

SCRIPTED
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FADE IN:

EXT. INFERNE - NIGHT

Weary people in plain clothes stream into their dilapidated houses. Some look beaten down, others glance enviously at the gate that separates them from

EXT. ALTUM - NIGHT

Polished cobblestone roads gleam in the streetlights. Mansions line the road, but only one is lit from within, emitting a warm glow.

INT. ELITA'S HOUSE, ALTUM - NIGHT

A long dining table, cluttered with empty wine glasses and used plates. ELITA - elegantly-dressed and beautiful - shows her ALTUM FRIENDS to the door.

SPLIT SCREEN

On one half of the screen, a script dictates the actions and words that we see simultaneously on the other half of the screen:

ALTUM FRIEND #1
It was a lovely dinner, Elita.
Marvelous as usual!

ELITA
Good bye, thank you for coming!

BACK TO SCENE

Elita closes the door behind them, and heads to

INT. ELITA'S ROOM, ALTUM, NIGHT

TICK, TOCK. Her clock shows 11.59PM. Elita takes a seat at her table, in front of a mailbox slot, labelled 'SCRIPT'.

MONTAGE - SCRIPTS ARE DELIVERED

-- Altum and Inferne people alike take their seats in front of their own script slots.

-- TICK, TOCK. The clock shows 12AM.

-- THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. Thick scripts fall onto tables through the script slots. The first page of each script shows the recipient's name, and the date.

BACK TO SCENE

Elita's script, considerably thinner, slides onto her table.

INSERT - Title page, which reads:

"ELITA - FUTURE SCRIPTWRITER"

Elita flips to the second page, which states:

"EXEMPTED FROM SCRIPT. You will go to Inferne tomorrow, as part of your Scriptwriter training. Do not speak to anyone."

BACK TO SCENE

Elita flips the script closed, breathing hard. Her eyes flick to the photograph on her table, of a young well-dressed couple. A necklace is draped over a corner of the frame, the same necklace that the woman in the photo wears. Elita takes a steadying breath, then flips her script open again.

EXT. LOCKED GATE BETWEEN ALTUM AND INFERNE, ALTUM - DAY

Elita stands beside MDM MALIKA, both in white tunics. Mdm Malika - an elderly, stern-looking woman - holds the gate's key.

MDM MALIKA

Remember - observe them. Don't speak to them.

ELITA takes a breath, nervous, hand going to her pocket unconsciously. MDM MALIKA grips ELITA's shoulder.

MDM MALIKA

You've trained for this.
(Beat.)
Be brave. Like your parents were.

ELITA nods. MDM MALIKA unlocks the gate, and ELITA strides through.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, INFERNE - DAY

The sun burns into the INFERNE PEOPLE as they trudge to work, all wearing threadbare, oil-stained uniforms in varying shades of grey. Guards, wearing tinted visors and sharp white uniforms, are stationed along the road, each carrying a gun. Elita stands apart from the crowd, watching. We hear snatches of conversation:

INFERNE WOMAN

(enthusiastically)

Sure is a nice day out!

INFERNE MAN

(mechanically reciting)

Can't wait for work.

Woman nudges man subtly, eyes darting over to a guard anxiously. The guard remains inscrutable. Man ducks his head and hurries on, and soon the couple is lost in the crowd. Elita frowns, troubled.

The crowd plods onwards, and Elita starts to move on, when she sees REN, a middle-aged man with a sad, weathered face, in the crowd. His eyes meet hers briefly, and she stops in her tracks. As if pulled by an invisible force, Elita moves towards Ren, stopping in front of him.

ELITA

Do I know you?

Ren's head snaps up, looking at Elita in wonder.

REN

Elita? I thought you were dead.

He looks around hesitantly, then reaches inside his jacket pockets to pull out an old photograph, giving it to her.

INSERT - The photograph shows:

A younger, wrinkle-free Ren and a couple wave at the camera. The woman is holding a small girl, unmistakably a young Elita, in her arms.

BACK TO SCENE

ELITA

It... It can't be.

Elita pulls a photograph out of her pocket, the same one we saw on her desk, and compares the two pictures. The couple in Ren's photo is obviously not the same as the one in Elita's photo.

REN

Those aren't --

Ren is brutally yanked backwards by a guard, a gloved hand over his mouth. Elita screams as another guard restrains her.

Ren struggles against his captor, but to no avail, and he is dragged away. Elita is forced back towards the gate, crying. The guard injects Elita with a sedative, the

photographs falling from her grip, fluttering onto the Inferne street. The world goes black.

INT. SCRIPTWRITER'S HEADQUARTERS, ALTUM - NIGHT

Elita wakes with a start in a chair opposite Mdm Malika, who doesn't look up. Mdm Malika TYPING on a typewriter atop an antique-looking wooden desk. Multiple wires snake across the desk and onto the floor, connecting the typewriter to television screens that cover the walls completely. Each screen shows a live feed of different parts of Altum and Inferne.

MDM MALIKA

I told you not to speak to them.

ELITA

The photograph... He's Inferne,
how does he have it? Were those
really...

Mdm Malika continues TYPING, ignoring her.

ELITA

My parents. The photograph that
you gave me, it's fake. He knew
my parents, he was friends with
them --

MDM MALIKA

That man is dead now.

Beat.

The typewriter CLACKS on.

MDM MALIKA

Your parents gave their lives
for the script system, they --

ELITA

I saw the photographs. Stop
fucking lying to me.

The typewriter DINGS and Mdm Malika finally stops typing.

MDM MALIKA

Your parents were rebels, fools
who couldn't understand how
necessary the scripts were --

ELITA

You killed them.

MDM MALIKA

They tried to escape. They
wanted the chaos to continue,
the suffering and the death --

ELITA

You made me an orphan, and for
what?

MDM MALIKA

I took you in. You had a good
life in Altum. I gave you
everything.

Mdm Malika rises from her chair, and, grabbing Elita's
arm, drags her around the table. Elita, crying, struggles
fruitlessly against her vice-like grip.

MDM MALIKA

And now it is time for you to
repay your debt.

Mdm Malika forces Elita to take a seat in front of the
typewriter.

MDM MALIKA

Type.

Elita's sobs rack her whole body. She reaches towards the
typewriter, ripping it away from the wires. The TV
screens flip to STATIC. Elita swings, smashing the
typewriter into Mdm Malika's face.

Mdm Malika's broken body falls onto the floor, bleeding
profusely. The typewriter, keys red, hangs from Elita's
grip. The sound of STATIC feels overwhelming, almost
claustrophobic.

Slowly, over the STATIC noise, we hear an alarm BLARING,
and FOOTSTEPS getting closer. Elita raises the typewriter
above her head and smashes it onto the floor with all her
might.

INT. ELITA'S ROOM, ALTUM, NIGHT

TICK, TOCK. Elita's clock shows 11.59PM. No one is in the
room. The mailbox slot gleams, the 'SCRIPT' label clear
in the light.

MONTAGE - SCRIPTS ARE NOT DELIVERED

-- Altum and Inferne people alike take their seats in
front of their own script slots.

-- TICK, TOCK. The clock shows 12AM.

-- Everyone sits expectantly, waiting. TICK TOCK. No scripts are forthcoming.

-- TICK TOCK. The clock shows 12.01AM.

EXT. LOCKED GATE BETWEEN ALTUM AND INFERNE, ALTUM, NIGHT

Elita grips the key in her bloody hand. ALARMS still blare in the distance. She looks back at the beautiful city of Altum, where polished cobblestone roads gleam in the streetlights, and beautiful mansions line the road. Her face is impassive.

Elita takes a deep breath, unlocks the gate, and strides through. The gate slams shut behind her. She does not bother to lock it.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, INFERNE - PAST MIDNIGHT

As she wanders down the street, Elita catches a glimpse into an Inferne house where a family embraces, laughing incredulously and happily, without restraint. She smiles sadly, and begins to move on when there is a CRASH behind her.

She turns to see people with bandanas obscuring their faces, just having thrown a rubbish bin into a store's window. They begin to loot the store, yelling elatedly. As she watches, more people join them, brandishing bats, knives, whatever weapons they could find in their homes. Eventually, the mob begins to make their way towards the gate separating them from Altum.

Elita's smile fades as she watches the chaos unfold.

FADE OUT.