

**THE METHOD**

**EPISODE 1**

by

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The mind's object is its own undoing.

IDA SHPOLYANSKY

**PROLOGUE**

AMATEUR FOOTAGE, shot surreptitiously on a phone. A wood-panelled, large-windowed room in an English country house. Backs, shoulders, heads: the cameraperson is in the middle of a crowd, trying to get a clear shot of...

A YOUNG WOMAN, BLINDFOLDED and TETHERED to a chair. She's trembling, petrified. An older woman in a black turtle-neck – MIRIAM – stands behind her, rubbing her shoulders.

MIRIAM

Ready?

The young woman exhales shakily, nods. Miriam removes the blindfold. The camera pans right: they're staring at an open, empty, seemingly innocuous DOORWAY.

MIRIAM (O.S.)

Tell me what you see.

The woman's eyes widen. She WEEPS silent tears. Whatever it is must be profoundly, inexpressibly horrifying. BLOOD starts to leak from her nose. Miriam strokes her hair.

MIRIAM

*Shhh*. It's alright. It's alright.  
Just tell us what you can see.

YOUNG WOMAN

H-h-h-h-h....r-r-r-r...

The chair suddenly LURCHES forward towards the doorway, as if dragged by an unseen force. GASPS from the crowd; the blindfolded woman SCREAMS. Miriam seizes the chair frame, struggling to hold it in place.

MIRIAM

Focus! You have to *focus*! Don't let  
it dominate! *Assert* yourself!  
(strength failing)  
For God's sake, someone help me  
*HOLD HER!!!*

Too late: the chair SHOOTs forward – and DISAPPEARS through the open door. CHAOS: the phone falls, landing face up, shaken by the crowd's stampeding feet. From somewhere far off, we can still hear the woman's SCREAMS, echoing...

TITLE CARD:

**THE METHOD**

**ACT 1**

INT. THERAPY CLINIC – ROOM 4 – NIGHT

In a chair, centre frame, sits MELVYN (26). Pale, underfed. Underslept.

The decor is studiously 'zen' – a GONG hanging on the wall, a TERRARIUM on a side table – though Melvyn could hardly be less so. One foot joggles restlessly as he struggles to get his words out.

MELVYN

So it's not. Like, it's always, um.  
Specific?

INTERCUT WITH shots of the following:

- 1) A set of KITCHEN KNIVES buried in a knife-block.
- 2) A TOASTER with a FORK lying nearby.
- 3) A cupboard filled with DETERGENTS: bleach, toilet cleaner...
- 4) A BELT hanging over a wardrobe rail.

MELVYN (CONT'D)

There's always a, a, a *place*, or a *thing* that makes it...happen. The thought. Like a –

DR COLEMAN (O.S.)

Trigger?

MELVYN

(weak smile)  
Something like that.

- 5) An underground platform: the lights and screech of an approaching TUBE TRAIN.
- 6) A bridge over a WEIR: water surging below.
- 7) A large ELECTRICAL TRANSFORMER, humming behind a fence.
- 8) An office-block STAIRWELL, stretching fifteen floors to the ground.

MELVYN (CONT'D)

It's not that I *want* to, y'know,  
I'm not...I don't think I'm  
*depressed*, or anything.

...

(MORE)

MELVYN (CONT'D)

It's the fact that I could. It's just...there, in my head, stuck, like...pfff, I mean...

CUT TO/INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OFFICE - STAIRWELL - DAY

The top of the STAIRWELL: Melvyn leans over the rail, staring down at the drop...

MELVYN (V.O.)

No one's stopping you.

...  
You wouldn't even have to really mean it.

In a single, smooth movement, he VAULTS over the rail, steps off...and starts FALLING.

It takes seconds. He turns in the air.

We hear the IMPACT - a visceral, sickening implosion, reverberating through the stairwell - as we CUT BACK TO:

MELVYN

And the harder I try *not* to think about it...the stronger it gets. The less I trust myself not to - like I'm scared to even just, make a *sandwich*, or open a *window*, in case, I dunno, I fucking...lose it. And I've not been *sleeping*, I'm not really *eating*, I can't - it's been going on for so *long* now that I'm starting to think...what if this is it?

CUT TO:

The top of the stairwell: an ashen-faced Melvyn staring down at...

MELVYN (V.O.)

My whole life? This thought?

His own BODY, splayed and broken, fifteen floors below...a pool of blood growing around his corpse...

CUT BACK TO:

MELVYN

What if that's the only way to make it stop?

Silence, save for the scratch of a pen: his therapist, DR COLEMAN (50s), taking notes. Melvyn waits for him to offer some comment or consolation...in vain.

MELVYN (CONT'D)  
(filling the silence)  
Is that. How normal is that?

The scratching stops. Dr Coleman looks up, intrigued.

MELVYN (CONT'D)  
I don't mean *actually* normal,  
more...normal for who you see. Like  
is that, like a thing people get,  
like – can you get better from  
that?

DR COLEMAN  
(pause to consider.  
philosophical)  
I'm not sure any of us is 'normal'  
exactly.

If this is meant to be reassuring, Melvyn doesn't find it so.

MELVYN  
(another weak smile)  
I guess not.

INT. THERAPY CLINIC – RECEPTION AREA – NIGHT

His hour up, Melvyn slips through the door of Therapy Room 4 into the reception area. The zen theme continues (paintings, plants, maybe a bowl of rocks?). The chairs are empty, save for a DARK-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN (25), reading a book.

Something about her draws Melvyn's eye as he passes. It isn't (just) beauty: more a kind of concentrated melancholy. She might have been painted by Gwen John; written by Sally Rooney. Her book is ***Mind & Manifestation by Ida Shpolyansky***, though we needn't notice this (Melvyn doesn't).

Her eyes dart upwards, meeting Melvyn's. He quickly looks away (though not quite quickly enough), diverting his attention to the RECEPTIONIST at the front desk.

MELVYN  
Hi. Hi. Is this where you pay?

The receptionist umm-hmms, glancing at the CARD MACHINE on the desk.

MELVYN (CONT'D)

Cos it's, um. Actually my work  
who's paying?

...

I wasn't sure if they'd paid ahead?  
Already? So...can you check that?

RECEPTIONIST

(turning to her PC)

What's your name?

MELVYN

Melvyn. Owens.

She types it out, checking his account...

RECEPTIONIST

I can't see a record of any  
payment, sorry.

MELVYN

No, that's. Sure. No problem.

He takes out his DEBIT CARD...

MELVYN (CONT'D)

(flustered)

Sorry, one...

Hiding the card below the desk, he wipes it on his  
jeans...leaving a conspicuous smear of WHITE POWDER on his  
thigh. After frantically brushing it off, he looks over his  
shoulder: the dark-haired young woman is SMIRKING slightly  
behind her book. Did she see???

He slides the card into the machine, types out the pin. The  
door to Therapy Room 4 opens:

DR COLEMAN

Ciara.

The young woman – evidently CIARA – rises without a word and  
follows him inside. Melvyn watches her go.

RECEPTIONIST

Would you like a receipt?

MELVYN

Please, yeah. Cheers.

INT. UNDERGROUND PLATFORM – NIGHT

Melvyn sits on a bench, staring absently up at a large DIGITAL ADVERTISING BOARD set into the tunnel wall. One ad dissolves into the next. The text reads:

IT'S OK  
NOT TO BE  
OK

He takes notice: it's almost a comfort. The text changes to read:

OUR SUMMER SALE MUST END JULY 31ST

A subterranean RUMBLE to his left: a TRAIN is approaching. Bracing himself, Melvyn closes his eyes and takes a long, steady, deep breath in...

The rumbling builds as he lets it out, takes another...

A ray of LIGHT in the tunnel – *in, out, in, out...*

The platform starts to SHUDDER – the rails SCREECH – Melvyn loses control, pressing his fists to his temples – *inoutinoutinoutinout...*

The screech becomes EAR-SPLITTING as we abruptly CUT TO:

INT. FLAT – HALLWAY – NIGHT

Melvyn lets himself into his shared flat. Masculine chaos: dumbbells, creatine barrels, a faint haze of SPLIFF SMOKE. A TV is playing in another room.

NARRATOR (O.S./V.O.)  
*That's because this is no ordinary  
grasshopper. It's a zombie.*

He follows the smoke and the sound through to...

INT. FLAT – LIVING ROOM – SAME

Melvyn's flatmate DOUGIE (27, shirtless, shaven head, cage fighting shorts) is sitting in an armchair, watching TV. One hand presses a TEA-TOWEL to staunch a deep CUT in his eyebrow; the other holds a JOINT.

DOUGIE  
Alright?

MELVYN  
Mmm-hmm. Yeah, fine.



The TV is showing a nature documentary. On-screen, a large GRASSHOPPER moves erratically.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
*It's been infected by a parasite - a hairworm - which has burrowed through its stomach and gradually spread throughout its entire body.*

MELVYN (CONT'D)  
 (noticing the eye)  
 That from training?

DOUGIE  
 (showing the wound)  
 Got paired with some big Scouse prick. Ex-squaddie.

MELVYN (CONT'D)  
 Oof. Looks nasty.

DOUGIE  
 Should've clipped his fucking toenails.

The documentary cuts an X-ray of the grasshopper, invaded by PARASITIC HAIRWORM: a mass of black tendrils, writhing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
*By secreting neuroactive chemicals directly into the brainstem, the worm manipulates its host's mind - using its body like a marionette...*

MELVYN  
 Ian's not still here, is he?

A loud *KRRSSHH* answers his question. Pan over to IAN (29), recumbent on the sofa, inflating a NITROUS OXIDE BALLOON.

MELVYN (CONT'D)  
 Oh. Hey man.

Ian nods sagely.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
*Powerless to stop itself, the grasshopper is forced to jump into water...and drown...*

The grasshopper obliges. Dougie offers Melvyn the joint.

MELVYN  
 Nah, you're alright.  
 (already backing out of the room)  
 I was probably just gonna -

DOUGIE

How was your thing?  
(at Melvyn's look)  
You had a thing. You said.

MELVYN

Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was good. Good  
thing.

As the grasshopper dies, the worm wriggles free of its  
corpse.

INT. OFFICE – DAY

The next morning finds Melvyn at his desk, trying to focus on  
the spreadsheet on his computer (he works as an e-commerce  
administrator). But he's distracted: a pair of SCISSORS is  
stood up in a desk pot across from him.

ASIA (O.S.)

(faint)

Melvyn?

Quick as a flash, he grabs the scissors and PLUNGES THE BLADE  
DEEP INTO HIS NECK.

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

(loud)

Melvyn?

He looks round, right as rain. ASIA (48), the firm's Head of  
HR & Wellbeing, is hovering behind his chair.

ASIA (CONT'D)

Have you got a moment?  
(thumb over shoulder)  
I've booked us a pod.

INT. OFFICE – BREAKOUT POD – DAY

They sit together in a BREAKOUT POD: a sealed glass cube in  
the middle of the office floor. It's private only in theory:  
a little like meeting in a fishbowl...

ASIA

So, I got your receipt, thanks for  
sending it through so quickly...

MELVYN

Oh, no problem, thanks for –

ASIA

Our pleasure. I just wanted to check in really, see how you've been getting on?

MELVYN

With...therapy?  
(she nods)  
I've only had the one -

ASIA

(smiling)  
Of course.

...

But, first impressions...?

MELVYN

Ah...good? Yeah, no, pretty, pretty positive. He seems nice, the bloke. Doctor. Seems to know his stuff.  
(Asia is expecting more)  
He, uh...gave me some breathing exercises?

ASIA

Okay?

MELVYN

They're supposed to stop me from, ah - to relax me, basically.

ASIA

Great. Well if you ever need a quiet place to do those, we can always find you a room somewhere.

...

Or a pod, even.

(Optional CUT to the pod's exterior: office workers milling about outside.)

MELVYN

Yeah, that'd be. Maybe. Thank you.

...

Was that all you wanted to - ?

ASIA

Uh-huh, that was it, pretty much, just - if you wouldn't mind keeping me in the loop, moving forward, I'd appreciate it.

MELVYN

Oh, uh...sure, I, uh, just...how did you mean exactly?

ASIA

With your progress. On your journey.

(Melvyn: 'Journey'?)

Your mental health journey? Your wellbeing is really important to us. We take our duty of care very seriously. If we're aware that an employee has been struggling, naturally, we want to keep a close eye on how they're doing.

MELVYN

Sure, I mean. I appreciate that, obviously...

ASIA

So if we ever need to cover any absences, or arrange additional support, we can -

MELVYN

I guess I'm not sure I'm fully comfortable, sharing all the -

ASIA

Oh no, don't worry! You can use the app.

(Melvyn: App?)

Have you downloaded the app? I'll email the code now, we've got a subscription. It just lets you let us know how you're holding up. Mentally. Bit like a FitBit, for your brain.

Melvyn does his best to look grateful.

INT. OFFICE - TOILET CUBICLE - DAY

Melvyn sits on the lid of the toilet, checking out the app. It's called **Moodle**: its logo is a fluffy cartoon cloud. When pressed, a question pops up:

**HOW ARE YOU FEELING?**

Then below it, a long list of options:

**Confused? Anxious? Overwhelmed? Excited?**

**Hopeful? Angry? Melancholy? Lonely?**  
**Guilty? Shameful? Insecure? Depressed? (etc.)**

Melvyn scrolls until he arrives at **Uncertain**. He presses it. The cloud absorbs the word and changes colour, acquiring an ambivalent expression (not a million miles from Melvyn's own).

INT. HOUSE PARTY – NIGHT

We're at a house party – not a very good one. The crowd is sparse, hipsterish: beanies, string vests, pierced septums.

Melvyn, Dougie and Ian are in the kitchen, clutching shopping bags full of cans. Dougie is on the phone, trying to get hold of his dealer. It rings out.

DOUGIE

Fuck's saaake. This is the last time I'm ringing this fucking guy, man, I swear. He's been ten minutes off for the last two hours.

MELVYN

(scanning the crowd)  
 Who do you know here again?

DOUGIE

I told you. Kedge. Ginger John's mate.

MELVYN

Which one's he?

DOUGIE

Ginger John? [The fucking ginger one].

MELVYN

(overlapping)  
 His mate.

DOUGIE

No idea. Haven't seen him. 'Ten minutes'. At least make it *plausibly* wrong. Let me down gently.

A *KRRSSHH* makes Melvyn jump: Ian is inflating a NOS BALLOON.

MELVYN

Jesus. Ian. Do you have to do that here? Now?

(MORE)

MELVYN (CONT'D)

(Ian shrugs)

You're making us look like...

IAN

What? Legends?

Dougie's phone rings. His eyes light up.

DOUGIE

Fucking *finally*.

(into phone, all smiles)

Yessss lad. Yea yea yea yea. Oh no worries, yeah, traffic's mad, innit.

(cupping receiver, to Melvyn)

You good for a gram, yeah?

MELVYN

Uhh...

DOUGIE

(already exiting)

Sound. Down in two, what's the make and reg...?

He disappears. Ian inhales his balloon.

INT. HOUSE PARTY – CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Later, Melvyn waits for Dougie outside the door to the toilet. He keeps close to the wall to allow party-goers to brush past. Music pounds softly on the wall.

For something to do, he opens the APP. How is he feeling? He taps **Anxious**. Then **Shameful**. A suggested emotion pops up: **Doomed**. His thumb hovers over it...

CIARA (O.S.)

Is this the queue?

He turns round. Facing him is a dark-haired young woman – Ciara. It takes him a second to process.

CIARA (CONT'D)

...For the bathroom?

MELVYN

Uhhh. Yeah, no, yeah, it is, yeah.

Her eyebrows rise. He turns away, flustered. Does she recognise him? He doesn't want to reveal the same if not. But he has to say *something*...

MELVYN (CONT'D)

More of a 'Q', at the minute.

CIARA

...Sorry, what?

MELVYN

(immediately)

Oh, don't. Nothing.

...

Sorry, I meant – like the letter?  
Q? Cos it's only one person, sort  
of like – a queue of one? But I  
guess, out loud, it doesn't  
really...

CIARA

(amused)

Are you alright?

(he laughs nervously,  
tries to think of a  
reply...)

Have you taken something?

MELVYN

No. No, I'm just...like this all  
the time.

She smiles, though he wasn't exactly joking. He smiles back.

CIARA

I wasn't judging. Wouldn't blame  
you either, tonight's got fuck all  
else to recommend it.

MELVYN

Yeah, it's. Not great here, is it.

CIARA

I'd be tempted myself, but y'know.  
I'm trying to be good.

Except she's giving him a look that suggests she's not trying  
all that hard. She regards him with sudden interest.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Melvyn. Why do I know that?

(before he can answer)

Palestine Action? No. All Points  
East?

MELVYN

(funny story)

Heh. Well...

CIARA

Oh God. Don't tell me we slept together.

MELVYN

N-o-o, definitely -

CIARA

(big sigh of relief)

Not that I'm - that's happened to me before, once, it was a whole, *ugh*. Never mind.

MELVYN

...I think it might have been - Montague Place? The clinic?

CIARA

Oh.

MELVYN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I think we might have same -

CIARA (CONT'D)

Yeah, Jesus. I remember.

...

You got coke on your jeans.

MELVYN

Aaa...ha. Yep, that was. Yep.

(can't let it go)

I've not got a *problem*, if that's what you're...

...

Like, I do do it, sometimes, but that's not what I'm *there* for, I don't have a problem [or anything].

Dougie chooses this moment to burst through the bathroom door, eyes watering.

DOUGIE

(pressing the BAGGIE into his hand)

Don't get your hopes up, think it's mostly baby powder.

(beat. noticing)

Oh, shit. Ciara Connaughty.

CIARA

Douglas.

They hug. This isn't a huge surprise to Melvyn (Dogie knows everyone).



DOUGIE

How've you been?

CIARA

Ah, not so bad, yourself?

DOUGIE

Sound. Very sound. You still –  
painting?

CIARA

Still trying.

DOUGIE

How's your sister?

CIARA

Well, I assume.

DOUGIE

How do you two know each-other?

MELVYN

We don't, [really] –

CIARA

We're seeing the same therapist.

!!!

DOUGIE

Oh, sweet. Wait, what? You've got a  
therapist?

MELVYN

Ahhh...aha...yeah, I...

DOUGIE

Siiick. No that's actually sick  
man, well done.

(cuffing his shoulder)

Look at you. Working on yourself.

MELVYN

I mean, it's not that. My work  
offered to pay for it, so.

CIARA

Amen to that.

She knocks her can against Melvyn's.

DOUGIE

Yeah, I was thinking about seeing someone myself for a while. Sort out my anger management issues? Till I started MMA. Turns out kicking the shit out of someone seems to do the trick.

(as he's passing)

Oi! Kedge! Where've you been you tosser?

He wanders off, leaving the two of them alone. After a moment's hesitation, Melvyn offers the BAGGIE to Ciara.

CIARA

After you.

INT. HOUSE PARTY – BATHROOM – DAY

Melvyn locks the door. Does a quick key of coke. Flushes the toilet, looks in the mirror, checks his teeth, nose. Deep breath. He opens the door...

INT. HOUSE PARTY – CORRIDOR – NIGHT

...onto nothing. The corridor is empty.

INT. UBER – NIGHT

Melvyn, Dougie and Ian are on their way home in an Uber.

DOUGIE

I dunno, yeah, she's cool man. Bit mad, obviously, but.

MELVYN

Mad? What sort of mad? Crazy?

DOUGIE

All those Goldsmiths girls are fucking mad. All that Foucault and ketamine, messes with their brains. Last I heard she was living in a squat in Hackney Wick.

(A soft KRRSSHH to their right: Ian with another balloon.)

MELVYN

A squat? As in – homeless people? Junkies?

DOUGIE

Nah, pretty sure it's more a sort of...urban nomad, vibe?

UBER DRIVER

Hey!!! Don't do that shit in my  
fucking car, guy!!!!

All look at Ian, who slowly lets the gas out of the balloon.

INT. THERAPY CLINIC – ROOM 4 – DAY

It's a week later; Melvyn's second session. Dr Coleman fills his glass with water.

DR COLEMAN

How was your week?

MELVYN

Good. Good.

DR COLEMAN

How about you? Where's your head  
at?

MELVYN

Yeah, I guess...

(fighting the impulse to  
lie)

If I'm honest? Not really any  
different, yet?

DR COLEMAN

How did you get on with the  
exercises?

MELVYN

Mmm, yeah, I had a go, at those.

(Dr Coleman: A 'go'?)

Maybe, sort of...light-headed, for  
a bit, after? But not. Anything  
more than that?

DR COLEMAN

I'd stick with it. They're  
techniques. It takes practice.

MELVYN

I guess I figured there might be  
other stuff we could try? Maybe I  
need a more. In-depth approach?

DR COLEMAN

What did you have in mind?

MELVYN

I thought – maybe we could talk  
about my childhood or something?

Dr Coleman's face betrays a very slight hint of impatience.

DR COLEMAN

I think I should probably clarify the kind of work I offer here. I'm not a psychoanalyst.

MELVYN

No, I know –

DR COLEMAN

My approach is closer to what you'd call a CBT-based –

MELVYN

Right, the cognitive – I get that, I do, I just, I. Worry, that. There's a more, fundamental...like there might be something actually properly wrong with me? Like maybe I'm fully broken, or something?

DR COLEMAN

You have mild OCD.

...

I know we haven't been working together for long, but from what I can tell, your symptoms are consistent with a diagnosis of mild OCD.

MELVYN

...Okay, but like. What does that mean?

DR COLEMAN

It means you have trouble distinguishing fears from reality.

(Melvyn: ...?)

These thoughts you're having – the *beliefs* that you hold, about yourself – they're not *real*, they're not *true*. They're nothing but...chatter from your synapses. Static, leftover in your brain. All I'm trying to do – what my techniques are designed to teach you – is to help you remember which is which.

...

I don't want to be your therapist, Melvyn. I want to help you to be your own. Does that make sense?

This is either too clever by half, or total bullshit: Melvyn can't tell which.

MELVYN

Mmm-hmm. No, sure, that sounds.  
Yeah.

DR COLEMAN

Good. Shall we get started?

INT. THERAPY ROOMS – RECEPTION AREA – DAY

Exiting Room 4, Melvyn spots Ciara sitting in her usual chair. He raises a hand and a smile...abandoning both as he gets a better look at her. She's much the worse for wear: pale, unkempt, RED-EYED.

Noticing the open door, she gets up and hurries past him without a word, pulling it firmly shut behind her.

EXT. UNDERGROUND STATION – NIGHT

Melvyn arrives at the entrance to the underground to find the SHUTTERS firmly closed. He gives them a futile rattle. Weirdly, no one else seems to be about.

EXT. SAME – LATER

Five minutes later, as he's leaning against the shutters, attempting to order an Uber on his phone, he looks up to see Ciara coming toward him, smoking a cigarette. She's looking a little more composed than previously.

She approaches the shutters. Turns to/finally acknowledges Melvyn.

CIARA

The fuck's happened here?

MELVYN

TFL's saying something about a passenger incident, whatever that means.

CIARA

(she takes a drag,  
exhales)  
Someone's jumped.

MELVYN

Or, I dunno, I thought – could be a medical thing?

CIARA

If they've closed the whole  
station, it's a jumper. Trust me.

Melvyn would rather not dwell on this possibility. She leans  
against the shutters next to him.

MELVYN

(to change the subject)  
D'you finish early today?  
(she looks at him,  
doesn't reply)  
Your session, did it finish...?  
(realising he's  
overstepped)  
Sorry, I shouldn't – you don't have  
to say any[thing] –

CIARA

I've quit.

...

Turns out I'm fine after all. Big  
misunderstanding. Nothing wrong  
with me.

Melvyn isn't sure how he should take this, but she seems  
fairly sanguine.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Are you Ubering?

MELVYN

Trying to. All the drivers keep  
cancelling.  
(sheepish)  
My rating got a bit fucked  
recently, so.

She takes a long drag on her cigarette.

CIARA

(fuck it)  
Do you want to get a drink?

MELVYN

...Now?  
(she nods)  
Where?

CIARA

Anywhere.  
(pointing)  
There. I don't care.

Across the road is a rather run-down looking PUB.

MELVYN

Yeah, me neither.

INT. PUB – NIGHT

They sit in a booth, their PINTS already half-empty. An open bag of CRISPS lies between them.

CIARA

She'd wanted rid of me for ages.  
Ever since her husband kept staring  
down my top at the company party.  
Plus, okay, I was taking a fair  
amount of piss, work wise, but it's  
a job isn't it? You're meant to.  
Anyway, week or so into my  
probation, I get this meeting in my  
calendar. No agenda, just me, her  
and HR – the firing squad. So, I go  
in. Tell them the reason I've been  
screwing up is I'm clinically  
depressed.

...

I lay it on nice and thick,  
sprinkle in few buzzwords –  
childhood trauma, substances, daddy  
issues, so on, so forth. I can tell  
my manager doesn't buy it, only if  
she goes ahead she's liable for  
wrongful dismissal. She's like, if  
you've been feeling this way, why  
haven't you sought professional  
help? To which I'm like, I wish I  
could, but there's a five year  
waiting list for treatment on the  
NHS and you're not paying me enough  
to go private.

...

Upshot is, I get signed off  
indefinitely on full pay and eight  
weeks of therapy to boot.

MELVYN

Wow. I mean. Yeah. Fair play.

...

So...you're not actually...?

CIARA

No. Fuck no. No more than anybody  
else, anyway. I mean, look around.  
Have you met people?

She gestures to the wider pub. From the careworn faces of the other DRINKERS, it would be hard to disagree.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Go on then. Your turn. What're you in for?

MELVYN

Ahh...

CIARA

I guessed eating disorder from the look of you, but you'd never have gone for crisps then, would you?

He grins. Her candour is infectious; he decides to come clean.

MELVYN

I've been having these...thoughts.  
(Ciara: Okay...?)  
Mainly along sort of - killing myself, type lines?

CIARA

You mean - you're suicidal?

MELVYN

Only, in, certain - so. If I'm on a bridge, or a balcony, say? I get this...*overwhelming urge* to...jump.

CIARA

Oh. Dude. Who doesn't?

...

That's just - ah. What's it called. *L'appel du vide*. Call of the void. Everyone gets it.

MELVYN

...Do you?

CIARA

I get a hell of a lot worse than that, I can tell you.

(fortifying swig)

Alright. For instance. Every time someone hands me a baby I think: drop it. Throw it. Smash its little skull against the wall. Don't laugh, I'm serious. Or whenever I'm in the smoking area, part of me's thinking: put it out on someone's arm. Or in one of their eyes.

(MORE)



CIARA (CONT'D)

Sometimes eyes. But that's fine.  
That's normal.

This is music to Melvyn's ears. He feels a weight being lifted.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Trust me. You're good.

INT. A DIFFERENT PUB – NIGHT

They've switched venues. This one's livelier than the first, as are they: they're at least three pints deep.

CIARA

It's a con. The whole thing. Think about it: when was the last time you heard of someone *finishing* therapy?

MELVYN

Yeah, I dunno...

CIARA

You don't. It doesn't. Best case scenario it never fucking ends. You hear about people who've been going for thirty years, I mean, Jesus. Shouldn't it have *worked* by now? Have you ready any Shpolyansky?

(Who? He shakes his head)

Ida Shpolyansky, she's this mad, brilliant...renegade psychologist. Wrote a load of books about how Freud's a bunch of patriarchal bullshit, anyway – there's this phrase she uses. The 'Analytical Industrial Complex?'

(Melvyn: *Okay...?*)

Why would they *want* to cure you? If it actually *worked*, you'd stop sending in your cheques. So, they tell you you're suffering from some massive, awful trauma in your past – which by the way, you can't even *remember*, because you've *repressed* it or whatever – then convince you you're making *just enough* progress to make it worth coming back every week.

Melvyn feels obliged to offer a defense.

MELVYN

I dunno, I mean. Even if that stuff isn't always – maybe just *talking* about it is – better than not?

CIARA

People are narcissists. Course they like talking about themselves. They don't want to *change*, they want someone else to blame, and they want to know what fucking...Hogwarts house they belong to. 'Oh, so I'm a manic-schizo...Slytherin', or whatever.

He digests this. She leans across the table, her face close to his.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Look. You're fucked up because the world's fucked up. It's an entirely reasonable response to the situation. We're the mutant spawn of late late capitalism, living through the last days of a dying planet – and what? We're supposed to be *pleased* about it? Fuck me. If you *weren't* thinking about killing yourself, that'd be the concerning thing.

He nods along, putty in her hands. She leans back, impressed with her own performance. She drains her glass. Falls silent.

MELVYN

What?

CIARA

Nothing, just. Pints. Pints are dangerous.

(again, fuck it)

Have you got a number?

(before he can answer)

Not – sorry. For a guy, I meant. A connection.

MELVYN

(cottoning on)

...I've still got most of that gram in my bag.

CIARA

(smiling)

That'll do.

INT. PUB – TOILET CUBICLE – NIGHT

Ciara SNORTS up a line from the cistern. She throws her head back, blinking hard, letting the high wash over her. As Melvyn racks up a line of his own, she turns to him.

CIARA

Kiss me then.

...

Kiss me so it's not sordid.

MELVYN

Would that make it – not, sordid?

CIARA

Fair point.

She KISSES him. It is hungry, almost savage. He responds in kind. After a few seconds she breaks off, rather abruptly.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Your round, I reckon.

She exits the cubicle. Melvyn stays behind, stunned. Part of him suspects it's almost too good to be true...a part he suppresses.

INT. UBER – NIGHT

They're in the back of an Uber, radio blaring. Ciara sings along to *Mandika* by Sinead O'Connor.

CIARA

*So I doooo know Man-di-ka. I doooo know Mandika...*

(sniffing)

I went fucking *feral* for this album when I was fourteen.

(turning to Melvyn)

How about you? What was teenage Melvyn into?

MELVYN

Ah. Let's not do this.

CIARA

No, let's.

MELVYN

I was a bit of an emo. Fall Out Boy, Good Charlotte...

CIARA

Fuck off. You were not.

MELVYN

Eyeliner. Double-dip fringe. The whole package.

CIARA

Well there you are, you see. The signs were always there.

UBER DRIVER (O.S.)

Here is okay?

They've pulled up outside an old WAREHOUSE.

CIARA

Here's perfect, thanks.

They exit. Melvyn stares up at the warehouse, derelict and beautiful against the sky.

INT. WAREHOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Ciara leading, they climb the warehouse stairs.

CIARA

Used to make toilet paper here, back in the day. They can't turn it into flats cos it's technically condemned. Riddled with asbestos.

...

Don't you just love the smell!

INT. WAREHOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Arriving at Ciara's door, she puts a hand on Melvyn's chest to stop him.

CIARA

Wait here.

She enters. He waits. Wipes his forehead, exhales - he's exceedingly high. She returns with the remains of a bottle of VODKA and a PORTABLE SPEAKER. She grabs his hand.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Come on. You haven't seen the best bit yet.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Ciara opens a door and steps out onto the roof of the warehouse. They're six storeys up: towers and cranes glitter in the distance. Melvyn stares out, transfixed by the view.

(The roof is separated into three sections: a flat central platform, ending in steep slopes on either side.)

Music strikes up: Ciara's turned on the portable speaker. A FALL OUT BOY song plays. She dances over to him.

MELVYN

Is this - ?

CIARA

Oh, yes.

MELVYN

It actually sounds pretty dreadful,  
listening back.

CIARA

So don't.

She KISSES him again. This time it goes on and on and on...

EXT. SAME - LATER

They lie side by side on their backs, looking up at the sky. Their clothes and hair are slightly dishevelled. (Have they had sex? It's possible.)

MELVYN

*Pfft.* It's fucking...*big*, isn't it?  
The sky.

Ciara's phone - and the music - die. She sits bolt upright, suddenly agitated. She begins scrabbling around: rifling through her bag, her jacket pockets...

CIARA

Have you got the bag?

MELVYN

(unconcerned)  
'S done. Empty.

CIARA

(oh fuck)  
Where's your phone?

MELVYN

(in his jeans pocket)  
It's. Here, [why]?

CIARA

Call the - person, guy, your guy.

MELVYN

I don't have one. It's not my guy,  
it's Dougie's [guy].

CIARA

Call him then. Get his number.

MELVYN

...Don't you have a guy?

CIARA

I deleted them all, didn't I?

MELVYN

...Why?

CIARA (CONT'D)

Just, fucking, call him, now!

He takes out his phone:

MELVYN (CONT'D)

It's dead. Must have left Uber open  
in the background.

...

I reckon I'm probably alright, if  
I'm honest.

Out of options, Ciara stares straight ahead. All the life  
seems to drain out her face. It's as though she's remembered  
every terrible thing that's ever happened, all at once.

A single DROP OF BLOOD slowly runs from her nose.

CIARA

No...no. No, no no no no no no no  
NO...

She stands up, starts – not even pacing: shuffling,  
staggering...

CIARA (CONT'D)

We have to...I have to...oh, *GOD*...

She doubles over, as though on the verge of throwing up.  
Where has this come from???

MELVYN

What, what is it?

CIARA

It's here. Again. *I'm here, again,*  
*it won't – stop, it won't end...*

MELVYN

Are you alright?

CIARA (CONT'D)

It doesn't *stop*, it *never*  
*ends...!*



Then, a second later, we hear the IMPACT, far below. It jolts him like a thousand volt shock.

Another few seconds. Dead silence.

Finally, he manages a tiny, terrified moan.

INT. WAREHOUSE – STAIRCASE – NIGHT

Melvyn sprints, trips, stumbles down the stairs. Still not quite believing...

EXT. WAREHOUSE – NIGHT

He bursts through the doors, running around the side of the building to find –

Oh. Oh, fuck.

Ciara's BODY. Lying on a heap on the ground.

Inarguably, unquestionably dead.

Melvyn turns away. Takes a few steps, dazed. Nothing computes; nothing registers. He keeps on walking until he's swallowed up by the shadow of the building.

It might only be a few seconds, or maybe several minutes, before piercing SCREAM rings out. Another RESIDENT has come through the doors and discovered the body.

Melvyn stays frozen in the shadows, unseen. What's he going to do???

This: he starts to walk. Keeping to the shadows, picking up the pace with every step. His only thought to put the scene behind him, his face frozen mask of horror...

**END OF ACT 1**



**ACT 2**

INT. FLAT – MELVYN'S BEDROOM – DAWN

Morning.

Melvyn lies on his bed, fully dressed, fully fetal, face illuminated by his PHONE. It poses him a question.

**HOW ARE YOU FEELING?**

He answers with a thousand yard stare.

INT. SAME – LATER

By noon he's gotten as far as sitting up. He makes a phone call.

MELVYN

(hoarse)

Coleman, Paul Coleman...Melvyn, I'm one of his...yes. Right...could you tell him I need to see him today, now, I need...seeing...

INT. THERAPY CLINIC – ROOM 4 – DAY

He sits in his usual chair, head bowed. Dr Coleman watches him with a grave expression. A long silence.

DR COLEMAN

(exhaling)

Thank you for telling me. That can't have been easy.

MELVYN

(noting his lack of surprise)

Did you...have they, already...

DR COLEMAN

This morning.

...

Such a terrible thing. Awful.

It hits Melvyn all over again. He nearly breaks down. Composes himself.

MELVYN

I should go to the police.

DR COLEMAN

I don't think you need to put yourself through [that] –

MELVYN

They need to know I was there, they need to know I left her there.

DR COLEMAN

What would it solve?

MELVYN

So they know that. They don't think I. Did it.

DR COLEMAN

(incredulous)

Why would anyone think that?

MELVYN

If there's CCTV...if they find DNA...

...

...It was me who gave her the drugs, it was me [who] -

DR COLEMAN

Melvyn.

MELVYN

I, I, I feel like - maybe I *did* kill her, maybe it was *me*.

DR COLEMAN

Look. Ciara...she was a very troubled young woman.

MELVYN

(shaking his head)

...No.

DR COLEMAN

Obviously, I can't disclose the details of a patient's history, but [believe] -

MELVYN

(overlapping)

She wasn't. She fucking *wasn't*, she *told* me, she only said she was depressed so she wouldn't get fired from [her] -

DR COLEMAN

I've been seeing her for three years, Melvyn.

What the fuck?

DR COLEMAN (CONT'D)

Whatever she told you – and, frankly, you wouldn't be the first person she wasn't entirely straight with – believe me. She has – *had* been dealing with some very dark...very *difficult* issues for a very long time.

Melvyn struggles to digest this.

MELVYN

I could have – stopped her, I, I should have...

DR COLEMAN

You can't save everybody.

Melvyn is staggered. Then, as it sinks in, enraged.

MELVYN

Wh. What the fuck is that? 'You can't save everybody'. You're her *therapist*.

DR COLEMAN

(holding up hands)

Alright. Obviously you're upset –

MELVYN

You don't even feel a tiny bit responsible? She was *your* patient! It was your *job* to save her!

DR COLEMAN

Please, just, take a deep [breath]  
–

MELVYN

*Breath!* Is that what I should do, take a fucking *breath*?!  
(rising from his chair)  
*Fuck* this! *Fuck* you, you fucking...fraud! What even *is* all this shit! Gongs? Fishbowl, trees? It's *bollocks*. It doesn't *mean* anything.

Dr Coleman starts to interject.

MELVYN (CONT'D)

No, I'm. No. That's it, I can't. I'm done.

He exits.

EXT. STREET – MOMENTS LATER

Melvyn staggers away from the clinic in a punch-drunk daze. Reaching a crossing, he starts to step off the kerb...

...when a BUS ALMOST HITS HIM, passing within an inch of his nose.

He stays rooted to the spot, struggling to process what just happened. Both the fact that he almost died – and more importantly, that he wasn't even *thinking* about it...

His phone RINGING brings him to himself. An unknown number: he answers.

MELVYN

...Hello?

ASIA (O.S.)

(gentle)

Melvyn. Hi. How are you?

Work: shit. He does his best to compose himself.

MELVYN

...I'm...

(letting out something  
between a laugh and a  
sob)

...not actually feeling very...

ASIA (O.S.)

Look I know you've requested sick leave today but could you possibly bear to make it in this afternoon?

MELVYN

I...really don't think I can –

ASIA (O.S.)

Nothing scary, I promise. I really think it'll help.

INT. OFFICE – BREAKOUT POD – DAY

They're back in the pod. Melvyn has retreated into himself.

ASIA

I've been noticing quite a concerning trend in your mood cloud.

She spins her LAPTOP around. We see Melvyn's mood cloud, filled with phrases like **Anxious, Shameful, Despondent, Desperate, Doomed.**

ASIA (CONT'D)

A lot of darkness. Lot of negatives.

MELVYN

(pause. slowly)

I've not been. I know I'm not. Well.

ASIA

I take it this therapist of yours hasn't made much difference?

(he shakes his head)

As it happens. We have a bit of an opportunity for you.

She slides a thick BROCHURE across the desk. It could be advertising a luxury spa, or the National Trust. The cover shows a palatial English country house called COLLINGWOOD.

MELVYN

...What is it?

ASIA

It's a

(tiny hesitation)

facility. A mental healthcare facility.

MELVYN

...Like a hospital?

ASIA

No, no, nothing like, no, it's a -  
(checking laptop)

An 'advanced private psychoremedial treatment centre and research facility'. It's very highly regarded. Very exclusive.

Melvyn leafs through the brochure. Lawns, gardens, woods. A LAKE. A large GREENHOUSE. A herd of DEER...

ASIA (CONT'D)

They're running a summer programme, specially designed for people like yourself.

(Melvyn: *Like myself?*)

Young people.

(MORE)

## ASIA (CONT'D)

Who are struggling with – who are struggling, and who have had trouble finding success with the traditional, ah. Routes.

(reassuring)

It wouldn't be for long. Just two weeks. We'd give you the time off, obviously. Starts in a couple of days.

## MELVYN

...Thank you, and everything, but...if it's super expensive...

## ASIA

Oh don't worry about that. All been taken care of.

## MELVYN

...By who?

## ASIA

As I say, no need to concern yourself with any of that, just – we want you to focus on you, right now.

...

Why don't you take that away with you and think about it? I've signed you off work for the time being.

INT. FLAT – MELVYN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Melvyn lies in bed, leafing through the brochure. On the final page, his eye is caught by a line of small print tucked away at the bottom.

**In association with the Shpolyansky Institute**

The name rings a bell. He picks up his phone, types it into the search bar. The first result is the Wikipedia page for IDA SHPOLYANSKY. The photo shows an old woman with half-moon glasses, turtle-necked and tousle-haired. The entry begins:

*Ida Shpolyansky (14th March, 1899 – 8th December 1981) was a Ukrainian-British author and former psychoanalyst. Born in Odessa, she fled with her family to London following the 1905 Pogrom. After undergoing psychoanalysis in her late twenties, she studied under Sigmund Freud, establishing her own private practice in 1935...*

As he scrolls down the page, the following phrases leap out:

*...ideas made her highly controversial amongst mainstream...*

*...accused of straying from the basic tenets of...*

*...expelled from the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1955...*

*...numerous works, including Why Freud Was Wrong (1961) and Against Analysis (1963), attacked the very foundations of...*

A knock on the door. Melvyn looks up: Dougie.

DOUGIE

You know that girl Ciara?

Melvyn flinches.

DOUGIE (CONT'D)

You know she's fucking dead?

MELVYN

...

DOUGIE

Killed herself. Jumped off the roof of her building. How mad is that? We only saw her last week.

Shaking his head, he closes the door, leaving Melvyn alone.

An involuntary, split-second FLASHBACK to Ciara's body. He shuts his eyes. Another flash: her twisted HEAD, her staring, OPEN EYES...

He reaches for his phone. Begins typing out a text...

INT. FLAT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next day, Melvyn dozes alone on the sofa as the television burbles away. He wakes to the sound of the letterbox opening; a PACKAGE landing on the mat.

INT. FLAT - MELVYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He lays the package on his desk, tearing off the plastic wrapping. It contains a large TOTE BAG, branded with the Collingwood name and a logo featuring a DEER'S HEAD.

Sensing weight inside, he tips the contents out. A WOODEN CUBE bounces away across the desk, followed by long QUESTIONNAIRE.

INT. SAME - LATER

He fills out the questionnaire: ticking boxes, ringing options, writing out answers...

The questions are oddly oblique: *What was the name of your year 4 English teacher? What food did you refuse to eat as a child? Do your dreams prominently feature a) broken teeth b) bleeding ears or noses c) burst eyeballs?*

INT. SAME – LATER

ON LAPTOP SCREEN: An old BBC/GRANADA television documentary, broadcast in 1976, playing on YOUTUBE. A male PRESENTER (thick glasses & sideburns) is doing a piece to camera outside a THERAPY CLINIC.

PRESENTER

Ever since Sigmund Freud established his first private practice in Vienna some ninety years ago, the discipline he founded – psychotherapy – has taken the world by storm. Today, clinics like this one can be found on high streets all across the country, offering treatment for nerves, depression, sexual perversions, and all manner of mental disease. But as this once groundbreaking profession comes of age, it may no longer be the only game in town...

CUT TO:

A different location: the presenter strolling through a park.

In recent years, a growing number have been turning their backs on Freud. Members of this new 'anti-therapy' movement seek to challenge the late doctor's theories, and to provide what they call a 'radical new alternative' to his analytical method.

CUT TO:

A photograph of a white-haired old woman in half-moon glasses.

PRESENTER (V.O.)

Their patron saint is this woman:  
Dr Ida Shpolyansky.  
(MORE)



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

Having spent twenty years as a practicing psychotherapist, she came to renounce her faith, and has since devoted her life to attacking her former master.

CUT TO:

A CLIP from a late night panel discussion show: six or seven psychoanalysts and assorted intellectuals sit in armchairs, smoking. IDA SHPOLYANSKY is holding forth:

SHPOLYANSKY

All I am asking is, *what good has it done us?* All this *talking*, all this...*boo hoo, there there*. Are we *happier?* No. Absolutely not, we are every day *worse and worse*. Every day, we see more and more patients. More and more pathologies. I say the experiment has failed. It is time for something new.

A SCEPTICAL GUEST chimes in.

SCEPTICAL GUEST

Which would be...you, I suppose? Your own so-called 'method'.

SHPOLYANSKY

(enigmatic smile)

Now is not the time for *analysis*. Now is the time of *revolution*. In this, I am with Mr Marx: we are not simply looking to *understand* the mind. The point is to change it.

CUT TO:

A series of PHOTOGRAPHS of those people/places described, culminating in an AERIAL SHOT of the COLLINGWOOD ESTATE.

PRESENTER (V.O.)

Though she remains a highly controversial figure within the psychiatric establishment, her message is proving popular within London's intellectual set.

(MORE)

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

Converts include Freud's own grandson, Lucien, and Lady Octavia Sedley, wife of the Earl of Scarborough, whose estate - Collingwood, in north Yorkshire - now serves as the unofficial headquarters of the movement.

CUT TO:

The presenter standing outside a set of tall, iron GATES, through which a large country HOUSE can be distantly seen.

PRESENTER

Every summer, a select group of disciples gather here to undergo a unique programme of treatment known simply as 'The Method'. Little is known about what this treatment involves. The group remains highly secretive - we weren't even permitted to film inside the gates - but whatever the techniques employed, customers seem more than satisfied with the results...

CUT TO:

A female Collingwood PATIENT, standing inside the gates, being interviewed by the presenter, standing outside. She is flanked by a Collingwood employee (known as a 'MENTOR').

PATIENT

She has changed my life.

PRESENTER

In what way?

PATIENT

Every way.

PRESENTER

You mean, you no longer consider yourself to be mentally ill?

PATIENT

Oh yes. Yes, I'm a different person now. Quite a different person.

PRESENTER

Yes, but, different in what sense?

PATIENT

(shrugging)

Better.

PRESENTER

Could you tell us what  
precisely she has done to  
make you -

MENTOR

That's enough now, thank you,  
no more questions, please.

The mentor gently steers the patient away, back towards the house. But she turns, staring into the camera, SMILING.

CUT TO:

OFF-SCREEN: Melvyn, in bed, watching the video on his LAPTOP. He drags the progress marker to replay the last few seconds.

ON LAPTOP SCREEN: Again the patient turns, smiling back.  
Seeming to hold his gaze.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

A few days later. Melvyn takes his seat by the window. Beyond, the grey bustle of Kings Cross station.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

*The 10.17 service to Darlington has  
been delayed by approximately  
thirty minutes...*

INT. SAME - LATER

He stares out the window as the train wends its way through the countryside. It's a beautiful day. Green fields roll by; hedges, hay bales, sheep.

INT. SAME - LATER

He dozes - the train has stopped again.

ANNOUNCER

*Once again we apologise for the  
late running of this service...*

INT. SAME - LATER

He wakes to a loud BEEPING.

ANNOUNCER

*Passengers are reminded to take all  
luggage and belongings with them  
when leaving the train...*

He leaps to his feet, grabbing his SUITCASE from the rack.

EXT. TRAIN STATION – PLATFORM – DAY

He steps down from the train into blinding sunshine. It's a small rural station: a single platform, fields and hills beyond. The COLLINGWOOD TOTE BAG is slung over his arm.

He shields his eyes to look around, at a loss for what to do next. He checks his phone: **no signal**.

The train pulls away, taking its shadow with it...revealing a YOUNG MAN stationed further along the platform: also with a wheelie suitcase; also carrying a COLLINGWOOD TOTE BAG.

They catch each-other's eyes. Clock each-other's bags. The young man smiles, raises a hand. Melvyn sheepishly raises his. They slowly trundle over to meet.

MINESH  
(offering his hand)  
Minesh. Hi.

MELVYN  
(taking it)  
Melvyn.

MINESH  
You here for the...?

Melvyn nods. It's a bit awkward. They look at their phones.

MINESH (CONT'D)  
Have you got signal?  
(Melvyn shakes his head)  
Will they have signal at the place,  
do you think?

MELVYN  
I dunno, sorry.

MINESH  
They'll have Wi-Fi though, right?

MELVYN  
(apologetic)  
I don't know much of anything, to  
be honest.

TRUDY (O.S.)  
Oi oi.

They look round: a young woman – TRUDY (24, mullet, tattoos) – is dragging her case towards them. She, too, has a COLLINGWOOD TOTE BAG.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

This is a bit embarrassing.

...

What can I say. I'm a slut for merch.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CAR PARK - DAY

The three of them exit through station entrance into the car park.

SIGRID (O.S.)

Hallo! Hi! Hi!

A WOMAN in her 30s wearing a BLACK TURTLE-NECK is standing next to a VINTAGE 60s ROLLS ROYCE, smiling and waving. They divert towards her.

MINESH

Is that a Rolls?

(shielding his eyes)

It is. It's a Rolls.

TRUDY

S'pose it's better than a padded van, at any rate.

SIGRID

(slight Scandinavian accent)

Hallo, hallo! So good to see you!

She embraces and kisses each of them on the cheek. They submit, slightly embarrassed.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Sorry about your journey. The trains are *ugh*. So *slow* here.

...

Shall we go?

INT. ROLLS ROYCE - DAY

They speed along a country lane. Minesh sits up front; Trudy and Melvyn in the back.

SIGRID

You're very lucky. The gardens are very beautiful this time of year. We like to work outside, when it is possible. Nature is a teacher, we say. The trees, the flowers, they are lessons. They teach us to grow.

MINESH

Are you one of the therapists?

SIGRID

(slight wince)

We don't really use that word.

...

Mentor is better.

TRUDY

What does that make us? Mentees? Or patients? Mentee patients?

Sigrid flashes her a smile in the wing mirror.

SIGRID

You are our guests.

EXT. COLLINGWOOD GATES – DAY/INT. ROLLS ROYCE – SAME

The car pulls up outside a set of wrought-iron GATES. Sigrid reaches into her pocket and takes out a small REMOTE. Once the gates have opened wide enough, they drive through.

EXT. COLLINGWOOD GROUNDS – DAY/INT. ROLLS ROYCE – SAME

Melvyn looks back as the gates slowly close behind them.

They proceed down a long driveway lined with trees. In the distance we can see woods, a lake, a ROTUNDA. A herd of DEER amble and graze.

On their left looms an enormous bronze STATUE: one HALF of a huge, hollow human HEAD, as if split vertically from crown to chin. They gaze at it in wonder.

SIGRID

That is by Anthony Gormley. The artist? The fountain was designed by Anish Kapoor.

She points out an egg-shaped FOUNTAIN made from reflective metal, dazzlingly bright in the sun.

An aerial shot tracks the car as it continues down the driveway. It passes by the OTHER HALF of the HEAD, stationed fifty yards on and to the right of the first: the driveway splitting it in two...

EXT. COLLINGWOOD – DAY

The car pulls up outside the house. Georgian, three-storeys: it could be Pemberley, Manderley, Brideshead. They exit, crunch towards it up the drive.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

They enter through the double doors into the hallway, where a wide staircase curves up to the upper floors. The decor is a mixture of classic country house and modern art museum.

At the head of the staircase, a huge FRESCO on the model of *Fall of the Rebel Angels* by Andrea Comodi: a writhing mass of naked, frightened bodies, tumbling through space...

SIGRID

Sorry, guys? If you can follow me to the Atrium? The induction is about to begin.

INT. ATRIUM – DAY

They enter into the ATRIUM: a cavernous room with a vaulted glass ceiling, through which sunlight falls in broad shafts.

It's populated by the rest of the 'guests' – twenty in total, all in their mid-late 20s – who are milling about, awkwardly chatting, drinking from CHAMPAGNE FLUTES. Orchestral music plays from a GRAMOPHONE on a stage at the end of the room.

Melvyn, Minesh and Trudy hang back, taking it in. Another MENTOR in a turtle-neck approaches. He clasps each of their hands in both of his in turn, like a vicar.

KWASI

Hi. How are you? Hi. So pleased you could join us.

He gestures to a broadly smiling 'GRADUATE' hovering behind with a tray of drinks: half champagne, half orange juice.

KWASI (CONT'D)

Please, help yourself to a drink.

Melvyn and Minesh choose champagne; Trudy opts for orange. They move off, towards the crowd. The Graduate watches, still smiling.

TRUDY

Bit keen, aren't they?  
(Melvyn and Minesh  
shrug)

I hope they're not expecting tips.

The music suddenly stops. In its place, a chorus of VOICES strikes up. All turn to face the gramophone.

*"It's like I've forgotten what feels like, not to feel like this. How am I supposed to be get better if I don't know what better even is?"*

*"Like I'm a machine, built to hate itself. That's the only thing I can do, I must have been born to do this."*

*"Like there might be something actually properly wrong with me, like maybe I'm fully broken, or something."*

*"Just this, bottomless pit of badness, inside me, going on and on, forever, swallowing everything in its --"*

The record scratches to a halt. The needle has been wrenched up by a WOMAN in her 50s. She wears a blazer over her turtle-neck, a pair of DETACHABLE SPECTACLES on a chain. This is MIRIAM.

MIRIAM

Gosh, that's better.

She detaches the spectacles, reattaching them over her nose, and surveys the crowd.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

There you are. Hello! Yes! Welcome!  
(clapping and rubbing  
her hands together)

We are *delighted* to have you here with us at Collingwood. I know many of you have travelled quite some distance at considerable expense to be here, and I can't tell you how honoured I am that you've chosen to do so.

...

Now. I imagine some of you will be wondering why it is you're here with us today. Why *me*? Why have *I* been selected for this opportunity?

INTERCUT WITH: faces in the crowd, staring back.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

You're here because you're young. You were born into good homes, attended good schools, and now earn good money in entirely respectable jobs. You have enjoyed every conceivable advantage in life. And still – you're miserable. Something, somewhere has gone terribly, terribly wrong, and you don't know how to put it right.

(MORE)



## MIRIAM (CONT'D)

(pause for effect)

You're also here because you've been lied to. You have been told, not perhaps in so many words, that this thing, whatever it is – this *trauma*, this *damage* – will never truly leave you. Its roots go too deep. At best, it can only be managed. Or medicated. *Mitigated*.

...

I want to make a pact. Here, now, with everyone in this room. At the end of our time together, I promise you. You will be – and I do not hesitate to say it – completely cured.

...

I am Dr Miriam Selby. I'm the director of our programme here at Collingwood. These are my colleagues – your mentors.

She gestures to the four identically turtle-necked figures – KWASI, CARMEN, OTTO, SIGRID – now standing beside her. They nod and smile in turn.

## MIRIAM (CONT'D)

You will get to know them all very well in the next two weeks – just as they will get to know you.

...

For as long as you are with us, you will be free to explore the house and grounds, and to make full use of our facilities. This includes our 24 hour gym, our indoor and outdoor pools, our tennis courts, croquet lawns, cricket squares and cinema room. I'm sure by now you've noticed our greenhouse.

She gestures to the windows, through which a huge Victorian GREENHOUSE can be seen. Inside it, two more figures – or 'GRADUATES' – tend to the plants.

## MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Nearly all of our food is grown on site. Much of the work is carried out by graduates of our programme, though many of our guests say they have found it beneficial to lend a hand.

...

(MORE)

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Our first session will begin at 10am tomorrow. In the meantime, I'm sure you're no less hungry than I am, so unless anyone has any -

From the middle of the crowd, a hand rises.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

...questions, yes?

FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN

What is the method?

All look round. The hand and question both belong to a FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN who Melvyn can for the moment see only from behind. But he recognises the voice: it sends a chill down his spine...

FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

The Shpolyansky Method? That's what you teach here, isn't it?

The faintest flicker of annoyance passes over Miriam's face. Then, as quick as it appeared, it's replaced by a beaming smile.

MIRIAM

You're quite right, this facility was originally founded by Dr Shpolyansky, and now exists to carry on her work.

FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN

But *what* work? What is it you actually *do* here?

...

What modalities do you use? What school are you a part of? What sort of *treatment* [do you] -

MIRIAM

(interrupting)

I'd be delighted to explain every element of our programme. Usually it takes about two weeks. If you would like to get better acquainted with Dr Shpolyansky's work in the meantime, we have copies of all her books in our library, I'd encourage you to start there.

...

Oh, yes, one more thing: regarding the curious object in your welcome pack...

She holds them out on her palm. There are four: a CUBE, a SPHERE, a PYRAMID, and a CYLINDER.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

We've taken the liberty of splitting you up into groups. I'll leave it up to you to figure out.

The attendees reach into their tote bags and pull them out. Melvyn, Minesh and Trudy all have CUBES.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Your luggage should already be waiting for you up in your rooms. Dinner will be served in...  
(looking at her watch)  
Gosh. Twenty minutes. That's more than enough from me - dismissed!

She leaves the stage. The guests begin filing out. Every ounce of Melvyn's attention is fixed on the FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN.

As she squeezes past him, he finally gets a look at her face.

It's CIARA.

He looks away, avoiding her eye. Not daring to believe it.

INT. MELVYN'S ROOM - DAY

Melvyn enters his new room - or, more accurately, rooms: a bedroom, en-suite, and a sitting room. All grand, ornate, wood-panelled.

In the sitting room, there are paintings and bookcases lining the walls, as well as an enormous red velvet CHAISE LONGUE.

As he inspects these, his eye is caught by one PAINTING in particular. It shows a LIMESTONE CLIFF jutting out into the sea. It, too, seems eerily familiar...

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

He wanders the length of a long buffet table, groaning with gourmet options, all homegrown on the Collingwood estate.

Having filled his plate, he spots Trudy and Minesh sitting together on one of four dining tables. Minesh raises a hand. He comes over to join them.

TRUDY

Looks like you're sitting with the squares.

He takes his seat between them and the two remaining 'squares': ALISHA and NATHAN.

MINESH  
How's your room?

MELVYN  
Mmm. Really nice, yeah. Amazing.

MINESH  
Mine's got a tapestry in it.

A short lull, as they eat. Then:

TRUDY  
So. What do we reckon then? What's the catch?

...  
Cos I've seen my share of institutions in my time, and none of them have been like this.

The same thought has occurred to all of them. They look at each-other.

TRUDY (CONT'D)  
My guess? We're being Milgrammed.

She glances over at the top table, where Miriam and the rest of the mentors are sitting.

TRUDY (CONT'D)  
They're all PHD's, in disguise. We're subjects. Here to be studied.

NATHAN  
Milgrammed?

TRUDY  
As in Stanley Milgram? The prison experiment dude.

MINESH  
Don't you mean the Stanford prison experiment?

TRUDY  
Maybe. Who do I mean?

MINESH  
The Stanford experiment studied the effects of incarceration on ordinary people.

(MORE)

MINESH (CONT'D)

Stanley Milgram tested their capacity to deliver fatal electric shocks.

TRUDY

Hmm. Well. Looking forward to finding out which one we're in for.

ALISHA

What if it's true? What if - I dunno. What if they're actually trying to help us?

They chew over this possibility. Further along the table, Nathan is popping a PILL out of a blister-pack. Trudy notices.

TRUDY

Sertraline?

NATHAN

Fluox.

TRUDY

(sympathetic wince)

How are you sleeping?

NATHAN

I'm not.

TRUDY

(flashing her own blister-pack)

I'm on citalopram, trazadone, betas as required. And estrogen, of course. Anxious, depressed and dysphoric - I'm a triple threat. Everyone else?

MINESH

Diazepam.

ALISHA

Mirtazapine.

MELVYN

...Nothing.

(beat. lamely)

Paracetamol, sometimes?

TRUDY

(with a grin)

You're really out here just raw-dogging this shit, huh?

Is this a compliment or an insult? He smiles anyway.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Rather you than me.

INT. CINEMA ROOM – EVENING

After dinner, Melvyn, along with five or so other guests, sit in rows watching a film on the big screen (I'd suggest, if possible, Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*).

After a while, restless, Melvyn rises, squeezing along the row toward the exit.

INT. GAMES ROOM – EVENING

He pokes his head in at the games room. Two guests are playing pool; two more are trying out the chess set. He withdraws.

INT. CORRIDOR – EVENING

He wanders along a corridor. Turning a corner, he freezes: the FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN/CIARA is sitting on a chair halfway along the next corridor, reading a book.

He retreats back around the corner. He doesn't want to confront the apparition; but he *has* to know if it's really her...

He walks slowly down the corridor. She remains engrossed in her book. Hair aside, she is Ciara's exact double...right down to the way she keeps a lock of it tucked behind her ear.

She looks up, catching his eye. Melvyn quickly looks away and keeps walking. It is an eerie echo of Scene 2: he senses the uncanniness of the moment.

Further down the hallway, he stops and turns. It takes him a moment to summon the courage.

MELVYN

C. Ciara?

She looks up with a start. Stares at him. A pause.

FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN

...Sorcha.

Another silence.

MELVYN

Okay. Yeah, never. Sorry.

He starts to walk away...

SORCHA  
You knew my sister?

He stops.

SORCHA (CONT'D)  
Ciara. You knew her?

MELVYN  
...No. No, I -

SORCHA  
Why did you just say her name?

MELVYN  
...didn't know her well, is what I.  
Meant. Like we only met, once or  
twice.

She is immediately suspicious. She studies his face.

SORCHA  
You heard what happened to her?

MELVYN  
I heard she...yeah. I heard.

SORCHA  
So, you thought, what - ?

MELVYN  
I didn't know she had a. You - you  
look a lot like her.

...  
I'm sorry.

SORCHA  
What for?

MELVYN  
For - you, for your loss.

The fact of it washes over her. He searches for words of comfort.

MELVYN (CONT'D)  
For what it's worth, I don't think.  
I'm sure there's nothing anybody  
could have done.

He couldn't have picked a worse thing to say.

SORCHA

And what would you know about it?

She rises from her chair, advancing upon him. He quails.

SORCHA (CONT'D)

Who *are* you?

MELVYN

No one.

(wrong answer)

I'm, Melvyn, my name's Mel[vyn] -

SORCHA

What are you doing here? Who *told* you about this place?

MELVYN

I dunno, I just, I got an invite, through work, I don't know how -

SORCHA

Are you with *them*?

...Them?

MELVYN

No. I'm not - *with* anyone, it's just - me.

She is very close.

SORCHA

Don't speak to me again.

MELVYN

Okay.

SORCHA

I mean it. You don't come near me, you don't look at me. I don't exist.

MELVYN

Umm-hmm, yep. Noted.

She turns and marches off, leaving him alone.

INT. MELVYN'S ROOMS - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Melvyn paces the sitting room, ill at ease. As he's inspecting the bookcases, he recognises the name **Ida Shpolyansky** on several of the spines.



Pulling down a copy of **Mind & Manifestation**, he carries the book over to the chaise longue, lies down, and begins to read:

SHPOLYANSKY (V.O.)

*Since hitherto all psychostructural models have been, in essence, partite, the methodologies of correction have by necessity been heterogeneous...*

As he puzzles over this sentence, gradually he (and we) become aware of a presence in the room, hovering behind the head of the chaise. Looking round, he sees it is Miriam. He starts to rise...

MIRIAM

No, please, don't get up.

He remains on the chaise.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I'm just making the rounds, putting faces to names. Wishing everyone the best of luck for tomorrow.

She sits down in an armchair, transferring a bundle of papers from underarm to her lap.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Settling in alright?

MELVYN

Yes, yep, very - settled.

MIRIAM

Good.

She begins leafing through her pile of papers.

MELVYN

(dropping a hint)

I was thinking I might get an early night, actually. I'm pretty tired from the journey.

MIRIAM

You've been having trouble sleeping lately?

...

Isn't that right?

MELVYN

Y-es. That too.

She carries on leafing. Melvyn recognises his QUESTIONNAIRE.

MIRIAM

Twenty six years old...graduate,  
renter, single...

MELVYN

Is that my - ?

MIRIAM

It is. I very much enjoyed reading  
your responses.

MELVYN

Oh. Okay. Thank you?

MIRIAM

Only child...introvert...anxious  
attachment style...  
(looking up abruptly)  
You tested positive for cocaine, I  
see?

MELVYN

(stumped)

I don't - was there a question  
about that?

MIRIAM

Not specifically. Not that it's our  
place to judge, of course, but we'd  
prefer you didn't do it on site.

MELVYN

No, absolutely, I'm - I've stopped  
all that, anyway.

MIRIAM

I'm glad to hear it.  
(resuming leafing)  
Obsessive ruminative  
tendencies...somewhat maladapted,  
socially...sexually, rather  
conventional. The usual fantasies,  
nothing out of the -

MELVYN

Sorry - are you getting all this  
from my answers?

MIRIAM

You'd be surprised by much of  
ourselves we reveal. Given the  
right question.

(MORE)

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I'd say I pretty much have the  
measure of you, from this.

(as he digest this)

Scared of women, aren't you?

(Melvyn: ...)

Most men hate women, but you they  
merely frighten.

MELVYN

Right. Is that - good, or...?

MIRIAM

It's interesting. Would normally  
suggest either a volatile mother or  
an absent father.

MELVYN

Well, no, definitely not - he was  
around, my Dad, he [was] -

MIRIAM

Vacant. Ineffectual.

MELVYN

...There.

A very slight smile: it feels like a victory.

MIRIAM

Now. Tell me about these  
intrusions.

(Melvyn: ?)

The recurring thoughts. The  
visions.

For a split second - ideally no more than a single frame -  
Miriam's outfit changes: she's briefly dressed in the black  
habit of a MOTHER SUPERIOR. Without necessarily being aware  
of it, the image distracts him (and us) all the same.

MELVYN

Ah - yeah. My therapist - my *old*  
therapist said he thought I might  
have OCD?

MIRIAM

Yes, I expect he did.

MELVYN

...But you don't think so?

MIRIAM

I think there's no such thing. I  
take it they're still troubling  
you?

For another split second/frame, her outfit changes again:  
she's dressed as a DOMINATRIX. Melvyn blinks, unsettled.

MELVYN

Yeah, they're still. Still there.

...

Less so since...

(correcting)

In the last few days, maybe?

MIRIAM

Well. That's promising.

She picks up her papers and rises from her chair.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I think it'd be a good idea to get  
some rest. We have a busy schedule  
tomorrow.

As she reaches the door:

MELVYN

Was that it? What that - this bit,  
is this part of it? The method?

MIRIAM

Oh no. That was just paperwork. But  
we'll get to it, soon enough.

She exits. Melvyn's attention is grabbed, once again, by the  
painting of the LIMESTONE CLIFF on the wall.

EXT. CLIFFTOP NEAR CASTLEMARTIN, PEMBROKESHIRE - DAY

We're on that same clifftop. The wind is high; the grass bent  
double. Waves BOOM against the rocks below.

A small BOY in a raincoat walks along a coastal path beside  
the cliff edge. He's trying to keep up with a WOMAN walking  
several yards ahead. She wears a raincoat and PURPLE GLOVES;  
her blonde hair tangles in the wind.

He starts jogging to catch her up, but her paces quickens  
with his; she seems determined to leave him behind. She  
strays from the path, heading towards the CLIFF EDGE. He's  
yelling, though no sound comes out: MUM! MUUUM!

With great effort, he manages to catch up to her. He grabs her hand...but the GLOVE comes away in his grasp.

Standing on the cliff edge, the woman looks back. She has CIARA'S FACE - her mesmerised, manic SMILE.

She turns away...and STEPS OFF THE EDGE. The boy's mouth opens in a silent SCREAM.

The only sound we can hear are the waves BOOMING on the rocks, becoming...

INT. MELVYN'S ROOM - BEDROOM - NIGHT

...a BANGING. Melvyn wakes in the dark, sits up: someone is knocking on his door.

He turns on the light, hurries to the door of his room, throws it open. The corridor is empty. He looks down to see a NOTE underfoot, slipped beneath the door. He picks it up.

***Meet me at the fountain, 2am.  
Tell no one.***

He flips it over:

**DESTROY ME**

INT. COLLINGWOOD - NIGHT

Now dressed, Melvyn creeps through the corridors, heading to keep his appointment. He casts glances back over his shoulder as he goes, keeping an eye out for - what? Mentors? Cameras? Sentient statues?

EXT. COLLINGWOOD GROUNDS - NIGHT

He appears through a side door, crosses the drive, and starts off over the lawns. A SECURITY LIGHT flashes on; he freezes it goes off, tiptoe-ing away slowly.

Crossing the grounds, he approaches the FOUNTAIN, glowing eerily in the moonlight. Sitting on the edge of the pool, is a female figure: Sorcha.

SORCHA

Closer.

(louder)

Come closer.

He does so, until they're both enveloped by the fountain's dull roar.

SORCHA (CONT'D)

You weren't followed?

MELVYN

I don't think so?

(at her look)

No. No.

She looks past him, into the fountain. Their reflections shimmer back. She seems to be fighting a battle with herself.

SORCHA

I don't know you, alright? I don't know how you...*fit*, with all this. I'm not telling you because I trust you.

...

But if you are just some - *one*, some *guy*, then I can't just let you...go on, not knowing.

...

This place. It's not what you think it is.

...

The, the, the *house*, the *deer*, the fucking...Brideshead bollocks, all of it. It's a lie. They're *lying* to you.

MELVYN

...What is it?

SORCHA

I don't know. I don't fucking know. That's why I'm here. I have to know what they're doing. What they *did*.

She inclines her head further toward the plashing fountain, forcing him to do the same.

SORCHA (CONT'D)

We weren't close. Ciara and me. Not since...

(how to put it?)

I know she wasn't *well*, but there were things she - she *did* some things, to me, I couldn't forgive. But she was trying to get help, she *wanted* to get better. And I know she'd been having trouble finding someone, but I thought, eventually...maybe she would. And then out of nowhere, this, obsession with that *woman*, this -

MELVYN

Shpolyansky.

SORCHA

You know about her?

(Melvyn: *Well...*)

She told you?

MELVYN

She mentioned her, yeah. The last time we, uh. When we met, last.

SORCHA

She started sending me these emails. Really weird, really frightening emails. Then just – nothing. Stopped speaking to my parents, wouldn't answer her phone. We hadn't heard from her in six months.

...

So, even before she – before, I've been trying to find out about this place. What they do here. I can't make sense of the books, just seems like a load of jargon salad. But these people. Her followers. The 'Instititute'. I don't know if it's a *cult*, or an *experiment*, but...they *did* something to her. They got inside her head.

Melvyn digests this.

SORCHA (CONT'D)

There have been deaths. Here, at Collingwood. Suicides. They've kept it quiet, somehow, but there's evidence out there, if you know where to look. Not just suicides. *People have disappeared*. Whatever it is they're doing...it isn't right, it isn't *normal*. And I don't know how and I don't know why but I know it was them who –

A cone of LIGHT flashes across the lawn: the SECURITY light has been triggered. A silhouetted FIGURE is marching towards them. Sorcha grabs Melvyn's arm, very hard.

SORCHA (CONT'D)

Listen to me. Trust no one. Trust *nothing*. Don't eat the food. Don't make friends.

(MORE)

SORCHA (CONT'D)

Don't let your guard down, even for a second. Because they're watching us, all the time. They'll kill you, if they have to.

The figure emerges into the light reflecting off the fountain: Sigrid.

SIGRID

Hallo, guys? Little bit late for a walk, isn't it?

...

So, totally cool if you wanna sit up, but we'd prefer if you did it inside, okay?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Back inside, Sorcha hurries away up the stairs back to her room. Sigrid and Melvyn watch her go.

SIGRID

She's pretty, no?

MELVYN

I. Sure. I guess.

SIGRID

The blonde. It suits her.

With a smile, she too walks away.

INT. MELVYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melvyn sits on his bed, drained by the night's events and revelations. He climbs in, turns off the light.

Then on again. He rummages under the covers; pulls out the foreign object he can feel underneath.

It's a PURPLE GLOVE.

He turns it over in his hands. Disbelieving.

As a single DROP OF BLOOD leaks from his nose.

**END.**