

SLEEPER CELL

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BLACK TITLE CARD

TEXT

1:55 AM

EXT. URBAN OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

A quiet, bare city street; the wee hours. A single car is parked crooked on the sidewalk; MOTOR RUNNING, headlights on and the driver's side door open.

A pregnant WOMAN walks toward the glass doors and reaches into the pocket of her pink bathrobe; it lazily flaps open from a breeze, she's in her pajamas and bare foot.

She pulls out a key card and we hear a CHIME as the doors UNLOCK and she pushes through, staring blankly forward.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

The metal door BANGS open as the same WOMAN stumbles onto the rooftop. We hear the CRUNCHING of small rocks under her feet as she approaches the edge.

She is not alone: Across the street and adjacent are two other people on their own separate buildings/ledges. A TEENAGE girl in a hospital gown, and a POLICE WOMAN.

EXT. CITY - CONTINUOUS

The silhouettes of the three women. They simultaneously jump from the buildings as we

CUT TO BLACK

TEXT

2:00 AM

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

MILES (V.O.)
 (private/aside)
 It's either nightmares, or I don't
 sleep at all...

FADE IN:

INT. CAFE - RAINY AFTERNOON

Everyone in the cafe is looking up at the ceiling-mounted television news.

Sat apart from the crowd on barstools by the window is MILES and CHEKHOV. MILES is in business casual, CHEKHOV has scrubs visible from under his coat.

CHEKHOV
 It's gonna depress you, physically.

MILES
 Don't doctor me.

CHEKHOV
 (shrugs)
 I'm a nurse.

MILES is weary. He rubs his dark, tired eyes.

The **TV** in the background:

TV (O.S.)
 (male/female anchor)
 Heavy hearts go out to the families
 and to the officers of the 87th
 precinct who are working diligently
 to better understand this senseless
 tragedy.

There is footage of emergency vehicles arriving to the scene.

CHEKHOV
 (staring at the TV)
 That one girl wasn't from our
 hospital, luckily-
 (catching himself)
 I don't mean it like that. I just
 mean: they're taking a lot of heat
 we'd obviously prefer not to have.

MILES

Are things easing up for you at work?

People are crowding around the TV in the background.

CHEKHOV

I'm changing schedules again. I wish I could still be doing house calls with Father Henry. You wanna come with me for that?

MILES

What? Why?

CHEKHOV

You're complaining about nothing to do.

MILES

No, I've been complaining about feeling nothing, and having nothing. I work at a radio station, and you heal lives. I don't have meaning like you.

CHEKHOV

That's what I'm talking about. Make a house call with me, you'll feel good and charitable. Father Henry and I visit three bed-cases a week.

MILES

You've been making your house calls with a priest.

CHEKHOV

Yeah?

MILES

Yeah, so how sick are these people? So sick, you need a priest ready to give last rites, or something? I mean, I don't want to make an effort to go out and stare at death. That's why I can't friggin' sleep right now as is.

CHEKHOV

Father Henry is an MD - he takes temperatures more often than confession.

(MORE)

CHEKHOV (CONT'D)

(beat)

You dreaming about what you did?

MILES

(annoyed)

No. I'm dreaming of other people dying. Not me.

CHEKHOV

Well you should sleep as much as you can tonight. I'm pulling my last all-nighter shift in the coma ward - I'm back with recovery cases for the next week.

MILES

Paid to stay up all night - not a bad gig.

CHEKHOV

Yeah! Instead of at home for free.

MILES

Shit - Do I keep you up?

CHEKHOV

Not a big deal. I can hear you bustle in your room, so it takes longer to pass out. I'm otherwise a deep sleeper when I don't have to be up at 2am every day.

MILES

I don't know if I want to sleep or dream right now. I'm somehow even more anxious after.

CHEKHOV

This is day three. I feel like you don't have a choice at this point; you're gonna crash.

MILES

Yeah...whether I like it or not. I've been dozing all day.

CHEKHOV

(distracted, clocking the crowd)

You've been what?

MILES' gaze out the window is soft focus; we hear RAIN pounding the glass along with

CHEKHOV (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MILES. MILES-

INT. RADIO STATION - AFTERNOON

Cubicles - the backend pencil pushing side of the station adjacent to a hall of studios and recording booths.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

MILES.

MILES sits up at his desk with a short GASP, startled.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

SCREECHING from the brakes makes MILES JOLT awake upright as the bus HISSES and sways. He zips his jacket up.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

MILES's head nods; he snaps fully awake in his pajamas, stirring hot tea.

CHEKHOV

MILES.

MILES

-What?

CHEKHOV

I said: "are you still dozing off"

MILES

...Yeah, just a b-

CHEKHOV

-bit, yeah, noticed. I've been here for a couple nods by now.

MILES

Sorry.

CHEKHOV

Still drinking that tea?

MILES

Yeah, more caffeine than coffee.

CHEKHOV

You - need - sleep. Did you buy the aids?

MILES

Yes.

CHEKHOV

Like an adult?

MILES

(sips his tea)

Yep.

CHEKHOV

Your brain is gonna shut down. And did you buy over the counter variety?

MILES

(cold)

Obviously.

CHEKHOV

You stuck to the list I texted?

MILES

(holds up small bag)

Pharmacist approved, and safe for children. As natural as it gets.

CHEKHOV

I'm glad he approved, my massive med school debt has meaning all of a sudden.

MILES

My school debt makes me want to take the whole bottle.

CHEKHOV

(beat)

I don't mind pretending you're not thinking about it, but-

MILES

I'm not thinking about it until you do that-

CHEKHOV

Come on-

MILES

No-

CHEKHOV

I think it's a little soon to joke, then.

(MORE)

CHEKHOV (CONT'D)

Especially with all the bullshit on TV. Can we not joke? In addition to not talking about it? Can that happen?

MILES

Joking can help, too - stop letting it bother you.

CHEKHOV

It'll bother me if it's my hospital they roll your body into again.

MILES

(beat)

If we're gonna keep living together, I can't feel like you're my warden.

CHEKHOV

We started living together because we were best friends; That's where I'm coming from - as a friend, not a nurse; not a warden.

MILES

It seems like your concern right now comes from wanting to chaperone me, all things considered-

CHEKHOV

-all things you put into motion. Nobody's changed the nature of our relationship, just the shit in between - and we're still good-I'm not complaining-

MILES

Could have fooled me. I'm not gonna do it again! Okay? I'm exhausted.

CHEKHOV

Well, I wonder why...

MILES

No, emotionally - everything. Exhausted on this topic, exhausted from going out the front door every morning - Just exhausted. Dreams are what tormented me to the edge last time. I don't want to dream about what I've been dreaming about.

CHEKHOV

You need sleep and exercise, or you'll get depressed and...wanna do it again. I'm sorry, but a spiral is a spiral no matter what you call it.

MILES

I feel like my dreams are hurtful. It's cosmic, or something. They feel so real. It's like I'm not done punishing myself, you know? So I do it in my sleep, and it spills over.

CHEKHOV

(half listening)

It's a chicken/egg issue. You need to sleep, and you'll stop hallucinating.

MILES

I really don't think it's...

CHEKHOV slings his bag over his shoulder.

CHEKHOV

I have to go...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MILES follows CHEKHOV into the living room as he readies to head out.

MILES

Have fun with the coma patients

CHEKHOV

(zipping up)

Yup - always.

CHEKHOV closes the door behind him as he leaves.

We show MILES leaning in the kitchen doorway, spacing out with his steaming mug of tea. We linger with him for a moment before we

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Same room, same night, same composition. The lights are off, it is cold and dark looking - many hours have passed.

We slowly move into

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

MILES is in bed, fast asleep. The digital clock next to the bed shines: "1:45 AM"

CUT TO:

I/E. DREAM SEQUENCE

After a series of abstract visuals that warp sense of time and place: We sometimes are, and other times simply follow MILES until we end up:

Falling. Falling...

Falling down a black void with the WHOOSHING power of WIND at high speed.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME NIGHT

The quiet coma ward is narrow. There are twelve patients, six lined up along either opposing wall.

A NURSE collects her personal items and hands the desk over to CHEKHOV, who's only just arriving. He sits down and we see the analog clock on the wall display: **1:55 AM**

I/E. DREAM SEQUENCE - CONTINUOUS

MILES sees a young WOMAN falling down the void along with him. She's calling out.

Their trajectory brings them closer - The WIND unnaturally cancels out enough for us to clearly hear:

WOMAN

(calm, reassuring)

It's okay. I've had this dream before. I always wake up before the bottom. Always! I always wake up before the bottom.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

CHEKHOV's alarm clock radio turns on at **2:00 AM** - It plays "Mr. Sandman"

I/E. DREAM SEQUENCE - CONTINUOUS

MILES and the young WOMAN fall less chaotic, no longer flailing but sitting and laying into their descent. The MUSIC echoes through the dream.

DISTANT MUSIC

"...Then tell him that his lonesome nights - are - over! Sandman...."

MILES reaches out and they clasp fingers.

WOMAN

You need to be brave.

MILES

Brave for what?

WOMAN

To help the dreamers.

MILES

But this is my dream.

WOMAN

And you've had it before?

MILES nods.

BOTH

I always wake up before the botto-

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

No MUSIC - it's quiet.

No filters, no dream sequence: cold reality. The young WOMAN from the dream is on the ground with her eyes open and the pavement beneath her cracked and cratered.

She COUGHS and splutters blood - coming to, waking up.

She can't move; we only see terror on her face before the apparent pain overwhelms her and she dies.

INT. COMA WARD, HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

At the end of the wing, CHEKHOV is reading a book and begins to doze off until-

VOICES (O.S.)

(singing)

Bum, bum, bum, bum bum bum bum bum,
bum bum bum, bum bum bum...

The 12 coma patients simultaneously sit up and are lazily squeezing enough air out of their atrophied bodies to sing along to:

INT. MILES' ROOM - SAME

DISTANT RADIO (O.S.)

"Mr. Sandman! Bring me a dream!
Make him the cutest that..."

MILES wakes up as if having almost hit the ground. He lies back flat, panting and staring at the ceiling as we

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE