

Coma Dreams

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FADE IN:

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD, RAINY DAY - DAY

An early '80s black sedan speeds too fast across a country bridge. The wood planks thump beneath the tires.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD, RAINY DAY - DAY

A current model black sedan speeds too fast along a highway.

BACK TO THE '80s SEDAN POV

The car hits a slippery spot in the road and spins out of control. A WOMAN'S FACE, unrecognizable, but late 30's, is visible through the windshield. She's frightened.

BACK TO THE CURRENT MODEL SEDAN POV

The car hits a slippery spot in the road and spins out of control. A WOMAN'S FACE, unrecognizable, but late 30's, is visible through the windshield. She's frightened.

TO THE '80s SEDAN POV

The car careens through a ditch into a pond and sinks below the surface.

TO THE CURRENT MODEL SEDAN POV

The car veers into the ditch, crashing into a tree.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A very injured WOMAN, unrecognizable, but late 30's, lies in a hospital bed. A variety of life support monitors are visible beside the bed. A MAN, 40, face unseen, stands by the bed.

A DOCTOR (OS)

There's brain activity, but it's-

EXT. DARK WOODS, A RAIN-SOAKED TRAIL - NIGHT

Running shoes pound the trail in pouring rain. They run hard, avoiding the worms and snails inching across the path.

CLARE, 37, pleasant looking, gasps for air with hands on her

knees. She steps back to the sickening crunch of a snail shell.

She slowly lifts her shoe to find a snail writhing in agony, bereft of protection. Clare covers her eyes, distraught.

She backs up, step by step, eyes fixed to the snail's agony.

Through the rain, Clare looks to a 3rd story office window and DR. ELIOTT SHERKOVITZ, mid-40's, gazing out.

INT. ELIOTT'S OFFICE - DAY (SIMULTANEOUS)

Eliott gazes out the window onto the park across the way. Although the day is sunny, the park is empty.

He addresses a WOMAN lying on a patient couch.

ELIOTT

These feelings of suicide coincide
with your depression.

INT. THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS LEADING TO ELIOTT'S OFFICE - DAY

Clare, in wet jogging clothes, puts a foot to the stairs.

BACK TO ELIOTT'S OFFICE

Eliott hands his patient a prescription and escorts her to the top of the stairs.

TOP OF THE STAIRS

Eliott notices Clare looking up, to ascend.

TO ELIOTT'S DESK

Eliott sips water and tosses his head back, eyes closed, to swallow a pill. He opens his eyes to see Clare lying on his patient couch.

He places a vial of pills into his desk drawer. He glances about the room to check his bearings.

CLARE

The rain has stopped. I must be going.

He glances to the window, noting the sunny day.

ELIOTT

It hasn't rained all day.

A loud thump, a bird, hits the office window, startling Elliott.

CLARE

The reflection confuses them. They fly headlong into what appears to be clear sky.

Only to crash into this invisible wall. Often the impact snaps their tiny necks.

Confused, he turns his attention to Clare.

ELIOTT

How long have you been lying there?

CLARE

I don't keep track. Probably shorter for you than for me, though.

He rummages through client files on his desk.

ELIOTT

Are you a patient of mine?

CLARE

I'm here to see about that.

Elliott notes her comment and stops looking for her file.

ELIOTT

What is I can help you with?

CLARE

Well, that's what I'm hoping you can help me with.

More confused, Elliott focuses on Clare.

ELIOTT

And again, why must you leave?

CLARE

I only come out in the rain.

EXT. THE PARK JOGGING TRAIL - DAY

Clare walks to where the snail lies, motionless. Within the shell fragments come movement and a butterfly emerges from the remains. It takes wing and floats off in the sunny breeze.

Clare watches its flight which takes her gaze to Elliott staring directly at her from his office window.

INT. ELIOTT'S OFFICE - DAY

Elliott stares onto the park jogging trail directly across from his office. He sees only the park, not Clare nor the butterfly.

He opens the window and notes a feather stuck in the sill. He drops it, watching it spiral to the ground.

ELIOTT
(shouting, nicely)
Shelly, do you have a new patient
file out there?

SHELLY, late 20's, plump, peeks into his office.

SHELLY
No one new since Wednesday.

He walks back to sit at his desk.

ELIOTT
A woman, just moments ago?

SHELLY
Your last appointment was thirty
minutes ago.

ELIOTT
No matter.

She exits. He contemplates the vial of pills in his drawer.

INT. CREBS PSYCHIATRIC HOSP. FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE - DAY

Elliott sits in a stark room facing a female PATIENT, 50's. She twirls her unkempt hair. Two GUARDS stand in the corners.

Elliott rubs his forehead.

ELIOTT

Anything to say today?

The woman stares, eyes vacant, twirling her hair. Elliott motions for the guards to dismiss her.

He sits back exhaling. He notes that both guards are gone, then sneaks a pill, eyes closed.

EXT. CREBS, PATIENT ADMITTANCE ENTRANCE - DAY

A police prisoner transport vehicle stands parked. TWO SERIOUS POLICE OFFICERS give transfer paperwork to TWO HOSPITAL GUARDS.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Under no circumstance is he to be left unshackled with anyone.

Two guards minimum must be present whenever he's out of isolation

HOSPITAL GUARD #1

What do we have here?

Police officer #2 opens the vehicle door for VAL'DER, 40, 6'3''. Eyes, hair and persona are dark, straight from Hades.

He's shackled at the wrists and ankles. He wears an electric shock neck collar. He's all tattooed up.

Guard #2 reaches to assist Val'der who lunges at him, placing his shackled arms over the guard's head, choking him, almost snapping his neck as they both fall to the ground.

Officer #2 remotely activates the shock collar, immobilizing Val'der. The other officer and guard rush to assist guard #2.

POLICE OFFICER #1

This is what you have.

Guard #2 rolls on the ground clutching his neck in pain. Val'der twitches, then addresses officer #2.

VAL'DER

You can't hide your daughter from me. I'll have her little pussy.

Officer #2 re-activates the shock collar, his face a snarl.
He presses his heel to Val'der's neck. Officer #1 intercedes.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Stand down, Frank. It's just talk.

Val'der smiles at the reaction he caused in the officer.

VAL'DER
I'll put my face between her tender
thighs. I'll think of you when I
snap her neck.

Officer #1 hands the keys and collar remote to the guards.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Do not underestimate this animal.
There is nothing human about him.

INT. A TELEPHONE BOOTH - DAY (VIEW FROM OUTSIDE, EAVESDROPPING)

An old-style phone receiver presses against a women's mouth,
ringing. A young boy answers.

YOUNG BOY (VO)
Hello?

Silence.

YOUNG BOY (VO)
Hello?

The women's lips move.

CLARE
Hello, Love.

A squeal of delight and recognition from the boy.

YOUNG BOY (VO)
I miss you.

CLARE
Me, too.

Clare glances out the glass to see Elliott walking by.

YOUNG BOY (VO)

When will I see you again?

CLARE

Soon.

Clare hangs up and with a frown watches Elliott continue past.

INT. A FLORIST SHOP - DAY

Elliott smells the roses and selects a dozen red. Clare appears.

CLARE

Try the gardenias. The scent is
intoxicating.

Elliott eyes her as if trying to recognize her, but he doesn't.

ELIOTT

I always give her roses.

CLARE

I think she'll like the gardenias.

Elliott notes her comment.

INT. MAYFAIR SANITARIUM, HELEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

HELEN, 42, sits in front of a mirror repeatedly combing her hair, her eyes distant and vacant. A wedding photo of her and Elliott sits beside her.

Elliott stands at the door holding the gardenias, observing her. She hasn't noticed him. Catching the scent of the gardenias, she turns to him, her face expressionless, eying the flowers.

Elliott places the flowers in a vase and kisses her forehead, but she doesn't respond, as she continues to comb her hair.

INT. MAYFAIR SANITARIUM, OUTSIDE HELEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elliott consults with HELEN'S DOCTOR.

ELIOTT

Any change?

The doctor shakes his head. Elliott notes it, somber.

INT. ELIOTT'S HOME - NIGHT

Elliott eats a frozen meal alone at the table, in the dark.

INT. ELIOTT'S OFFICE - DAY

Elliott shuffles files at his desk while Clare sits across. A shaft of bright sunlight filters prominently across the floor.

ELIOTT

I've misplaced you. Your name again?

She smiles, amused.

CLARE

Call me Clare.

Elliott stops looking for her file and focuses on Clare. He writes her name on a piece of paper.

ELIOTT

No matter. What is—?

CLARE

My problem?

The sunlight dims, replaced by the patter of rain on the glass.

CLARE

I must go.

He notes the rain and offers her his umbrella.

ELIOTT

Do you have an umbrella?

CLARE

I've never felt the need.

AT HIS WINDOW - MOMENTS LATER

Elliott gazes onto a dry, bright sunny day, no clouds in sight. He lies down on his patient couch and closes his eyes.

ELIOTT'S DREAM: EXT. THE PARK ACROSS FROM HIS OFFICE - DAY

Clare sits on a bench gazing at two swans in the pond. She notes a figure walking her way.

THEN

The figure, Elliott, deep in thought passes by.

CLARE
Good afternoon, Elliott.

He stops to look back and study her face.

ELIOTT
Do I know you?

CLARE
We've not met here yet.
(noting the swans)
Aren't they beautiful?

ELIOTT
Yes, very much so.

Clare offers him a sandwich.

CLARE
Lunch?

He pauses to consider her offer. A drizzle begins, then rain. Soaked, they eat sandwiches, unconcerned by the rain.

END DREAM: INT. ELIOTT'S OFFICE - DAY

MALCOLM, late 60's, old money, barges in with a magazine. His entrance startles, then awakens Elliott who sits up.

MALCOLM
Working too hard again.

Malcolm settles across from Elliott. He hands him the magazine, *Psychiatric Journal*, which features Elliott on the cover with the storyline, "Dr. Sherkovitz's *Subliminal Technique in Psychotherapy* could revolutionize psychiatry."

MALCOLM

National recognition.

Elliott returns to his desk, eying the cover. Malcolm slides an envelope across the desk.

MALCOLM

Saturday's party invitation. Have you given thought to my offer?

Elliott looks up from the magazine.

MALCOLM

My recommendation carries some weight, but you'll still need to impress them.

(looking around the office)

At this point in your career you should publish. Papers are nice tidbits, but you need something substantial, a book.

(noting the magazine)

Your subliminal technique would receive wider exposure with a book. The prison hospital work would make an excellent case study.

Elliott notes the advice and looks toward the window.

MALCOLM

The board selection committee will be there. They'll be looking you over.

Elliott nods, absentmindedly pensive.

MALCOLM

Helen?

Elliott returns to focus. He pulls out a tape recorder.

ELIOTT

The same.

MALCOLM

A shame. See you Saturday.

He rises to leave. He's gone before Elliott can say goodbye. Elliott dictates into the recorder.

ELIOTT

Start a new patient file, titled.. E S.
Subject is a forty-four, otherwise
healthy male complaining of encounters
with an imaginary woman, claiming to
need his help.

No psychotic history, however
he's taking psychotropic medication
for depression, triggered by-

Eliott pauses to look at the picture of Helen. He rewinds and
replays the tape, pensive.

EXT. THE PARK - DAY

Clare sits on a bench gazing onto the pond as several crows
land on the water turning into swans that dive underwater to
feed. As some swans fly off they turn back to crows.

INT. CREBS, THE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

The guards escort a PATIENT from the room. Eliott closes his
eyes to relax. He opens them to find Clare sitting across.

CLARE

We don't have much time.

He rubs his temple, then is distracted by the click of the
door as the guards escort in another WRETCHED LOOKING WOMAN.
He reaches for the next file. Clare's chair is empty.

EXT. THE SPINNAKER ESTATE, BACKYARD POOL - DAY

MAGGIE, 37, an uncanny resemblance to Clare, lounges with a
NEIGHBOR WOMAN watching their CHILDREN play in the pool.

Anxiety twists Maggie's face.

TIMOTHY, 5 yrs, swims like a fish staying underwater for long
periods of time. Maggie tenses to stand.

MAGGIE

Timothy, keep your head above water.

CLARICE, 7 yrs, stands at the pool edge and reaches below the

surface to grab Timothy's hair and yank him to the top.

CLARICE

Mum says not to stay under water.

Timothy wiggles free with a grin and dives right back. The neighbor consoles Maggie.

NEIGHBOR

There are specialists for this.

Maggie sighs and looks away.

INT. ELIOTT'S OFFICE - DAY

Alone, Elliott pops a pill followed by a gulp of water. For a split second the water in the glass appears to Elliott to be a raging flood that engulfs his body, submerging him.

Then, back to normal perspective he notes a rainbow butterfly cross his desk. He follows its flight to find Clare sitting across from him. He frowns. He looks to his clothes, dry.

ELIOTT

How are you getting into my office?

CLARE

I think it's the other way around.
You're visiting me.

Elliott looks around his office. He notes the rain outside.

ELIOTT

(to himself)

Everything looks normal.

(to Clare)

I still don't know what I'm treating
you for.

CLARE

I think you're my last hope. We
must try something tonight.

ELIOTT

(musing)

I may just be lucid dreaming. I'm
not even sure you're real.

Clare glances to the sunlight shining through the window.

CLARE

Are you real?

He looks to her. She takes his dagger-like metal letter opener.

CLARE

Is this real?

He watches, waiting for her point. Before he can react, Clare plunges the letter opener deep into his chest.

CLARE

What about this, is it real?

Horrified, he looks to the oozing blood and hiss of air escaping his lungs, yet he's unharmed. He touches the blood.

CLARE

Nothing is real, certainly not reality.

(standing to leave)

I'll be dressed in white.

Shelly escorts in a MALE PATIENT.

Elliott sits at his desk, distraught, looking at his chest, expecting blood, but everything is normal.

Shelly notes Elliott's confusion.

SHELLY

Doctor?

Elliott regains his composure.

ELIOTT

I'm fine.

Elliott grabs the ES file and scribbles more notes.

INT. MAYFAIR SANITARIUM, HELEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dressed in a black tuxedo, Elliott sits contemplative in a sofa chair to watch Helen methodically file and buff her nails. A new vase of red roses sits beside her.

A NURSE enters taking in the situation.

NURSE

She spends all day, trying to look
pretty for you.

ELIOTT

(wistful)

I know.

The nurse exits. Elliott stands to kiss Helen on the cheek. She turns to him, but her eyes belie no recognition.

ELIOTT

I love you, Dear.

Elliott leaves. The merest hint of a tear graces Helen's eye.

INT. MALCOLM'S PARTY - NIGHT

Elliott mixes with the crowd. Across the room LIZ, 42, dressed in black, attractive, catches his eye. She lingers a moment, their eyes to each other before she slips away into the crowd.

EXT. THE PARTY, A WALK-OUT BALCONY (GROUND-LEVEL) - NIGHT

Alone, Elliott peers into the woods. Liz joins him.

LIZ

Nice night.

He looks to her, tensing.

LIZ

I saw this month's Psychiatric Journal.

Elliott moves to exit the balcony.

LIZ

Elliott, don't-

He stops.

LIZ

Can we find some common ground?

He steps back to the balcony.

LIZ

It was wrong, we made a mistake.

ELIOTT

And look who's paying for it.

Liz sighs.

LIZ

I'd pay anything to go back and undo it. She didn't deserve what happened, nor do you deserve what you're doing to yourself.

He glances to her, his demeanor softening.

ELIOTT

I don't blame you. It's just—

He notes a figure in the woods, dressed in white. His attention is drawn into the woods.

EXT. THE LOVELY WOODS, DARK AND DEEP - NIGHT

Eliott wanders among the trees, very dark. The damp earth compresses beneath his feet, toads jump to avoid his step.

Clare comes from behind a tree, dressed all in white.

CLARE

You kept our promise.

Eliott turns, startled.

CLARE

I thought you'd forget. Do you realize what a breakthrough this is?

LIZ (OS)

Malcolm mentioned the book you have in mind. I could help organize it.

BACK TO THE BALCONY

Liz touches Elliott's hand, breaking his reverie. He glances to

her, momentarily disoriented.

LIZ
What do you see out there?

ELIOTT
(peering back into the woods)
Nothing.

Liz slides a bit closer. He tenses.

LIZ
Don't make me a pariah.

He glances to her. She pulls back.

LIZ
I just wish-

Malcolm barges in, drink in hand, tipsy. He addresses Elliott.

MALCOLM
For Chrissakes, I've been looking all
over for you. Important people to meet.
Board members.

ELIOTT
I'll be right in.

Malcolm exits.

LIZ
He's retiring.

ELIOTT
I know.

LIZ
His board seat will be open...

Peering back into the woods, Elliott nods. Liz eyes him, a mixture of concern and affection, before going inside.

EXT. A HILLSIDE TRAIL - NIGHT

Clare jogs very hard up the hill in the rain, breathing heavy.

INT. THE OCEAN, A CAR PARKED WELL BACK FROM A BEACH - DAY

Maggie sits in a car reading while her family plays on the beach. The children build sand castles and fly a kite. She looks up occasionally from a book to the fun.

The driver side door opens and HENRY, 40, slides in.

MAGGIE

Everyone's having fun?

He nods looking at the children and then to Maggie.

HENRY

Perhaps it's not too late...

She looks to him with disappointment.

INT. ELIOTT'S OFFICE, RECEPTIONIST AREA - DAY

Elliott tops the stairs and heads absentmindedly to his office.

SHELLY

I tried to stop her, but she said
she knows you.

Elliott glances to Shelly, hand to his door knob.

INSIDE HIS OFFICE

Liz sits on his patient couch writing. Elliott enters. He pauses to view the situation. They lock gaze.

LIZ

I want things right between us. We
never did that.

Elliott considers her words, walking to his desk.

LIZ

Plus I'm concerned about-

ELIOTT

I'm fine.

LIZ

You're not fine. Malcolm sees it,

LIZ (CONT)

I see it.

Again, Elliott contemplates. He hands her the ES file.

ELIOTT

Give me your perspective.

Liz reads the file notes.

LIXZ

I'd say this client is experiencing
a psychotic break with reality.

Elliott leans forward.

ELIOTT

I am the client.

LIZ

So who is Clare?

ELIOTT

I don't know.

LIZ

She's not real?

Elliott shrugs. Liz closes the file, serious.

ELIOTT

What if the subconscious could be
experienced with the conscious mind?

LIZ

It wouldn't be subconscious.

(pause)

I think you're suffering from classic
depression.

ELIOTT

I'm a psychiatrist. We don't suffer,
we explore.

Liz drops the file on his desk.

LIZ

At least you're documenting your delusion. It'll come in handy if I'm assigned to treat you, when you snap.

She departs, leaving Elliott to his thoughts.

INT. CREB'S, THE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Elliott reviews a file, frowning. TWO GUARDS enter struggling to bring in Val'der. TWO MORE GUARDS assist from behind.

They force the shackled Val'der into the interview chair and lock his hand shackles to the table.

Two guards leave, two stand in the corners. Elliott watches the entire event, impassive. He and Val'der eye each other.

ELIOTT

The only question I have is why are you here?

VAL'DER

I'm a bad person.

ELIOTT

Yes, but clever enough to elude capture. Why are you in a prison for the insane?

VAL'DER

(relishing the discussion)

Are you saying I don't belong in prison or I'm not insane?

ELIOTT

Why are you here?

VAL'DER

I'm bored. I've found you psych doctors more interesting.

I'm fed, got a place to sleep and can go about my business.

ELIOTT

Which is?

VAL'DER

You tell me, Doc.

Elliott motions to the guards, indicating he's finished.

VAL'DER

That's it?

Elliott nods.

VAL'DER

You disappoint me. No probing questions.
No interest in my motivation, explore
my psychosis?

Elliott ignores Val'der as he busies himself with the next case.

VAL'DER

She's a lovely woman.

Elliott looks up at Val'der.

VAL'DER

Your wife.

ELIOTT

(lying)

I'm not married.

VAL'DER

Good try, Doc. Her name is Helen.

Elliott doesn't respond and disguises any reaction.

ELIOTT

We're done.

The guards lift Val'der to his feet. The other guards assist.

VAL'DER

Don't worry I'm not going to hurt
her. She's too old for me. Unless...

(pause)

you want me to give her your love.

Elliott motions for the guards to remove Val'der. Elliott sits
back, pensive. His cell phone rings.

MALE VOICE (VO)
You need to come immediately.

ELIOTT
What is it?

MALE VOICE (VO)
Convulsions or seizures. She's never
had anything like this.

Eliott gathers his files and scurries out.

IN THE HALLYWAY

From the opposite end of the hall, Val'der looks back at him.

VAL'DER
I didn't hurt her... this time.

Eliott glances back. Val'der laughs maniacally.

INT. MAYFAIR SANITARIUM, HELEN'S ROOM - DAY

Helen is strapped to her bed to protect her from the body convulsions. Elliott walks in, sizing the situation. He steps beside Helen. A NURSE stands nearby.

ELIOTT
Remove these.

NURSE
She could harm herself.

His glare directs her to comply. He strokes Helen's forehead.

ELIOTT
Helen, I'm here.

Her body relaxes a bit, but her eyes remain agitated.

ELIOTT
Darling, I'm here. What is it?

Helen moves her lips, yet no sound emerges. Elliott moves closer. Helen's doctor enters.

Helen clutches the back of Elliott's neck to whisper in his ear.

HELEN

Dange—

Elliott's eyes cast about. He catches the doctor's eyes.

HELEN

Dange—