



In Mind

CLOSE UP ON: A SHELL

As we move away slowly, the shell is surrounded by more shells. As we continue the move, the shells are forming a pattern. We can't tell what it is. Even though we've now fully seen the shape (an equilateral triangle, one foot each side, with smaller triangles within the centre) we don't recognize it. Perhaps a Nordic ruin of some sort. But unmistakably a "sign".

BEACH - DAY

The shells are on the beach. Looking down at them, we cannot see much but sand and this shape. Waves crash closer and closer to the shells—they are broken apart by a wave, its crashing sound swelling when we:

CUT TO:

CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - BED COVERS - NIGHT

Fill the frame. Two little hands pull them down quickly revealing a girls face who's been woken by this dream. Even with sleep in her eyes, we can tell this is a principle character. Indeed, this is YOUNG SIERRA HEXTON, age eleven.

WIDE

Two single beds are crammed into a tiny room. One side has dolls, colouring utensils, stuffed animals. The other has posters of the Misfits, Billie Eilish, a shirtless Ryan Gosling, and a vanity dresser crammed with makeup kits whose colours are mostly shades of dark red, dark purple and black. The contrast is as if a museum from 2100 recreated a "sisters in the year 2020" exhibition, with "prepubescent" and "angsty teenager" divided in the middle.

Sierra sits up, seeing something: the other bed is missing her sister. She's out late frequently so it's not a large reaction from Sierra.

CUT TO:

KITCHEN - OPEN FRIDGE

With scant food items. Sierra removes the milk.

CUBBOARD

The lowest shelf is empty. She reaches in vain for a glass on the upper shelf.

KITCHEN FLOOR

Two little feet step onto a stack of books with titles like: "How to Get Back On Track", "A Woman's Guide to Surviving After Surviving", "Power Within: Overcoming Domestic Abuse"

HOUSE HALLWAY - WIDE

Walking with glass of milk in hand she is about to go back to her room. But stops short. Freezing in place. We pan over to see there is light coming from under another door in the foreground. A shadow moves.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM DOOR

The other side of the door we can hear a flushing. A faint breathing is heard on the other side. But nothing that gives anything away.....yet.

A little hand raises into frame. About to knock but then doesn't. Sierra puts her ear to the door to listen. Her brow furled in concern. Her mouth slightly ajar from curiosity. Her milk glass clenched tightly.

CUT TO:

MOM'S BEDROOM - COVERS - NIGHT

Worn hands sleepily pull them down to reveal a worn woman (paralleling the previous shot with Sierra's covers). Her breathing pushes her hair outward, falling back onto her face during the inhale.

MOM

(semi-consciously)

Triangle's not gonna hurt you
Sierra. Mommy's up early today. Go
to bed please.

WIDE

Mom is in a double bed, alone. A clock reads: 3:33AM. The small room is very messy but of the sort caused by stress rather than sloth. A old flatscreen TV displays a muted infomercial. Sierra stands at the doorway with her milk and turns to exit.

CHILD'S BEDROOM - BEDSIDE TABLE

The milk is placed down beside Sierra's bed. We JUMP CUT to the glass being empty. In the same shot, THROUGH THE GLASS, we see a distorted image of the sister's empty bed. A very large figure, surely not the sister, perhaps not even human, silently makes its way over to the bed.

SIERRA

In bed, facing away from her sister's half of the room. Her eyes wince open at the sound of covers being ruffled behind her. More concern is in her eyes now. Something feels off.

Her hand pulls down a lamp string, illuminating Sierra's worried face. We cut quickly to her POV: her sister's bed is no longer vacant. But the figure underneath the covers is normal looking.

SIERRA

Sam?

She reaches again for the lamp string. But stops. Something in the corner of her vision catches her attention. Sierra stares intently at the glass on her bedside table. She picks it up, holds it inches from her face.

HER POV:

Through the glass. It leaves frame—showing the sister's normal figure on the bed. It comes back into frame—revealing the massive figure.

SIERRA

Not sure what to make of it. She keeps waving the glass back and forth in front of her eye. The other closed as if aiming a gun. The glass comes into, and then leaves the frame, a few more times.

HER POV:

As the glass comes into frame again, suddenly A HIDEOUS BLOATED FACE appears behind the glass, droopy and saggy, like melted wax.

Sierra's diaphragm projects a SCREAM that easily carries to the neighbourhood. The glass shatters onto the floor.

MOM'S BEDROOM

She sits up in terror. "That wasn't a bad dream scream".

BATHROOM - WIDE

Through the doorway we push in towards the sink, drops of blood on the floor. We peer over the lip of the sink and see it's filled with contents from a stomach, finally landing our move to an EXTREME CLOSE UP of a bloodied razor.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: IN MIND

CLOSE UP ON:

The words "Cutting Edge" are underlined by a hand out of frame. Holding on it for a beat.

PROFESSOR (OS)

In 2020 the Nobel Prize for Chemistry was awarded to Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna for their work on gene editing. They made science-fiction a reality with an invention called CRISPR—a DNA modifying tool.

YOUNG WOMAN

With glasses, sitting in the middle row. Dressed business casual with a personal touch of colour. Her eyes are intense, as if they'd seen everything. This isn't too far from the truth. This is GROWN UP SIERRA.

PROFESSOR (OS) (CONT'D)

This is sort of like having access to the zeroes and ones of a computer's source code.

Looking down at her work as she types in her laptop, we see files on the screen marked "CHEM 420", "PHYS 400", "BIO 302", "PSYCH 435", "PSYCH 430" and so on.

BOOK

Beside her laptop is titled: "Paranormal Psychology by Dr. Maya Malison". We hold on this author's name for a beat.

PROFESSOR (OS) (CONT'D)

But our source code is in A,G,T, and C, not zeroes and ones. If that isn't science-fiction turned reality, of all cockamamie things, what is?

RIVERSIDE COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - WIDE

At the whiteboard, a MIDDLE-AGED PROFESSOR with mousey features. A SMALL CLASS takes notes as sun trickles through the high pane windows of what seems like a respectable college campus.

THEN: He draws the same TRIANGLE shape in Sierra's dream on the board. (Note: this occurs a bit like the dream sequence in American Beauty (1999) where, from the bleachers, Lester watches his daughter's friend's cheerleading routine. The music change, lighting change, etc.)

PROFESSOR

Speaking of cock, Sierra, shouldn't you be focusing on my class instead of your father?

CUT TO:

BEACH

We're back at the dream sequence. A child's hand, palm down on the sand, is gripped with a male adult's.

BACK TO:

Sierra--shocked. Looking back at the professor. Not sure what to say. The professor glares at Sierra as if the whole class isn't there.

PROFESSOR

Even though he's long gone. You're still worried about what was left behind. Scar tissue in the mind. Afraid daddy might come back. But it's what's motivated you to be an A student, can't you see that?

Sierra stands up forcefully.

SIERRA

No!

She looks around. The whole class is staring at her.

PROFESSOR

He turns around from the writing he was doing. Apparently as surprised as the rest of the class. There's no triangle on the white board.

SIERRA

Frozen as if awakening from a nightmare, now coming to. Embarrassment takes the place of terror as she realizes what's happened. Shit.

PROFESSOR

Uh, moral trepidations aside, gene editing is here to stay.

HALLWAY - LATER

Two figures are chatting, silhouetted by a bright window down the hall. HAROLD SCHRUKLE is speaking with THE DEAN, they're finishing a conversation. The Dean exits.

Schrukle is a rotund older man with stubby legs who always wears a pink bowtie and is in touch with his "sensitive side". He's holding a coffee overfilled to the brim. As he turns away from the Dean, Sierra startles him.

SCHRUKLE

Oops! Woah.
(Seeing coffee spilt on
his pink bowtie)
Look at that, entropy wins again.

SIERRA

Sorry. Can I ask you something professor?

Schrukle begins walking, Sierra follows.

SCHRUKLE

Everything all right, kid? Looks like you've seen a ghost.

SIERRA

That's what I wanted to talk to you about actually. Do you have a minute?

SCHRUKLE

'Fraid not kid, I'm already indebted minutes, they're charging me interest at this point. Won't live past sixty. Ha!
(Seeing no reaction from
Sierra)
My office hours are later today.
I'll book you in for three.

SIERRA

Thanks. I'll be there.

COLLEGE FOOD COURT - SHORTLY AFTER

Sierra sits alone eating her lunch. Tekkamaki sushi. She's reading "Paranormal Psychology" again from the previous scene. She looks up across the room to see a group of THREE STUDENTS looking her way, then, smirking, they turn back.

CROSSFADE: From Sierra's book, to "Crime and Punishment".
We're at:

RIVERSIDE SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION - CASHIER DESK

It's being held by a tall, handsome man with sharp cheeks, dark blonde surfer hair and an athletic frame. This is BROCK. He's standing at the cashier till. We're in an alcove of the Student Union Building where other college clubs set up shop and offices.

Sierra's reached into a little fridge for a chocolate milk near the cashier desk.

BROCK

Will that be everything?

SIERRA

Yeah.

(Pause)

You're--reading quite the paperweight.

BROCK

A-what?

SIERRA

Um, I was just saying--your book is, you know, like a paperweight.

BROCK

Uh. Yeah.

She pays and leaves in a hurry.

CUT TO:

WOODEN DESK

Covered with hand-written research papers, psycho-analytic instruments of foreign quality, and stacks of books, all with arcane titles of jargon like "Phylogenesis of the Collective Unconscious". We hover above this production design eye candy for a few beats.

SCHRUKLE (OS)
 ...You shouldn't have asked him
 that Sierra.

SIERRA (OS)
 It was none of my business, I get
 it, but I had to. Never hurts to
 try, right?

SCHRUKLE'S OFFICE - WIDE

Professor Schrukle is sitting in his desk, another cup of coffee filled to the brim on his side. He is removing his stained pink bowtie. Sierra stands opposite.

SCHRUKLE
 Look, the police are desperate,
 this is true. But they won't simply
 go off about confidential murder
 files to any Tom, Dick and Harry
 that asks.

SIERRA
 I'm a psychologist. They should
 trust me.

SCHRUKLE
 You're a student. Not a
 psychologist. And, by the way, no
 respected psychologist would ever
 take that cockamamie stuff
 seriously.

SIERRA
 Why does everyone say that?

SCHRUKLE
 Because Doctor Maya Malison is a
 phoney. Her work is all speculation
 and can't be recreated in
 laboratory conditions.

SIERRA
 No, I mean that word. Cockamamie.
 It's so old. And gross.

SCHRUKLE
 Is that why you came here? To ask
 me about my vernacular?

Sierra shakes her head. Schrukle finishes removing his sullied bowtie, then opens a desk drawer filled with fresh bowties and puts one on.

SIERRA

You're profiling the murderer. I want to help.

SCHRUKLE

(studying her)

No. You want to meet Maya. I'll save my breath asking how you know she's profiling the murders with me. I'll save even more of my breath to ask whether you've heard she's hiring an assistant.

Sierra nods slowly.

SCHRUKLE (CONT'D)

When's her test, tomorrow?

Sierra nods again.

SCHRUKLE (CONT'D)

Well the answer's "no". I'm not helping you study the psychological equivalent of astrology.

Sierra looks down in disappointment. He gets up and goes to the door.

SIERRA

Where're you going?

SCHRUKLE

You're my first and last appointment.

He turns in the doorway towards Sierra.

SCHRUKLE (CONT'D)

Would you like a ride home?

EXT. SMALL CITY ROADS

We get to know the setting. Professor Schrukle's car drives past the town church, a strip mall, a high-school, and so on. Sheerbrook is between a large town and small city. North American facade, yet geographically undefined with both pine trees and deciduous trees lining streets and mountains.

INT. CAR - DAY

Schruckle puffs away on a cigar. He's a man that believes, relative his image, he ought to puff one rather than specifically preferring them. NOTE: Interior car shots can be intercut with the passing townscapes.

SCHRUCKLE

I know smoking's no good. But it helps me think. You know what else I know? A sizeable percentage of students are doing Ritalin, Dextrin, amphetamines of all types. Why? It helps them think. We both know it's bad for us, but I'd rather take a chance with my lungs, not my brain.

SIERRA

Well, you don't have to risk either of them do you?

SCHRUCKLE

Point being, it's all about perspective. You're brand new. Wide-eyed. This kook that's managed to enchant you, you know she's wrong. But want her to be right. We all do. If mental illnesses were as simple as "mind parasites", life would make more sense.

SIERRA

"Parasitus psychica". Mind parasite sounds like pulp fiction.

SCHRUCKLE

Now you're catching on, kid.

SIERRA

But I've seen one. I really think I've seen one--oh, turn right here.

EXT. MODEST SUBURBAN AREA

Schruckle's car stops. Sierra gets out of the passenger seat carrying her school bag.

SCHRUCKLE

Bye, kid. Stay safe.

SIERRA

Thanks for the ride.

PAVEMENT - CAR TIRE

As the wheel of Schrukle's car drives away we hold on the pavement. We JUMP CUT TO: later, and see a set of SNOW TIRE CHAINS laid down. Another car rolls onto them, a newish Honda Civic (the same car Sierra drives). The chains are snapped together by an unseen person.

BUYER (OS)

I've seen 'em new for the same price.

A CRAIGSLIST BUYER GUY stands on the sidewalk, folded arms over a beer gut. He has a goatee style that's rarely worn by honest people (you know the one).

SIERRA

Then buy new.

BUYER

They're already on my car tires. You should've told me you didn't haggle before I put them on my car tires.

SIERRA

The price is already really low.

BUYER

And why're you selling 'em precisely ma'am? They stolen?

SIERRA

I used to ski but now I've got student loans.

BUYER

Uh-huh. My kid's got loans too, doesn't stop him from shreddin' pow.

SIERRA

(Enough is enough)
Look, do you want the chains or not.

BUYER

(Puts on a plastic grin)
Okay, fine. You win. But I need a test ride.

Before she can disagree, he gets in and drives off, the chains clak-clak-clak-clak-clak down the road. Turning a corner, he's never seen again.

WIDE

Sierra stands at the side of the road for a beat—audibly sighs upon realizing what happened—goes back inside. The wind starts picking up, its HOWL is matched with the following sound of the next scene:

KITCHEN - ANGLE UP AT STOVE VENT - LATER

The fan's sound crossfaded with the wind blowing through the stove vent. We tilt down onto a pan as Sierra sprays aerosol grease into it. The GREASE CATCHES FLAME in the pan (NOTE: this is important foreshadowing for the ending as we'll see). She slams a lid over it, extinguishing them, her other hand holding her phone.

SIERRA (OS)

...There's more rats than last year. Is that why it's going up? Do the rats increase the value?
...Believe me Vera, you'd know if I was loosing my temper.

JUMP CUT - SOON
LATER:

Sierra's facing camera and gesturing around a package of noodles like a showgirl from the "Price is Right" gameshow. A lock of hair is pinched with her upper lip like a moustache.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

(French accent) Ah, oui, monsieur. Tonight we have ze marvellous chef special. Instant noodles a la chicken. Or, ze classic: instant noodles with beef. So riveting. You can really taste ze love in ze artificial flavouring.

CAT

Stares back at her with indifference. Silly human.

BOILING POT

Noodles are dropped into the pot. And stirred for a beat.

WIDE - LIVING ROOM / DINING ROOM - LATER

Cozy. Sierra is eating at her dinner table. "LO-FI" electronic music plays. Despite the complaints, the meal seems pretty tasty.

She's in a single bedroom apartment, small but very orderly. An old Phrenology chart is on the wall, as well as pictures of psychologists including Jung, Freud, Adler, Mary Ainsworth, and another whom we don't yet recognize as DR. MAYA MALISON.

She's again reading "Paranormal Psychology" at the table while eating. She flips a page to reveal bizarre creatures, one with an obscenely BLOATED FACE LIKE MELTED WAX not incomparable to the one at the beginning of the movie. She flips to the next page where various nordic RUIN-LIKE symbols line the page. None are precisely like the "dream triangle" that she's seen in her dreams, but all have a similar aesthetic.

A traditional phone sound RING RINGS out in the apartment. We push in towards the sound, over the top of the couch we tilt down to see it's her cellphone. It says "UNKNOWN CALLER". (NOTE: this will be dramatized as if this is a call from Dr. Malison or else someone very important)

Sierra's hand reaches into frame to grab it.

SIERRA

Hello?

PHONE

(Mechanical Voice)

Hello. This is the FBI. This is our final attempt to contact you. You will be convicted in criminal court if you do not wire us \$5,000 immediately--

SIERRA

Son-of-a-bitch.

CUT TO:

CAT

Is curled up. We pull out to reveal he's on the bed.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sierra gets in and we hold on her facial expression. She's forlornly staring out the window out towards the street lights. She sees a neighbour putting out a garbage bin.

Sierra reaches over to something off screen. We hear an electronic buzzing noise. Her facial expressions become more relaxed, her eyes close.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

The electric humming is crossfaded with feedback static of a PA system.

MALE VOICE (OS)

Hi everyone. Name's Richardson.
This is a mammoth test so I'd like
to jump right into things. Dr.
Malison said I ought to say
"mammoth" specifically. For effect
I guess.

INT. SMALL AUDITORIUM - DOWNTOWN - LONG SHOT

It's quite dark. A spotlight directly above dramatizes the scene. About a dozen students are sitting at tables arranged in a circle, at computers with "privacy wall" blinders in between each person. They are at the SPEAKER'S END of the auditorium, empty seats where audiences usually sit surround them like a coliseum.

RICHARDSON is a lanky Ph.D candidate looking guy. Clean but poorly fitting clothes.

RICHARDSON

She also told me to tell you that
it is absolutely imperative to read
the instructions carefully. Your
final scores will be a function of
your test marks, as well as when
you finish, so, best be a hare
rather than a turtle. Except don't
take a nap right before the finish
line. Anyways, you get the analogy.
Are there any questions?

(Seeing none)

You have two point five hours,
starting now. Good luck.

SIERRA

Her brow furled in intense concentration, her eyes glide around the computer screen, unblinking, absorbing the information. She has a fresh number 2 pencil in her mouth.

SCREEN

In capitalized bold we see "READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY". Sierra scrolls past them like a normal human.

She gets to the first question: "1) In 1953, the diagnosis of what is considered to be the very first case of paranormal psychology on record, was prognosticated using what psychotherapy method? By whom?"

CLOSE: SCROLLING ON THE MOUSE

She's scrolled to the bottom of the test: the number at the bottom? Question 500.

SIERRA

Jesus.

Sierra puts up her hand.

RICHARDSON

Yes?

SIERRA

Are we expected to finish this test? I mean, five hundred questions. That's three questions a minute.

RICHARDSON

All the more reason not to ask frivolous questions.

Sierra's focus is back at the computer. Her expression is more deflated. She sighs quite deeply. WE JUMP CUT TO:

CHEWED PENCIL

It's picked up and tapped on the table impatiently.

SIERRA

Is clearly withdrawn and defeated. She's looking up over the computer, apparently lost in thought. Then, as if answering a question in her head, she focuses back on the computer.

MOUSE WHEEL SCROLLING UP

SCREEN

She's back at the beginning of the test. She starts reading the instructions. "1) Cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught with..."--SCROLLING--"4) This test is not open book. Students may use..."--SCROLLING--"15) Answers must be written in full sentences unless otherwise directed by the question..."--SCROLLING--"50) Look under your mouse pad."

SIERRA

What?

(To herself)

"Look under you mousepad"...

Sierra, confused for a beat, removes the mouse and flips the mousepad over. Nothing out of the ordinary.

SCREEN

"51) Find the serial number inscribed next to the barcode"

Sierra looks over her shoulders but realizes how suspicious this is and stops. MACRO SHOT of the mousepad serial number.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

Weird...

(then)

"52. Type the barcode number into question 444 to indicate you've read these instructions"

She scrolls to question "444" and types the 13-digit barcode of her mousepad into the question. Then scrolls back up.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

Double weird.

(Then)

"53. Press: "Finish Test""

SIERRA

Very uncertain now but the glint in her eye has returned. Her gut was telling her something was off and this might be proving it.

SCREEN - FINISH TEST BUTTON

The computer clicker hovers over it a beat. Clicks. Then:

"EXCUSE YOURSELF. THEN GO TO ROOM 444."

RICHARDSON

In the background. We rack focus to the foreground as a hand comes into frame with a question.

RICHARDSON

Yes?

SIERRA

Can I go to the washroom please?

OFFICE BUILDING HALLWAY

Sierra's uneasily walking. It's late at night. The office building is empty and the lights are mostly off. It's a 1920's building with grandiose metal handrails and checkered tile flooring.

STAIRWAY

Up the stairs. Almost tripping near the top.

OFFICE DOOR

We move up towards the number on the door: "444"

HALLWAY - LONG SHOT

Sierra is alone in the Hallway. Not a sound is heard anywhere.

SLOMOTION:

Sierra hand finally curls into a fist. We follow it from her side, all the way up until it makes contact with the door three times. Three sonorous knocking sounds reverberate through the hall.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

Who is it?

SIERRA

The test told me to come here.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

A test told you to come here?

SIERRA

Yes, the, um, the test I took—just now, told me to come here—uh, I think I made a mistake. Sorry to bother you.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

Took you long enough. Come in.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE OFFICE - NIGHT

There are opened boxes with books, as if someone has just moved in. The lights are dim.

Sierra is standing, we hold on her. We still have not revealed who this voice is. The person goes to and fro in the foreground. Pacing as she speaks. Her voice is low, raspy. Her inflections are of a woman for whom life holds few surprises.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

Good help is hard to come by these days. Can't trust tests. Know why? Intelligence isn't important anymore. Any ten-year-old with a phone can outsmart the smartest college student without wifi. What's impossible to test is wisdom. How one uses their knowledge is far more important than the knowledge itself. And that includes knowing when something is so stupid it couldn't possibly be real. Like my test.

We cut to the reverse of Sierra. The woman has sat down into a swivel chair facing away from us. Slowly, as it spins—the following line is delivered and we reveal: DR. MAYA MALISON in the flesh.

MALISON

You passed. But that doesn't mean you're my assistant. Not yet.

SIERRA

Instantly beams in satisfaction. But holds back her contentment upon hearing the latter half of the previous comment.

MALISON (CONT'D)

Well, I guess I'd better have a look at you.

Sierra, still standing a little too rigidly, awkwardly keeps facing forward as Dr. Malison circles her like a stalking lion. Malison's gaze is intense. We aren't sure what she's doing until:

MALISON (CONT'D)

Pretty standard. Cute, shy college student. Enough to get some attention.

(MORE)

MALISON (CONT'D)

Uses a pink vibrator in the
meantime. Eyes, however, tell a
deeper story. Pain. Sadness. Guilt.
But also strength. Purpose.

Malison grabs Sierra by the shoulders and brings her to peer
at the adjacent wall.

MEDIUM SHOT: SIERRA

Is brought into the frame, facing the camera. Malison is
still "guiding" her by the shoulders.

MALISON (CONT'D)

Who is this funny little character
here?

Sierra studies it thoughtfully.

SIERRA

...Must be a form of PTSD.

REVERSE ON: Framed drawing of a creepy looking "she-creature"
with bulging eyes. NOTE: All of the following drawings are
done like a criminal mug shot. One bust shot facing camera.
One profile.

MALISON

Willian Hersch. Twelve. Psycho-
projection I diagnosed last year.

Malison brings her to the next drawing.

SIERRA

Schizophrenia.

The next drawing shows a devilish creature with long teeth
and a pointed skull.

MALISON

Good.

She guides Sierra to the next one.

MALISON (CONT'D)

And?

SIERRA

Depression.

The drawing is of a chained ghost looking creature. With
flame-like tendrils shrouding over it like a robe.

Malison brings her to another drawing on the wall.

SIERRA (CONT'D)
Multiple Personality Disorder.

This drawing has a multi-faced creature with hands propping it up instead of feet.

Sierra is brought to the next image. We hold on her for a beat. Something about this next drawing throws her off.

MALISON
Well?

SIERRA
It's anorexia nervosa.

MALISON
You've seen this before?

Sierra nods slowly. She clenches her jaw to avoid what would otherwise be an emotional tremble.

We reveal the image to see it is the bloated creature—oozing features resembling a fat melted candle with little twig legs and feet—and a face like Jabba the Hutt (or the polluted river spirit from *Spirited Away* (2001))

MALISON (CONT'D)
Then you know what we're dealing with here. That's good.

Malison goes back to her desk, leaving Sierra standing there.

MALISON (CONT'D)
Tomorrow. 3pm. Meet me at the West Sheerbrook Police Station.

SIERRA
So I got the job?

MALISON
Mmm-hmm. Better leave before I change my mind.

Suddenly, Dr. Malison lets out CACKLING laughter like a plotting villain from a Disney film.

MALISON (CONT'D)
Those idiots! They're still writing my impossible quiz.

AUDITORIUM

Sierra enters back into the room, walking straight to where she was sitting.

RICHARDSON

Uh, miss, you forfeit the test.
There's no point sitting back down.

Sierra grabs the school bag that was sitting beside her chair. 180's and walks back towards the door. She stops in front of Richardson. She puts something in his hand.

SIERRA

(With a sly grin)
I give up.

HAND

Opening his fingers, we see a gross chewed up pencil.
Richardson shakes his head in pity.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: ALARM CLOCK RINGING

BEDROOM - WIDE - DAY

Sierra practically leaps out of bed.

SIERRA

Yes!

SHOWER

Through her mirror we see her silhouette dancing.

BATHROOM

Brushing her teeth with glee.

CAT BOWL

She dumps a heaping quantity of cat foot into it. Cat starts devouring. Good human.

CUT TO:

CHOCOLATE MILK BOTTLE

Being taken from the little fridge at:

RIVERSIDE SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION - CASHIER DESK

Sierra is at the cashier, where Brock's standing idle again.

SIERRA

Hi.

BROCK

Hey.

Sierra taps her credit card on the machine, pauses, then:

SIERRA

Look, um.

(deep breath)

I see you in here a lot and I think
you're really handsome and- would
you like to go out with me? Ever?

Brock's facial features give nothing away. Then after what
feels like days:

BROCK

Please go away.

SIERRA

(Shrivelling)

Oh, god. I'm sorry. I should've,
ah, I'm sorry.

BROCK

(From poker face into a
smile)

I'm messing, relax. I'm just
messing with ya.

From profound cringe to disbelief, she's on a rollercoaster.

SIERRA

You're messing...?

BROCK

Sorry.

SIERRA

That's actually--pretty mean.

BROCK

I would love to go out with you.

SIERRA
You would?

BROCK
Yeah I would. Where'd you like to go?

SIERRA
Oh, uh, Sushi? I know a great sushi place.

BROCK
I love sushi.

Beat. Sierra's smiles sheepishly, still tongue-tied.

BROCK (CONT'D)
Well, I'm off tonight at six. Why don't you meet me here.

SIERRA
Oh, six? Yeah, okay.

BROCK
Tonight.

SIERRA
Tonight. Right, uh, I'll meet you here.

Sierra turns to leave, but:

BROCK
Hey.

Sierra turns back around.

BROCK (CONT'D)
I didn't catch your name.

SIERRA
Oh, yeah, sorry. It's Sierra.

BROCK
Nice to meet you Sierra. I'm Brock.

SIERRA
Nice to meet you--Brock.

We hold on her as she walks away from Brock. The unmistakable expression of relief washes over her.

CROSSFADE:

CURTAINS

They swing to the side showing us we are actually seeing a change room. Sierra steps out wearing a nice outfit. She poses towards camera.

CLOTHING STORE - DAY

MOM (OS)

Oh, yeah. I like that one.

SIERRA

I kinda liked the other one better.

MOM

This one suits you more.

Mom (now in her 50's) is on Sierra's phone, video chatting from another clothes rack facing the change room.

Sierra looks at herself in the mirror. Her open posture shows a confidence we haven't seen before. (NOTE: Sierra listens to Mom over herself, marking a key development later on when she disobey's her)

SIERRA

Yeah. Okay.

MOM (OS)

Gotta go, honey. I'll see you this weekend for dinner. Love you.

SIERRA

Bye. Love you.

SIERRA'S BATHROOM - DAY

She's putting on some eyeliner and other makeup, now strewn everywhere. A Bluetooth speaker is playing news beside the sink.

SPEAKER (OS)

...the young boy is in critical condition and is believed to be the latest victim in a string of murders plaguing the town of Sheerbrook. Police are asking any potential witnesses to come forward with information related to these cases.

SIERRA
 (Screwing up her lipstick)
 Crap.

CHEF (OS)
 "Irasshaimase!"

SUSHI - CLOSE UP

Chopsticks struggle to pick one up. A second try, this time pinching the roll so hard it breaks apart.

SIERRA (OS)
 Like this.

Another hand, this one using correct chopstick technique. It picks up a sushi from a platter.

INT. SUNRISE SUSHI PALACE - NIGHT

Ironically quite small considering the name. Traditional Japanese waves and pagodas decorate the walls. An open kitchen where the Itamae (chef) rolls some rolls. Sierra sits with Brock at a two seater. She's wearing the outfit she picked out with Mom.

BROCK
 This place is--nice.

SIERRA
 Yeah, I really like the "tekkamaki" here.

BROCK
 The what?

SIERRA
 The tekkamaki. It means tuna sushi.

A silent beat as they eat. Brock's getting the hang of chopsticks.

SIERRA (CONT'D)
 You know, I was impressed with that book you were reading the other day.

BROCK
 Crime and Punishment?

SIERRA
 Yeah.

BROCK

Why? It's not like its any good.
All those old-timer writing guys,
you know they're all fakes.

SIERRA

Well, what subjects do you like
then?

BROCK

None of them really. The soccer
program is why I'm there. My dad
knows the Dean, says they'll get me
into Major League Soccer but I
gotta get a degree.

Sierra nods in sympathy.

BROCK (CONT'D)

How about you?

SIERRA

My dad left when I was ten.

BROCK

(Pausing)

I meant like--what do you do?

SIERRA

Uh, right. Sorry. I'm graduating
this May. BA in Psychology.

BROCK

That's dope.

SIERRA

I've always been interested in how
people think, you know? Like, it's
just so interesting.

BROCK

For example?

SIERRA

For example... usually our
motivations are driven by emotion,
but the conscious mind repackages
it to seem like we're doing things
by reason rather than
sentimentality. It's called
"reverse rationalization".

BROCK

Reverse rationalization?

SIERRA

Yeah. But being aware of it,
doesn't make you immune.

BROCK

You know what, I take that back.

SIERRA

Take what back?

BROCK

About not liking any subjects. I
like psychology.

SIERRA

Oooh be careful. I could talk about
it all day.

BROCK

Try me.

UNDER THE TABLE

Brock's foot meets Sierra's foot.

The two hold a comfortable pause, smiling lightly at each
other.

CLERK (OS)

Dr. Malison--Dr. Malison?

CUT TO:

INT. SHEERBROOK POLICE STATION - SERVICE DESK - DAY

SIERRA

Yes, Dr. Maya Malison.

CLERK

What is that, like a superhero
name? Far's I know I haven't heard
of this person.

Confused, Sierra turns away, exits frame.

POLICE STATION LOBBY - LATER

Sierra sits there waiting in a plastic chair, absently
watching the officers criss-cross the scene, going about
their work.

VOICE (OS)

Sierra? What're you doing here?

It's: Professor Schrukle with an overfilled cup of coffee (and pink bowtie of course) across the room.

SIERRA

Hi professor, I was supposed to meet with Dr. Malison at three. I'm officially a paranormal psychologist!

A passing POLICEWOMAN glances towards Sierra's little outburst.

SCHRUKLE

Well, I'm happy that you're happy kid. But hold off the celebrations. Assuming you're going where I'm going, you're in for quite the initiation.

SIERRA

Initiation?

SCHRUKLE

Yeah. To be honest, I haven't really been profiling the murderer. They call me in time to time, but I don't contribute much. And while I don't like to admit it, a serial killer isn't adding up. The evidence suggests something—
(To clerk as they pass)
She's with me Tracy.

SIERRA

What?

SCHUKLE

—something "unusual" is happening.

SIERRA

How unusual?

SCHRUKLE

Enough for the constable to give Maya a chance at presenting her case today. We're about to witness the strangest police briefing this department has ever seen.

They exit frame.

CUT TO:

DIGITAL PROJECTOR LENS

Light beaming towards camera. We hold on it for a beat.

MALISON (OS)

Is it unbelievable? Of course it is. Am I trying to convince you otherwise? No.

POLICE BRIEFING ROOM - WIDE

The room is only lit by the projector's reflective glow. About six officers, most in plain clothes, watch with folded arms and disinterested expressions. The door behind them opens as Sierra and Schrukle enter. (NOTE: we don't know them yet, but Clarence and Sherman are in the crowd)

MALISON

But you have eight murders on your hands--most likely nine considering the condition of the latest victim--so it's time to think outside the traditional parameters of reason. It's time to consider "paranormal psychology".

PROJECTOR SCREEN

It changes to show all the strange creatures we've seen in a single collage.

MALISON

My doctoral thesis hypothesized that most, if not all, mental pathologies are influenced by what's called "Parasitus Psychica": a formless parasite which nourishes itself on negative thoughts, sometimes driving the host to death unless quickly diagnosed and addressed.

PROJECTOR SCREEN

We see the next slide consists of dozens of nordic RUIN like shapes.

MALISON

When a victim survives, the result is a mental scar, such as these archetypal symbols, which show up in the "incidental memory" that caused the infection. In other words, trauma invites a Parasitus Psychica in when left untreated. Think of it like an open wound that, if unsterilized, allows bacteria and other harmful germs to enter the body. This is the mental equivalent of that.

SMASH CUT TO SIERRA

She furrows her brow in astonishment and shock as something dawns on her. Then she sees it:

REVEAL: we push in slowly towards the ruins in the presentation. Eventually landing on the unmistakable shape that we've seen twice so far. The "DREAM TRIANGLE".

CUT TO:

BEACH

We match the push-in that just occurred in the previous scene with an identical push-in towards the shells on the beach, which form the same triangle.

MALISON (VO)

(Very echoed)

...the incidental memory...
Incidental memory...

CHILD'S VOICE (OS)

No, daddy. No, please don't.

An adult's hand gripping a child's lands to the right of the triangle.

The waves crash down hard and again wash away the triangle's shape.

BACK TO:

PROJECTOR SCREEN

The waves sound is quickly extinguished. Changing to the next slide, we see the bloated melted wax Psychic Parasite, a title underneath: "Anorexia Nervosa".

MALISON

Depending on the type of Parasitus Psychica, symptoms one would classically diagnose as Anorexia Nervosa or Schizophrenia, for instance, will arise. I have reason to believe, this here, Anorexia Nervosa, is our culprit. A very aggressive one at that.

OFFICER

Nice story. Where's the evidence?

Malison goes to the side of the room, turning on the lights.

MALISON

Glad you asked. Sierra?

The room turns its gaze to follow the eye-line of Malison, now staring at Sierra in the back.

Sierra is frozen, looking around at the stranger's faces like a deer in the headlights.

MALISON (CONT'D)

Tell them.

SIERRA

What, exactly?

MALISON

What you've seen.

SIERRA

(Pausing, looking around the room)

It happened a long time ago. My sister. She came home late one night. Not unusual for her, but tonight was different. I saw the creature where she was. I swear I did. I screamed and woke up the whole street. At the time I thought it was only a distortion. Part of the dream I had. But then I saw Dr. Malison's drawing a few years later and knew. It was the same creature I saw—

OFFICER

—so, hold on, let me clarify in case I've missed something here. Your "evidence" is this girl's thing about a dream she had?

SIERRA

I'm a psychologist not a girl.

SCHRUKLE

She's a student of mine. And yes, I must agree. Maya, I'm not sure why you've needed to impress upon these hard working policemen and women, with your conjectures.

Sierra looks at him with betrayal in her eyes.

SCHRUKLE (CONT'D)

For the record, I, the actual psychologist in the room, do not condone we abandon traditional methods of investigation.

OFFICER

Here-here.

MALISON

What did I say? Did I say you would believe me? No. I'm asking for some manpower. Herald, despite his "revelations", has not given any leads on our killer. We need to interrogate all the previous victim's families to cross-reference the mental condition of each case. If-

(The Officer gets up to leave)

If they-

OFFICER

You'll have better luck building a team in Orlando.

MALISON

...What's in Orlando?

The Officer turns around before exiting--

OFFICER

Mickey Mouse and Goofy.

--and exits. Low chuckles fill the room.

All the officers who are still in the room get up to leave.

Schrukle is leaving as well.

SCHRUKLE
Common Sierra.....Sierra?

Sierra's looking at him, unsure.

SCHRUKLE (CONT'D)
Oh heavens. You're not serious.
(Off her look)
Look, kid. I said I'd help you
apply for Princeton. That won't
happen when you're chasing ghosts.
So what'll it be?

Sierra's thoughtfully considering her options, her gaze meets Schrukle again and she shakes her head slowly.

Disappointed, Schrukle turns to exit, waving his hand over his shoulder like a restaurant patron rudely dismissing a waiter.

WIDE

We hold on the room for a beat as Sierra looks to Malison.

MALISON
Not sure about you--but I could use
a drink.

We finish the scene with a shot towards the PROJECTOR lens again. It's SHUT OFF and we go dark.