

FADE IN:

A WHITE CANVAS

A PAINTBRUSH comes into FRAME. With a confident stroke a black line is drawn.

CUT TO:

FEET, walking down a long narrow hallway at a brisk pace. Only the ECHO of the footsteps can be heard.

CUT TO:

THE CANVAS on which a few more strokes are now visible, all of which are quite angular and in the same black paint.

THE PAINTER'S EYES are unmistakably those of a young boy - no more than twelve, but they show an incredible intensity and unwavering concentration on the task at hand.

CUT TO:

THE FEET turning a corner in the hallway. They stop in front a large metal door.

BOOM UP to reveal that the owner of the feet is wearing a white lab coat and is carrying a box. He removes a card from his coat and swipes it through a card reading device. The door OPENS.

DOLLY with the feet as they march through the door and the dim hallway beyond it.

CUT TO:

THE PAINTER'S EYES, he is now working harder, quicker.

His PAINT STROKES are precise - he knows where everything should be.

CUT TO:

THE FEET have sped up as well. The ECHO of the FOOTSTEPS in rhythm with the brush strokes.

CUT TO:

THE PAINTER'S EYES as they dart around the canvas, examining it, looking for any faults. A door is now visible over the painter's shoulder.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE FEET arrive in front of another door. Once again, the card is necessary, although this time a number code is also required - the SCIENTIST punches it in.

CUT TO:

THE PAINTER'S EYES as he hears someone at the door. His eyes twitch but then focus back on the painting.

PULLING BACK from the canvas until we are OVER THE SHOULDER of the painter, we discover that the painting is that of a sparsely furnished large cubicle room. A young man is sitting on a seat in the corner, holding his face in his hands.

The door behind the painter SLIDES OPEN.

INT. ADDIE'S ROOM

HIGH ANGLE - the room is stark white and sterile. Modest furnishings sprinkle the room. A chair, a bed, a table and a number of puzzles and simple looking toys are visible - everything neat and in its place. It is almost exactly like the one represented in the painting.

The painter, ADDIE, sits on the edge of his bed in front of an easel. His back is turned as he stares at his work.

Behind him, DOCTOR COHEN enters carrying a box. In his early seventies, he has a strict demeanor like that of a school teacher. Addie ignores the interruption and continues painting without a pause.

Dr. Cohen stands in the doorway. He looks at Addie curiously, like a zookeeper whose tiger has developed a new behavior.

He steps forward. The door closes behind him. He pulls up a chair and sits down, staring at Addie the entire time.

ADDIE
Where were you?

COHEN
What do you mean?

Addie continues to paint.

ADDIE
You're never gone more than a day.

COHEN
I was sick.

(CONTINUED)

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Addie stops painting and turns to face Cohen. His skin is pale and his build fragile, yet his eyes show an intensity uncharacteristic of a child his age.

ADDIE

When I'm sick I'm always here.

COHEN

I brought you a present.

Cohen gets up and puts the box on the table.

ADDIE

Did you go where Doctor O'Shea goes sometimes?

Cohen opens the box and pulls out a cage which he places on the table. In it is a HAMSTER.

COHEN

His name is Mister Fiddles.

Addie's expression changes from one of distress to one of curiosity. He gets up and cautiously approaches the cage.

ADDIE

What is it?

COHEN

He's a companion for you. I want you to take care of him.

Addie's face lights up at the prospect.

ADDIE

Really? How do I take care of him? Can I take him out of the cage?

COHEN

You can do whatever you want Addie. He's yours.

Addie pets Mr. Fiddles through the cage. He looks at the door, hesitates, then decides not to open it.

ADDIE

I think I'll leave him in there for now, so I can look at him.

COHEN

Okay Addie.

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Cohen turns and heads for the door. Addie continues to watch Mr. Fiddles until he hears the door SLIDE OPEN.

ADDIE
You'll be back, right?

COHEN
Of course.

The door SLIDES SHUT, leaving Addie alone with his new pet.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

A MONITOR on which we see Addie in his room, poking at Mr. Fiddles through the cage.

PULL BACK to reveal DOCTOR O'SHEA, a fifty year old psychiatrist, sitting in a leather chair watching the monitor. Despite the concern on his face, his eyes reveal a youthful and comforting persona.

The room is a cross between a laboratory and a break room. A few computer terminals sit on desks. A large table sits against one of the walls. On it is a coffee maker. Against the opposite wall are a multitude of monitors - each of which show a different angle of Addie's room.

O'Shea turns as Cohen enters. Cohen walks to the coffee maker and pours himself a cup.

O'SHEA
You can't keep ignoring his questions Joseph.

Cohen pours milk into his coffee, never turning around.

COHEN
There's no point in going down that road.

O'SHEA
A child will always feel concerned about a parent's absence. He felt abandoned.

Cohen walks to the monitors and looks through a few files that are laying on the console.

COHEN
You're a sentimentalist Doctor O'Shea. That's not what this project is about. Besides, he's not my son.

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CONTINUED:

O'SHEA

He looks up to you. He sees you as a father figure.

Cohen turns to face him.

COHEN

Is that something he told you or is that the kind of nonsense you've been filling his brain with while I was gone?

O'SHEA

You can refuse responsibility Doctor, but you can't decide against its existence.

COHEN

Do you see any alternatives? Did you want me to walk in there, explain that I had bypass surgery and share a moment with him? Do you not remember what this experiment is about?

O'SHEA

Yes, but --

COHEN

We must stay on course. You need to keep your emotions in check and never forget the importance of what we are doing here.

(beat)

Are these the files from the past week?

O'SHEA

Yes.

Cohen takes the files and heads for the door.

COHEN

Remember that if you want to keep your job.

Cohen exits. O'Shea sighs as he looks back at Addie on the monitor.

INT. ADDIE'S ROOM

Addie and Dr. O'Shea are sitting silently at the table. A plastic 3D puzzle lies in pieces in front of them. Addie lethargically fumbles with it. He looks over at Mr. Fiddles' cage, which is at the opposite end of the table.

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
info@filmmakers.com