through Sue who lets go. Elisabeth runs into the corridor... Sue runs right after her. Everything speeds up.

Elisabeth rushes...

191

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

191

...into the bathroom to hide. Her hand trembling as she locks the door. Sue tries to kick the door down.

Elisabeth searches for a weapon... something to block or defend... anything... she tries to push a large piece of furniture against the door to block it but too late... SUE KICKS the door down... BAM!

She punches Elisabeth who falls backwards - THUMP! Her head bangs violently against the edge of the earthenware sink - dizzy, she crashes down brutally to the floor...

She tries to come back to her senses but Sue is already upon her... she grabs her by the hair... picks her up and holds her in front of the mirror... they both look at each other's reflection for a moment before suddenly...**THWACK!** Sue smashes Elisabeth's face against the mirror... the mirror cracks and Elisabeth's eyebrow splits open... She doesn't have the time to do or say anything before **BAM!** She's slammed once again against the mirror.

Elisabeth tries to say something to her:

ELISABETH
Stop... we are o-

But **BAM!** Sue slams her again against the mirror!! Again! And again! Soon, Elisabeth's mouth is so messed up that she can no longer talk - nothing comprehensible comes out. Sue is in a trance, entirely uncontrollable...

Elisabeth manages to free herself from Sue's grasp...

192

INT. HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - DAY

192

...she crawls down the hallway and into the living room.

Sue catches up with her and gives her a final blow which sends Elisabeth flying through the room before landing on the glass coffee table which smashes into pieces.

Lying in the middle of the shards of broken glass, Elisabeth tries to wriggle to get up but her body no longer seems to respond... Sue now starts kicking her repeatedly, more and more furiously, each kick making Elisabeth jerk on the floor and cough up blood. **SUE CAN NO LONGER CONTROL HERSELF. SHE'S KICKING HER MERCILESSLY...** until a large pool of blood slowly starts to form around her on the floor... and Elisabeth's body finally stops moving: an irreversible stasis.

Sue looks down at the red liquid, as if hypnotized by it. She brutally seems to come out of her state of trance...

And realizes what she's done...

EVERYTHING IS YOU

INSERT

THE PALM TREE LOSES ITS LEAVES.

She's just killed the matrix.

She's just... killed... herself...

193

INT. INSERT

193

SMACK! THE TWO BLU TACK BALLS SLAMMED ONE AGAINST THE OTHER

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOURSELF

194

EXT MOTORCYCLE IMAGERY

194

THE DIRTY GRAINY IMAGE of the MOTORCYCLE FROM THE BEGINNING hurtling straight towards the camera... AND VIOLENTLY CRASHING INTO IT STRAIGHT ON: the motorcycle smashes into pieces and the body of the driver flies into the air like a disarticulated puppet from the sheer ferocity of the impact.

195

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

195

BACK TO THE SCENE INSIDE THE LIVING ROOM

Sue looks down fixedly at her bloody hands in the foreground above a blurry Elisabeth in the middle of a pool of blood in the background. (*tinnitus starts up in her ear - it gets louder and louder right up to the end*)

All of a sudden, we see all the panic, all the VULNERABILITY inside her eyes.

A long beat.

The phone rings. Like a robot Sue picks up the phone.

SUE

Yes?

ALAN (V.O.)

Sue? Is that you? I tried reaching you earlier, what happened?...

SUE

Oh nothing.... some practical joker or something...

ALAN (V.O.)

Oh, you're reassuring me. This is no time for nerves.

Through the picture window, the large billboard with her image smiling brightly right back at her:

NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW

TONIGHT 9PM

ALAN (V.O.)

*I'll be in the front row to see you
shine. THEY'RE GONNA LOVE YOU!*

She hangs up.

195B **INT. SALLE DE BAIN - JOUR** 195B

Sue calmly washes her hands. The blood disappears down the dark sink hole.

She looks at her reflection shattered in dozens of pieces inside the broken mirror.

196 **INT. TV STUDIO / BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - DAY** 196

Sue arrives at the studio where EVERYONE is rushing around in preparation for the last rehearsal before the live event.

She listens to everything attentively, her wide smile upon her face, but we can sense she's acutely attuned to everything happening inside her, checking for anything that could potentially go wrong.

CUT TO:

197 **INT. NYE FITTING ROOM - DAY** 197

A MAGNIFICENT DIAMOND NECKLACE that is delicately placed around Sue's neck, as she's slipped into a dress in the fitting room.

Everyone drops by the lounge to encourage her.

As the stylist finishes lacing up the corset of her dress from behind, Sue suddenly starts coughing slightly.

She drinks from a glass of water to try and calm down.

But after a short moment, she starts coughing again.

And again. She can't seem to stop coughing.

She apologizes and leaves for the bathroom.

198 **INT. WINDING CORRIDORS - DAY**

198

We follow her making her way down the hallway.

Walking past the soundstage, we see Harvey shouting at a technician, pointing to a cable hanging from the ceiling.

HARVEY
*...you nail it, you GLUE it or you
fucking EAT it! But EVERYTHING'S
GOTTA BE PERFECT!!*

199 **INT. NEW YEAR EVE BATHROOM - DAY**

199

Sue reaches the restroom and double locks the door.

After a few seconds, she starts coughing again.

Once.

Twice. Ten times.

She's leaning over the sink; trying to make it stop.

Cling gling...

She catches something in the nick of time which has just fallen into the sink before it slides down the black hole...

A silent beat.

She looks down at her closed fist... which is closed so tightly it is almost about to break the cartilage.

She slowly opens up her fingers...

And looks down... in the middle of her palm...

... at a TOOTH...

... Its bloody root...

She looks down at it...

And looks back up at the mirror again...

Slowly... very slowly... she opens up her mouth...

And discovers... a black hole right in the middle of her white teeth...

She stares for a long moment at her smile in the mirror's reflection...

And as if drawn by an irresistible urge to do so... she slowly approaches her fingers towards her other front tooth.

She pulls on it... and the tooth pulls away easily with a small sticky noise...

Her eyes widen...as she holds this new tooth in between her fingers...

And as if drawn by another compulsive urge, she touches a third tooth... which also detaches itself very easily...

Her eyes grow increasingly crazed.

Her toothless smile gets bigger and bigger...

Like the black holes of a harmonica.

A black hole into hell.

She stares down at the three teeth in the palm of her hand.

The enormous and bloody roots... It's as if her hidden dark side was suddenly coming to light.

Someone knocks at the door.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - NYE SHOW (O.S.)

Sue?! Are you there? They need to see you on stage to set the lights

She looks down in terror at her teeth in her hand... then her face in the mirror...

Her eyes increasingly crazed and terrified, she attempts to articulate in a normal voice:

SUE

I'm coming just a sec!

Blood drips into the sink. She bends over to make sure none of the blood stains her dress.

SUE (CONT'D)

I'll meet you there!

She tries to calm herself down for a moment... thinks...

And suddenly... an idea sparks to life in her eyes...She looks at her necklace and seems to have come up with an idea.

She rinses her hands and mouth, to get rid of all traces of blood.

... keeps her mouth shut tight... closes her fingers around the three teeth inside her hand...

A long beat on the tightly closed fist...

She takes a deep breath and...

...opens the door.

200

INT. WINDING CORRIDORS - DAY

200

She walks quickly through the corridor with her head slightly lowered and her fist closed along her thigh, trying not to be noticed by anyone in the busy hallway.

HARVEY (O.S.)

HEY SUE! SUE!

SUE!!!

After a few moments she has no choice but to stop and turn around slowly.

She finds herself facing... HARVEY.

Behind him, a SWARM OF WHITE MEN in their 60s and 70s wearing suits.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Let me introduce you to the shareholders! They've been dying to meet you!

Sue stares at them... sweating...

Next to her thigh, her fist seems as if it's about to explode, her fingers clasp down on the teeth so tightly...

Harvey looks at her, frowning:

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Everything ok?

Sue remains silent for a moment... Has he noticed anything?

She nods as if to say yes... her neck is drenched in sweat...

Harvey continues to stare at her for a long moment... until his face finally lights up as he erupts:

HARVEY (CONT'D)

SO SMILE! THAT'S WHAT WE WANT TONIGHT!

After a short moment as if frozen... Sue smiles, keeping her mouth tightly shut.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

PRETTY GIRLS SHOULD ALWAYS SMILE!

A bunch of half naked, young dancing girls with big feathers on their rumps come walking down the corridor, which is enough to draw Harvey's attention away from her.

He follows the movement of the cute, little butts bouncing up and down towards the studio and prances about happily behind them.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
OOOH... feathers feathers
feathers...

The shareholders turn and follow Harvey and the dancing rumps as well.

Sue makes the most of this moment to turn away and strides towards the dressing room.

She rushes over to the stylist's desk, searches through her work materials and takes out... a small tube of super glue.

She walks back to the bathroom.

201

INT. NEW YEAR EVE / BATHROOM - DAY

201

Locks the door shut.

She puts her teeth down on the sink and exhales out deeply, opening her mouth and letting a large quantity of blood gush out and into the sink in the process...

She stands feverishly in front of the mirror...

She takes a tooth in between her two fingers... pours a few drops of super glue on the root...

Shaky, she opens her mouth, lifts up her lip... approaches her tooth to the naked gum... and pushes the root of the tooth as deeply as she can into the gum... as deep as possible... remains still for a few moments...

Takes her fingers away...

It sticks.

Outside, she can hear everyone excitedly looking for her.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - NYE SHOW (O.S.)
***Sue? They're waiting for you, we're
running late!***

She speeds up and does the same thing for the two other teeth...and glues in her smile.

She rinses her mouth several times until all of the blood disappears...

Smiles broadly in front of the mirror in order to make sure we can't see any evidence of the carnage which just occurred...

Takes a deep breath...

202A INT. WINDING CORRIDORS - DAY

202A

... and opens the door with a big smile as if nothing happened.

She follows the assistant director into the corridor.

Everyone she sees throws words of encouragement at her.

ENCOURAGEMENT PERSON #1
Break a leg for tonight!

A spider passes fleetingly in her field of vision.

...

A SPIDER PASSES FLEETINGLY IN HER FIELD OF VISION?

...

?

???

As she continues to follow the assistant on set, she rubs her eyes discretely... Fuck... no it's still there... This shit is preventing her from seeing properly (she rubs her eye which makes the thing move but part of its legs are still there)

She continues to smile and pretend that everything's ok, while a whole portion of her field of vision is darkened. The assistant's face seems to disappear into the spider's darkness.

It's just a motionless black shape which remains still in the middle of her line of vision, but it's absolutely TERRIFYING.

202B INT. NYE SET - DAY

202B

She arrives on set. THE DOP and THE CAMERAMAN show her where to hit her marks on the floor. They tell her to "**look here**" or "**look there**" but she can't see anything with this fucking spider in the way.

The cameras film her smile but inside her head, it's a complete nightmare...

202C INT. WINDING CORRIDORS - JOUR

202C

As soon as the fine-tuning is over, Sue runs off the set to the corridor...

203

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

203

...and slips into the elevator.

Once inside, she hits the lobby button repeatedly... and the more she pushes the button nervously, the more she notices that... one of her fingernails is less and less lined up with her finger... the door closes, she pulls slightly on the fingernail which comes straight off and remains in her hand...(same thing for her two other nails)

She hears a little... *splotch!*

She looks down at the floor and sees... an ear...

A short beat, her eyes frozen, in shock, while staring down at the ear on the floor...

Her ear...

She's falling apart and into pieces...

The elevator grinds to a halt. Ding. Second floor.

As the door moves and starts to open, she barely has time to put her **dress** over the ear to hide it, while swinging her hair over her shoulder in order to cover the gaping hole.

MAN ENTERING ELEVATOR

Ready for tonight ?

With the spider in her field of vision, she's unable to make out who's talking to her... Her hearing is affected. Sounds grow muffled. She can't understand anything of what THE PERSON is saying...

Ding. First floor. The person leaves muttering something completely incomprehensible. Ding. The door closes again. She hurries to pick up her ear and stuffs it inside her handbag.

Ding. Ground floor.

204

OMITTED

204

205A

EXT. STUDIO LOT ALLEY - DAY

205A

She hurries out of the building...

205B

EXT. STREETS (SPIDER DEAMBULATION) - DAY

205B

...and starts to head back home, walking as best she can through the streets between the pedestrians. The spider and macular degeneration have evolved and now hide 80% of her vision.

205C **INT. STAIRWELL - DAY** 205C

SUE'S POV rushing up the stairs.

206 **INT. APARTMENT / HALLWAY - DAY** 206

Once back at her apartment...

207A **INT. BATHROOM - DAY** 207A

...she hurries to the bathroom, searching through the closet until she finds... the small vial marked **ACTIVATOR** / matrix - where there is a little of the fluorescent yellow fluid left.

She takes off her dress.

CLOSE UP ON THE SYRINGE THAT FILLS UP WITH THE LIQUID...

SUE
(muttering to herself)
I just need a better version of
myself...

Activator / single use / discard after use

...FILLS UP...

SUE (CONT'D)
Please give me a better version of
myself...

Activator / single use / discard after use

She tightens the tourniquet around her arm.

She sticks the needle into her arm.

Shaking, she injects the contents of the syringe.

A beat.

Which goes on.

Nothing. (Subjective POV: her view in the mirror is still blocked by the huge spider in her field of vision)

SUE (CONT'D)
C'MON!!!!!!

She closes her eyes and starts muttering a prayer.

SUE (CONT'D)
Please please please please...

All of a sudden, FLUORESCENT YELLOW FILLS THE SCREEN AND THE IMAGE SPLITS (as the camera drops to the floor)

She starts feeling the abdominal cramps.(she falls to the floor)

Even more violent than the first time. Atrocious. Excruciating. She feels like she's dying. She screams.

Suction noises. The second pupil. The fluorescent tunnel. Subliminal images of anarchic cellular division (everything is stranger than before).

BLACK

207B

A long silence.

207B

Then the sound starts to return, only muffled...

A slightly wheezy breath.

The image comes back gradually.

Flickering like the batting of eyelids...

AT LAST THE SPIDER HAS GONE.

Thank God...

Sue turns her head to one side and sees...

SUE lying on the floor unconscious on the white tiles.

Her translucent skin and her back split open.

It worked... Thank you God, thank you...

She approaches the sink... her vision is half blurry and it's difficult for her to focus...

And she then discovers in the mirror:

A MONSTROUS VISION... a being with a hybrid face, shapeless and hideous... (chaotic cellular growth / body parts placed haphazardly and in all the wrong places / teeth stuck in her cheeks and in her cleavage)

The camera slowly tracks back... pulling behind her shoulder... and discovering stuck on her back:

...AN OUTGROWTH OF ELISABETH'S FACE IN A FROZEN SCREAM, LIKE EDWARD MUNCH'S PAINTING.

We hear the casting director's voice that echoes in her head:

CASTING DIRECTOR (V.O.)
*Looks like everything sure is in
the right place this time...*

ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR (V.O.)
*Please state your name/ age /
measurements.*

SUE (V.O.)
I'm... I'm...

SUE (V.O.)
I'm...

She vomits a green liquid while at the same time she says:

MONSTROELISASUE

She wipes her mouth and turns her head from right to left as she looks at herself in the mirror.

She's strangely calm...

As if this monstrous vision didn't scare her.

Almost fascinating her.

As if it pleased her.

As if she was TRULY seeing herself for the very first time, and finally, accepting herself.

208

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

208

Facing her, through the picture window is the huge billboard:

NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW

TONIGHT 9PM

Elisabeth lies dead on the living room floor.

Sue lies dead on the bathroom floor.

It's time.

209

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

209

MonstroElisaSue starts preparing herself and putting on her beautiful dress as if everything were completely fine.

The zipper that she's closing up covers Munch's face on her back that forms a hump under the fabric, the dress starts to rip all over.

She slips her foot stumps into her shoes.

She wants to put her earrings on but... she doesn't have any ears anymore.

She sticks the earrings directly into the sides of her head.

The few disheveled strands of hair that remain disintegrate under the curling iron.

She has the exact same gestures of vanity as if everything were normal which is even more weird and scary given her completely monstrous appearance.

210 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 210

Back to Monstro who is standing, scissors in hand, facing the huge frame with the photograph of her back in the days of her old show: her blue leotard and dashing smile.

She gives it a kick to get rid of the last pieces of remaining glass and cuts out the face on the poster...

211 **INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT** 211

...and sticks this paper face (with holes for the eyes) to her monstrous face with super glue.

She then puts lipstick on top of it to emphasize her smile while Harvey's voice echoes in her head:

HARVEY (V.O.)
Pretty girls should always smile!

212A **EXT. NIGHT STREET (GOING TO STUDIO) - NIGHT** 212A

We follow her from behind as she crosses town like a ghostly shadow, with her Elisabeth mask like a clown's mask covered in red lipstick.

212B **EXT. NIGHT STREET (GOING TO STUDIO) - NIGHT** 212B

Still on Monstro's back as she walks.

213A **OMITTED** 213A

213B EXT. STUDIO LOT ALLEY / STUDIO DOOR - NIGHT 213B

We follow her from behind as she arrives in front of the studio door.

She swipes her badge over the screen that unlocks the door and finds herself standing face to face with the assistant director...

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - NYE SHOW
Ah, at last! We were starting to worry... hurry up, you're up in five!

214A INT. NYE STUDIO / HALLWAY THAT LEADS TO THE SET - NIGHT 214A

He leads the way in towards the set as if nothing were wrong...

MonstroElisaSue walks past the staff and CREW MEMBERS who greet her with a broad smile: "**AAAAAH THERE SHE IS! SO BEAUTIFUL!**", "**We love you!**", "**This is where you belong and you'll always belong here!**", « **We can't do without you » We could never do without you!**» "**You're irreplaceable!**"

She smiles, dazed with her cut out face glued on and her teeth stuck all over the place.

Her eyes are filled with tears, moved by so much love.

All of a sudden a loud BEEP rings out...

214B EXT. STUDIO LOT ALLEY / STUDIO DOOR - NIGHT 214B

...Bursting this completely fictitious bubble she just invented.

She's still standing in front of the studio door. Her badge has just opened the secure door.

In front of her: the long empty corridor that leads to the set...

CUT TO:

215 INT. NEW YEAR EVE STAGE - NIGHT 215

ON STAGE - LAST MOMENTS BEFORE GOING ON AIR

The group of dancers is ready on stage, awaiting her.

Harvey and the shareholders in front row seats, their eyes gleaming with excitement and expectation.

HARVEY
(proud, to the men)
You won't be disappointed. She's my
most beautiful creation. I shaped
her for success!

Friendly pat on the shoulder in return: Atta boy...

The live countdown starts... 5....4...3...

A figure backlit by the violent stage lights walks onto the
soundstage.

2...

The figure comes to take her place in the middle of the sexy
dancers.

1...

A buzz of whispers rise up... and freeze...

LIGHTS. CAMERA/ON AIR.

LIVE.

Great silence.

Monstroelisasue on the stage in the middle of the dancers.

The sound of a fly buzzing through the room.

The cameramen remain completely still.

Just like the little red dot of light.

Just like the audience.

Just like Harvey and his clique.

The dancers with feathers sticking out of their asses placed
around Monstroelisasue haven't moved an inch; they glance at
each other, not knowing what to do.

Monstroelisasue, her shapeless body, her cut out paper face
with the red lipstick smile drawn on top of it.

The mike lets out a feedback noise.

A silent wave of shudders passes through the room.

MonstroElisaSue tries not to let herself be disconcerted and
talks into the microphone as if everything were normal: (tap
tap on the microphone with her mush finger)

MONSTROELISASUE
I AM FO HAPPFY TO BE WIFF YOU
TOFIGHT... I'FE MIFFED YOU FO
MUFCH...

Her ridiculous half stuck on mask detaches itself...
revealing her monstrous face.

A beat.

Thrrrup - a breast sticks out of the monster's eye socket and
starts swinging at the end of the optic nerve...

...

The shrill, high-pitched scream of a WOMAN (WOMAN#1) suddenly
interrupts this suspended moment...and right then... ALL HELL
breaks loose.

COMPLETE PANIC INSIDE THE ROOM

MAN 1
THE MONSTER!!!

MAN 2
SHOOT THE MONSTER!!!

MAN 3
IT'S A FREAK!!!

A MOTHER hides her DAUGHTER'S eyes (she's wearing the same
mini-dress as Monstro)

The music starts up automatically and the dancers look at
each other in panic, not knowing what to do... some start to
take a few steps... while others make the most of this moment
of confusion to run away, rushing off the set.

MonstroElisaSue looks around her and starts to panic as
people's screams grow louder and louder in the room.

MONSTROELISASUE
FDON'T BE FCARED... LET ME
EXPFLAIN...

She tries to stop people from running but they break away
while insulting her:

WOMAN #3
FREAK!

MAN#4
YOU FREAK!

MONSTROELISASUE
IT'F ME...IT'F FTILL ME... I'M FE
FSAME....(Elisabeth's face,
embedded in the monster's back is
speaking at the same time)

SOMEONE pushes past her and makes her fall over violently.

A spotlight turns on and shines down on her. She shades her face and eyes with her hands to prevent the blinding light from burning her eyes and dazzling her...

ELISABETH
IT'F ME! FUE! ELIFABEFF!...

IT'F ME!

ME !

She gets up and tries to pick up the microphone but her hand remains glued to it and **CRACK** detaches itself from her wrist!

Everyone is sprayed with the blood now gushing out of her arm stump, like a snow canon.

More horrified screams rise up.

She sprays blood in every direction, like a lawn hose, while spinning around in her princess dress.

SPLASH ON HARVEY!

SPLASH ON THE SHAREHOLDERS!

SPLASH ON THE LITTLE GIRL!

New burst of terrified screams.

HARVEY
(to the infuriated
shareholders who mime
slitting their throats to
say:"you're done")
Let me explain!!

MONSTROELISASUE
(to the public)
LETF ME EFPLAI-

BAM! SOMEONE KNOCKS HER OVER THE HEAD WITH THE MIC STAND.

MonstroElisaSue's head is half destroyed. A new head - a mix of Sue and Elisabeth is sticking out of the gaping hole. She leaves the set to escape the crowd's fury.

216 **INT. BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT** 216

She runs through the corridor, the famous corridor, where she leaves an immense trail of blood, spraying the walls as she passes.

Complete carnage.

217 **EXT. STUDIO LOT ALLEY - NIGHT** 217

She runs outside in agony...

218A **EXT. NIGHT STREET 1 - NIGHT** 218A

...wheezing more and more as she rushes into the street in a panic.

She's scared and she wants to be left alone.

She's trying to get somewhere. We can tell she knows where she's heading.

218B **EXT. NIGHT STREET 2 - NIGHT** 218B

She runs through the streets as fast as she can.

Her legs dislocate and collapse underneath her.

SPLASH ! The billboards get splattered with blood as she crumples to the floor.

She tries to get up. But her body no longer really has a human form and she has neither legs nor arms to get up as her body dislocates more and more into a bloody magma mass:

MUSHOFMONSTROELIZASUE

She continues to drag herself along the sidewalk, desperately wanting to get somewhere...

Her breathing is more and more wheezy, but she doesn't give up; she continues to drag her bloody blob along the sidewalk giving everything she has to give to keep on going...

CUT TO:

219 **EXT. WALK OF FAME SIDEWALK - NIGHT AND DAY** 219

STATIC HIGH ANGLE TOP SHOT on the pink star on top of the grey slabs upon which we can read:

ELIZABETH SPARKLE

A long silent beat on the star, which seems like a moment of peace in comparison to the previous images of carnage.

We then see a piece of flesh crawling into the corner of the frame trying to drag itself over to the star.

In agony, MushofMonstroElisaSue, puts her last efforts into heaving what remains of her body onto the middle of the star.

She winds up in the middle of the star, looking up at the sky which grows more and more dazzling as if spotlights were shining right down on her.

Gold confetti starts to fall from the sky upon her like a golden rain shower...

Noises of the street and cars muffled little by little, turn into the sound of applause and grandiloquent music.

MushofMonstroElisaSue watches the confetti fall down on her monstrous face like in a dream, as if everything were disappearing around her and she were alone in the world inside this golden rain.

We can sense that she is utterly happy, as though she were thoroughly experiencing her moment of accomplishment and glory as mush on the sidewalk...

The confetti continues to fall as she dissolves more and more...

PUDDLEOFMONSTROELIZASUE

...is overwhelmed by the sound of applause... and dissolves even more until there's now only a large, bloody stain...

Which looks a lot like the splattered ketchup from the beginning.

A beat.

We hear a roaring sound, which grows louder and louder... as day breaks...

And a large street cleaning machine with black rotary brushes glides across the frame, its soapy mouth wiping clean the traces of blood on the pavement...

BLACK - over which the music from **THE TRASH VERSION OF THE WORLD IS A VAMPIRE BLARES LOUDLY.**

THE END