

TAME

By

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TAME

TITLE CARD:

Prologue

CUT TO:

EXT. A FARM IN THE IRAQI COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The huge wheels of a truck at a standstill emerge from the thick fog. At the back of the truck, a group of armed men belonging to Daesh, all dressed in black, wave their weapons and SHOUT orders in Arabic.

A group of women and children appear from under the tarp that covers the flatbed of the truck. The men order them to jump. The women push the children aside and jump. The men do nothing to help them. On the contrary, they greet them with insults, make vulgar comments, lift their skirts, or rip off their clothes with jeering laughter. The women who fall on the ground are kicked and beaten with rifle butts. They quickly stand up again, bruised and half-naked.

When the one who leads the operations sees his men harassing women wearing a hijab, he SHOUTS in Arabic:

THE LEADER

Leave these women alone. They will
be the mothers of your children.
With the others, you can do
whatever you want until we sell
them.

It is now the turn of the children to jump, and the women try to help them by catching them in their arms, but the men grab them brutally away. The children SCREAM, terrorized, and the orders and insults that burst from all sides only add to their panic.

The leader notices that one woman, her head covered with a scarf, is pregnant. He asks one of his men:

THE LEADER (CONT'D)

Sexual intercourse with a pregnant
slave is forbidden.
(MORE)

THE LEADER (CONT'D)

Take her away - I don't want my men
to become sullied and unclean.

The man walks away with the woman. A SHOT is heard, and he comes back, alone.

When the truck is empty, women and children are divided into four groups: boys, girls, women wearing a hijab, and women who are not. Very obviously, veiled women are treated with much more respect.

The fog clears to reveal the buildings that bound the courtyard on three of its sides, a high wall and a gate closing the fourth one.

Veiled women and boys are taken to the main body of the farm. The other women are pushed towards the stalls on the left. The men who escort them have already set their sights on the one they want to take first, and do nothing to hide their intentions and excitement. The leader smiles at their frenzy.

As for the girls, they are hurried in the direction of the huge barn to the right. Suddenly, one of them escapes and runs towards her mother, SHOUTING:

THE GIRL

Mama! Mama!

Without hesitation, a guard points his gun at her and shoots. The girl collapses. Her mother faints. The screams and tears have suddenly stopped, as everyone is in shock. While the guards threaten to kill the mother lying on the ground, the women around her swiftly take her by the arms and drag her on the ground towards the stalls.

Aghast, the other girls are pushed inside the barn. The bright luminosity that reigns in the courtyard makes the obscurity inside the barn even more terrifying. Panic sets in when the massive metallic doors close behind them with a deafening sound.

EXT. A FARM IN THE IRAQI COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (LATER)

A few weeks have passed. We see a very peaceful rural landscape.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Iraq, 2014"

SLOW PAN TO THE RIGHT

Calm reigns, in contrast with the violence of the previous scene.

SFX: We HEAR repeated shots, very close.

Outside the farm, Peshmerga soldiers in light-colored army fatigues are lying in ambush on each side of the gate and of a large shell hole in the wall. They exchange fire with the Daesh fighters who occupy the farm.

After a while, the last shots are heard. The leader of the Peshmergas signals to his men to enter the courtyard and disperse.

EXT. A FARM IN THE IRAQI COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (LATER)

The corpses of men in black litter the ground of the courtyard. The Peshmergas spread to cover all the buildings. A few of them take position on both sides of the doors that give access to the different parts of the farm. They wait. Nothing is moving. The silence is oppressive.

On a sign of the leader, the men break open the doors and enter the three buildings. We hear a shot coming from the living quarters of the farm before everything becomes silent.

EXT. A FARM IN THE IRAQI COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (LATER)

Escorted by the Peshmergas, the captives come out of the three buildings and gather in the courtyard.

A dozen women come out of the main body of the farm. They are all wearing a black niqab. Only their eyes are visible. None of them seem to bear discernible marks of violence or abuse. Two of them carry babies in their arms.

They walk with their heads down. A few of them are crying. They all seem to be conscious of the fate that awaits them for having been "married" to the enemy.

One of them sees a Daesh fighter lying on the pavement and rushes toward him, YELLING. A soldier opens fire, and she collapses on the corpse.

In contrast, the women who come out of the stables cannot conceal their joy despite the obvious signs of ill treatment they bear, with their emaciated face, their torn or absent clothes, and the visible marks of beatings. A few of them are unable to walk and have to be supported by their companions. Nevertheless, their faces are radiant at the idea they will escape the fate of the many women they have seen come and go, sold as slaves and taken away by their new master.

The girls coming out of the barn walk glued to each other, blinded by the intensity of the light. The oldest among them show marks of abuse as well.

A young girl (ASHERAH) recognizes a woman coming out of the stables and rushes towards her, CRYING tears of joy:

ASHERAH

Nahid! Nahid!

While a few girls see a familiar face among the survivors, most seem lost and look around in distress.

When everyone is gathered in the courtyard, the COMMANDANT of the Peshmergas sees that one of his soldiers is missing. He heads straight out for the stables and almost immediately reappears, dragging by the collar a man holding his unbuttoned pants. He asks a soldier to handcuff him. A group of women approaches, and they all spit on him. A moment later, a woman comes out of the stables, haggard, her hair undone, her clothes in a mess. Her face is empty of any expression, as if all traces of humanity have definitely vanished from her.

A PRISONER wearing a niqab asks the leader:

THE PRISONER

(in Kurdish)

Where are the boys?

THE COMMANDANT

There are no boys here. They have all been taken away.

She collapses. Women rush to support her.

Finally, the convoy of survivors escorted by the soldiers starts to move. They pass the gate and walk away on the dirt road.

FADE TO BLACK.

END PROLOGUE.

TITLE CARD:

Part One

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET IN TEHRAN (IRAN, 2031) - DAY

It's early in the morning, and the street is empty. Everything is clean and neat in the soft shades of the morning light.

On the sidewalk, behind a bus stop with its digital panels switched off, a white building with a modern but sober architectural design is separated from the public space by a manicured lawn. Planted in the lawn, a large green board says in golden letters in Farsi: "Insemination and Fertilization Centre. Government Research Laboratory".

SUPERIMPOSE: "Insemination and Fertilization Laboratory. Tehran (Iran), 2031"

A bus arrives noisily. Covered with graffiti and advertisements in Farsi and in English, its decrepit state contrasts with the setting. The bus stops with sighs of exhaustion, rocks from side to side as it offloads its passengers, and starts to move again, releasing a cloud of black smoke to mark its effort. On the sidewalk, a group of women wearing colorful clothes and scarves walks toward the entrance of the building in silence.

INT. IN THE HALL OF THE LABORATORY - DAY

They walk across the hall towards the locker room. Those who come out of the locker room are all dressed in white, with masks around their necks and their hair wrapped in bouffant caps. They wave their badges in front of an electronic eye before entering the laboratory.

EXT. IN THE STREET - DAY

In the late afternoon, the traffic is now intense. People are waiting for the bus that goes downtown. Among them, a young woman (ASHERAH, 25) is wearing a long green coat, her head covered with a green scarf.

SFX: Public loudspeakers broadcast music interspersed with commercials and political slogans in Farsi and in English.

The very clear and limpid SOUND of a bell announces a driverless bus that stops without a sound along the sidewalk. The passengers get on, and the bus leaves.

INT. ON THE BUS - DAY

The bus makes its way through the chaos of the city center. Asherah is standing and holds a security bar. When the bus stops, she gets off. The sidewalk is crowded. As the bus leaves, she approaches a stall where a costermonger is selling fruit and vegetables.

EXT. A BUS STOP AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY - DAY

A road winds between a row of dilapidated buildings on one side and a large wasteland on the other. The place is desolated. Only dogs seem to occupy the scene. A golden one is lying fully stretched on the sidewalk.

After a while, a bus appears. The dogs move to the side. At the bus stop, the remaining passengers get off, cross the road and head for the buildings. Asherah is among them. She carries two bags full of groceries.

Once empty, the bus leaves. The dogs retake possession of the scene.

EXT. IN A PARK - DAY

It's lunch break. Many people make the most of the good weather by spending their lunch break in the park. Children run around, SCREAMING.

Asherah is among the walkers, and a woman in her late thirties (NAHID, 38) is beside her. They walk quietly, without talking, both lost in their thoughts.

Suddenly, Asherah looks at her watch, says a few words to Nahid, kisses her, and leaves in a hurry.

INT. IN THE LABORATORY - DAY

The laboratory is divided into islands that are independent from each other. A central aisle connects them together.

Only women work there. They all are dressed in the same white outfits.

It is late in the afternoon, and the few employees that are still present seem to work in slow motion. From time to time, one passes in the aisle pushing a trolley containing measuring instruments or carrying folders.

Alone in her island, Asherah is glued to her microscope. From time to time she writes something down, and quickly returns to her observations. She is very concentrated, almost febrile.

A BELL announces the end of the day. Everyone quietly heads toward the exit. Seeing Asherah still at her microscope, one of the women calls her.

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, all dialogues in the scenes set in Iran are spoken in Farsi. On screen, the English text will appear in subtitles.

THE COLLEAGUE

Hey, Asherah, Are you coming? It's enough for one day.

ASHERAH

Just a minute, I'm coming...

Her back turned towards the aisle, Asherah picks up her notes and quickly hides them under her blouse before joining her colleague who is waiting for her. They disappear toward the exit.

EXT. AT THE MARKET - DAY

Asherah, dressed in city clothes, chooses fruit and vegetables at the stall of the costermonger. She then takes money out of her purse and hands it to the merchant.

Suddenly, SHOTS are fired. Everyone looks in the direction of the street where two military jeeps storm through the heavy traffic. Standing in their vehicles, soldiers shoot in the air and SHOUT words that are incomprehensible.

Asherah shrinks automatically to hide from the soldiers. In her eyes appears an intense panic.

The jeeps disappear as quickly as they came, and the crowd returns to its occupations. The merchant impatiently SHOUTS something at Asherah who realizes he is handing her her change. She straightens up and, still shaking, takes the money and puts it in her purse. She then grabs her bags and heads for the bus stop.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/HALL/LIVING ROOM - DAY

A key OPENS the front door. Asherah comes in with her shopping bags. She closes the door behind her with her foot, puts the bags on the ground, removes her shoes and places them carefully on a cloth beside two slippers.

On the right, an opening gives access to a living room furnished without taste. A long sofa, an armchair, a modern lamp, and a low glass table furnish the room.

A large window bay overlooks a gray, apparently little-used balcony, and an opening on the left wall connects the living room to a basically equipped kitchen. An exceedingly large television screen fills the corner between the window bay and the kitchen, while a small table supporting a fake antique telephone occupies the corner between the kitchen and the hall.

Asherah picks up her bags, crosses the living room, and drops them on the kitchen table. She then disappears through a door connecting the kitchen to the hallway.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

Asherah, wearing a housecoat, is busy in the kitchen, her back turned towards the living room. A CLOCK strikes the half hour. She stiffens almost imperceptibly, but continues to prepare the meal.

A few seconds later, the front door opens up. Someone comes in and closes the door noisily. After having removed his shoes and put his slippers on, a man appears in the opening of the hallway. Asherah's HUSBAND is approximately 45 years old, small and potbellied. His gray hair is sparsely scattered on his head. He doesn't seem to be in a good mood.

For an instant, he stays in the doorway, looking at Asherah who goes on with her activities as if she was unaware of his presence. Then, without a word, he heads toward the bedroom at the end of the corridor.

He reappears almost immediately in the living room. He now wears white undergarments that accentuate his protruding belly, his slippers still at his feet. He sits down in the armchair, and without losing sight of Asherah, takes the remote control from the table and turns the screen on (O.C.). We HEAR the voice of a journalist (V.O.) commenting on the news in Farsi.

He tries to concentrate on the program, but his eyes are constantly returning to Asherah.

Finally ignoring the screen, he fixes his attention on Asherah. Feeling his gaze on her body makes her uncomfortable. She stiffens.

All of a sudden, the man gets up, walks towards her, and presses his body against hers. He then starts to caress her brusquely, without any tenderness. Asherah does not move, frozen against the sink, a vegetable peeler clutched in her right hand. Her face is colorless.

Without any warning, he suddenly grabs her by her hair and throws her violently on the carpet of the living room. He rolls up her clothes and assails her. With tears in her eyes, Asherah looks straight before her, her teeth tightly clenched together. With one hand she clings onto the carpet to provide some resistance to the shocks she endures, while her other hand holds the vegetable peeler so tightly that her knuckles turn white.

EXT. IN THE PARK - DAY

The following day at lunch break, Asherah and Nahid are sitting on a bench.

ASHERAH

(in Kurdish, in a low voice)

By the way, I think I finally found the right dosage. I have to try it now.

NAHID

Isn't it a bit risky? You don't know what the secondary effects are.

ASHERAH

I know. That's why I want to try on a dog. There are plenty of them in the wasteland near the apartment. There's a golden one in particular that I see every day, a male with a strong macho attitude. A perfect specimen. I'll mix the product with meat.

NAHID

It's a good idea. Well, I have to go.

(MORE)

NAHID (CONT'D)

Yesterday, I already had a sermon from the manager because I was late. A real bastard, that man! He's always trying to touch us. Most of the girls don't say anything, they are too afraid to lose their job. But since I told him that I was going to call his wife, he keeps his distance. When your pill is ready, I'll give him one, it might calm him down.

They laugh. Nahid gets up and kisses Asherah.

NAHID (CONT'D)

Call me, all right?

ASHERAH

I will.

Nahid leaves.

INT. THE LABORATORY - DAY

Alone in her working island, Asherah aligns ten tiny white pills on a glass plate. She then fills a micropipette with a liquid from a test-tube and releases a drop of this preparation on each pill.

Once the pills are impregnated, she places them into a small iron box that she closes and puts in the pocket of her blouse.

INT. ON THE BUS - DAY

Asherah is standing in the middle of the crowded bus, near the central door. She holds a security bar with one hand, and a shopping bag with the other. Her second shopping bag is stuck between her feet.

She does not notice the man standing behind her until she feels his hand on her shoulder and something sharp against her back. Instinctively, she stiffens.

The man then pastes his body against hers and whispers something in her ear while accentuating the pressure of the blade on her back. Terrified, Asherah does not dare to move.

The man begins to rub himself against her buttocks in an obscene way, while his free hand wanders all over her body. She starts sweating. The pain caused by the blade against her back keeps her immobile, but her eyes are moving back and forth, searching desperately for a way to escape his grip. The man bites her, kisses her in the neck, and whispers obscenities in her ear while his hand invades the most intimate parts of her body.

He is so busy groping her that he doesn't realize that the bus has stopped and opened its doors. To get off, passengers push the man on the side. Surprised, he loosens his grip. Asherah seizes the opportunity to free herself. She grasps the bag at her feet and rushes towards the door, SHOUTING like a madwoman:

ASHERAH

Wait! Wait for me! I want to get
out! Wait! Let me get out!

Everybody turns around to look at her. Taken aback by her reaction, the man hides the knife he is still holding in his hand, and, with a sour look, watches Asherah get off the bus. As the door closes, he SHOUTS at her:

THE MOLESTER

Slut!

Asherah has got off the bus so fast that the contents of one of her bags spread onto the sidewalk. While the bus leaves, a woman helps her pick up her groceries. Asherah then takes hold of her bags and starts to walk. Passers-by look away when they see the tears running down her cheeks.

EXT. THE BUS STOP AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY - DAY (DUSK)

A bus arrives and stops. The last passengers get off and walk in the direction of the buildings. Asherah is not among them. The bus leaves. Everything is dead still, even the dogs are gone.

After a while, Asherah appears on the road carrying her two bags. She seems exhausted and defeated. She takes the path that leads to her apartment.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/HALL - DAY (DUSK)

The light is on in the living room, and the sound of the television is somewhat muted.

SFX: repeated gun shots

The front door opens, and Asherah comes in. She closes the door behind her with her foot, puts down her bags, and removes her shoes. Her husband suddenly appears in the opening of the living room. Dressed in his usual white undergarments, he seems furious and immediately starts to YELL:

THE HUSBAND

Where were you? Have you seen the
time? Where have you been, you
whore?

And without giving her the possibility to answer, he slaps her so hard in the face that she falls on the ground, knocking over her shopping bags. Seeing the groceries all over the floor, her husband becomes enraged.

THE HUSBAND (CONT'D)

(kicking her and hitting
her with his fists)

Look at what you've done! You're
really worthless. Where were you?
With whom? Hey?

(beat)

You are no better than your sister,
a whore like her! If you think...

(getting out of breath)

... you can get away with it,
you're mistaken... You can't even
give me children... and you want to
dishonor my name... You're going to
pay for this...

He keeps hitting and kicking her as if he had been waiting for this moment for a long time. He seems completely mad. Asherah receives his blows curled up on the ground among the groceries.

Finally out of breath, he stops hitting her. She does not move. Panting, he looks at her full of scorn and hatred and spits on her. He then gives her a last look and returns to his chair. As he turns the volume of the television on, the sound of gunshots becomes more intense.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM/KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Asherah is sitting on the edge of the bed. Her head between her hands, she lets a few muffled sobs of rage escape. When she straightens up, we see her swollen face. Her whole body is sore. The muted sound of gunshots reminds her of her husband, and a look of hatred crosses her face.

She opens her bag, empties its content on the bed, takes her compact, and looks at her face in the small mirror. She is ready to burst into tears again when she sees the little box containing the pills. She takes it and turns it around in her hand absently, lost in her thoughts. All of a sudden, she seems to have come to a decision.

She takes off her city clothes and looks at the bruises on her body. She then puts on a house dress, powders her face to hide the swelling, and combs her hair with a few brush strokes. She acts automatically, her thoughts wandering somewhere else.

She then takes the small box and puts it in the pocket of her dress. After a last look in the mirror, she goes out of the bedroom.

SFX: The sound of the television is now more present.

She goes to the kitchen and, without looking in the direction of the living room, bustles around. Furtively, her husband looks at her, surprised by her apparent docility.

After a while, she discreetly grabs the box in her pocket, takes one of the pills and puts it in a tea glass.

She then pours very strong tea, adds sugar, and fills the glass with hot water from the samovar. She slowly stirs the preparation while intensely thinking.

She then puts the glass on a small silver tray and brings it to her husband. He surreptitiously looks at her, trying to read something in her eyes as she sets the tray on the table beside his armchair, but she does not look back, eager to act as normally as possible and afraid that her eyes will betray her.

On her way back to the kitchen, Asherah moves more slowly than usual, as if she wants time to slow and give herself the possibility to undo what she has done before it is too late. Her husband looks at her as she walks away, wondering what her attitude is hiding. He finally shrugs his shoulders, picks up the glass of tea on the table and brings it to his lips while turning his attention back to the screen.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The dark silhouette of the buildings stands out in the night. A few scattered lights still shine. In the distance, those of the city sparkle. Everything is deserted and silent.

From time to time, the reflection of Asherah appears in the glass of the window bay, as she looks at the night while softly talking on the phone.

ASHERAH (O.C.)
(in Kurdish, into the
phone)
Nahid, I did it.

NAHID (O.S.)
(filtered over the phone)
You tried on the dog?

ASHERAH (O.C.)
No, not on the dog, on my
husband...

NAHID (O.S.)
What?

ASHERAH (O.S.)

I just couldn't take it anymore.
At first in the bus, a bastard
attacked me with a knife. He wanted
to rape me in front of everybody.
His hands were all over me.

(lets out an involuntary
sob)

The bus was packed, and no one
reacted. Not a word, nothing. They
just looked the other way. But when
I started to scream, everyone
looked at me as if I was the one
who was crazy.

NAHID (O.S.)

(angry)

I can't believe it. And how did you
escape?

ASHERAH (O.C.)

When the bus opened its doors, I
rushed out. I was in such a panic
that I lost half of my groceries on
the sidewalk.

NAHID (O.S.)

It's really disgusting! And then,
what did you do?

ASHERAH (O.C.)

I didn't dare to take another bus,
so I walked all the way. It was
almost dark when I got home, and he
was waiting for me.

She lets out a nervous sob again.

NAHID (O.S.)

Did he hit you?

ASHERAH (O.C.)

Yes, just like he did to you. It's
weird that I don't have anything
broken. He was completely out of
his mind.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (O.C.) (CONT'D)

It was so unfair. I decided to take my revenge and gave him one of the pills I had brought for the dog. I hope I haven't done anything stupid...

NAHID (O.S.)

Do you think we have to take him to the hospital?

ASHERAH (O.C.)

No, I believe he's okay now, he's sleeping.

I was watching him from the kitchen. I saw the first reactions appear very quickly. It surprised me, I wasn't expecting that. He became agitated, he couldn't concentrate on the screen, although there was one of his favorite shooting games.

Suddenly, he got up. I was afraid, but he went straight to the bathroom. He stayed there a long time, but I didn't dare to go and ask him if he needed help.

He finally came out of the bathroom and went directly to bed.

I'm so scared I have made a mistake. What if he doesn't wake up tomorrow?

NAHID (O.S.)

Don't worry. Let him sleep it off, and then we will see. Anyway, it's probably too late to do anything now.

Try to get some sleep. Do you want me to come over?

ASHERAH (O.C.)

No, I think I can manage.

NAHID (O.S.)

Okay, but if there's anything, call me immediately.

(MORE)

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

Otherwise, I'll see you tomorrow in the park. Marianna asked if she could come with me, as she's eager to meet you.

ASHERAH (O.C.)

Okay, bring Marianna with you. I'll have plenty of time. I'm going to take the day off.

NAHID (O.S.)

I love you.

ASHERAH (O.C.)

I love you too! Bye.

She hangs up, and watches the silent night outside through the window, with a preoccupied look on her face.

EXT. IN THE PARK - DAY

The next day, Asherah walks towards the bench where Nahid and MARIANNA, a woman in her late thirties, are waiting for her.

NAHID

(in Kurdish, horrified
when she sees the face of
her sister)

Oh my god! That bastard has surely made a mess out of you! Have you seen a doctor?

ASHERAH

(out of breath)

No. I'm all right, I'm used to it.

(with a smile)

And I took my revenge. It helped me to recover...

(precipitously)

That's why I'm so late - I couldn't leave because of him. He was so strange this morning that I had to call his boss to say that he was sick.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

Naturally, he asked me what the matter was, wondering why he didn't call himself. He even wanted to send someone to check my story. I explained that his voice was gone, which is almost true, and that he had to go to the bathroom every five minutes, which is absolutely true.

(laughter)

In the end, it was okay. But after that, he didn't want to let me go.

NAHID

How is he?

ASHERAH

I don't recognize him. He is so anxious and scared that he asked me not to leave him. Can you imagine that?

But above all, he is as gentle as a lamb. Unbelievable! He is also extremely weak, he can barely walk alone, and I have even to help him to the bathroom, something he would never accept in normal times.

NAHID

By the way, this is Marianna, my psychiatrist friend I told you so much about.

The two women shake hands with a smile.

MARIANNA

Hello, Asherah, it's nice to meet you finally. What you were saying is fascinating.

ASHERAH

(sitting down, all to her story)

What's really strange is his voice.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

It derails completely, switching all the time from its normal low tone to a very high pitch, without any warning, without any transition. It's horrible to hear, and he is so ashamed that he doesn't say anything anymore, the poor--

NAHID

Oh no! You're not going to feel sorry for him. After what he has done to you! If you need a reminder, go and have a look at your face in a mirror, you still wear the marks of his kindness.

MARIANNA

(to Asherah)

Yes, he definitely didn't miss you, and it seems that it is now your turn not to have missed him. What are you going to do?

ASHERAH

I have no idea. I wanted to test my products on dogs and observe their reactions, but what happened yesterday changed all my plans.

(smiling)

He has involuntarily volunteered to be my guinea pig.

Anyway, it is the last time that he treats me like that; it's now my turn to treat him like a dog.

The three women laugh, and then remain silent for a while.

MARIANNA

But what is this product precisely?

ASHERAH

It is a protein that prevents the Leydig cells that are located in the testicles from producing androgens, and thus testosterone.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

The changes occur at the level of the spermatogenesis and the secondary sex characteristics. In a first stage, the voice is transformed, facial hair disappears, and the libido decreases. In a second stage, the muscles start to sag, and breasts begin to develop. In some cases, there could even be lactation.

MARIANNA

How long do you think he will stay in this state?

ASHERAH

The effects of the pill do not seem to diminish. I'm afraid he will always stay like that, if he doesn't get worse.

The more Asherah speaks, the more jubilant Marianna becomes.

MARIANNA

You know, what you're doing is truly extraordinary. You are making the world of my dreams possible, a world in which women would live safely. Thanks to you, this world might become a reality. It is the most beautiful day of my life.

NAHID

(a bit irritated)

Marianna, now you're going over the top!

MARIANNA

No, I'm serious. Listen, Asherah, you must continue your research and thoroughly analyze the effects and dosages of your product in a systematic way?

ASHERAH

Of course, I would like that very much, but I need to test my product on people, and until now, the only one who has volunteered is my husband.

(laughing)

By any chance, you wouldn't have a husband who would like to try?

MARIANNA

(laughing as well)

No, so far no man has ever taken the risk. They probably knew what to expect.

(serious again)

On the other hand, I work a lot with Omid, the organization that helps victims of domestic violence. They provide legal counseling and psychological support, and they also find them a place to stay if their life is in danger.

They send me the most desperate cases, mostly women who have suffered severe traumas and whose life is an impossible nightmare. Unfortunately, you're not the only one to go through hell--

NAHID

That's all very exciting, but the work of Asherah must absolutely remain secret. If the religious authorities knew what she's preparing, they would make her disappear very quickly.

ASHERAH

You're right, we really have to be very cautious. This invention is even worse than the atomic bomb.

They laugh.

NAHID

As Marianna said, finding volunteers won't be so difficult. The best thing would be that you go on working on your product, while we organize its distribution.

ASHERAH

It is a good idea. Anyway, I still need some time to observe the effects on my husband. If you agree, let's talk about it in a few days.

NAHID

Fine. By the way, you should find a name for your pill. Have you any idea?

ASHERAH

Yes, as a matter of fact, I have. I want to call it "i2" (in English) as in "I too exist."

The three women laugh.

MARIANNA

(standing up)

Very appropriate! Well, I have to go.

(to Asherah)

I'm very happy to have met you. I hope to see you very soon.

She kisses the two women and leaves.

NAHID

(watching her go)

You know, she's an extraordinary woman. You have already met her, but you probably don't remember. She too was a prisoner on the farm with us. We have lived the most horrific moments of our existence together.

(MORE)

NAHID (CONT'D)

She's also the one who helped me
recover and rebuild my life after I
ran away from your abusive husband.
You can really rely on her.

They get up and walk away.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

A few days later.

Asherah puts a bowl of soup on the table next to her husband who sits half-collapsed in his chair. His open bathrobe reveals the usual white undergarments. The television is on, but he does not look at it.

ASHERAH

Eat while it's hot, it will do you
good. And don't forget to take your
vitamins.

She returns to the kitchen. He looks at her as she walks away. A tear runs down his cheek.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT/INT. STREET/BUILDING (JALAWLA, IRAQ, 2014) - DAY
(FLASHBACK)

Nahid and Asherah, respectively 21 and 8, have been freed by the Peshmergas and walk confidently on a street carrying the evidence of recent fighting. The buildings around them, although riddled with the scars left by the war, are still habitable.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Jalawla (Iraq), 2014"

The two sisters enter one of the buildings and climb the staircase without hesitation, excited at the idea of seeing their family again.

INT. BUILDING - DAY (LATER)

Nahid and Asherah walk in a dark and silent hallway and stop in front of a door. They knock. We HEAR the sound of footsteps inside the apartment.

THE GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)
(in Kurdish)
Who's there?

NAHID
It's us, grandma, Asherah and
Nahid!

THE GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)
(beat)
What do you want?

Nahid and Asherah look at each other, surprised.

ASHERAH
Please open the door, grandma.

They hear voices whispering on the other side of the door.

THE GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)
No, I can't. Listen, just go away,
I can't do anything for you.

NAHID
(alarmed)
What's going on, grandma? Why don't
you let us in?

THE UNCLE (O.S.)
Listen Nahid, in the outskirts of
town, there is a camp for women who
were married to Daesh fighters.
That's where you have to go. The
family cannot do anything for you
now. You shouldn't come back here,
this door will always remain closed
for you.

NAHID

But we were not married to them, we were just their prisoners.

THE UNCLE (O.S.)

It's all the same, you understand, no man will ever want you anymore. You will always represent a dishonor to our family. There's no other solution for you than to leave and never come back.

NAHID

And Asherah? It's not fair, she hasn't done anything.

THE UNCLE (O.S.)

It doesn't make any difference. All women who have been captured by Daesh must be banished. That's what we have to do.

There's a long moment of silence. Asherah presses herself against Nahid. The two sisters remain petrified in front of the closed door.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Nahid and Asherah walk away from the building, slowly, without a word, without knowing where they are going.

Suddenly, the uncle appears beside Nahid. He acts hastily, as someone who does not want to be seen. He gives her a purse.

THE UNCLE

(in Kurdish)

Here, take this, it will help you.
Take good care of your sister. May
God be with you!

He hurriedly leaves.

Nahid turns around and watches him walk away. As she looks up, she sees her grandmother observing the scene from behind a window. But as soon as their eyes meet, the old woman disappears behind a curtain.

EXT. A MARKET NEAR A REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

A few weeks have gone by. Nahid and Asherah are sitting on a bench and look at the feverish activity of the market.

NAHID

(in Kurdish)

You know, we're getting near the end of our money. No money, no protection. We have to find something if we don't want to end up--

ASHERAH

... sold as prostitutes. I've seen it happen to so many girls in the camp.

(beat)

When I think of what you already have done for me, it makes me sick--

NAHID

(angrily)

Shut up, Asherah! Don't ever talk about this again.

They look at the crowd for a while.

NAHID (CONT'D)

We have to get out of here. I've asked several merchants if they would take us with them. Of course, they all want something in return. The problem is that most live around here. As long as we stay here, we will not escape the war or the debt of honor that's hanging above our head.

(MORE)

NAHID (CONT'D)

So, I have looked for someone who could take us across the border, to some place where we can rebuild our lives. I could work, you could go to school...

ASHERAH

(dreaming)

To Iran... But who will take us there?

NAHID

I found someone who wants to drive us there, but...

ASHERAH

But?

Nahid remains silent.

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

(worried)

But?

NAHID

(with a lump in her throat)

He knows a man in Tehran who will pay all the expenses but...

She hesitates, then in one breath:

NAHID (CONT'D)

He wants to marry us.

ASHERAH

(flabbergasted)

Marry us?

NAHID

(hesitantly)

Marry you. He thinks I'm too old.

ASHERAH

(reacting violently)

Without you? It's out of--

NAHID

Of course, I said to the merchant that it's either both of us or no one. He thinks that the man will agree to take me as a servant so that we can remain together.

They remain silent for a while, looking at the people come and go.

ASHERAH

(gloomily)
How old is he?

NAHID

I don't know.

ASHERAH

(disgusted)
Must I have children with him?

NAHID

Don't worry. I'll talk about it with him.
(beat, then softly as if talking to herself)
It can't be worse than here...

ASHERAH

(on the same tone)
No, as long as we stay together.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. AT OMID/MARIANNA'S OFFICE (TEHRAN, 2031) - DAY

Small desks are disseminated without any regularity in the large room. A few women are working in front of computer screens.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Tehran, 2031"

The front door opens, and Nahid (38) comes in. She greets everyone, hangs up her coat, and asks one of the women:

NAHID

May I come in?

THE WOMAN

Sure. Marianna is with a patient,
she's waiting for you.

Nahid knocks on the door and comes in without waiting for an answer. Seated at her desk, Marianna is in consultation with a woman in her late thirties wearing a niqab. She seems ill at ease.

MARIANNA

(to the woman)

Ah, here is my colleague.

(to Nahid)

You're just in time. Mrs. Kalemli
has just begun telling me her
story.

Nahid shakes the woman's hand and sits on a chair next to her.

MARIANNA (CONT'D)

You were saying that you are
married and that you don't have any
children.

MRS. KALEMLI

(reluctantly)

Yes.

NAHID

You don't have to be afraid, you
have nothing to fear. We've helped
a lot of women who were in terrible
situations. In the beginning, many
find it difficult to admit that
their marriage has failed because
they feel responsible for its
failure. They also think they are
betraying the one to whom they have
promised loyalty and support.
In addition, we are often the first
to whom they tell what they face at
home.

(MORE)

NAHID (CONT'D)

It's only once their sufferings stop that they realize how their feelings of guilt and loyalty were misplaced.

Beat.

MRS. KALEMLI

(in a very soft, hardly audible voice)

Six years ago, I got pregnant for the first time. At the beginning of my pregnancy, we were very happy. He was very caring, and we were doing a lot of things together. But soon afterward, things began to change. My husband became horribly jealous. His fits of anger were getting more extreme by the day. He accused me of sleeping with everyone, and, to get a confession out of me, he started to beat me. And the more he hit me, the more obsessed he became. One day, he was drunk, he threw me on the ground and began to kick me in the stomach, screaming that he was not going to be the father of a bastard.

She suddenly stops. The sweetness of her voice makes the scenes she describes even more horrible. After a while, she resumes:

MRS. KALEMLI (CONT'D)

I lost my child that day, but he didn't believe me, and he kept hitting me the following days until I had to be hospitalized. When I went back home, he was completely metamorphosed, he was just like before my pregnancy, you know, very caring, acting as if I was his princess.

(MORE)

MRS. KALEMLI (CONT'D)

I was very suspicious until I realized he had a total blackout about what had happened. For example, he was convinced that I fell down the stairs with a trunk in my arms. That was the story we told at the hospital.

A feigned smile appears on her face and fades away immediately.

MRS. KALEMLI (CONT'D)

After a few days, the crisis of jealousy began again. He accused me of being a whore, of sleeping with everyone. With time, he became more delirious. One day, he even asked a man on the street if he wanted to sleep with me.

She lets out a nervous sob, but immediately takes hold of herself.

MRS. KALEMLI (CONT'D)

I'm pregnant again, but he doesn't know it yet. I'm afraid he will become completely mad when he hears it. That's why I got in contact with Omid, and they told me you could help me.

MARIANNA

Why didn't you go to the police?

MRS. KALEMLI

Two months ago, I was so fed up of being beaten and insulted that I decided to ask their protection. I made a detailed account of what I was going through, I even showed them the bruises on my body, but they kept on asking what I had done to make him mad like that. I came out of the police station with the feeling that everything was my fault.

MARIANNA

Unfortunately, it happens more often than not. Even when a woman or a child dies of domestic violence, it's always the man that the system protects.

MRS. KALEMLI

Do you think you can help me?

NAHID

Yes. But before we come to that, I have to ask you to show us the places where he has hit you lately. It helps us determine the most appropriate treatment.

After a short hesitation, she removes her niqab. Her fine and well-proportioned features are strewn with colored bruises. Her lips are swollen and cut in several places.

MRS. KALEMLI

He hits me in the face so that no man will want me. That's why I cover myself, I am so ashamed...

NAHID

(disgusted)

I am sorry.

(taking hold of herself)

We have developed a product that will make your husband harmless within twenty-four hours.

MRS. KALEMLI

(covering herself)

If he knows what I'm up to, he will kill me.

MARIANNA

Do not worry, it will be all right. The first effects occur after just a few hours. He'll feel weird, nauseous, and he will often go to the bathroom. At first, he will think he has caught a virus.

(MORE)

MARIANNA (CONT'D)

He will go to bed earlier than usual.

You must act normally. The next day, he won't feel fit and he will stay at home. He will become apathetic and will not understand what's happening to him. From that day on, he will never raise his hand to you again.

NAHID

You will have to reorganize your life. Many women remain with their husband because they have nothing to fear anymore and he's entirely dependent on them.

A few, however, ask for a divorce after a while, and, in the light of the circumstances, get it without a problem.

MRS. KALEMLI

What do you mean by that? Which circumstances?

NAHID

Besides a few side effects, such as his voice suddenly shifting from one register to another without any warning, or his hairiness starting to disappear, there are three things you must be aware of: your husband will lose his aggressiveness and his libido, and his social life will die out very rapidly. His lethargic state and the total absence of sexual desire entice many women to start a new life.

MARIANNA

Is your husband at home?

MRS. KALEMLI

No, he is gone hunting with friends for a few days.

MARIANNA

Do you want to wait for a few days
to think about it?

MRS. KALEMLI

No, it's not necessary. This
nightmare has to stop. Besides, I
don't want to lose my child. It
might be my last chance to have
one.

(pensive)

I even thought about killing him,
but I didn't have the courage to do
it.

Nahid takes a small plastic bag out of her pocket.

NAHID

You'll see, our product is very
easy to use.

The woman nods.

INT. MARIANNA'S OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Mrs. Kalemlı leaves and Marianna closes the door behind her.

NAHID

(in Kurdish, angrily)

It's revolting to see that. Such a
nice woman! She seems so kind...
What can push a man to do things
like that?

MARIANNA

It is their way to express their
chronic insecurity. These men have
only their wife and children they
can dominate. And as Oscar Wilde
accurately put it, everything is
about sex, except sex, which is
about power.

By the way, I would like to speak
to you, but not here.

(MORE)

MARIANNA (CONT'D)

Do you have a moment? We could go
drink something somewhere?

NAHID

Okay. Let's go!

They leave.

EXT/INT. STREET/SNACK BAR - DAY

Wrapped in their winter coats, Nahid and Marianna walk on a snow-covered street. They enter a snack bar, order tea at the bar, and choose an isolated table. Marianna goes straight to the heart of the matter.

MARIANNA

(in Kurdish)

You know, I'm a bit worried. You
may think that I'm paranoid, but I
have the feeling that we are being
watched.

NAHID

(suddenly concerned)

What makes you think that?

MARIANNA

Every day, I see a car parked in
front of the office, and a couple
of men waiting or walking up and
down on the sidewalk in front of
our door. Always the same two men,
they don't even try to be
inconspicuous.
What's more, I noticed a lot of new
recruits at Omid these last two
weeks, and I'm sure a few of them
belong to the Ovum. It would be a
disaster if our product fell into
the hands of these extremists.

NAHID

(absorbed)

What do you propose?

MARIANNA

You're the only link between Omid and Asherah. You should stop coming to the office so that no one can locate her through you.

I will keep my work there because the women who need our help always contact them first, but we could interview them in a snack bar like this one, for example. What do you think?

NAHID

You're right, we have to be very careful. In fact, the best thing would be that our clients never see us at Omid. We could fix a location at the last moment. I'll organize that.

They drink their tea, put their coats on, arrange their scarves, and go out on the street. They kiss before going their separate ways.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A few months later. The snow has disappeared, and spring is already in full bloom. It's early in the evening, but the street is already deserted. Nahid, Marianna, and another woman walk out of the snack bar. They talk for an instant on the sidewalk and separate. Marianna and the woman leave together, while Nahid walks in the other direction on her own.

Two men get out of a car parked in front of the snack bar and start to follow Nahid. As she passes by a dark and narrow alley stuck between two rows of buildings, they run towards her, seize her, and drag her into the alley. One pulls her scarf off her head and fills her mouth with it to stifle her screams.

One of them takes a knife out of his pocket. Nahid sees the blade approaching her eye and freezes, terrified. The man then whispers into her ear:

THE AGGRESSOR

We come on behalf of our friend,
Ebrar Kalemli. Does it ring a bell?
Do you remember him, the man you
transformed into a vegetable?
Well, you're going to pay for what
you did to him. But before that, we
want to have a little fun with you,
so that you keep a good memory of
us.

(He laughs, before
abruptly becoming very
menacing)

But don't get too excited: we'll
give the same treatment we gave to
our friend's wife. The bitch ended
up telling us everything we wanted
to know. And with what we have in
mind for you, you'll implore us to
put you out of your misery.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A few days later. Asherah, her back to the room, looks out
the window. We do not see the rest of the room, but the
whiteness of the walls, the absence of furniture, and the
loudspeakers that broadcast a stifled call from time to time
suggest that we are in a hospital.

Suddenly, a man's VOICE startles Asherah.

THE WOUNDED MAN (O.S.)

Who are you?

Asherah turns around. The man lying in the only bed in the
room has several drips attached to his arm. The other
machines that are beside his bed seem to be disconnected.

Asherah moves towards the bed.

ASHERAH

I am the sister of the woman you
helped. The nurse said I could wait
in your room until you woke up.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

You are the last person to have
seen my sister alive,--

THE WOUNDED MAN

I'm sorry...

ASHERAH

... and I would like to hear from
you the details of what happened.
But if it's not the right moment
for you, I can come back another
time.

THE WOUNDED MAN

No, it's alright. Anyway, it will
never be the right moment. Take a
seat.

Asherah sits beside the bed.

THE WOUNDED MAN (CONT'D)

I left work early that day to buy a
gift for my wife - it was her
birthday. I was going home when I
heard the voice of a man in the
small alley that always stinks of
urine, you know. He didn't shout or
anything, but it struck me because
he sounded furious. I also heard
someone moaning.
It was dark, and I couldn't see
much, so I took a few steps in the
alley. Behind a container, I saw
two men pinning a woman to the
ground. I thought that they were...

He stops, ill at ease.

ASHERAH

Raping her?

THE WOUNDED MAN

Yes. But there was something funny.

ASHERAH

What do you mean?

THE WOUNDED MAN

The woman didn't struggle, she didn't even move. I immediately thought she was dead.

The man who had his back turned to me seemed totally wound up, shouting things like: "You're going to pay for this, bitch."

(embarrassed)

Excuse me, I shouldn't have said that.

ASHERAH

No, don't worry about me, go on.

THE WOUNDED MAN

I wanted to call for help, but there was no one around. And all of a sudden, without really thinking, I jumped on the guy whose back was turned to me.

It was too late when I saw the knife, and I felt an intolerable pain in the belly. I collapsed. At that moment, I think I heard someone say, "she's dead," but I'm not really sure about that.

It's only after the operation that I regained consciousness. The doctor told me that the body of your sister was savagely stabbed. He thought that it was the work of a jealous boyfriend. Dreadful! It's really monstrous.

ASHERAH

(impassive)

Yes, and these monsters will never be caught. The police clearly said that they have neither the resources nor the time to deal with this crime.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

However, they say that if the murderers get caught for another crime, they will end up paying for this one as well because traces of their DNA are all over the place. They told me that I have to be patient. Anyway, I want to thank you for what you did for my sister. I hope you get better very soon.

Asherah stands up, thanks him again while shaking his hand, and leaves.

INT. IN THE HALLWAY OF THE HOSPITAL - DAY

In the hallway, Asherah goes to Marianna, who is waiting for her.

MARIANNA

(in Kurdish)

And? What did he say? Did you learn something new?

ASHERAH

Yes. Come, let's get out of here.

As they head towards the exit, Asherah tells Marianna what the man said.

EXT. IN A PARK - DAY

A while later, Asherah and Marianna are sitting on a bench, talking in low voices.

MARIANNA

(in Kurdish)

Listen, I have to tell you something about Nahid. Ten days ago, she handed me an envelope for you.

Out of her bag, Marianna takes an envelope with only two words on it: 'For Asherah' and hands it to Asherah.

MARIANNA (CONT'D)

For some time now, Nahid and I thought we were under surveillance. We had the feeling something was wrong. That's why she asked me to give you this letter, in case something happened to her.

Asherah looks at the envelope and opens it. She unfolds a single sheet of paper and comes closer to Marianna so that she can read as well. Asherah reads slowly, miming the words with her lips as we HEAR the voice of Nahid:

NAHID (V.O.)

My beloved Asherah, if you read these lines, it means that something has happened to me. For some time already, Marianna and I have been watched. As a precaution, we have limited our contacts with Omid to the strict minimum. But then, I received a threatening letter written by the friends of a man that we had treated. They forced his wife to tell them everything, and they warned me of their imminent vengeance. I thought I better take some precautions. We have seen time and again that we should never underestimate men's madness.

Asherah briefly looks up, then resumes miming the words.

NAHID (V.O.)(CONT'D)

When taking my decision, I first of all thought about you, your research, the new product you are developing, and the help you can bring to all the women who suffer unacceptable violence. To make sure I would never reveal your name, I decided to use an old recipe, the cyanide capsule.

(beat)

(MORE)

NAHID (V.O.)(CONT'D)

My death will put the authorities on your tracks. It's the reason why I expressly ask you to leave for Paris as quickly as possible. There, you'll be able to continue your work in security. Marianna should go with you, the danger for her being even acuter. Don't waste an instant. You cannot do anything for me anymore, and it would really be a pity if I had died for nothing.

Asherah stops again, before continuing.

NAHID (V.O.)(CONT'D)

I'm devastated at the thought of the pain these lines will inflict on you, but I'm also aware of the incredible strength that inhabits you. In the most difficult moments that we went through together, you have proved time and again to be much stronger than I was. You knew how to keep your head cool, while I was losing my nerve. I love you as I never loved anyone, and I know that there will always be a place for me in your heart. Maybe we will meet again somewhere out there, in a place that everyone hopes to be better. But don't be in a hurry to join me there, for you must first achieve the destiny imparted to you. Your new discovery will have the power to transform society and will open a new era. Know that I die happy at the idea that I somewhat contributed to its advent. Your sister forever, Nahid.

The two women remain a moment silent. Still holding the letter in her hand, Asherah asks with a very soft voice:

ASHERAH

Did you know about the cyanide?

MARIANNA

No, but I now understand why her aggressors and the man at the hospital all thought she was dead: she really was!

Asherah suddenly bursts into tears. Marianna takes her in her arms without saying anything. Tears run down her cheeks as well.

MARIANNA (CONT'D)

(taking hold of herself)

If you agree, I'm going to reserve two seats on a flight for Paris for tomorrow afternoon. At the office, I will say that I have to go to a conference.

ASHERAH

Yes, I don't think it's a good idea to remain here. Sooner or later, they will discover where I work and understand my role in all this. And if a woman has betrayed us, she surely has given your name. They could be watching us at this very instant, ready to take us away. We are both in danger.

MARIANNA

(with a smile)

Nahid would have said the same thing.

I have an appointment tomorrow morning with a woman whose case is serious. We could meet at two o'clock at the airport. What do you think?

ASHERAH

Good. Do you still have pills for your client?

MARIANNA

No, it was always Nahid who kept them.

ASHERAH

(taking the small box out of her bag)

I still have one here.

She hands the box over to Marianna who puts it in her bag.

MARIANNA

Thank you!

What are you going to do with your husband?

ASHERAH

I will ask my neighbor to take care of him. She always does when I have to leave for a few days. She's used to it.

The two women stand up.

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

(taking Marianna in her arms)

It's better that we separate here. I'll see you tomorrow at the airport. Be careful!

MARIANNA

You too. Bye!

They leave in different directions.

INT. MARIANNA'S OFFICE - DAY

The next day. Marianna is at her desk. A forty-year-old woman is sitting in front of her. She's wearing a sweater and jeans, and a hijab that emphasizes a face made-up with great care.

MARIANNA

On the phone, you told me that you have an eight-year-old girl and a five-year-old boy, that your husband beats you and that he also beats your children. You have filed a complaint about domestic violence, but you were told that it would take weeks before your complaint is taken care of. Have I got it right?

THE PATIENT

Yes.

MARIANNA

Forgive me for asking you this, but I see no visible marks of violence on your face, and it's necessary that I see them to help you.

THE PATIENT

He always manages to hit me in places that no one can see. Look...

She removes her sweater. Her chest, her back, her shoulders and her arms are strewn with long marks such as those made by a whip. Their colors indicate that some are very recent. Marianna also sees various bruises and the distinctive round marks left by a burning cigarette.

MARIANNA

(nauseated)

It's really dreadful. What cruelty!

The woman puts her sweater back on.

MARIANNA (CONT'D)

Does he also sexually abuse you?

THE PATIENT

(almost inaudible)

Sometimes... Not very often, though.

MARIANNA
(suddenly worried)
And your daughter?

Looking at the floor, the woman nods her head.

MARIANNA (CONT'D)
(with a very soft voice)
And your little boy?

The woman puts her face between her hands and bursts into tears.

THE PATIENT
(as to herself)
He's a monster...

Marianna takes a tissue from her bag and gives it to the woman. She then stands up, goes around her desk, and puts her hand on the woman's shoulder.

MARIANNA
I will help you.

INT. MARIANNA'S OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

The woman takes leave of Marianna, thanking her warmly, and goes out, closing the door behind her. Marianna returns to her work when the door is opened quite violently. The woman reappears with four men around her. She looks scared.

Marianna wants to say something when one of the men asks her:

THE INSPECTOR
Are you Marianna Erbili?

MARIANNA
Who are you?

THE INSPECTOR
(showing his credentials)
I'm Inspector Amaç from the
security services. You are under
arrest for subversive activities.
(to two of his men)
(MORE)

THE INSPECTOR (CONT'D)

Handcuff them and take them to
headquarters!

(to the fourth man)

Search everything thoroughly!

THE PATIENT

(to Marianna, whining)

They were waiting for me outside.
They said that if I didn't
cooperate, I would never see my
children again. What will they do
to us?

Marianna does not answer. Taken away by the agents, the two women walk through the Omid office where several women are working. Some look at them, surprised, while others pretend to be immersed in their work. Marianna catches the eyes of one of them and has just enough time to articulate "Asherah" with her lips before being pushed outside. In the meantime, Amaç has gone behind Marianna's desk and is going through her papers.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The phone RINGS. Asherah comes hastily from the bedroom and picks it up.

ASHERAH

(into phone)

Hello?

(beat)

Yes, it's me.

(beat)

(suddenly worried)

I understand. Thank you for warning
me. Goodbye.

She hangs up and remains a moment pensive without moving. Suddenly, she takes a decision and disappears in the hallway. After a while, she comes back with a small suitcase and a coat.

THE HUSBAND

(in a falsetto voice,
anxiously)

What's going on?

ASHERAH

(soothingly)

Nothing, don't worry. I have to
leave for a conference. I will be
back in five days. I talked to the
neighbor, and she will take good
care of you.

Asherah looks at him with tenderness and hesitates as if she
wanted to say something, but kisses him on the forehead
instead. She then picks up her suitcase, casts a last glance
at her husband and at the living room, and leaves. We HEAR
the front door close.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

Intermezzo

CUT TO:

EXT. A WATER PURIFICATION CENTER IN BOGOTÁ (COLOMBIA) - NIGHT

A desolated road lit by a row of street lamps spreading a
yellow light is bordered by a long wire fence, behind which
one distinguishes large reservoirs with inscriptions in
Spanish.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Water purification center, Bogotá (Colombia)"

Near the only lamppost whose light is out, three individuals
are cutting the fence mesh using a long pincer. All three
then pass through the opening to the other side of the fence
and disappear in the shadow of the reservoirs.

EXT. A WATER PURIFICATION CENTER IN HAIFA (ISRAEL) - NIGHT

The night is very dark. The only light comes from a street
lamp placed above the guard post.

On each side of the post, a gate controls the access to the grounds beyond. On the gate, a rusty sign says: "Haifa Wastewater Treatment Centre" (in Hebrew). In the distance, we see the dark mass of large reservoirs.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Water purification center, Haifa (Israel)"

Inside the post, a man and a woman are making love, both standing, the man behind the woman.

Outside, three individuals dressed in black sneak under the window of the post and enter the grounds without being seen. They quickly disappear into the night.

EXT. IN A MINERAL WATER FACTORY IN VESOUL (FRANCE) - DAY

Large aluminum tanks sparkle in the sun. On each of them, big green letters state "Natural Purity, Vesoul Water" (in French).

SUPERIMPOSE: "Mineral water factory, Vesoul (France)"

Two women in blue uniform arrive. One starts to climb the metal ladder along one of the reservoirs, while the other one keeps watch.

Having reached the top of the tank, the woman releases the ventilation cap and takes out of her pocket a small block of transparent sheets. She drops ten of these sheets, one by one, inside the tank. She then goes back down silently.

It is then her turn to keep watch while her colleague ascends another tank and repeats the same gestures.

EXT. IN THE TOWN OF ARLIT (NIGER) - NIGHT

The nocturnal sky is lit by artillery fire.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Arlit (Niger)"

In the obscurity, three shadows thread their way among the houses. Arriving at the main square, they directly head to the well in the center.

The artillery fire, growing in intensity, reveals three women completely covered in black niqabs. All three have a few transparent sheets in their hands and throw them, one by one, in the well.

Once done, they quickly disappear into the night.

INT. A TELEVISION STUDIO IN PARIS (2033) - NIGHT

A female journalist is standing in front of two cameras. A cameraman gives the countdown of the last seconds with his fingers and signals to the journalist that she is live.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Paris (France), 2033"

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, all dialogues in the scenes set in France are spoken in French. On screen, the English text will appear in subtitles.

THE JOURNALIST

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening.
As every year on Women's Day,
demonstrations were held around the
world to denounce violence
perpetrated against women and
children.

The journalist continues to read her text while images appear on the screen behind her.

REPORTAGE

We see demonstrators walking in the middle of a broad Parisian avenue. Women bearing visible marks of violence (swollen faces, broken arms, etc.) occupy the front rows of the rally, followed by demonstrators brandishing photos of women who died of domestic violence that year. They SHOUT their names:

THE DEMONSTRATORS

Marie Dupuis, 46; Fatima
Boumediene, 24; Christine Auber,
31...

THE JOURNALIST (V.O.)

(continuing)

In Paris, hundreds of thousands of men and women took to the street to show their solidarity with the victims of domestic violence. Several ministers, the Mayor of Paris, and a few celebrities opened the procession...

We then see the Place de la République where a stage has been erected. On the stage, a VICTIM tells the public about the violence she has suffered.

THE VICTIM

He followed me everywhere--

She stops as her audience supports her story with boos.

THE VICTIM (CONT'D)

Because of his repeated absences,
he even lost his job--

(applause)

That made him even worse--

(boos)

THE JOURNALIST (V.O.)

... while, as every year, on the large stage erected on the Place de la République, "survivors" testify in front of an emotional crowd. But not only women dared to take the stand. A few men also had the courage to come into the open before the compassionate public.

On the screen appears the square in front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral where a large crowd is gathered. Among the demonstrators, a dozen women all dressed in black, with the word "Ovum" painted in iridescent letters on their forehead, are particularly active. The virulent activism of one of them, a twenty-five-year-old woman with beautiful blond hair (INANNA), particularly stands out.

A huge poster representing a crucified woman, her naked body covered with bruises, cuts, and marks of lacerations is hanging on the façade of the Cathedral. A sentence forms a large halo around her head: "Forgive them, Mother, these men do not know what they are doing."

THE JOURNALIST (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Except for a few skirmishes caused by religious groups, this Women's Day has been remarkably calm, though stirring up strong emotions. Noticeably, however, a group of Ovum protesters occupied the square in front of Notre-Dame Cathedral, blocking access for tourists as well as devotees. According to their spokesperson, their intention is to denounce the patriarchal dogma of the Church that maintains the inequalities between the sexes and fosters domestic violence...

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM (PARIS) - NIGHT

We do not immediately notice that we are no longer in a television studio, but at Asherah's. It's only when we hear the door that we suddenly realize that the setting has changed.

THE JOURNALIST

Tonight's Point Of View is devoted to accelerated chromosomal deficiency, or A-C-D, a recent phenomenon that has put the scientific world on alert. My guest is Professor MENDEL who heads the Institute for Applied Anthropology in Paris. Good evening Professor. Could you give us an overview of what we already know about this phenomenon?

THE PROFESSOR

Of course. But first of all, I want to thank you for inviting me...

We HEAR the sound of a door opening and closing, and the energetic VOICE of a woman.

INANNA (O.S.)

It's me!

In a Bohemian-style living room, we discover Asherah sitting on a sofa facing the television screen, a cup of tea in her hand. She has changed. Gone are the subdued behavior and the sweet innocent face. Her traits now show a tougher personality with definite opinions, a woman aware of herself and fully committed.

ASHERAH

(excited)

Come quickly, Inanna, they're talking about us!

Inanna enters the room, throws her things on a chair, and takes place on the sofa beside Asherah. Their eyes glued to the screen, they exchange a quick kiss on the mouth.

THE PROFESSOR

The press and many of my colleagues speak of an epidemic because the people that have been affected all show the same symptoms. First of all, only men and male adolescents are affected. Second, the most common symptom to all known cases today concerns the voice, which can be described as completely "derailing."

(with an embarrassed smile)

You will excuse this unscientific term, but it perfectly pictures the changes that occur in the voice of these men, continually passing from one registry to the other. Although absolutely not painful, it is extremely unpleasant and so annoying that most of these men, whether young or old, are so ashamed that they do not dare leave their home.

(MORE)

THE PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Another symptom that emerges from the latest medical reports is that patients become apathetic. Many women have stated that their husbands' sexual appetite has completely vanished.

THE JOURNALIST

But Professor, why the name accelerated chromosomal deficiency?

THE PROFESSOR

Blood tests have revealed a dramatic decrease in the level of testosterone. This explains without any possible confusion the transformation of the voice and the loss of libido.

THE JOURNALIST

Of course, everyone is wondering how such a phenomenon could have occurred. But before we hear you on this topic, I would like to hand over to our REPORTER Michel Cauvin who has traced back the history of this epidemic for us.

On the screen behind her appears a young man. Behind him, in the bright light of the early afternoon, we recognize the road lined with street lamps and the tanks of the Water Purification Center of Bogotá.

THE JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

Michel, what have you found?

THE REPORTER

Good evening Sarah, good evening Professor. Indeed, I've tried to establish the chronology of the phenomena associated with the A-C-D epidemic. As Professor Mendel has already told us, this phenomenon is recent and global.

(MORE)

THE REPORTER (CONT'D)

The first reports attesting to the occurrence of its most prominent symptom are not older than a few months.

However, one of the most unusual features of this epidemic is that it did not spread, as all epidemics do, but it appeared almost simultaneously in scores of urban centers around the world.

A map of the world with dozens of places circled in white appears on the screen.

THE REPORTER (V.O.)(CONT'D)

The white circles on the map indicate the regions where cases of voice transformations have been reported. As you can see, all cases except for one, to which I will come back in a moment, appear around important urban centers.

The reporter reappears on the screen.

THE REPORTER (CONT'D)

In all these centers, the main symptom of A-C-D was reported between February and March of this year. However, these are not its first manifestation. Many cases of A-C-D have been reported before the epidemic of this year. The earliest mention comes from Iran and is three years old. Since then, other cases have been recorded in Brazil, in Japan, and here in France. But unlike the recent outbreak that has affected hundreds of thousands of individuals, the older cases only concern isolated individuals, all male of course--

THE JOURNALIST

Fascinating indeed. But tell me, Michel, where are you?

THE REPORTER

I am in front of the Water Purification Center of the city of Bogotá in Colombia. Just before the emergence of the numerous cases of A-C-D that has devastated the city, local newspapers reported that individuals had broken into...

The reporter steps aside, allowing the camera to zoom in on the opening in the fence, now patched up with a plank of wood.

THE REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

... the place where the municipality recycles its water. Is there a link between this transgression and the epidemic of A-C-D? The authorities immediately started an investigation, but no trace of toxicity has been found in the water contained in the tanks.

The reporter reappears on the screen.

THE REPORTER (CONT'D)

Another most curious coincidence comes from Arlit, a town in northern Niger that government forces have tried to retake from rebel fighters, but made little progress until last February, when the fighting suddenly stopped from one day to the next. A journalist stationed there confirmed that the rebels had abruptly abandoned their positions. Curiously, the first cases of A-C-D were recorded at the same time.

THE JOURNALIST

It is indeed a most curious coincidence. Thank you, Michel.

The screen behind her turns black and she faces her guest again.

THE JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

What do you think of this,
Professor?

THE PROFESSOR

(vaguely)

It is certainly an interesting idea. We should not neglect any lead. But to come back to your question about the causes of this epidemic, a hypothesis favored by most secret services was that of a virus or of a bacterium. The sudden and spontaneous appearance of A-C-D could indicate the use of a biological weapon. But so far, no group or network has claimed responsibility for this.

THE JOURNALIST

It would be the most horrible scenario.

THE PROFESSOR

Indeed! A few other causes that have been brought forward are the pollution of groundwater, a deficiency in the food chain, or a shower of meteorites carrying harmful gases.

THE JOURNALIST

Do we have to worry, Professor?

THE PROFESSOR

No. First of all, no new case has surfaced in recent months. It seems that the worst is behind us. Furthermore, laboratories all over the world are actively looking for a way to counteract the effects of A-C-D.

THE JOURNALIST

Thank you very much, Professor Mendel.

Asherah turns the screen off.

INANNA

I'm worn out.

ASHERAH

I'm not surprised, I saw you on the news, you were real dynamite. The naked women on the Cathedral must have scandalized many?

INANNA

Wow, it was a big success. They insulted us, they threw tomatoes, they spat at us. Fortunately, the team I was working with was really fantastic. We had real fun!

ASHERAH

Come, as a reward for what you have done for the good cause, I'll give you a full-body massage.

They disappear into an adjacent room.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/SLEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

The mess in the bedroom is quite extraordinary. Clothes are spread all over the place, and the bed is a real battlefield.

Inanna undresses and lies down on her belly on the bed. Very gently, Asherah sinks her fingers in the lush blond hair of her companion, and slowly goes down her neck and her back.

INT. A LABORATORY - DAY

Asherah and three other women work in a room transformed into a laboratory. All four wear white coats, bouffant caps, and gloves, and have masks on their faces.

Someone KNOCKS at the door.

ASHERAH

(without raising her head)

Come in.

The door opens ajar, and Inanna's head appears.

INANNA

I'm on my way. I took one of the last batches. I've written everything down. We are almost at the end of the stock. Demand is really booming.

ASHERAH

(looks at her and answers cynically)

Yes, it's a pity.

INANNA

Well, I'll see you later. Bye!

ASHERAH

(plunged again in her research)

Okay! Bye!

Inanna closes the door.

INT. A LABORATORY - DAY (LATER)

Asherah and Inanna are alone in the laboratory.

ASHERAH

I think I found a way: the effects on the mother are now insignificant. What's great is that only the Y chromosome from the father is affected when sexual differentiation occurs.

I have now to move to the next stage and try it on pregnant women.

(mischievously)

Don't you want to get pregnant?

It's for a good cause.

INANNA

You're joking, but I thought about it. I could get pregnant in vitro. It's your specialty, and it would be our child.

But it would be better to try on a larger scale. I'll talk with our most loyal representatives. I think it won't be too difficult to find volunteers among the women we have helped, right?

ASHERAH

I get it, you don't want to have a child with me.

They laugh and kiss.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. BUILDING (JALAWLA, IRAQ, 2014) - DAY

A group of men belonging to Daesh, dressed in black and armed, arrives on the landing leading to the apartments on the second floor.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Jalawla (Iraq), 2014"

One of them SHOUTS a few orders in Arabic, and the group splits in two, half of them going to the right, the others to the left.

INT. THE GRANDMOTHER'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM/BEDROOM - DAY

Sitting in the living room, the grandmother, the uncle, a couple in their forties, and two young men drink tea and discuss in Kurdish.

All of a sudden, one HEARS shots that seem to come from the neighboring apartment. They all stop talking and listen attentively, a worried look on their faces.

The uncle stands up and heads towards the door when it is opened violently.

Three armed men enter the apartment, SHOUTING orders in Arabic and indicating with their weapons that everyone has to get out. One of the two young men tries to resist, but a blow with the butt of a gun sends him to the ground. His brother helps him to stand up, and they follow the others outside, followed by one of the armed men.

In the meantime, the two others begin to loot the apartment, throwing everything on the ground except for the objects of value that they put into big bags.

ENTERING a room, one of them discovers Nahid, 21, and Asherah, 8, curled up in a corner in each other's arms. They seem terrified.

The man SHOUTS something in Arabic. The two sisters stand up, glued to each other. While holding back Nahid with his gun, the man pulls Asherah out of the arms of her sister and pushes her out of the room. He then throws Nahid on the bed. She doesn't resist.

NAHID
(in Kurdish, to Asherah)
Go find grandma, I'm coming.

But Asherah, frozen, stays in the doorway and looks at the man who opens his zipper and jumps on Nahid.

NAHID (CONT'D)
(imploring)
Asherah, go away, please.

But Asherah doesn't move.

NAHID (CONT'D)
(weakening)
Asherah, please!

The two sisters look at each other, their eyes riveted on one another, while the man rapes Nahid. After a while, Asherah leaves.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The inhabitants of the building have all been gathered in the street. The men of Daesh separate the young women and the children from the rest. Children are forcibly pulled out of the arms of their mother when these are judged to be too old. Women and children CRY and YELL.

Once in the street, Asherah has to join the group of children. Shortly after, Nahid comes out of the building. The soldier is behind her, pushing her with his weapon towards the group of young women and children. She looks broken, traces of the assault she has just endured being plainly visible. When she walks past her grandmother and her uncle, they turn their head away.

When Asherah sees Nahid, she starts to run towards her, but the man who seems to be in charge of the whole operation takes her by her arm and stops her. A scarf covers his face, and one can only see his eyes. They seem to smile at Asherah when he says:

RAMI

Asherah!

Asherah looks at him and suddenly smiles back.

ASHERAH

Rami!

But Nahid suddenly rushes toward Asherah, grasps her and takes her away without looking at Rami. The two sisters join the group of women and children that has already started to walk away, cordoned off by the men of Daesh.

As they disappear in an adjacent street, one HEARS shots and women yelling.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. A PRIVATE ROOM IN A RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Thirty women and two men are sitting at tables with glasses, cups, and a few bottles of water and wine.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Paris, 2035"

Standing up, Inanna speaks:

INANNA

(in English)

Although none of us has been apprehended or even bothered, the authorities are still trying to find what has caused the A-C-D epidemic.

The fact that it no longer makes the front page must not let us think that the danger has passed. For this reason, we thought it best to limit the number of representatives invited at this meeting - let me use this occasion to greet our two male colleagues - to reduce the risks to a minimum. You are all tasked with informing your networks, but please remain on your guard.

(drinks water)

In a moment, Asherah will tell you all about her new discovery. I can assure you it's an amazing one, and it fully supports our objective to eradicate all forms of violence, especially those against women and children. With her new product, our goal could become a reality in a much nearer future.

A thrill of excitement goes through the room.

INANNA (CONT'D)

However, you'll leave this gathering empty-handed,--

She is interrupted by an "ooh" of disappointment.

INANNA (CONT'D)

... in case you are searched when returning to your country.

(MORE)

INANNA (CONT'D)

But don't worry, everything will be sent to you in due course when you are safe.

Asherah stands up. Inanna whispers a few words in her ear and leaves the room.

ASHERAH

A few years ago, shortly after the first tests with i2, I developed another product to which I gave the very romantic name of M-C, standing for Male Control.

The laughter loosens the tension in the room. Inanna comes back and sits down.

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

Don't look for poetry behind this name, as you won't find any.

(laughter)

Like i2, M-C is a protein that prevents the production of testosterone. But whereas i2 has to be ingested by males, M-C has to be taken by the woman at the beginning of her pregnancy.

A murmur goes through the room. Asherah waits a bit before continuing.

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

The effects of M-C are practically identical to those of i2. However, the two products differ on an essential aspect: whereas the effects of i2 are always the same whatever its dosage, the effects of M-C vary with its dosage. M-C offers, therefore, the possibility to create physiological as well as psychological variations in the expression of masculinity in men.

The representatives show their amazement with an uproar. Asherah waits until the calm has returned before continuing.

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

M-C gives women a new tool to exert control on their progeny because it gives them the possibility to decide the degree of masculinity the boy they will bring out into the world will have.

A representative raises her hand.

REPRESENTATIVE #1

Has M-C been tested on pregnant women?

ASHERAH

Yes, of course. We began the tests about two years ago. Since then, a hundred women have participated. Until today, every woman has given birth to a beautiful baby, or to the most beautiful baby, if we believe the mothers themselves.

(laughter)

Mothers and children are all doing very well. Besides, M-C doesn't seem to have altered the sexual demographic distribution: fifty-one percent of these women gave birth to a girl, forty-nine percent to a boy. It's a quite normal proportion for such a small sample.

I want to take this opportunity to thank once again all these women who had the courage to take this step into the unknown with us.

Another representative stands up.

REPRESENTATIVE #2

Why use M-C if there are no differences between the women that take it and those that don't?

ASHERAH

M-C stops the spermatogenesis and prevents the development of secondary sexual characters in boys at puberty. The sexual organs, on the other hand, keep their normal appearance.

The women who have taken M-C know that they will have to wait approximately ten years before the differences become visible.

REPRESENTATIVE #1

Did they all receive the same dosage?

ASHERAH

No, we tested several dosages, while taking the mothers' desires into account. To help them in their choice, we've established four prototypes representing four different dosages. You will find a precise description of these prototypes in the file that you will receive.

A third representative rises.

REPRESENTATIVE #3

Why this meeting then, if we'll have to wait for at least another eight years before the first boys reach puberty? Only then will we have results that will allow us to go further.

ASHERAH

Our goal is to provide women with absolute control of their procreative capacities within one generation.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

The fact that the tests on pregnant women have demonstrated that M-C is harmless for the mother as well as for the child has motivated us to take the next step. That's why you are here tonight.

REPRESENTATIVE #3

But how do we know that there won't be any adverse effects on girls?

ASHERAH

Because M-C provokes the syndrome of androgen insensibility in the fetus. Its effect is concentrated on male genitalia, and its consequences on the sexual development of girls are therefore negligible. Furthermore, any adverse effect on girls with a hormonal instability could be easily compensated.

REPRESENTATIVE #1

Has one of these women been pregnant after this first pregnancy?

ASHERAH

Yes, two of them have become pregnant a few months after their first childbirth with M-C. However, neither of them took M-C during their second pregnancy. One delivered a girl a few days ago, and all is well. The second woman should give birth in a month's time.

REPRESENTATIVE #3

But is there no risk that M-C will create an imbalance in the distribution of the sexes that could prove irreversible?

(MORE)

REPRESENTATIVE #3 (CONT'D)

In the long term, couldn't it mean the disappearance of the male sex, and therefore, the extinction of humanity?

ASHERAH

You raise a crucial point here. There are several ways to consider it.

First of all, many, many years will have gone by before the number of women having taken M-C is sufficient to have a substantial impact on the demographic balance. Besides, many laboratories today can artificially impregnate an ovum. This could, however, imply that the black market for active spermatozoids is going to experience a fantastic boom.

(laughter)

And finally, I hope to reassure you completely by saying that we are nowhere near a shortage of semen. On the contrary, there is a superabundance of it. As of now, sperm banks have the capacity to repopulate the planet for several generations.

(laughter and applause)

As you can see, there is nothing to fear about the survival of the human race. Besides, if you think about the historical process of detestosteronization that has not only made human features more feminine, but that has also allowed our ancestors to become more social beings. In turn, this has accelerated the development of tools and arts, and has ultimately given birth to modern society with the introduction of agriculture - which, I need not remind you, was introduced by women, as the men had gone hunting.

(MORE)

ASHERAH (CONT'D)

(laughter)

A reduction in the level of testosterone has not decreased the survival possibilities of the human species. On the contrary, it has multiplied them.

On the other hand, in their quest to control nature, men have pushed its conquest to extremes that have brought us to the brink of extinction.

The step that we are going to take today doesn't have the eradication of violence as the only goal. It will also allow us to ensure our long-term survival in a most rapid and efficient way by protecting the nature on which our existence depends. It is especially to guarantee humanity's survival that we have to place it in women's hands. They have to take control of it.

The representatives all rise and applaud.

INT. ASHERAH'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Inanna is lying on a large bed, a book in her hands. The door to the bathroom is open and one HEARS Asherah brushing her teeth and getting ready for the night.

INANNA

Anyway, you did very well tonight. Well done! It always impresses me to see the passion that inhabits you when you speak about things you believe in.

(beat)

It sharply contrasts with your wild attitude when you are in society.

Asherah appears in the doorway of the bathroom, with toothpaste at the corner of her mouth.

ASHERAH

I've been like this since I've known you. I was passionate when I was young, but you showed me how to express my passions intensively.

She returns to the bathroom.

INANNA

In any case, our representatives were enthusiastic about you. A lot of them asked me to organize this kind of meeting more often. They all said you were fantastic.

ASHERAH (O.S.)

Two of them even asked me to go for a drink with them somewhere.

(laughing)

They were openly making a pass at me.

FADE TO BLACK.

END PART ONE.

TITLE CARD:

Part Two

CUT TO:

EXT. A PEDESTRIAN STREET (OREM, U.S.A., 2070) - DAY

The street is very animated.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Orem (Utah, U.S.A.), 2070"

Most women wear subdued but elegant and comfortable clothes. Sometimes, one carries a hat or some other ornament, but always with discretion.

Men's fashion, on the other hand, contrasts with its exuberance. It includes clothes from all eras and cultures, Roman tunics alongside eighteenth-century dresses, leather tank tops and pants, chainmails, monk's frocks, etc.

But it is above all the headdresses and accessories that exhibit the greatest exuberance: multi-layered hairstyles, shaved skulls, gelled punk spikes, shoe-shaped hats, bags used as hoods, ill-matching shoes, hamburger-shaped handbags, jewelry that projects 3-D images, heads in a gilded cage, screen shirts, T-shirts without backs held at the level of the shoulders by two birds, etc.

Nevertheless, this cacophony of styles and colors does not conceal the specific attributes of each caste. "Hulls" wear the shell that contains their penis in an always clearly visible way. Made of wood, metal or plastic, it hangs between their legs, sometimes reaching to their knees. And to mark their manhood in a more ostentatious manner yet, their face is often adorned with the most extravagant mustaches or beards.

The men of the second caste highlight the curves of their bodies. Their breasts, comparable to those of women, clearly appear under the lightness of the garment covering them. Some even wear just a bra above the waist or go topless.

The "chained men" form the third caste and walk on a leash. Alone or in a couple, they often walk behind their mistress or wait for her, grouped at the entrance of a store, chatting together.

Finally, the "pariahs" are characterized by a total absence of hair. Their face is often very pale, without any expression, and they show a complete lack of reactions. Their inactivity contrasts with the feverish animation of the street. They tend to gather on remote corners, sitting on the ground glued to each other. They are the only ones whose clothing is poor, dirty, and devoid of any appeal.

In the street, women walk almost always with one or more companions, extensively talking and often laughing. We also see men walking together, hand in hand or chained to each other, but they are generally more discreet. The public space clearly belongs to women.

Among the shops that line the street, many sell clothes for men and are immediately recognizable by the richness of the forms and colors of the merchandise they offer.

In the windows and at the entrance of the shops, male models entice customers by presenting the latest trends, doing tricks, or telling stories.

EXT. A PEDESTRIAN STREET - DAY (LATER)

After a few hundred meters, the street opens up into a large square at the center of which stands a massive glass dome surrounded by phalluses made of glass and spewing jets of water in the air.

A low and pleasant man's VOICE invites the passers-by to enter the Center of Vows.

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, all dialogues until the end of the movie are spoken in English.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Whether you are looking for a rushed orgasm or want to organize your pregnancy, you will find everything here under one roof.

(sound of a bell)

Have you tried our 'sex in the mood'? Consult our menu.

(sound of a bell)

For your greenest desires, enjoy our 'sex in nature'.

(sound of a bell)

Compose your own script and become the heroine of your erotic movie!

(sound of a bell)

The largest choice of men with guaranteed pedigrees at the most competitive prices.

(sound of a bell)

You would like to have a real boy? Have you always dreamed of raising a little girl? Would you prefer a multi-faceted child, sixty percent girl, forty percent boy? The broadest collection of sperm components waits for you inside.

(MORE)

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Our experts will help you choose
the sperm and the impregnation
method that best match your needs.

On both sides of the entrance, holographic PROJECTIONS representing the various activities proposed by the center are shown. One sees a muscular man wearing a swimsuit enhancing his penis performing a massage on a woman whose face we cannot see. The next projection shows a dozen women splashing in a pool...

INT. THE CENTER OF VOWS - DAY

Inside the dome, holographic PROJECTIONS of women and men approach the newcomers to inform and direct them. The hosts and hostesses wear the same kind of clothes as the visitors they accost. One cannot see what lies beyond.

Among the crowd, two women in their thirties seem to come for the first time. CHRISTINE, the tallest, is blonde and wears a black suit. The collar of her jacket forms a small screen around her head. SAÏDA has brown hair and is dressed in a curved yellow suit and matching heels.

A HOSTESS in a black costume ornamented with a gold brooch immediately appears to welcome them.

THE HOSTESS

Welcome. Can I provide a messenger
for you?

SAÏDA

With pleasure. We would like to
talk to a counselor about the
possibilities of simultaneous
pregnancies, but before that, we
would like to watch some of your
displays.

THE HOSTESS

Very well. One moment, please.

A gray dwarf DOVE appears, fluttering above the head of the hostess.

THE HOSTESS (CONT'D)

This is Kate. She will appear when you call her.

(to Christine)

Would you like Kate to respond to your voice as well?

CHRISTINE

No, it won't be necessary. Thank you!

THE HOSTESS

(to Saïda)

Will that be all?

SAÏDA

Yes, thank you.

THE HOSTESS

(with a smile)

Pregnancy will fit you both very well.

(disappearing)

You are lucky.

The two women smile. The hostess has vanished, and the interior of the Center of Vows appears. The dove leads the two women to a circular plateau, where they take a seat. The plateau immediately starts to go down, forming large circular movements. The dove has disappeared.

INT. THE CENTER OF VOWS - DAY (LATER)

A large circular plaza lined with cafes and restaurants occupies the bottom floor of the Center. In the middle of this esplanade, a white grand piano placed on a slightly raised platform slowly turns as the pianist plays well-known tunes that fill the dome.

Each terrace has its own musicians as well, with acoustic walls insulating their music from that of the other terraces.

When the plateau has landed on the esplanade, the dove reappears and guides Christine and Saïda to the Square of the Displays, a circular space adjacent to the central plaza.

As soon as the two women have entered the square, the dove disappears.

At the center of the square, three-dimensional projections presenting erotic situations rapidly follow each other. The periphery of the place is lined with windows, all of the same size.

Behind each window, there is a small room with, at the back, a large bed that can accommodate three people. The walls are covered with mirrors and screens. At the front of the room, one sees a high stool, a metal bar fixed to the ceiling and the floor, and several accessories that vary from one room to the next: a hammock, a massage table, a vibrator, a three-dimensional projection, etc. Lamps emitting a reddish glow light the room. Each window is separated from the next by a door hidden behind a red curtain.

The windows that are lit display a wide variety of male sexual partners. Men wearing a loincloth or a small slip take erotic poses, dance, caress themselves, or show their muscles to attract passers-by. Some are young, tall, and muscular, but a few are old, small, bald, with fat bellies, or even obese. Some are covered with hair; others have skin as smooth as that of a baby; others still exhibit erotic tattoos. In addition, all races are represented to accommodate all tastes.

On each window, information concerning its occupant is displayed to the public. Next to his three-dimensional picture, one reads his age, his provenance, his size, weight, the length of his penis, and a sexual resume containing, among other things, his chromosomal group with the precise level of testosterone produced by his body. A stamp guarantees that his semen is not active, and another one indicates the date of his last medical examination, which is mandatory every three months for the employees of the Center of Vows.

Visitors, mostly females, often stroll in couples or in groups from one window to the other, making abundant and piquant comments and laughing a lot. Sometimes, they enter the room to ask about the activities that the man proposes and his prices. If a deal is done, the man pulls a curtain that isolates the bed from the gaze of the public, and a small red lamp above the window is switched on.

Some are flashing, indicating that the customer does not want the curtain to be closed and desires to be exposed to the public's gaze. It is also a way to invite passers-by to come in and join the activity in progress.

Christine and Saïda go slowly from one window to the other, carefully examining the data of their occupants. They do not talk. After several windows, Saïda says:

SAÏDA

I think I've seen enough. What an exhibition! But it's not really what we seek. Do you want to go on?

CHRISTINE

No, you're right, it's nothing for us. Let's go.

INT. THE CENTER OF VOWS - DAY (LATER)

As they leave the Square of the Displays, the dove reappears, leads them to an elevator, and disappears again. The elevator takes the two women to the third level inside the dome. From the balustrade, they look at the animation on the esplanade below.

The dove reappears and takes them along partitions made of frosted glass that form an opaque wall on their left.

At their approach, one of the partitions opens up, and a VOICE inside says:

THE COUNSELOR (O.S.)

Come in, please.

The dove disappears again as the two women enter the room.

INT. THE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

THE COUNSELOR

Sit down, please.

Behind a round screen-table, the female COUNSELOR gets up to shake the hand of the two women. They all sit.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

My name is Caro Nika, and I would like to give you some guidance about the possibilities of a simultaneous pregnancy. Is that what you came here for?

CHRISTINE

Yes, it is. This is Saïda, and I am Christine. We want to become pregnant at the same moment from the same semen.

THE COUNSELOR

(smiling)

That is clearly put. And what sex do you want the two children to be?

CHRISTINE

We would like a girl and a boy.

THE COUNSELOR

Very well. Do you already have children?

CHRISTINE

(a bit irritated)

No. That's why we are here.

THE COUNSELOR

How old are you?

CHRISTINE

I am 32 and Saïda is 31.

THE COUNSELOR

Very well. And do you work?

CHRISTINE

Yes, we both work, and we both have a good salary if you want to know.

THE COUNSELOR

How long have you been together?

Feeling that Christine is getting more and more irritated by these questions, Saïda puts her hand on her companion's arm to calm her and answers.

SAÏDA

We've known each other for eight years now, and we've been living together for five years.

THE COUNSELOR

(slightly upset)

I ask all these questions to get an idea of who you are. You understand, all sorts of people ask me to advise them, and to do my job properly, I have to know who I am dealing with.

Only this morning, there was a couple, he was sixty-five, and she was more than eighty years old. Their situation required a very different approach than yours.

(beat)

Today, I will try to sketch the possibilities available to you, and the things you will need to address to take the most appropriate decision.

First of all, the fact that you want to get pregnant at the same time from the same spermatic batch prohibits pregnancy by sexual contact. It has to be done by insemination. Do you follow me?

CHRISTINE

Of course, it's logical.

THE COUNSELOR

Yes, it's logical. However, we advise our clients to have intercourse before insemination as it enhances the chances of a successful implantation.

A second point concerns the ova.

(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

To get both of you inseminated by the same spermatic batch does not represent a problem, but if this sperm fertilizes your eggs individually, your children will share the genes of their father, but not those of their mothers. Do you see what I mean?

SAÏDA

Yes. It's not what we want. Is there another possibility?

THE COUNSELOR

Yes. The other possibility is to combine your pronuclei. You will thus give birth to a little girl whose genetic material comes from her two mothers.

SAÏDA

And for the boy?

THE COUNSELOR

I'm coming to that. Your little girl will have an X chromosome from Saïda and one from Christine. But boys possess only one X chromosome, the second chromosome having to be a Y that only the male sperm can provide. For the boy, you'll have to choose which one of you will provide the ovum that will be fertilized.

Christine and Saïda look at each other, puzzled. The counselor gives them a moment to digest the news.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

There are other factors that you must take into consideration if you want a boy. As you know, the sex of the child can be determined with high precision, although there is always a margin of error of about five percent.

(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

What's more, being the mother of a boy brings additional difficulties. You not only have to determine his chromosomal group, but also have to think about the treatment every male child has to undergo.

The costs of these treatments, if they are made on the fetus, are insignificant. But the longer you wait, the higher the price. In all cases, they must be completed before the boy reaches puberty. That's why it is important to know before conception the chromosomal group you want your boy to belong to. You also have to specify the timing of the treatment.

Do you already know which one of you will bear the boy?

CHRISTINE

No, we haven't talked about it.

THE COUNSELOR

If you wish, I will give you a file containing comprehensive information about the points I just mentioned. It also includes material on spermatic batches, on the positive and negative aspects of each male chromosomal group, and on the treatments to which boys are subjected. Study it at your leisure, and we can meet again in a few days to talk about the different strategies and the procedure you will have to follow. What do you think?

CHRISTINE

(to Saïda)

We could do that. Do you agree?

SAÏDA

Yes, I believe we could use a few days of reflection.

Christine and Saïda leave.

INT. A ROOM IN A DISUSED BUNKER - NIGHT

Two armored doors allow access to a large room without windows. The concrete walls are lined with photos and posters of actors, sportsmen, men surrounded by women, men showing off their muscles, pinups, sports cars, etc. These images of another time form a sort of tribute to masculinity that the banners bearing the acronym SPERM confirm.

Besides the spaces for meetings and for bodybuilding, there's also a mat, a punch bag, a pool table, a large screen, and a bar.

There are only men in the room. Most have long hair; some have a beard and a mustache, others are deliberately badly shaved. In singlet and short pants or in tracksuits, most have a muscular body. Some are lavishly tattooed, while others exhibit overly "aesthetic" scars.

A few of them are sitting around the large table, drinking a beer while reading a newspaper or thumbing through a magazine. Others are training in the fitness area. Two men with bottles of beer in their hands are watching an old two-dimensional porn movie whose colors are faded.

Nobody is talking. One only hears the heavy breathing of the sportsmen blended with the gasps of the actors in the porn film.

After a while, one of the sportsmen stops and challenges those watching the movie:

SPORTSMAN

Hey, girls! Move your ass! Who would like to fight with me?

SPECTATOR #1

Wait, it's the best moment, he takes her from behind like a bitch. Damn, these were the good old times!

SPORTSMAN

Living in the past is useless.
Today, it's not them who are
fucked, it's us. Come here, my
love, I'm gonna give it to you.

No one reacts.

SPECTATOR #2

(his eyes glued to the
screen)

I prefer when they get ass-fucked
and cry out of pain.

SPORTSMAN

Why don't you bring your ass here,
instead?

He bursts into a big laugh and resumes his training when a
group of men enters the room.

INT. A ROOM IN A DISUSED BUNKER - DAY (LATER)

The room is now crowded. About 50 men and a few women chat in
small groups, glasses of wine or bottles of beer in their
hands. The conversations are lively.

Rows of chairs make a semicircle around the table, behind
which four men (JACK, MAX, PETER, RICHARD) sit, facing the
audience. Jack starts to speak:

JACK

Gentlemen, ladies, please sit down.

Everyone sits down. Those who do not have a chair remain
standing behind. The conversations die away.

JACK (CONT'D)

For those who do not know me, my
name is Jack Daniels. As a delegate
of the SPERM for the State of Utah,
I am glad to welcome you in our
good city of Orem for our third
mini-symposium.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

The goal of this meeting is to sketch the latest developments relating to our activities on the international scene. Three of our delegates will take the floor today. I immediately hand over to Max Jordan, our delegate for California and SPERM representative in Asia.

MAX

Hi, everyone. Today, I'll talk about the Philippines. Unfortunately, what I have to tell is not very positive, especially since an identical phenomenon was observed in all the countries of South-East Asia where the same project was launched. Two years ago, we started promoting the emigration of women from poor regions of Asia to the United States and Europe. For each woman, we were ready to give two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and pay all travel expenses and immigration costs. In return, we asked them to have three children with one of our men. The contract stipulated that their pregnancies would be "natural," meaning that they would be the result of a sexual relationship with the chosen man. And to avoid any chromosomal manipulation of the male fetuses, they would refuse any external intervention on the fetus, except if their own life was in danger. We wanted to create a pool of boys that would live outside the caste system and escape the treatments imposed by the authorities according to the directives of the United Nations, better known as Code Ishtar.

He drinks some water, before resuming.

MAX (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, after having supported this project for two years, I'm obliged to throw in the towel: the project has utterly failed.

Of the hundred and fifty-three women that we brought to the United States, eighty-eight of them have returned to their home country in the meantime, taking their children with them.

All those who still live here have been so seduced by the system that they have broken their contract with us by announcing their pregnancy and by giving birth at one of the Family Planning clinics.

Someone in the audience interrupts him.

PARTICIPANT #1

And the money then?

MAX

Except in six cases, we haven't been able to recover our money, mainly because the nature of the activities mentioned in the contract did not allow us to undertake legal action. For those who have returned to their country, recovering the money has proven to be even more challenging.

Max drinks some water to conceal his emotion. A second delegate takes the opportunity to speak.

PETER

Excuse me for interrupting you, Max, but I've seen the same phenomenon in Central and South America.

Seeing that Max does not seem to want to speak, Jack says:

JACK

Go on, Peter.

PETER

Thank you, Jack. By the way, my name is Peter Gaultier, and I represent the State of Washington. I would like to mention another occurrence that is rapidly spreading and that has severe consequences on our freedom of movement. These past two years, many men who wanted to escape the segregation they suffered here decided to start a new life in countries such as Venezuela or Uruguay. However, the migration of these single men caused many problems with the local populations. In the first place, the money they brought with them created serious imbalances and disrupted the traditional economy. Furthermore, by marrying locally, they reduced the number of women available for indigenous males. In time, this led to riots, and to the murder of several immigrants with their wives and children. The authorities decided to intervene and put a stop to what they call the "North-South sexual migration."

MAX

The same thing is happening in Asia. In Laos for example, a law has just been passed that deprives a woman who marries a foreigner of her Laotian nationality. A few countries are even taking protectionist measures, a step that Washington does not like at all.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

The American government has decided to curb this sexual migration by introducing exit visas for men departing for these countries, and by partially blocking their bank accounts to oblige them to return.

JACK

Apparently, these projects have not delivered what was expected at the start. They have also depleted our community financially. Our third speaker this evening is Richard Thorpe, our delegate for the State of New York. Richard, do you have some positive news for us?

RICHARD

To tell the truth, I'm afraid my news is even worse than that of my colleagues.

A reaction of disappointment goes through the crowd.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I investigated the so-called "farms" that are flourishing in remote places of the American continent, and that are also found in Europe and in Japan. The official goal of these farms, whose official name is Natural Birth Centers, is to allow women to give birth outside the regular Family Planning centers.

Someone in the audience interrupts him.

PARTICIPANT #2

But why would the government create a competitor to their own Family Planning centers?

RICHARD

That's precisely the point I tried to answer, but the authorities remain very discreet on this subject, and I couldn't get any official answer to this question. I had therefore to conduct my own investigation, and one thing became very quickly obvious: these farms - which in the meantime have become real villages - are strictly forbidden to men.

This led me to conclude that they are intended to create a micro-society only composed of women and children, an environment from which the male element is entirely excluded.

The public strongly reacts to these words. Richard waits for the calm to return before resuming:

RICHARD (CONT'D)

If my interpretation is correct, boys that are born in these centers will have to leave them when they reach puberty.

Beat.

JACK

(faking a smile)

Thank you, Richard, you have delivered the coup de grâce.

(to the audience)

But we must not lose hope. History has shown us that it is the technological advances of the last two hundred years - chiefly the work of men - that have enabled women to overthrow our patriarchal society.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

It is therefore up to us to find the Achilles' heel of their matriarchal society, as they call it, and develop the tools that will allow us to reestablish a status of equality.

(beat)

For our next mini-symposium, I would like to suggest a theme that is dear to my heart, the theme of love. Throughout history, love has played a paramount role in male-female relationships. Curiously, love has completely disappeared from the social discourse today. Could love represent the Achilles' heel of the matriarchal society? But let's go back to the present. Demonstrations are planned for tomorrow to mark Male Day. It is imperative that this day unfolds without any violence: we certainly do not want to provide those who want to censor us with ammunition. I hope to see you all tomorrow.

The delegates and the audience stand up. The conversations resume but the spirits are now low.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. VILLA/LIVING ROOM - DAY (DUSK)

The living room is very modern, with large window bays overlooking the town and a magnificent sunset. Inanna, 62, is sitting on a couch and watches the news on a big screen built into the wall. In front of her, with her back to the screen, Asherah, 64, is lost in her thoughts.

THE JOURNALIST

... a holiday that celebrates the fifty-seventh anniversary of the historic decision made by the Bolivian government to prohibit men who have committed violence on women or children to access any public function.

Although these laws seem outdated today, these celebrations remind us of the importance of this early attempt to regulate male aggressiveness, a feature that had dominated the relationships between men and women for thousands of years. Fifty years later, it is good to remind younger generations that it is thanks to the courage of all the women and men who have refused the yoke of patriarchal domination that we are, today...

ASHERAH

(irritated)

All this feminist propaganda gets on my nerves.

INANNA

You forget that it's my job to maintain this propaganda--

ASHERAH

Yes, I know, but it's nevertheless pure and simple brainwashing.

INANNA

(a little upset, mutes the sound of the television)

It's true that my work is much less glamorous than yours.

(beat)

It's a pity that you want to preserve your anonymity at all costs.

(MORE)

INANNA (CONT'D)

The people of Orem would be so proud to know that a laureate of the Nobel Prize for peace lives among them.

ASHERAH

Please, Inanna, let's not start again. I'm not so sure the world has become a better place because of me.

INANNA

I often wondered what would have become of the world if you had not been there. You have not only proved the redundancy of the masculine, but you have primarily established the viability of the feminine. You might not be so proud of that, but thanks to you, millions of women have become aware of the scope of their abilities and of their power. But for me, the most remarkable thing is that the world is experiencing its longest era of peace thanks to you. No matter how you look at it, it's an extraordinary feat and I'm proud to have contributed to it.

Lost in her thoughts, Asherah does not answer. Inanna looks at her for a while, sighs and focuses her attention on the screen. She increases the volume.

THE JOURNALIST

... Despite the ban, the SPERM has organized a new demonstration on Tuesday in front of the maternity units of the Family Planning to protest the systematic emasculation of men which violates the most fundamental of human rights, the right to procreate. In an exclusive interview...

INANNA

(cutting the sound again)

History has shown us how they have
abused this right.

On the screen, we see demonstrators carrying placards with drawings illustrating slogans such as "No to sperm manipulation," "In the beginning was semen," "Stop violence against men," "No to domestication: we are humans too," "Stop! Demographic Disaster Ahead!"

ASHERAH

(suddenly, as if thinking
out loud)

Has the destiny that Nahid and
Marianna saw in me made a monster
of me?

INANNA

My god, have you forgotten what you
have suffered? And your sister? And
all the women that you have helped?
Who were the monsters that made a
hell out of our lives?
Think of all the women who are able
to live a normal life thanks to
you. Think of all the testimonies
of gratitude that you have received
over the years. Think of the women
who worship you as a goddess. Think
of me who is so proud to have
shared your life.

They remain silent a moment.

INANNA (CONT'D)

Speaking of worship, everyone asked
if you will come to the party
tonight. Even colleagues from
Paris, you know, Marion and a few
others, come especially for you.

ASHERAH

Please, don't insist Inanna, I will
not go. You know how much I hate
these social gatherings.

Inanna stands up, kneels before Asherah, and lays her head on Asherah's knees. Asherah gently caresses the blond hair of her partner.

INANNA

(softly)

How can someone transform society
as you have done and be so wild at
the same time!

(beat)

That's one of the mysteries I love
in you.

ASHERAH

(gently)

Go ahead. I'll stay at home.

Inanna stands up and kisses Asherah.

INANNA

I'll make sure not to wake you up.

ASHERAH

Have fun. Give my love to everyone.

Inanna leaves the room. Asherah remains in silence. On the muted screen, we see police with laser weapons arresting hooded protesters carrying wooden sticks.

FADE TO BLACK.

END PART TWO.

TITLE CARD:

Epilogue

CUT TO:

EXT. DUNES BY THE SEASIDE - DAY - (NIGHTMARE)

Asherah, 8, runs in the dunes. She seems to float in the landscape. Forms are fuzzy in the bright yellow sunlight.

EXT. ON THE SHORE - DAY - (NIGHTMARE)

Asherah is now on the beach. Her hand rests in the hand of Nahid, 21. Both, their backs turned to us, are wearing floral dresses and straw hats. The reflection of light on the water glitters around them in bluish white sparkles.

SLOW ZOOM OUT

Standing on the other side of Nahid, the gray silhouette of a man appears. Nahid has her hand in his.

EXT. IN THE WATER - DAY - (NIGHTMARE)

Asherah swims, dives, and re-emerges on the surface of the water like a dolphin. Around her, everything is blue. Her face radiates a boundless happiness.

She looks towards the shore. She waves her hand.

EXT. ON THE SHORE - DAY - (NIGHTMARE)

Nahid is sitting on the beach, alone. She smiles in the direction of Asherah and waves back to her.

ZOOM OUT

At the top of a dune overlooking the beach, we discover the grandmother and the uncle. They look severely in Nahid's direction.

INTERCUT between Asherah in the water and Nahid and the others on the shore.

Asherah sees her grandmother and her uncle and wants to wave at them when the sky and the water around her darken.

Armed MEN appear on the crest of the dunes all around.

SFX: We hear someone BREATHING faintly at first, then increasingly louder until the end of the nightmare.

Nahid has not seen the armed men. She smiles at Asherah and waves her arm.

The face of Asherah takes an alarmed expression. She tries to warn Nahid of the danger when a hand grabs her head and pushes her into the water. In the middle of the air bubbles that surround her, Asherah recognizes the face of Rami who smiles at her, but who continues to keep her head under water. The bubbles fill the screen.

Everything goes black as we hear the deafening SOUND of a massive metallic door that closes (see scene #1).

INT. VILLA/BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is almost entirely in the dark.

Asherah, 64, suddenly straightens up in her bed. Sweat beads on her forehead. She's panting, her eyes filled with terror.

ZOOM OUT

Inanna emerges beside Asherah in the bed and takes her in her arms to reassure her.

INANNA

(softly)

This bloody nightmare again...

FADE OUT.

THE END