

# WHAT IF MEMO

*"What if..." as a method to project reality to create alternative scenarios, through a surrealist approach.*



RIES

# HAD EXP IRATION DATES



# ADAPTATION

Chungking Express, the 1994 film by the Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai, distinctly captures the human obsession — and is particularly immersed in the passage of time. The concept behind this adaptation of Wong Kar-wai's work



builds itself around the idea that memories might have expiration dates — a thought presented by one of the main characters of the film: He Zhiwu, Cop 223.

Aided by a mournful voice-over narration, Cop 223 recurrently gives significance to dates and numbers in a film where time is a clear object of obsession. Driven by an



idea of reconciliation with May, his recent ex-girlfriend, Cop 223 begins a quest of buying almost-expired cans of pineapple — cans with an expiration date of May 1st, which is also the date of his birthday.

He, therefore, tells the spectator: If May hasn't changed her mind by the time I've bought thirty cans, then our love will also expire. Later in the film he also manifests a yearn to hold a memory eternally: On May 1, 1994, a woman wishes me happy birthday. Now I'll remember her all my life. If memories ever come in a can, I hope that can never expires. If it has to have a shelf life, I hope it's 10,000 years.



Bearing in mind the film's adaptation, another fundamental aspect is the characters' sense of alienation and dreaminess: they move about immersed in their peculiar thoughts, reveries and delusions, paying no mind to their surroundings — almost as if floating. While they all remain in their self-contained universes, following the laws of desire and their eccentric paths in pursuit of a perhaps elusive state of happiness, Wong is able to invade the film's idiosyncratic character's fantasies — in virtue of his singular dazzling, fluid and experimental style. Voice-over narrations become devices that are able to display the characters' emotions and thoughts. Therefore, we likewise intend to make use of the monologue with the aim of delving into our lead character's mind.





## SYNOPSIS

In this fiction, the leading character craves for a world where all the darkness in their life no longer exists. In order to build this world, they decree an expiration date for all their negative memories. Being able to select their memories, they are their own god, being able to manipulate their reality, living in a nostalgic time, in this unreal world they imagine, where there are no bad experiences and everything is an utopia. At first, living in this world seems like living for the first time, but later, the leading character falls into a void of emptiness. Their identity was taken by all the repudiated memories. They are no longer living. There's no past, present or future. Just emptiness.

# STRUCTURE

## **PART 1 (Protasis)**

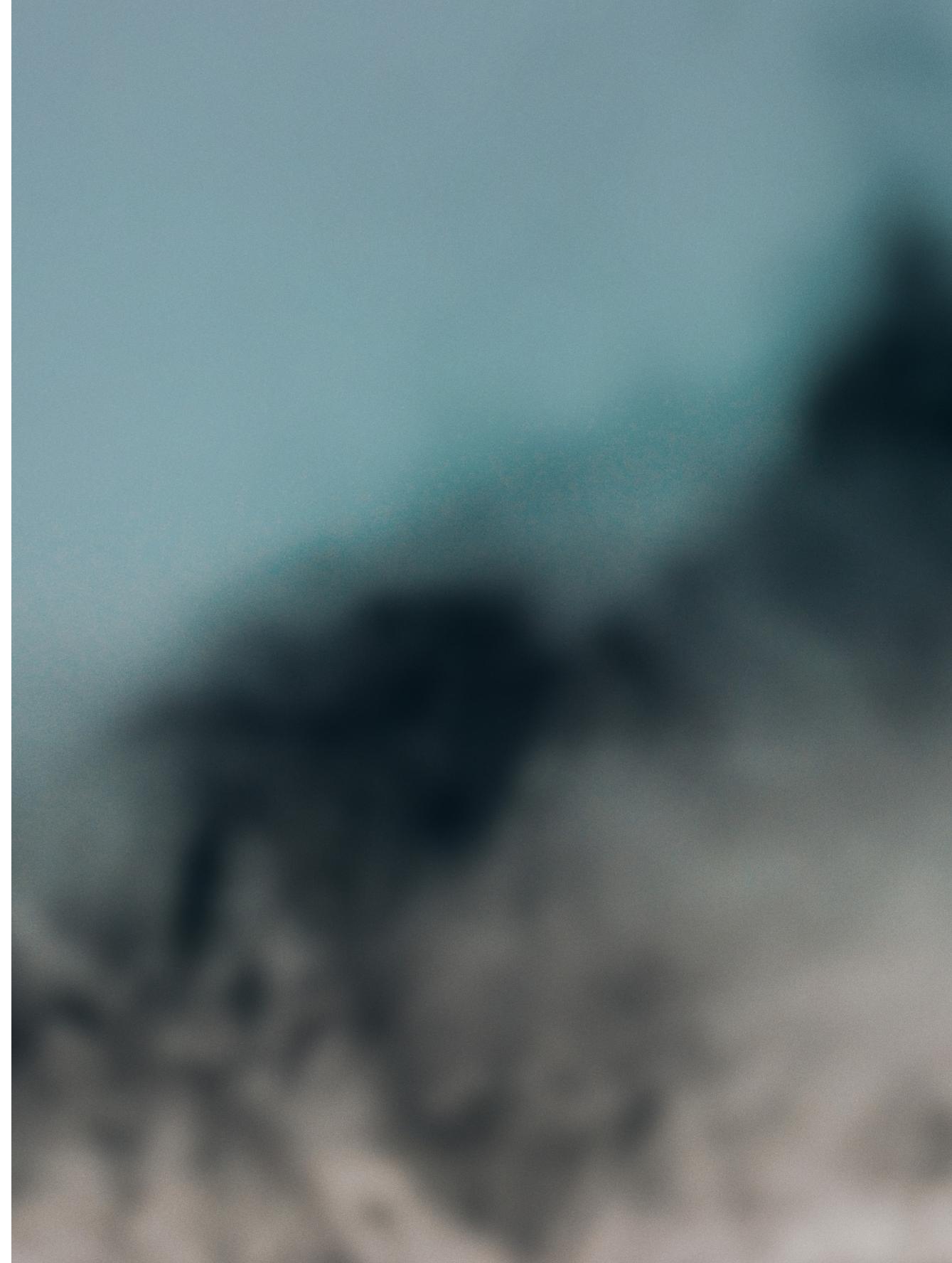
Tired of reminiscing the same negative and haunting memories, living a life bound by an endless sadness, the main character decides to erase these memories and combat its consequential adverse feelings so they're able to start a new and free life. As these yearnings and decisions are fruitful, the main character finds itself in a brand new and exciting man-made reality. Full of possibilities and hope, they rejoice their newfound freedom and urge to live life to the fullest without the shackles of their own mind.

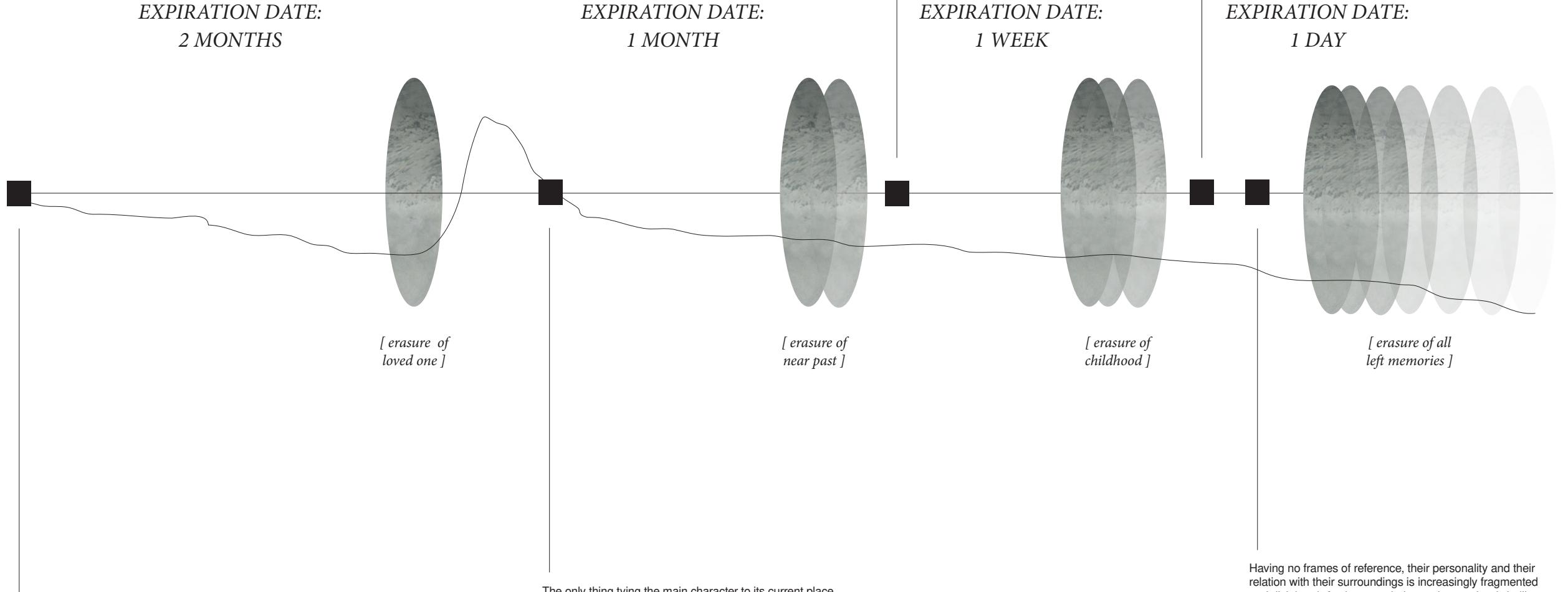
## **PART 2 (Epitasis)**

As their new sense of happiness starts to slowly fade away, obsession and restlessness take its place. No longer bound by the memories that afflicted him, having no recollection of the process of erasing itself, new memories take the place of the old ones. The main character starts to contemplate the erasure of these memories, not being aware that they had done this before.

## **PART 3 (Catastrophe)**

As the cycles of erasure become more frequent and demanding, otherwise positive labelled memories start to not be sufficiently satisfactory. Finding and attributing faults and errors to an ever-growing number of recollections, the main character finds itself being increasingly and subsequently hollowed out. Losing their references and consequently their personality, the leading character starts to lose their sense of reality.





Pining for a love that is never reciprocated, the main character finds themselves obsessing about it, letting it dominate the narrative of their every day. Not wanting to live bound and tormented by these thoughts, they decide to define an expiry date to every memory pertaining to their loved one. Still holding some optimism, the date is set at three months.

The only thing tying the main character to its current place of living was the desired relationship with its love interest, as these memories are eliminated a nostalgia regarding their past creeps in. Feeling disconnected and out of place from their surroundings and the people they're in contact with on their day-to-day life, only pressures them to reflect and ruminate more and more about their past. Striving for happiness and serenity, they decide to attach an expiry date to their recollections of their near past.

By disengaging themselves from these spaces, they are left with their childhood memories. Nostalgia for this period of time starts to manifest in conjunction with the resurgence of some repressed memories. As they are unable to retrieve and re-experience these long-gone days, they decide to eliminate these memories by establishing an expiry date.

The previous cycles of erasure leave the main character in a progressive and constant state of alienation, leading to a life of isolation, confusion and complete dissociation from reality.

# SCENE 1

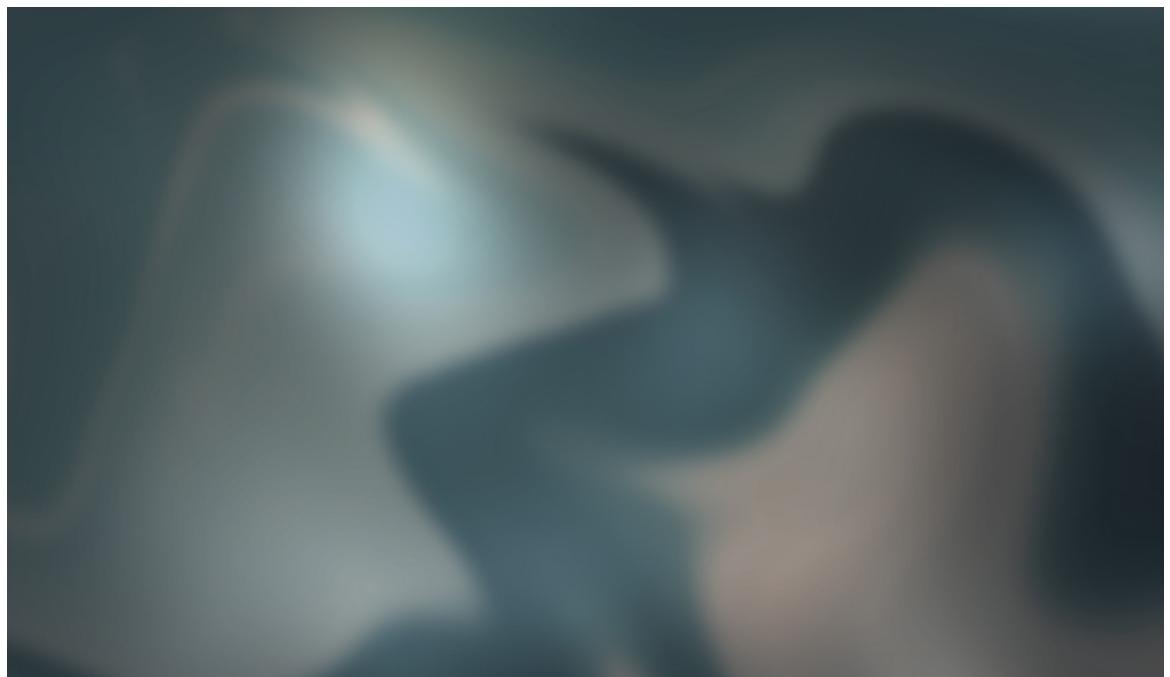
*The leading character seeks an emotional involvement with another that never comes to fruition, which starts a long period of sadness in his life. This is the introduction of this fiction's theme in which, through a monologue, he reflects on how he feels and announce the decision to fight that darkness, establishing an expiration date for all the memories related to the person he is obsessed with.*

Darkness and brightness have always lived together. Just like the moon and the sun need each other, darkness needs brightness. They are complementary, interconnected and interdependent. And it used to be like this since the beginning.

Then I saw you and everything started shaking. At first it was something good. Your presence, even if distant, filled a hole in me that I didn't even know that existed. All the lights shine and the darkness dances along. But I started needing more. For the first time, giving you all my time wasn't enough for me. I needed one second, just one glimpse of your beautiful eyes directed to me. It never happened and once I realized it would never happen, the shadows started spreading like cancer in me. Now, the darkness is filling my body and infecting everything in me. It's hard to see the light of the day when the clouds are too heavy. I look at the mirror and don't see the reflection I used to see.



As long as darkness exists, it will never be tamed and it will keep draining like lava, burning everything it goes through and extinguishing all signs of light in me. My desire is to live in a world where brightness doesn't have to be scared to be covered by darkness. To live in a world where you can't haunt me in my own thoughts.



# SCENE 2



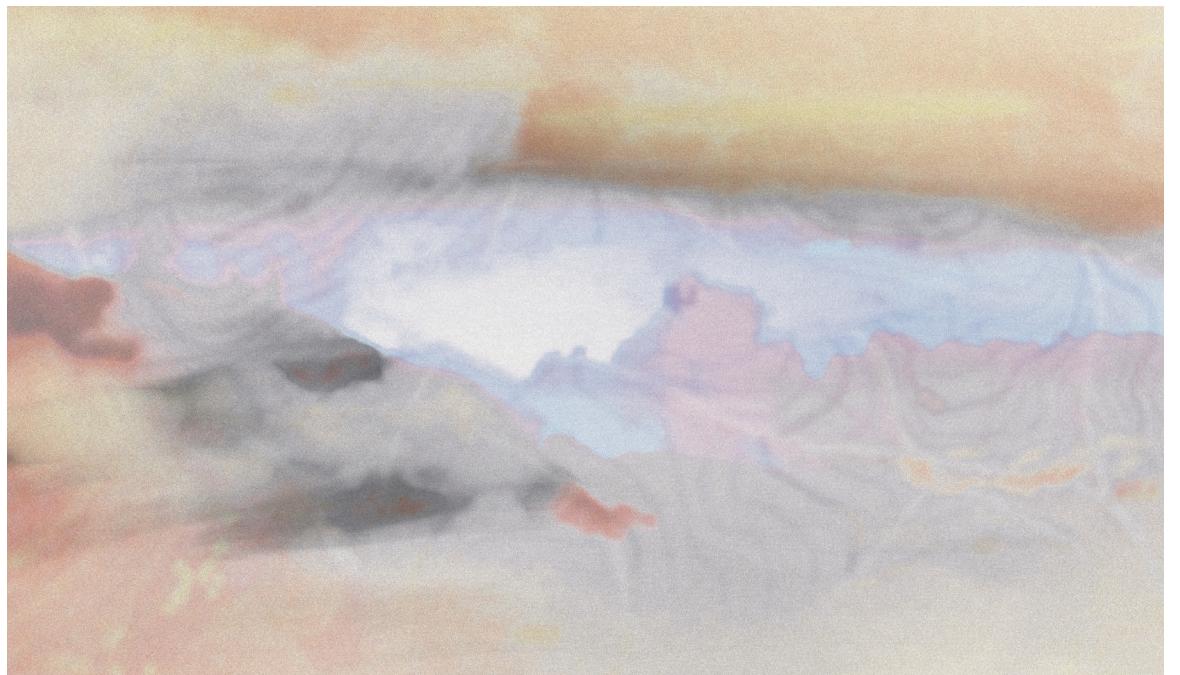
*As the burden of the negative memories that haunted the main character is lifted off, a new world full of possibilities is opened up to them. As they try to grasp their new reality, an immense sense of liberation and a slew of new, positive and strange emotions falls upon them.*

As if I woke up from a long deep slumber, my eyes seemed to not want to open. As I get a hold of myself and my surroundings, I sense a substantial shift in my center of gravity.

Something is out place or missing, but I don't feel unbalanced. In fact, I feel light, as if I just inhaled a good amount of fresh air on top of a scenic mountain. Where is that feeling of weight that I used to drag on through life? Where is all that extra baggage? At least I think I used to feel different, I'm not quite sure.

I don't remember ever encountering these feelings, I lost something, but I don't remember what. I think nothing happened... Everything seems to be the same, the sun is up and all is in its right position. This is so strange but at the same time so.... I don't know.... What do I feel? A sense of liberation, of boundless happiness and freedom? It's all so new, so refreshing, a new light shines upon me. Where there used to be blades of sorrow and pain, that lacerated my insides on each step I took, now prevails a softness and a hunger to do something with my life.

A newfound yearning to wake up, feel the breeze and the sunshine upon me, and for once do what I always craved, fulfill all that I wished to achieve, but couldn't find the strength and drive to accomplish. These unique feelings that I ached every day for, and never conceived I would, at last, encounter within me. I'm in a state of disbelief. It's as if my life started only just now as if I was never truly here until this moment. I am alive, finally.



# SCENE 3

*The leading character is no longer overjoyed. Restlessness creeps in and what once was peaceful gives rise to disquiet. Confusion arises and 'they' question whether or not a new cycle of erasure should begin. There is still a possibility to reach out perfection, and that is what is ultimately aimed. The scene begins with a soliloquy.*



Everything was fine and obliterating. Just as a warm sparkle hidden in the corner of the eye. And just as unexpectedly it got me... Something creeping in the back of my head again. Should it be this simple? Am I allowed to thrive and flourish as easily as any brainless robot creature would? There was a time I could recite Shakespeare if I wanted to and feel overwhelmed by such perfection. Today Shakespeare means nothing to me. Just another echo from a boring, sad and short-sighted routine.

Eventually, I repeat the same words over, and over again: yesterday was simple, and maybe the day before. And the day prior to that one too... But as inevitably as I once smiled, over the possibility of enjoying everything with such amusement, I now sense things whirling in a melting pot of confusion and deception. Things are definitely not what they once were.

Surely it will go away. This suspicion, this unsettling sensation over what I knew with such certainty. I am probably overthinking, but maybe it's time for another round.

If I do it once again, I'm sure I can erase the parasite that was left behind. The particle that seemed to fit so smoothly and yet became an outlier. I should be bluntly honest with myself, for a masterpiece is never complete. There is always another detail to work around, something one has briefly missed in the midst of the process.

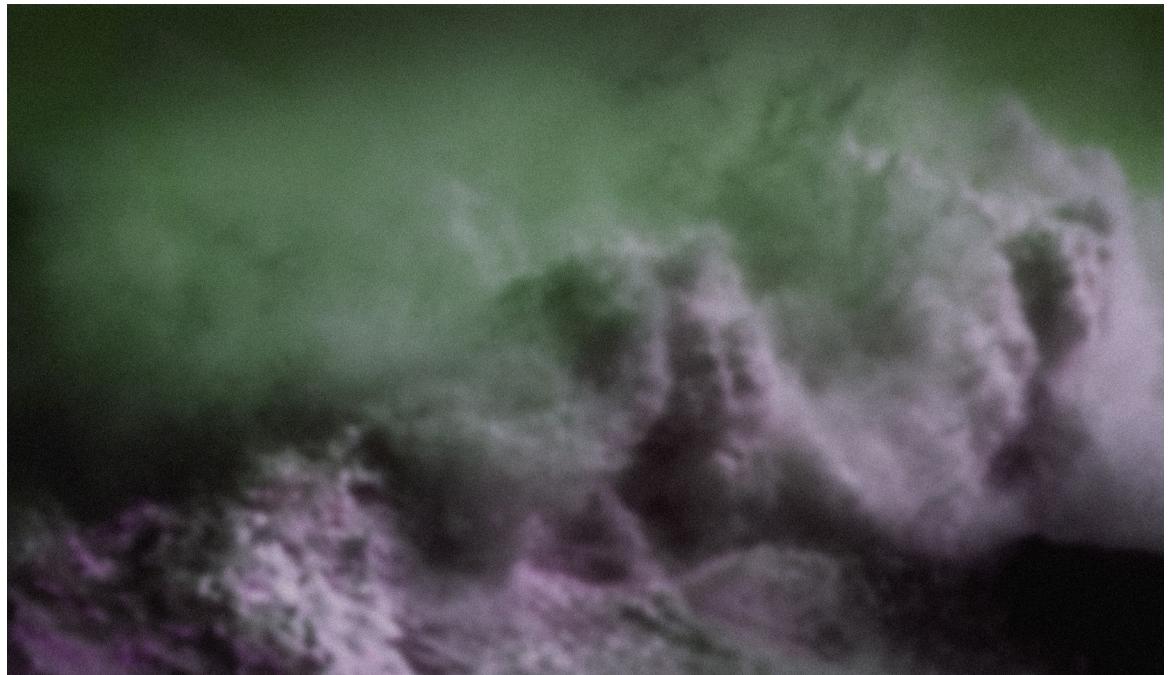
If I were a mirror, then I would like to be a broken one. As long I shatter every bitter moment, then I will be safe and sound. I must fight against the dark pits of my mind. And if I am allowed to choose then I will not apologize. I will not stop until I put my soul at ease. As long as I keep on moving to another stage of excellence, I will improve my collection until it is flawless. And that is, I am sure, what will set me free.



# SCENE 4

*The leading character's obsession is expanding restlessly. They've grown troubled and unable to break the constant cycles of memory erasure. Nothing feels sufficient anymore as wholeness and transcendence are aimed. The character's mind is hastily becoming more chaotic and blurred.*

I am at last on the verge of grasping it. I am barely taking a hold of it, feeling its flawless pulsation. And soon, so will my once sore spirit be flawless. This light is not suitable yet — I wonder: where is it coming from? I recognize nothing anymore. I cannot call to mind the last time I spoke out and somebody took notice. But I feel it expanding, drawing so near. And I will seize wholeness and feel intact — an unspoiled sensation. Safe to say it was becoming unendurable. I desperately yearn for a sense of totality, the strength that derives from being ethereal — of witnessing nothing, perceiving nothing, whilst being it all. Because everything ends up disclosing its hollowness while I haltingly walk towards the void. And everything becomes a wild and irretrievable cause for this agony. I must have peace at last — I will have peace at last. There are empty spaces in my mind, clear nothings. Places to where I let myself evade. To be light and heavenly, that's sufficient for my spirit.



I can no longer sustain the blaring echos of my head. And every day they just grow dirtier and dimmer. I go about it, over and over again, I allow my mind to gravitate — where am I precisely, where did it conduct me? Light or darkness. I feel myself sprouting, regaining a sense of integrity, even though it is unclear if I've formerly touched it. How to untangle this? I must liberate my head, unbind it, let myself out.

# SCENE 5

*This is the final scene when the process of selection went too far and the leading character has no longer any memories and recollections of their past experiences.*



This night has left me walking around in a daze. Either the night or the sunlight — sometimes I can no longer tell. I'm not sure if it's just me but thoughts do not come so easy anymore: they're heavy and reluctant now; they used to be so lively. I assume they've lost themselves in the haze. Maybe they'll find their way back by following the pounding of my head.

Cause it's getting louder. The pounding is getting louder but I can't hear them. Maybe they can hear it. However, the silence is even louder, I think. I can't even separate what's real than what's not... I'm real but I wonder if the pounding is... I lost my reasoning. The pounding... It's real. But I'm not.

It draws near, ever closer, moment by moment. An impending and thunderous sound. The sun is setting, and in its place, the night blooms. I can see reflections in the water, flicking like lights. Disappearing and reappearing, as so they are gasping for their last breath. They almost seem alive, are they trying to tell me something? ... I wish I could speak, but I don't know-how. I wish

I could try, but I don't see the point. It's exceedingly clear my impotence in the face of such entities, and I'd like to say I'm perplexed and anxious, but, truly, I'm unaffected by these changes, about what's to come and what's occurring.

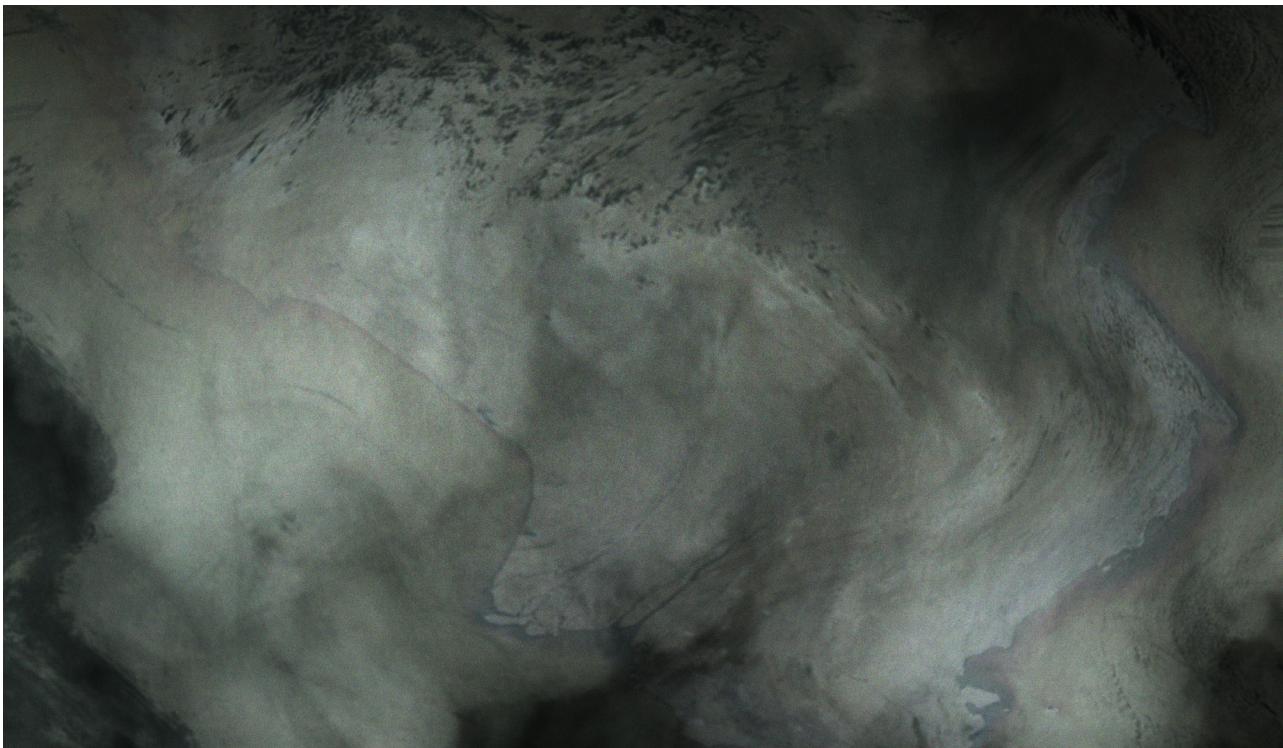
As cosmic haze permeates the air, and the sharp pronounced line of the horizon seems to be effortlessly brushed off as if it was always just a mere suggestion, I feel the smoke pierce my skin. Feeding off all that was left — the fragments, the shards, and the shadows — pervading every inch of the uninhabited places within me. I don't feel scared, and I give in.

I should start all over again. Not sure whether it's pain or pleasure anymore. A sip of both intertwined would surely be more than welcome. Then again, I guess it feels strangely familiar and I have no choice but to embrace it. Surely, I'm spinning endlessly and need to pause for a moment. And the voice again: "There's something cracking in the back of my head".

Like a strange pressure, this visceral creature growing and spreading from my insides. Is it even real? It bothers me to feel the unthinkable, to perish annihilated and alone. In which case, I believe I made up my mind: as of today, I shall not sit around and wait for acceptance.



I allow my mind to drift away — nowhere distinct to be found. I do not recognize this place: was my sight ever this blurry? I dwell upon glances of time, blinks of space, blinks of light. I even get to overhear echos of sound once in a blue moon: has the moon always been this gloomy? I will lie on this surface, eyes staring upwards, not ever being able to disclose what it is that moves below.



*They begin to fight against the feeling of emptiness but, not long after, they lose the sense of their identity and the reality around them. As even the shadows of their past begin to dissipate, there's nothing more than darkness.*



Lost in time, lost in space, lost in my own thoughts that don't even exist. I know nothing. It all stopped making sense. I wish I could erase something that could change how I'm feeling. But I don't know how I feel and there's nothing more to erase.

These hollow places within me, they must have kept so much. Where life used to outflow and burst, where memories and history would blend, fuse together and again separate, all gone. Now lies here but nothing, a lifeless never-ending sea aching for its past, desiccated, parched of something more. Maybe I could find someone, someone who could tell me something, maybe a story, anything to fill this void. But as I search through all that's left, I find no one, as far as the eye can see: nothingness. A Futile endeavor would it be, as I wouldn't be able to conjure the strength. I must be honest with myself: here where I lie is where I shall remain, for I have no place to go, and I don't recall where I belong.

But maybe... Maybe there's still a way out from all this vertigo. That comfortable and secure exit. That secret escape room we all keep to ourselves. In a nutshell: that safe spot no one talks about. I'm sure I have written that somewhere in my notes.... If I could just shut my mind for a minute. I miss the quiet days, the busy nights. Or is it the other way around? If only I could bend my body and light the torch within my soul again....

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