A man with short brown hair and a serious expression is looking directly at the viewer. He is wearing a dark-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt over a white collared shirt. The background is dark and appears to be a room with a window or glass partition, as some light is visible through the grid pattern. The overall mood is mysterious and dramatic.

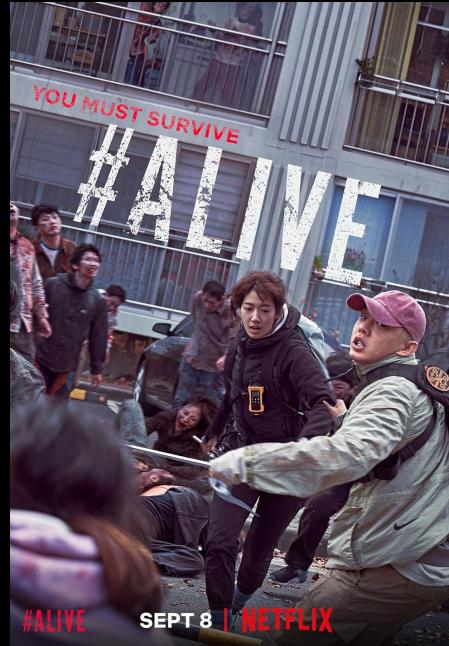
If you endure this room for 1 year,
you get 100 million won

COMPS

Black Mirror: 15 Million Merits (2011)
Drama, Mystery



#ALIVE (2020)
Drama, Horror, Thriller



Although this isn't a zombie story, the concept of solitary confinement and its effects on the psyche are explored in both.

TONE AND SETTING

Set in the world of a hopeless young man presented with a “chance” at immense financial earnings, this story plays with expectations. A multi-million dollar mega corporation’s experiment disguised as a contest claims Yusang as its unknowing victim.

Sometimes, quick money is too good to be true...

Genres explored are Thriller and Mystery, with near-future, dystopian elements.

YUSANG

Yusang is a 33 year-old loser in life. He lives with his mother, who barely scrapes by with her small medicine shop.

Ridden with guilt and regret but unlucky enough to not be able to nab a stable job, Yusang resorts to odd jobs and wasting away under his mother's wing.

Without a degree and career, Yusang spends his time aimlessly, wallowing in self-deprecation.



Hyundong

Hyundong, despite having a college degree, is not much better off. He failed the civil service exam for 4 years in a row, and is now looking into technical school.

Nevertheless, he's still doing better than Yusang, even if not by much.

He's Yusang's only real friend, making him an undeniably valuable relationship, which Yusang unfortunately realizes too late...



After his mandatory military service, Yusang finds himself back at the desolate crossroads of his untimely decisions. He's never held down a decent job, failed the college entrance exam, and had never been in love.



Since Yusang's father died early, his mother was left to raise him alone, with only a barely profitable pharmacy business to keep their expenses at bay. Even if both Yusang and his mother wanted him to go to college, he couldn't because they were poor and he was too academically untalented to get a scholarship. As a result, Yusang had to resort to odd jobs to help his mother pay for their costs of living.



Every morning that Yusang wakes up is greeted by regret. Why hadn't he studied harder and gone to college? If he had, he would've have a stable job. If only he'd invested in cryptocurrency when it boomed. Yusang is among is 50% of the young adult population struggling to find a job and make ends meet. The others among the 50% are also probably wasting away in their parents' homes, chasing dead-end jobs and broken dreams.

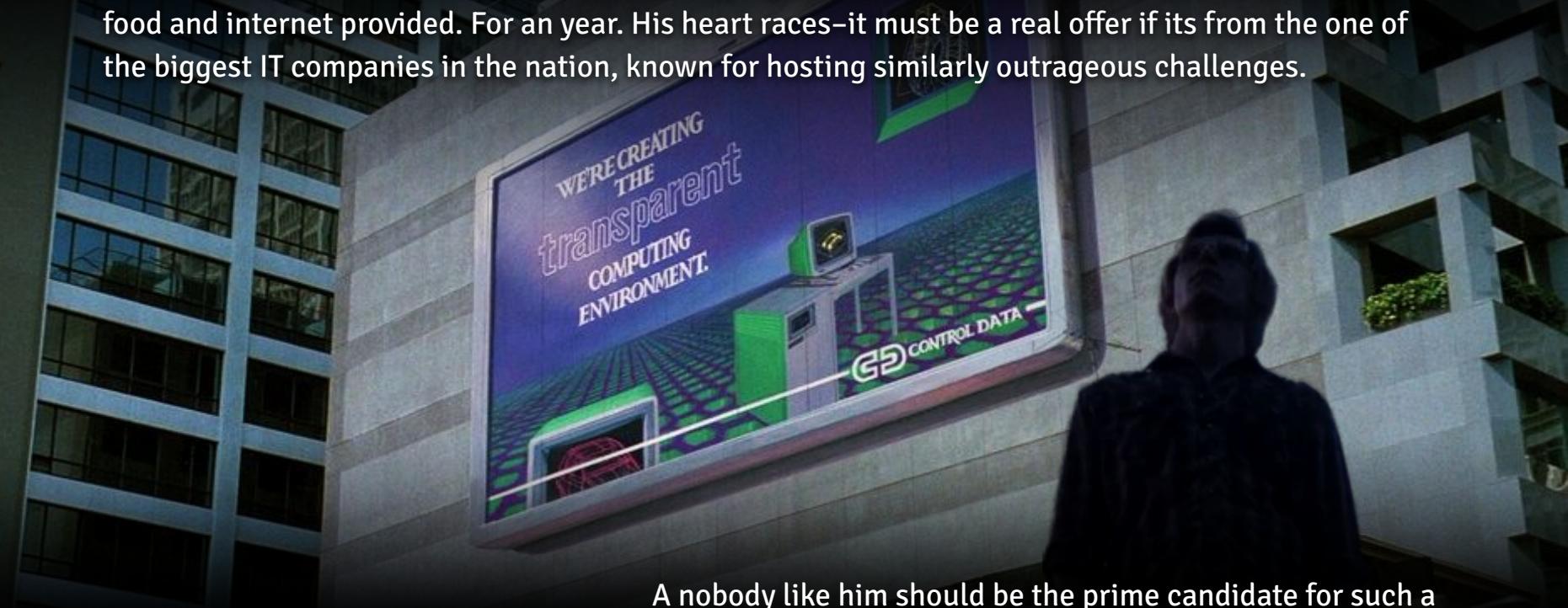


“If you were offered one billion won to serve five years in prison for another person’s crime... would you do it?” Hyundong is always asking Yusang these arbitrary questions.



Yusang tells him that it would depend on whether the world knows that he was falsely framed or not. Hyundong argues that it wouldn’t be that bad either way, as prison is cushier than it used to be. Hyundong moves onto other, more ridiculous scenarios, and Yusang is fed up with the unrealistic and humiliating questions. Yusang exits the conversation with “If I ever find a deal like that, you’ll be first to know.”

On the bus ride home, Yusang scrolls through ads on his phone, landing on a search flyer from the MJ Foundation offering 100 million won for staying in a compact room without external contact, food and internet provided. For a year. His heart races—it must be a real offer if it's from the one of the biggest IT companies in the nation, known for hosting similarly outrageous challenges.



A nobody like him should be the prime candidate for such a challenge. Actually, it seems barely different from his current day-to-day life.

Yusang decides not to tell Hyundong about the opportunity, lest he become a competitor. He applies for the challenge, and to his surprise, an email pops up a week later announcing that he had been selected to participate. Yusang is excited, and promptly receives a call from a MJ representative.



The woman tells Yusang that the conditions may be difficult to live in: the room will be cramped, windowless, and Yusang will have only a week to decide what he wants to do for the next year of his life.

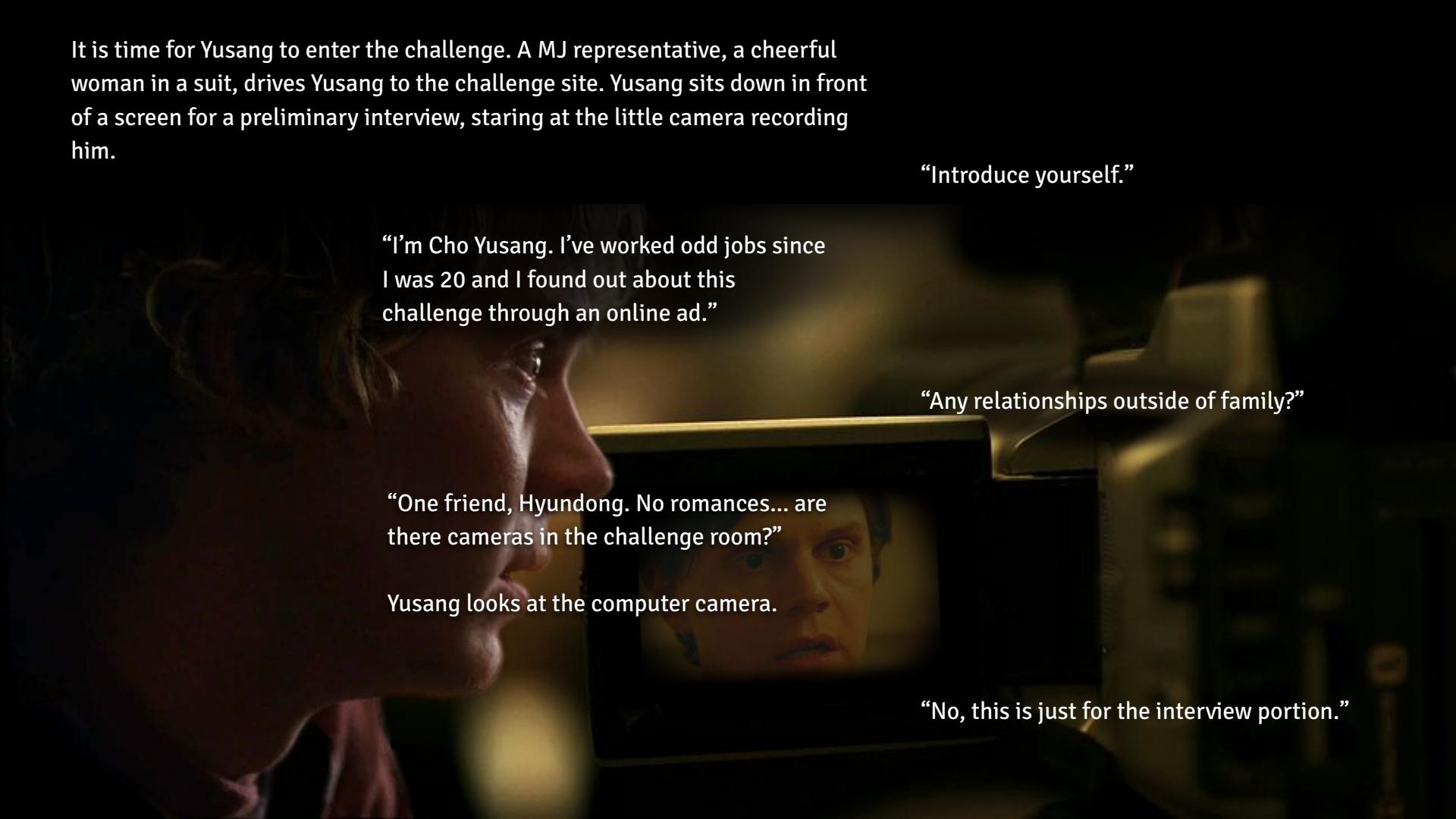


Yusang had practically already decided that he would participate. Now, he just needed to think of a good excuse to tell his mother. He tells her that he had gotten a job in a distant province's factory and promises to return after a year—with money.



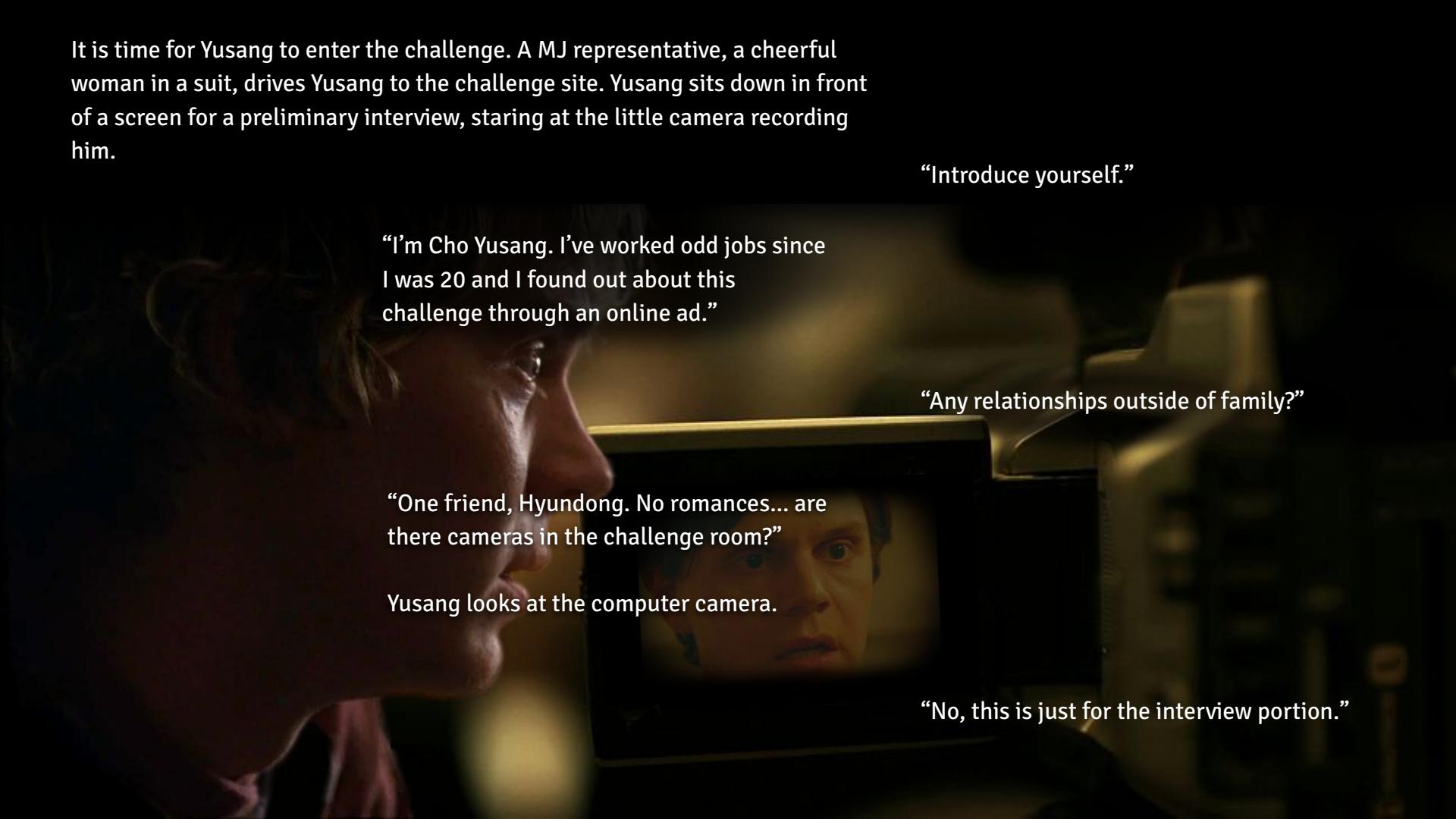
It is time for Yusang to enter the challenge. A MJ representative, a cheerful woman in a suit, drives Yusang to the challenge site. Yusang sits down in front of a screen for a preliminary interview, staring at the little camera recording him.

“Introduce yourself.”

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark suit and glasses, is driving a car. She is looking towards the camera. The interior of the car is visible, including the dashboard and seats. The background is blurred, suggesting motion. The lighting is warm and focused on the woman.

“I’m Cho Yusang. I’ve worked odd jobs since I was 20 and I found out about this challenge through an online ad.”

“Any relationships outside of family?”

A close-up shot of Yusang’s face. He is looking directly at a small video camera mounted on a computer monitor. The monitor is brightly lit, showing a reflection of the room. The background is dark and out of focus.

“One friend, Hyundong. No romances... are there cameras in the challenge room?”

Yusang looks at the computer camera.

“No, this is just for the interview portion.”

Yusang, not entirely convinced yet, is led into the challenge room where he would spend the next year of his life. His doubts are erased once he sees the squeaky clean floors and bathroom and all the amenities he could need as a social hermit. It would just be like living normally for a year. With a free 100 million won.



The MJ representative, before leaving him and closing the door, tells Yusang that to quit the challenge, he can press the little red quit button on the top of the computer's screen. This can be pressed at any time.



A dark, minimalist interior scene. On the left, a chair with a textured, light-colored backrest and a dark, rectangular seat is visible. To the right of the chair, a lamp with a dark shade and a thin, light-colored stand is partially visible, casting a soft glow. The background is dark and indistinct.

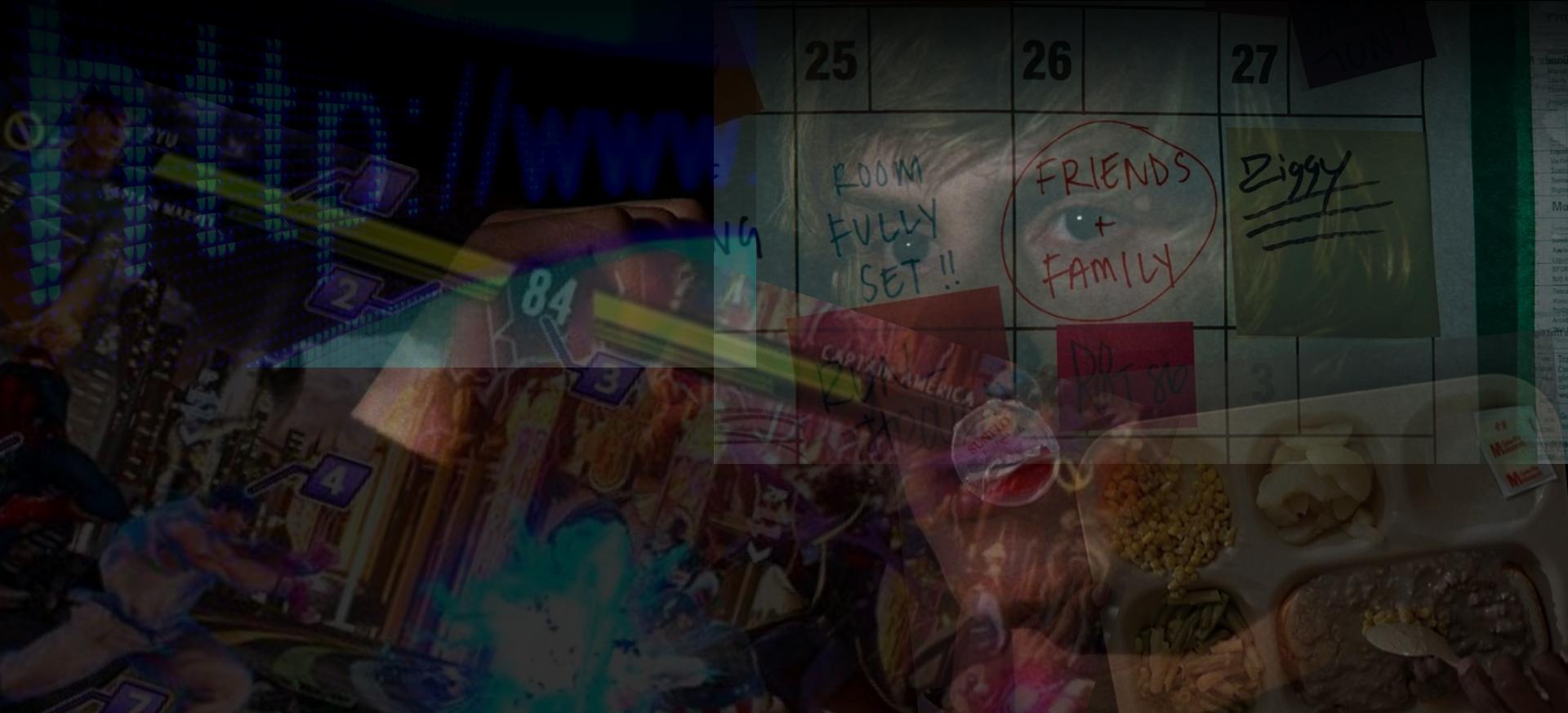
YEAR ONE

After settling in to his new home, Yusang uses the room's only device, a computer, to download video games, e-books, and register for online courses. He even orders notebooks and pens online to use for studying. However, he notices something that irks him. There is a software installed by the MJ Foundation, perpetually locked to the computer. Yusang's efforts to turn them off are futile, but at least there weren't cameras in the room watching him 24/7.

moosigoo.com/www/123456



Yusang spends his days playing video games, reading, studying, and eating the three meals a day provided by the MJ Foundation. The days blend into each other, and he loses track of how long he has spent in the room. The only markers become the computer notifications that tell him when to eat, sleep, and wake up.



He orders a calculator and crunches out his earnings per day: 270,000 won per day. His odd jobs, being spit on by rude customers, arguing with coworkers, had payed less than half this rate. Yusang realizes how rewarding spending 365 days in this room is compared to his life outside.



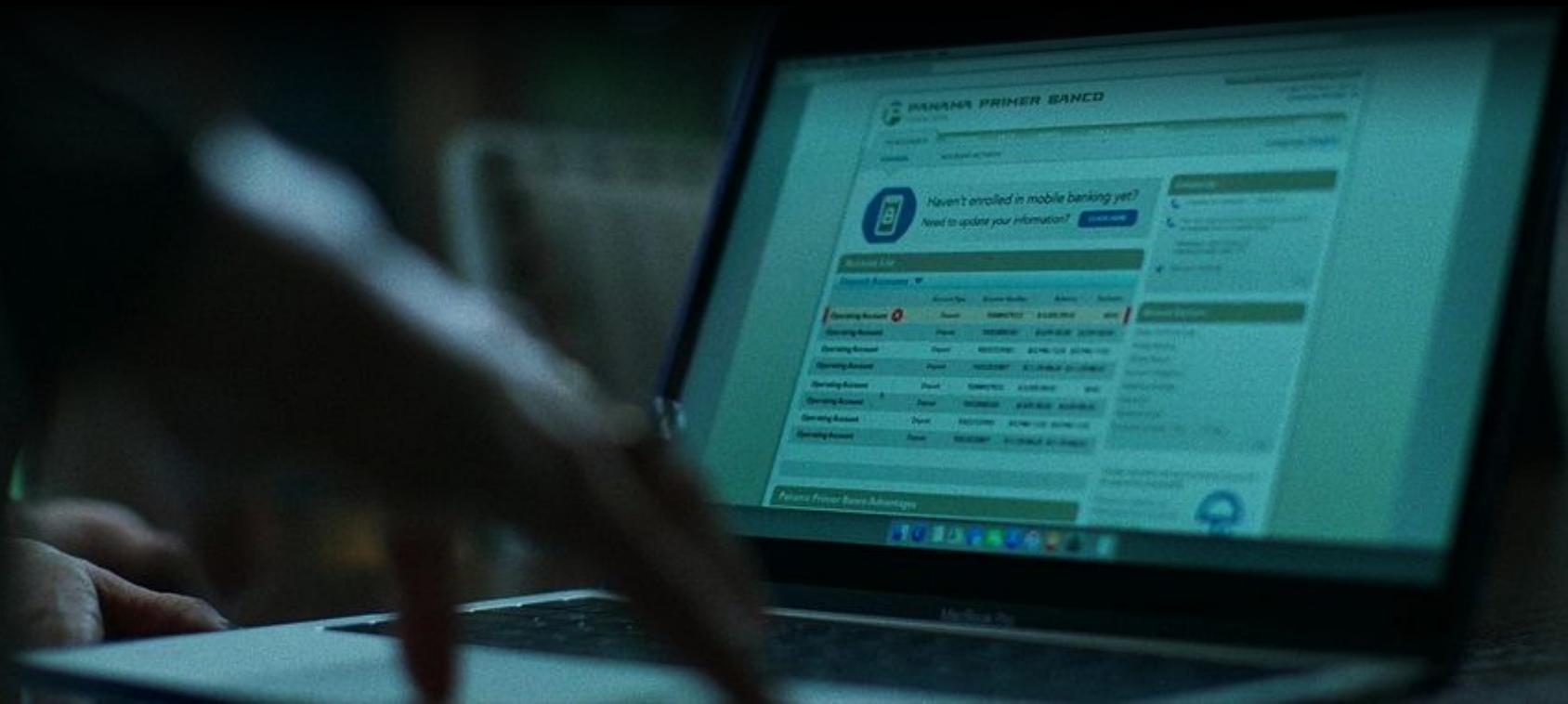
Yusang's determination falters. He now understands why the MJ employee had told him "Fighting! Good luck." as he entered the room. He definitely needs that encouragement. The only ray of sunshine in the room came from the tiny window just under the top of the wall.



Loneliness and the repetitive, mundane days get to Yusang, and he feels tentacles constricting him, confining him in the room that seems to shrink with each passing day. He names this entity, Mr.Tentacle. He isn't sure how much longer he can last in this solitary confinement, but manages to push through by repeating positive affirmations to himself. Halfway through the challenge, he gets used to the suffering. He clutches to the hope that 100 million won is more than his family has ever had the privilege to ever own.

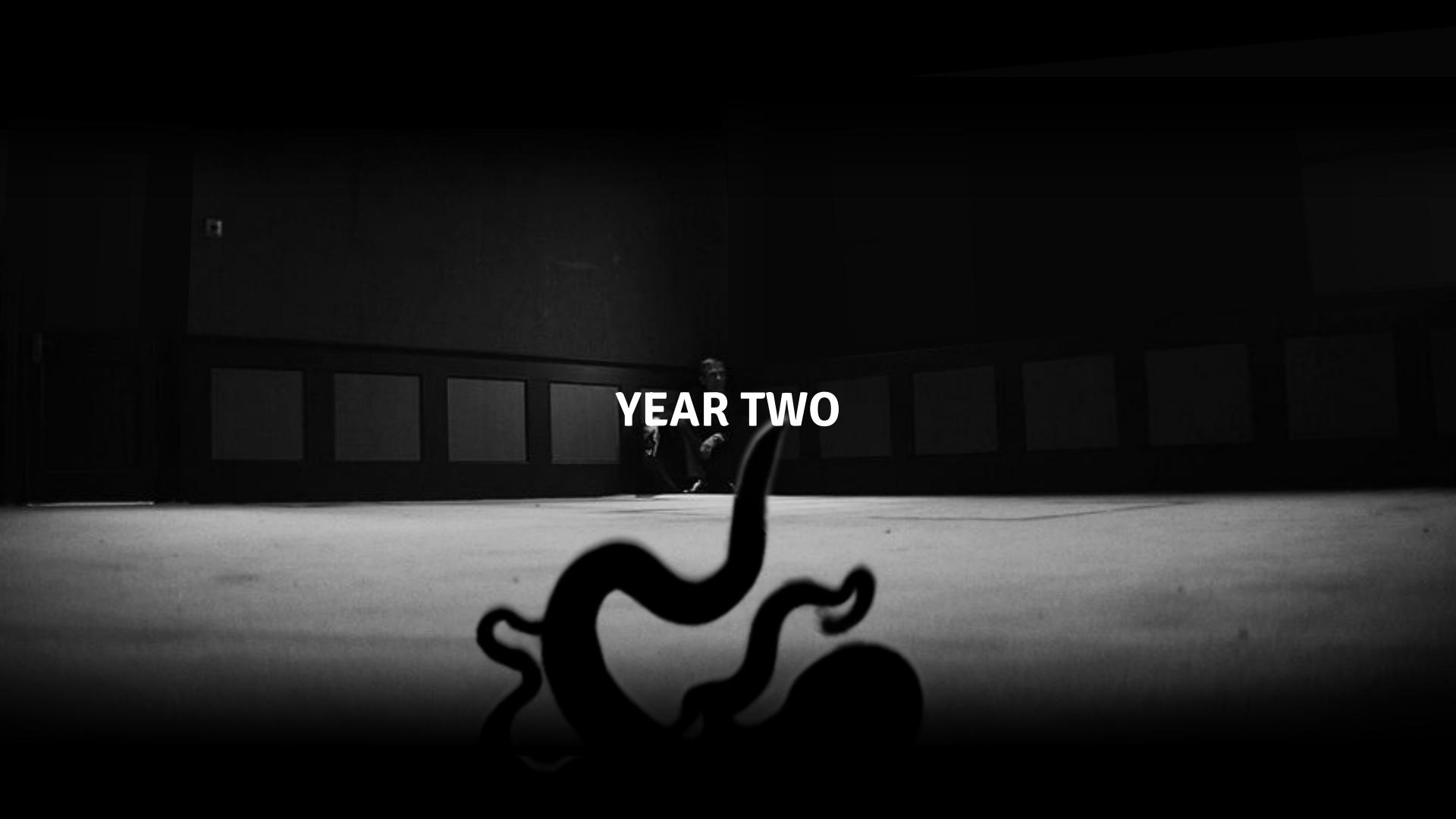


The challenge comes to an end abruptly, Yusang is caught off guard by the sudden message that pops up on the computer screen. “Congratulations on winning the MJ Foundation’s apartment challenge. You have successfully spent exactly one year in this room. One hundred million won has been deposited into your registered account. Please check your balance.” Upon checking his bank account, the money had been deposited. He did it.



Yusang begins packing, mind rushing with possibilities for the new life that awaits him outside. He is interrupted by yet another message on the computer: "Would you like to extend the challenge for another year?" He freezes. He may never have the chance to earn so much money in such little time ever again. He decides to stay and starts unpacking.





YEAR TWO

This year starts off much more smoothly, Mr.Tentacle, the psychological manifestation of loneliness that had tormented Yusang in the year before, had not visited. This time, instead of focusing on bettering himself, Yusang turns to entertaining his days in front of the computer, playing games and watching videos.



This paradise changes when record snowfall brought with it, a heart wrenching piece of news to Yusang. *Ding*. Hyundong is dead. He'd fallen while working and it had been fatal. Yusang realizes that he wouldn't even be able to attend his only friend, Hyundong's, funeral. He looks at the "quit now" button on the screen, almost ready to press it. He doesn't.



Instead, Yusang sends his condolences to Hyundong's mother in the form of payment, paying 15 days worth of earnings to alleviate some of his guilty. Yusang spirals after Hyundong's death, resorting to binging streamers and chatting with strangers online just to get some semblance of genuine human company. However, any online interaction was ultimately stripped down to superficiality. Yusang vented his frustrations by playing the most violent video games he could find.

Choose your Side!

SCORE 116393

1 [xzeus]: bro WHAT u doing in there?
1 [HalfEntity]: Nah - watch, I see the strategy
1 [softpaste1]: Yep. Clean break, it's coming
1 [funktallguy]: 34 minutes left.
1 [kiddwim]: Plenty of time. Sounds like we good.
1 [longshot123]: What's our team name here?
1 [Ladyprime91]: "Corsairs" - pay attention, baby.
1 [NevRok_]: Facts! Get those bounties.
1 [Nava99]: It is! Flat circle.
1 [JiJiE34]: WHAT MAGIC IS THIS??
1 [KSKS99]: Lightning Bolt! Lightning Bolt!
1 [Lookkket]: Did I miss something?
1 [homelessmango33]: Shot record
1 [Sol_Invictus]: Holy cow. Represent.
1 [Ladyprime91]: Brb



It was then, that Mr.Tentacle returned, causing Yusang to deteriorate both mentally and physically. When the end of the second year came, Yusang was too weak to even crawl out of bed. Instead of quitting, he sends his mother money for the coming year.



A dark, moody scene. In the center-left, a person stands in a doorway, their silhouette illuminated by a bright light from behind. In the bottom-right corner, another person is seated on a bench, their back to the viewer. The overall atmosphere is somber and dramatic.

YEAR THREE

The food that came to Yusang's room started arriving in different boxes, this variant is blue and marked with the MJ Foundation's logo. When compared, the quality of the food got worse but at least the portions seemed larger. Yusang squints at a strange reflective scribble on the edge of the chopsticks wrapper. Barely legible, there is something written in blue ink on top of the already blue wrapper: "11pm, tap at the sink."



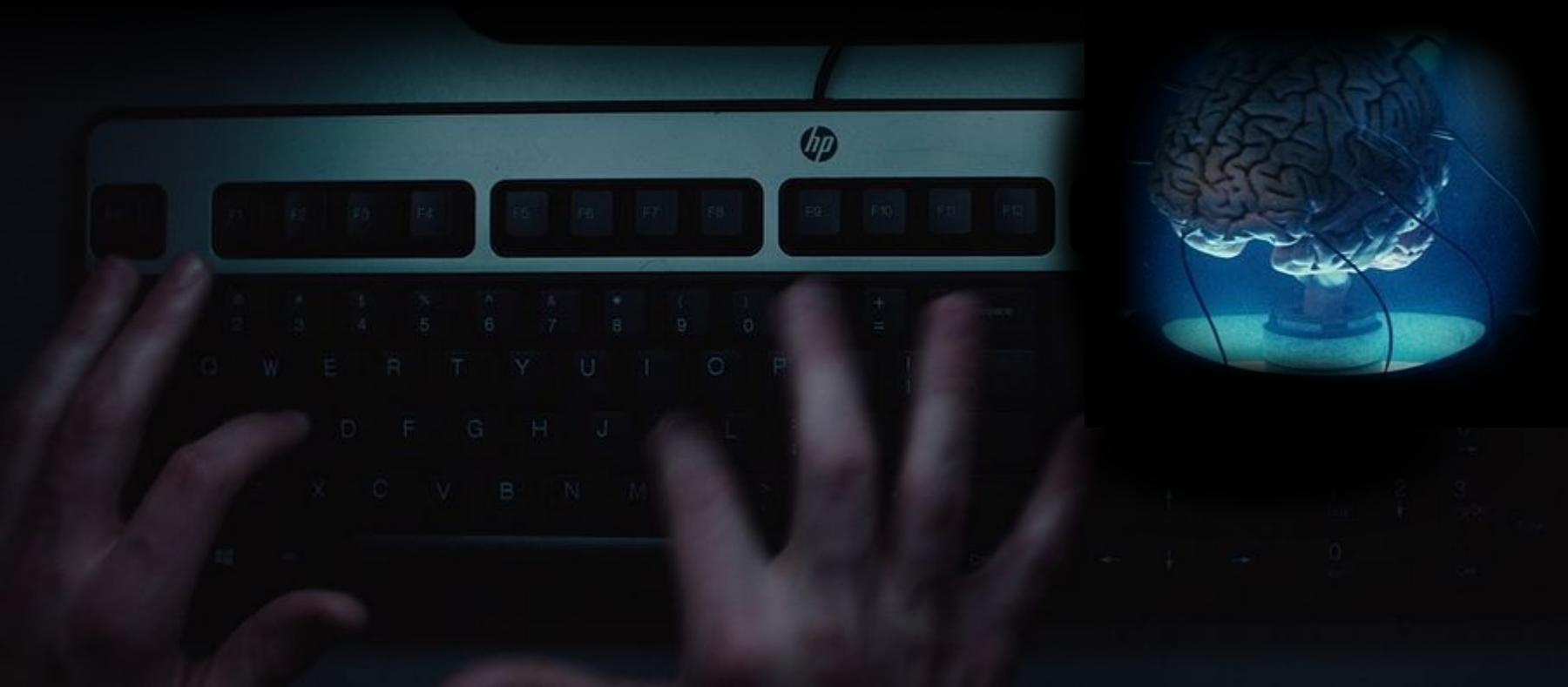
At 11pm, Yusang taps on his sink. A thud. Then the husky voice of an older woman travels up from the pipes. She introduces herself as another participant in the challenge, but delivers news to Yusang that he would struggle to believe. She insists that the challenge is just a facade and that it has only been used to keep people like him and her contained away from society. Something bad had been happening outside, and all the contestants were kept unaware. Yusang, tired of the woman's conspiracies, turns on the water faucet to drown out her voice.



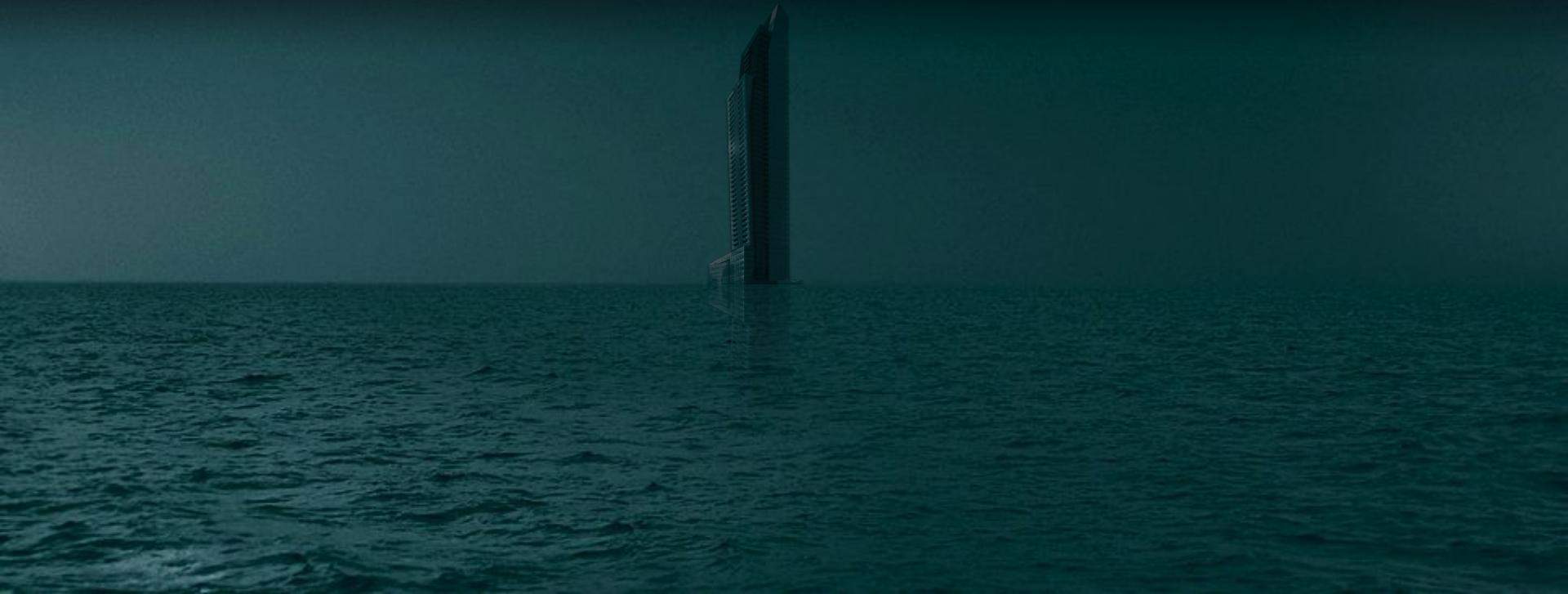
Yusang thinks about the woman as he tries to sleep that night. He grows nervous, considering the worthlessness of money in a life confined to this one room. He's awakened by the screams of a woman—the woman who had spoken to him earlier. The screams are anguished, and Yusang cannot imagine the pain that the woman must be going through. All he knows is that the screaming sounds like physical pain rather than mental pain. Yusang buries his head under the pillow and eventually falls asleep.



The next morning, the woman is no longer screaming, and Yusang is still thinking about what she said. He feels like a brain in a box. The computer, the room, his own thoughts are being puppeteered by the MJ Foundation. Why would one of the biggest, most successful IT companies spend a fortune locking people up like this?



At night, Yusang has a strange dream, his room is floating in an expansive ocean, nestled between the floors of an impossibly tall building. In the dream, the MJ Foundation had been sent to Earth for the mission of securing brain samples—including him. To the MJ Foundation, he was nothing but a mere test subject, locked away in his room and oblivious to the outside world.



Mr.Tentacle had returned, wrapping his familiar, constricting limbs around Yusang, who no longer has the strength to do much of anything, sacrificing daily bodily functions. Unable to reach the computer, Yusang slowly wastes away.



One day, a sudden epiphany strikes Yusang, and he tidies himself up, clipping his nails, trimming his hair, and getting dressed. He finally clicks the “quit now” button on the computer screen. His steps immediately felt lighter and he reaches the door, opening it for the first time in years.



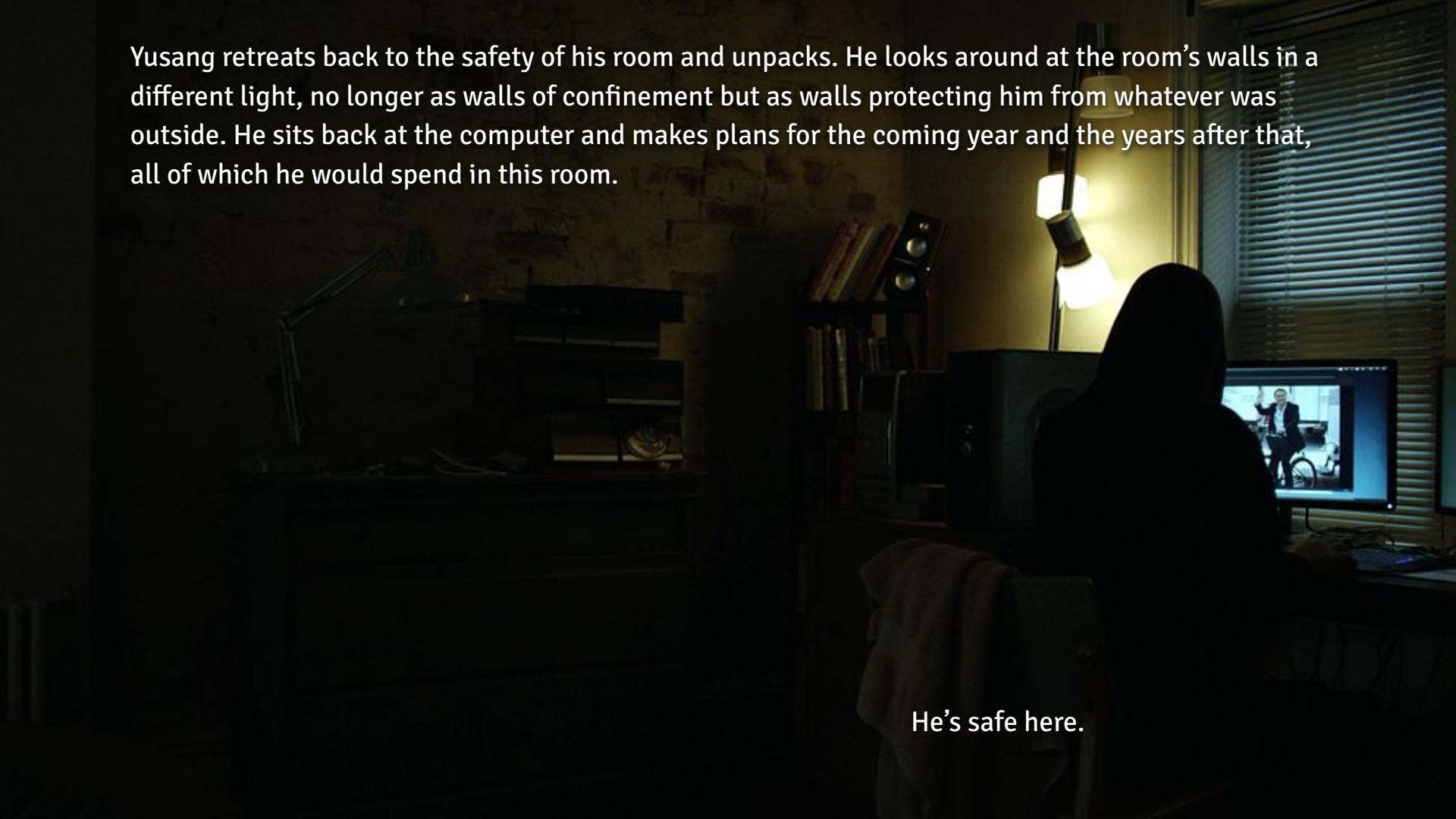
“After enduring for a year, ten months, and a week, are you really sure you want to give up now? The prize money for those eleven months won't be awarded.” A woman looks back at him. Yusang is speechless and the woman becomes confused. Yusang asks her if anything big has happened outside, but the woman simply responds that he should already be aware.

She lowers her arm to her sides, and Yusang realizes that her fingertips end at her knees. There is no way the woman is human.



Her round eyes are a peculiar shade of yellow. Yusang shivers, the uncanny valley-ness of the humanoid disturbs him.

Yusang retreats back to the safety of his room and unpacks. He looks around at the room's walls in a different light, no longer as walls of confinement but as walls protecting him from whatever was outside. He sits back at the computer and makes plans for the coming year and the years after that, all of which he would spend in this room.



He's safe here.

A wide-angle aerial photograph of a city at sunset. The city is built along a large, winding river that cuts through the landscape. In the foreground, the glass and steel facade of a modern skyscraper is visible on the left. The city skyline is dense with buildings of various heights, and in the background, a range of mountains is visible under a sky filled with warm, orange and yellow hues.

MEANWHILE:
THE OUTSIDE
WORLD

A young man, an official from the MJ Corporation, addresses the crowd from a podium. All 30 audience members are dressed up, impeccably neat, and sitting in a relatively oversized auditorium. He reveals that the most unproductive members of society have been utilized as subjects in an experiment run by the MJ Communication, MJ-5. All environments surrounding the experimental participants are controlled according to the will of MJ-5, causing them to go insane and have hallucinations in an attempt to explain their containment.



Each of the subjects create their own logic to their closed-off surroundings. The facility is designed to support the inhabitants until they turn 60, in which they would succumb to this set maximum lifespan. The most “useless” members of society are kept separate from the rest of the “useful” world, and the resources of the rest of the productive citizens are conserved.

The audience doesn't laugh like villains or erupt into outrage as the man describes the inhumane project. Everyone is serious and carries good intentions, ready to lead the future.

Unlike Yusang and others who share his unfortunate fate, everyone in this crowd is a useful, productive member of society.





If you endure this room for 1 year,
you get 100 million won

Stories worth the binge

Manta