

THE BEGINNING: INSOMNIA

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FADE IN:

EXT. CHATEAU BONA VISTA - NIGHT

A ten story residential building, surrounded by gloomy darkness. From the outside, it looks like the typical North American edifice. From the inside...

INT. CHATEAU BONA VISTA - ENTRANCE AREA - NIGHT

A double set of doors and floor-to-ceiling windows secure the building. Between those doors and windows, there is a security console and an empty office chair...

INT. CHATEAU BONA VISTA - LOBBY - NIGHT

The golden glow of the chandelier-lit lobby contrasts with the blackness that shrouds the exterior of the building.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

A desk and chair, a sofa, a huge, antique wall mirror with a fogged and corroded surface...

All the furnishings try hard to suggest the luxury of a French Chateau. But, this 'chateau' has seen better days. Now, the place looks deserted and... CREEPY.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A dimly lit hallway... A row of oak laminated doors: B2, B4, B6...
A FEMALE VOICE, brittle and taut...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

...I wake up in the middle of the night and
I feel like there's someone in my room...
I scream: who are you? What do you want?
But, nobody ever answers me. I try to turn
the lights on, but I can't...

The sobbing voice gets clearer and louder towards apartment B14...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Then, I wake up, covered in sweat. I have
this nightmare over and over again. I
can't be alone anymore, Max. Please, call
me--

The Apartment door marked B14... CLUNK!

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

CLUNK! An old, darkened elevator slowly descends with a jolt as the worn out engine's NOISE gradually fills the cabin.

JERRY (50s, overweight, dark circles under his eyes, tired expression) fishes a BLUE BOTTLE OF PILLS from out of his pocket.

JERRY

Thank God, I finally got someone. You want some?

He extends his bottle of pills to MIKE (late 30s, disheveled, with pale skin)

Lost and disoriented, Mike does not answer. He wipes his forehead. Jerry sighs. Un-flips Mike's shirt collar.

JERRY

Your predecessor 'quit' two weeks ago. Poor idiot killed himself, so--

CLUNK!

The elevator stops abruptly. The doors SQUEAL as they open. Mike looks outside, skittish and wide-eyed.

JERRY

--Goddamned building!

He pushes the 'CLOSE DOOR' button. Pops two pills into his mouth before continuing...

JERRY

So, we'll see him soon on the way to hell.

He smiles knowingly. The doors don't close. Annoyed, Jerry presses the button again and again.

JERRY

I know how you're feeling...

Finally, the doors close and the cabin descends with a jolt. Jerry pats Mike's shoulder, trying to smooth some wrinkles. Gives up...

JERRY (CONT'D)

I was also like: what the hell am I doing here? I'm a *writer*, for God's sake! But, unfortunately...

(spreads his hands)

We don't always get what we want. Do we?

Mike doesn't answer. The cabin jolts, then clunks. Nervous, Mike wipes his forehead again. Jerry notices...

JERRY

There's gonna be a lot of strange noises, but don't worry. They can't really hurt you.

He stops. Looks around like he's afraid someone might listen to him. Lowers his voice and...

JERRY

What is gonna hurt you is--

He leans towards Mike and starts to whisper as the NOISE of the elevator's exhausted engine fills the cabin...

JERRY

I'll tell you something you won't believe--

INT. LOBBY - LATER

The elevator doors open SQUEALING. Jerry and Mike step out. They walk down the lobby, towards the entrance.

JERRY

...I didn't want to scare you, but the sooner you figure out what's going on here, the better chance you'll have to survive. You want some?

He extends his bottle of pills to Mike again. Mike doesn't respond.

JERRY

Unfortunately, I did not run when I could. And now, I'm stuck here...

(looks around with disgust)

In this Goddamned building!

INT. ENTRANCE AREA - SECURITY CONSOL - NIGHT

Jerry opens a heavy oak door with a decorative glass. Puts a wedge under it.

They enter the entrance area. Jerry seats Mike on a chair, behind the console...

JERRY

One of the reasons you're sitting here is to keep 'lost souls' like him, out of the building...

He motions towards the pervasive darkness outside the building where A STRANGER (a man about 50, tall and lanky) creeps down the street.

Just before dissolving into the night, the Stranger turns and shoots a gloomy, hateful look at Mike.

JERRY

Always stay close by the front doors, okay? In case of an emergency, push that button...

Behind Mike, there is a stand with the tenants' names on it. Jerry touches the button next to: #F5 JERRY TROMPETTI.

JERRY

I know, the first night is always tough, but...

He pats Mike on the shoulder in a supportive gesture...

JERRY

Try to survive, okay?

He leaves. Mike clears his throat...

MIKE

(strangled voice)
Hum... What kind of emergency--

He stumbles over his words. Jerry stops at the door, surprised.

MIKE (CONT'D)

--Are we talking about?

JERRY

Thank God. Thought you were mute...
(smiles cynically)
Judgment day. Eviction. Hell. We talked
about it in the elevator. Don't you
remember?

Mike mouths: 'Ah' - like he remembers. Doubtful, Jerry stares at him.

JERRY

Are you okay? You don't look--

MIKE

--I'm okay.

Jerry gazes at Mike for a while. Then, waves him off and leaves.

INT. LOBBY - LATER

Rubbing the nape of his neck, Mike observes the lobby: two parlors, elevators, emergency exits... Everything looks quiet. At least for now...

INT. SECURITY POST - NIGHT

Mike studies THE MONITOR, installed inside the console. The monitor shows the footage of the security cameras in nine small windows. Mike enlarges one of them: a DARKENED GYM fills the screen.

Mike leans forward for a better look. His eyes are glued to the screen. His face strained, as though awaiting something to jump out of the darkened gym. Nothing...

Mike CLICKS the mouse... The monitor displays GARAGE LEVEL B: quiet and unobtrusive. He enlarges another window... THE POOL: empty and peaceful.

Mike relaxes, CLICKS again, and... SOMEBODY'S distorted, dreadful FACE fills the screen. Mike SCREAMS and falls backwards.

The video CRACKLES with a sudden quick burst of static. As the distorted face recedes, Mike sees a MAN WITH A BEARD.

The man, standing on a chair, looks into the security camera as he tries to correct its position.

Mike sighs, calms down gradually. Leans towards the monitor, again. He sees the man sitting behind the console.

Logically, the camera should show Mike, but it shows the man instead. Realizing that, Mike startles. A mixture of confusion and suspicion clouds his face.

He looks up at the security camera. It hangs from the ceiling, aimed at him.

Mike glances back at the monitor. Focuses on the date. It reads: 'August 12, 2014.' Mike squints, wondering what date it is.

Unable to remember, he grimaces... CLICKS on the mouse. Checks the other cameras: all of them show the same date.

Mike looks out, takes a long, deep breath. He sees the Stranger walking down the street, in another direction.

Mike hesitates for a while then rushes to the front door, opens it and calls out:

MIKE

Sir! Sir! Do you know what day--?

The stranger runs away, glancing back a couple of times, fearful. Astonished, Mike frowns. Steps out.

Abruptly, some kind of HIGH-PITCHED WHINE - loud and unpleasant - sets off. Mike steps back. Glances around frantically, trying to figure out where the sound is coming from.

The whine quickly growing louder and LOUDER, makes Mike to cover his ears. Then, it ends as abruptly as it started.

Mike looks towards the lobby suspicious, waiting for something else - something strange and unexpected - to happen.

But, nothing happens. Mike exhales, relieved. Wipes his forehead... BOOM! The FRONT DOOR slams shut behind him. Mike spins around, frightened.

No one. Just an electrical lantern dangling under the entrance overhang, swaying in a heavy gust of wind.

MIKE

Fucking wind.

He goes back to the console: more alert than lost. On the monitor, he sees the man talking to SOMEONE with the same complexion as Jerry.

The time on the monitor shows 4:38 am. Mike checks his watch. It doesn't work. He taps on it. It doesn't work.

Frustrated, Mike looks out. The Stranger's outline materializes out of darkness and walks towards the building. Mike ignores him.

He goes back to his watch. He takes it off his wrist and... drops it. He crouches. Looks under the console. Can't find it...

BOOM! The door SLAMS SHUT again. Mike straightens up, sees nobody... Looks out: no Stranger. Wonders: Did he sneak in?

He mouths 'Fuck' and bursts out of the entrance towards the lobby, closing the heavy oak door behind him...

LOBBY

Mike checks the parlors. There is nobody. BOOM! Emergency Stairwell door slams shut. Mike runs towards it and enters into the...

EMERGENCY STAIRWELL

Mike looks up. On the top floor, the door closes with a BANG. Mike runs up and enters into the...

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Breathing heavily, Mike frantically glances around. He catches a GLIMPSE of SOMEBODY'S SHADOW in a decorative mirror, hung on the wall, near the corner.

MIKE

Hey!

He runs towards the corner... Nobody.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Help! Please! Somebody... Help!

A DESPERATE SCREAM comes from the end of the hallway...

Mike runs to apartment B14. Tries the handle. It's locked. Tries again...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
(screaming)
Who are you? What do you want from me?
(cries)
What do you want from me?

BOOM! Some heavy object strikes the door from inside. Mike backs up.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Get away! Get away!!

BOOM! Another object hits the door. Mike leaves, glancing back confused.

INT. LOBBY/ENTRANCE AREA - LATER

Mike enters the lobby as the Stranger sneaks in the entrance area and walks to the oak door. The DOOR HANDLE jiggles...

MIKE
Hey!

The Stranger freezes. Then, runs out of the building. Mike rushes to the door, opens it and slides a plastic wedge under it. Goes to the front door and looks out. No trace of the Stranger...

SHHHHH... An eerie SOUND, coming from behind, terrifies Mike. He turns around slowly. Sees the oak door moving.

The plastic wedge, sliding on the carpet, makes: SHHHHHH.

He catches the door before it slams shut, re-opens it and secures the wedge underneath it.

INT. ENTRANCE AREA - NIGHT

Sitting behind his console, Mike looks tired. Jerry enters, popping some pills in his mouth. Mike stands up. Licks his lips, nervous.

JERRY
How was your night?

MIKE
I don't know--

He pauses: not knowing where to start. Then...

MIKE

There was a lady from B14 screaming for help...

(motions at
his watch)

Then, my watch stopped working...

Jerry nods, like he was expecting all that to happen.

MIKE (CONT'D)

And, it's still night outside... I have no idea what time it is... What date-- And, and, this monitor...

He gestures at the monitor. Jerry smiles. Sits at the console.

MIKE (CONT'D)

There's a problem with this monitor, I guess. It shows some old recordings...

Jerry looks at the monitor. Sees the man with the beard.

JERRY

You still don't get it, do you?

He CLICKS a couple of things. Motions to Mike. Mike approaches.

JERRY

There's nothing wrong with the monitor...

On the monitor, they see the man cleaning the desk... The time shows 7:15am.

JERRY

He is the Night Doorman. He finishes his shift at 7:30...

(smiles cynically)

Looks like you weren't listening to me, yesterday...

(clicks the mouse)

Watch. This is the footage from yesterday.

On the monitor, Mike sees himself. With a MOVING BOX and two BOTTLES OF WHISKY, he waits for the elevator in GARAGE B. Mike stares, wide-eyed.

JERRY

Do you remember that?

Mike squints, trying to remember something. The whole night plays back in his head - like someone rewinding an old, noisy VCR.

The VCR stops with A SQUEAK on the opening scene in the elevator.

Mike grimaces and tries again...

The result is the same: his memory stops on the opening scene in the elevator - with THE SQUEAK!

MIKE

No, I can't remember. I don't know what's going on...

(scared)

Am I dead?

CLUNK!

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT - MORNING - REAL WORLD IN BRIGHTER COLORS

CLUNK!

Mike jolts out from his nightmare. Breathing heavily, he sits up on his chair. Looks around, scared and disoriented.

An empty bottle of WHISKY stands on top of a PACKING BOX. It takes a while before he realizes where he is.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

--Mike talks to someone on the phone. Hangs up, irritated.

--Gloomy, Mike stares at the moving boxes. Sips whisky.

--Mike talks again on the phone, yells something.

--Mike looks out of the window, smoking.

--Mike sips whisky. An empty pizza box lies beside him.

INT. CHATEAU BONA VISTA - NIGHT

Mike, disheveled, walks down the lobby. Near the Parlor, he stops. Looks towards the entrance area.

Through the huge, floor-to-ceiling window, he sees the empty security console. Mike enters the...

PARLOR

Goes to the desk, full of PARCELS and PACKAGES. Finds one with his name on it.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Are you a new tenant?

Mike startles. Turns around. The man with the beard sits in an old chair. He's the NIGHT DOORMAN (about 40-45, East European immigrant, always ready to talk with the tenants practicing his English) Mike squints...

MIKE
Yes, I moved in yesterday...
(recognizes him)
And, you are the Night Doorman.

NIGHT DOORMAN
Yes, sir. The bored Night Doorman.

He chuckles. Suddenly, the same HIGH-PITCHED WHINE that Mike heard before, sets off.

The Night Doorman mouths 'Sorry' and leaves. Mike watches him rush to the entrance area.

The Night Doorman goes to the security console, checks the monitor then pushes a button. He comes back smiling.

MIKE
What was that?

NIGHT DOORMAN
That was a tenant walking his dog. They use the service door. We don't allow dogs through the main lobby...

Dumbfounded, Mike stays still. A long beat...

NIGHT DOORMAN
Please, sit down...

He motions to the chair, happy to see that Mike is not leaving.

NIGHT DOORMAN

I like to relax here. Rarely does someone enter from the main door. Everybody goes through the garage--

Deep in his thoughts, Mike sits down, reflexively. Blurts out...

MIKE

Unbelievable...

The Night Doorman glances at him, curious. Mike explains...

MIKE

As soon as I saw you, I thought about that buzzer: like I knew it was coming.

The Night Doorman smiles knowingly...

NIGHT DOORMAN

Déjà vu... I also have them once in a while.

MIKE

(doubtful)

No, no. It wasn't that... It was something else. Yesterday...

He puts his hand to his temple, remembering...

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT (FLASH BACK)

In the darkened cabin, Jerry talks to Mike. Mike looks around, confused.

MIKE (V.O.)

(struggling to remember)

I 'woke up' in the elevator with a man who looked like a security guard or something...

JERRY

I'll tell you something you won't believe--

Jerry's VOICE is barely heard in the NOISE of the elevator's old engine.

MIKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He was talking and talking and talking.
And, the elevator was moving *endlessly*...

Sometimes serious, sometimes with a cynical smile, Jerry talks to Mike nonstop...

JERRY
...As soon as the judgment is made, you and me, we have to evict the tenants that are going to hell. People go happily to paradise, but for hell, we have to kick them out. And, it's not easy--

MIKE (V.O.)
...I was so scared and depressed, I couldn't get what he was talking about...

Jerry continues his speech...

JERRY
--We can still get a glimpse of the real world through mirrors and cameras. Call it a parallel universe, a world of nightmares or a limbo state... It doesn't matter. It doesn't change anything...
(to himself,
laughing)
And it doesn't explain anything either.

The doors open. Jerry and Mike walk out of the elevator.

JERRY (O.S.)
I didn't want to scare you. But--

INT. CHATEAU BONA VISTA - NIGHT (END OF FLASH BACK)

Bewilderment is printed on Mike's face as he stares at the Night Doorman.

MIKE (CONT'D)
...I still have no idea what--

NIGHT DOORMAN
(persuaded)
--A nightmare. You had a nightmare...

He glances at his watch.

NIGHT DOORMAN

I have them too: in the middle of the night, I'm lost in a city, searching for my apartment, but... I can't find it.

He rises, goes to the mirror. Gets a comb from his pocket...

NIGHT DOORMAN (CONT'D)

You never had a nightmare like that?

He looks back at Mike. Mike shakes his head.

NIGHT DOORMAN

(sadly)

I started having nightmares after my wife left me. To be more accurate...

(laughs)

After she booted me out.

He squints his eyes to see his face in the old, fogged and corroded mirror.

NIGHT DOORMAN (CONT'D)

Did you know that all illegal immigrants have the same nightmares?

He stops combing, looks back at Mike again.

NIGHT DOORMAN

They are back in their countries, with their relatives: drinking and dancing and having fun... Then, suddenly, they realize they have left America, and... they wake up in sweat.

The Night Doorman resumes combing. Smiles. Looks like he gets more and more excited as Mike gets increasingly worried.

NIGHT DOORMAN

Any problems recently? Job, love, health?

Mike hesitates for a while, then cringes:

MIKE

I was fired... My wife left me... And,
the bank took my house...

NIGHT DOORMAN

Classic!

His face brightens, his eyes spark...

NIGHT DOORMAN

Now, that we have a diagnosis, let's
talk about the cure...

(persuasive)

You have to become a Lucid Dreamer.

He glances at his watch and grimaces regretfully.

NIGHT DOORMAN

Sorry, I have to check the building--

INT. LOBBY - LATER

Mike and the Night Doorman walk in the lobby. Mike listens
attentively...

NIGHT DOORMAN

... You have to learn how to control
your dreams. Not everybody can do it.
It takes time to master. I tried it,
but couldn't do it. So, I took the
second option...

The Night Doorman stops brusquely near the elevators. Gets a BLUE
BOTTLE OF PILLS from his pocket and extends it to Mike.

NIGHT DOORMAN

Take it. It helps. You'll still wake up
drenched in sweat, but at least, you
won't remember what your nightmares were
about.

MIKE

No, no. I don't take pills. It was just
one nightmare...

(forced laughter)

I'm sure I won't have it every night.

He pats the Night Doorman on the back good-naturedly. Skeptic, the Night Doorman smiles.

NIGHT DOORMAN

Let's hope so, but-- Be careful. I know at least one person who had nightmares like yours. He ended up jumping from his balcony, two weeks ago--

MIKE

(irritated)

--Thanks! I'll be okay! Okay?

And, he calls the elevator. The Night Doorman shrugs and goes to the Emergency Stairwell.

Before entering the elevator, Mike hears the same door shutting NOISE he heard before...

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Mike is asleep in his chair with an empty bottle of whisky in his lap.

BANG. BANG. BANG. Mike jumps. BANG. BANG. BANG. Mike waddles to the door, opens it, and... Jerry is there, waiting for him.

The emergency light flickers in the lobby. Horrible NOISE fills the building. Jerry shouts...

JERRY

Come on! Move! We have an emergency.

MIKE

(confused)

What? What emergency?

JERRY

We have some tenants to evict.

(excited)

You're gonna witness hell tonight!

CLOSE UP: Mike's face: scared and confused...

SUPER: THE BEGINNING: INSOMNIA

THE END