

Evangelina

FADE IN:

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A hazy view of a slow-moving ceiling fan as seen by a disoriented TEENAGE GIRL face up on a scratchy old couch.

Headbanger music becomes clear as a door to the room opens, then muffled again with the door closed.

Through blurred vision she sees a shirtless BLOND TEEN BOY in a backward blue baseball cap climb on top of her.

She whimpers. He shushes her. Her protests go unheeded...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Enigmatic DR. DON PARKS (40ish) slumps in a chair at his desk. A happy family photo of him, his wife and young son stares back at his unhappy, haunted face.

A chime draws his attention to a digital timer on the desk: "4:00 p.m."

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mute colors and sparse decor suggest the handiwork of an uninspired consultant's touch in the quiet room.

Emotionally clamped AUTUMN (13) stares at the sleep-inducing art on the opposite wall the couch where she sits.

Next to her, MEG RUDOLPH (35), a frazzled mom, pretends to read a magazine. Her knee bounces. She chews her nails.

Autumn puts her hand on Meg's nervous knee.

Meg flashes a smile and puts her hand over Autumn's.

RECEPTIONIST/JENNA (O.S.)

Autumn?

Autumn looks up, nods, takes a deep breath. She stands. Pulls her oversized sweater close around her and heads in.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Autumn appears small and frail in the spacious love seat across from Don, who slouches in his easy chair.

Autumn makes a quick check of the dim, boring room. She spots a nice view of Lake Michigan through a long bank of windows.

Her eyes settle on Don. An air of mysterious melancholy hangs over him.

DON
So, what's on your mind?

AUTUMN
Just wondering why you're so depressed.

DON
(surprised)
Why do you say that?

AUTUMN
Just look at this place. I've only been here a few minutes and I'm already getting depressed--

Something catches Autumn's eye by the windows. Don attempts to pull her attention back.

DON
Think I need a decorator?

AUTUMN
Maybe. At least you got a view--

A WHOOSH of gray gusts from Don's end of the room to Autumn's in front of the bank of windows.

Autumn jerks her head to look. Nothing. She's freaked.

DON
What's wrong?

Though distracted, Autumn doesn't miss a sarcastic beat.

AUTUMN
I thought we were talking about you.

Don smiles at her snarkiness. He sits up a bit straighter.

DON
I'm pretty sure we're here to talk about you. Something happened a few weeks ago, right?

Autumn gestures toward the windows.

AUTUMN
You didn't see anything just now?

DON

Birds sometimes hit the window.
I've stopped ducking whenever they
come at me.

AUTUMN

Frickin' condor, then... So you're
a bird murderer. What else should I
know about you before I spill my
guts?

DON

(holds back a chuckle)
What do you want to know?

AUTUMN

(dead serious)
Why should I spill my guts to you?

Don reaches for a blue file on the end table and flips
through it. He opens his mouth to speak--

AUTUMN

Yeah, I know. I'm a mess. I get it.

She pretends to be hiding behind a sheet and mocks...

AUTUMN

I see dead people.

Don's not amused. He looks back through the file, troubled.

AUTUMN

What's it say there? I suppose my
mom told you all my dirty secrets.

DON

I haven't spoken with her yet, but
she did provide some information.
(looks up at her)
Nothing too damning. Some imaginary
friends, a few lies, a bit of
partying, arguing--

AUTUMN

Typical tweenybopper crap, right?

DON

She says there was some kind of
incident you won't talk about...?

He hesitates to see if she wants to fill in the blank.

She looks toward the window again, distracted. Wraps her sweater around her as if chilled.

AUTUMN
Is it normal that I haven't gotten
my period yet?

DON
(taken aback)
You mean since the--

AUTUMN
NO! I mean ever. I'll be fourteen
in a couple months, and nada.

She pulls at her loose-fitting top.

AUTUMN
Nothin' under here. Flat as a
pancake. I'm a freakazoid.

She looks at him closely for the first time, cocks her head.

AUTUMN
Shouldn't I be talking to a chick
about all this?

DON
That's up to you. If you want, I
can refer your mom to someone else.

Autumn looks over toward the window.

ELINA (V.O.)
(crushed windpipe voice)
Stay.

Autumn turns, as if the voice was behind her. She looks back at Don who is oblivious as he waits for a response.

Don leans forward. Scrutinizes her.

She cowers back a bit, but is still distracted.

DON
Is there something here I'm
missing?

AUTUMN
(monotone, serious)
I told you, I see dead people.

Don makes a note in his folder then looks back up to find her staring at him with tears in her eyes.

DON

We can talk about that... Or are you ready to talk about what happened at school?

When he offers a genuine smile, Autumn breaks down in tears.

AUTUMN

It wasn't actually at school. It was a sports banquet at the community center. He was on the summer baseball team. I played tennis...

Don reassures with a nod for her to continue.

AUTUMN

I think he put something in my pop... I woke up and he was already on top of me...

Don listens as she spews everything through sobs.

Behind Autumn, a gray shadow hovers.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Red-eyed, Autumn walks in. Meg stands, moves toward her.

Autumn shakes her head and rushes past her to the exit. Meg starts to follow.

DON (O.S.)

She just needs some air.

Meg turns to see Don enter with a clinical, caring smile.

DON

You must be "mom"?

Meg nods and shakes his offered hand. He doesn't let go of her hand right away as he assures...

DON

It got a little intense, but she'll be okay.

Meg smiles slightly and withdraws her hand.

MEG

Was she awful to you? I wanted to go in, for your sake, but Autumn wouldn't let me.

DON

She's embarrassed to talk about it. And she's working through the other issues too. Which is why you came to me, right?

MEG

(nods)

It's like she's matured in reverse lately... I just wish she'd talk to me.

Don smiles with understanding.

MEG

But she talked to you?

He nods.

MEG

I gotta tell you, I expected we'd be referred to a woman. I mean with her history and what's happened--

DON

I'm happy to refer you, but she seemed to get comfortable pretty quickly. She's smart. Kinda funny.

MEG

That's a nice way of saying she's a smart ass. You must have a brood of kids at home to have such a high tolerance.

Don's expression falls suddenly serious.

DON

I've been working with kids awhile.

MEG

Thank you. I'd better go get her--

DON

I'd like to see her in a couple days. Both of you. Together.

MEG

Am I part of the problem?

DON

I don't think so, but you can be part of the solution.

MEG

I'll check my schedule and call.

Don nods. Meg leaves. He watches her go.

Receptionist JENNA, young, pretty, slides open the glass partition to the check-in desk, pokes her head out.

Don doesn't seem to notice. He still stands there, faces the door, pondering.

JENNA

(annoyed)

Love at first sight?

Don snaps out of it, turns to her.

DON

Don't be absurd. She's a little girl.

Jenna rolls her eyes.

JENNA

The mom. Kinda hot.

Don walks back into the office and faces her on the other side of the check-out desk.

DON

Is she? I didn't notice. That kid is something, though...

He shakes his head and walks back toward his office. He rolls his shoulders and stretches his arms overhead, as if doing a morning stretch after a good, long sleep.

DON

Weird. I feel great.

He stops and turns back to Jenna.

DON

Any more appointments today?

JENNA

Just Mr. Thompson at five thir--

DON

Cancel. I need to play some tennis. I feel like I could take on John McEnroe, bad attitude and all.

Jenna, suspicious, watches him go into his office.

JENNA
(to herself)
Sure, I'll get Mr. McEnroe on the
phone right away. Whoever that is.

INT./EXT. CHICAGO - PUKE GREEN AMC GREMLIN (MOVING) - DAY

Autumn stares out the window. She seems far away. Forlorn.
Meg drives. She glances at Autumn, worried.

EXT. CHICAGO - AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Gremlin is parked in front of a low-rent small duplex
decorated with cheesy Halloween props and uncarved pumpkins.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Posters of female tennis stars. A couple tennis trophies.

The bottom bunk of a metal-frame bunk bed is strewn with
clothes, schoolbooks, junk-food wrappers.

Autumn lies on the top tier, chats on her cell phone while
painting her nails black.

AUTUMN
You have got to be kidding me. You
can't wear that to school... Not
even for Halloween. You'll be
expelled--

MEG (O.S.)
Autumn, our show's on.

Autumn rolls her eyes and resumes her phone chatter.

AUTUMN
Huh? Oh nothing. Mom just wants me
to watch her lame show... Yeah, we
used to watch it together once a
week when I was like ten!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Meg sits curled up on the couch, watches Wheel of Fortune.
She glances at the empty end of the couch. Sighs.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meg awakens to a thud followed by a cry of pain.

She throws aside the cover and dashes out half dressed.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Meg charges in to find Autumn lying on the floor.

Autumn looks up at Meg.

AUTUMN

It felt like someone pushed me.

Meg's panic turns to skepticism.

MEG

Are you hurt?

Autumn looks up at the bunk. She shakes her head.

AUTUMN

Knocked the wind out of me, though.

Meg puts out a hand and helps her to her feet. Gives her a hug, holds on a bit longer than Autumn would like.

AUTUMN

I'm okay.

MEG

I hope so, kiddo.

Meg finally lets go and heads out the door. Stops.

MEG

Time to clean that bottom bunk and sleep a little closer to Earth?

Autumn shrugs and climbs back up to the top bunk, but stops. She looks at Meg. Pleads with her eyes.

MEG

Okay. C'mon. My room it is. Just for tonight, though.

Meg puts her arm around Autumn, kisses her and leads her out.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Meg and Autumn sit on the love seat together.

Relaxed, Don absently tosses a tennis ball up and down.

DON

You've been "pushed" out of bed before?

MEG

After her dad left, she started to make up friends. Well, frenemies, she called them. They weren't always friendly.

Don looks at Autumn whose curious eyes scan the room.

DON

Do you remember those friends?

Autumn shrugs, distracted.

MEG

Some had weird names. All ages.

AUTUMN

What's different in here?

DON

(looks around)

Nothing.

He looks back to Autumn to find her staring at him.

AUTUMN

It's you. Something's different about you. You're... lighter.

DON

(laughs)

Actually, I'm darker. I caught a few rays playing tennis the last couple days...before it gets too cold.

MEG

Autumn's a star singles player.

DON

So I gathered from the background information. Maybe varsity next year?

Autumn shrugs.

Don leans forward to get to business.

DON

So what happened to all your "frenemies"? Any still come around?

AUTUMN

Of course not.

MEG

She seemed to grow out of them a couple years ago--

AUTUMN

They moved on. They always do.

Don makes a note in the file on his lap.

MEG

We had to move a lot. Of course she made up friends. That's normal, isn't it?

DON

(shrugs)

Still gathering data.

AUTUMN

Now you sound like Mom.

DON

Gathering data? That's what she does?

AUTUMN

What was that Spanish thing... the Inquisition?

Don holds back a smile. Meg frowns.

MEG

Listen, after what happened to you, I'd think you'd want me to be a bit overprotective.

DON

She told you what happened?

MEG

(nods)

Finally. But won't talk about it.

Autumn goes into her own world, stares off.

AUTUMN

They were so mean. I hated them. Why do we have to talk about them?

DON

(alarmed)

Them? There was more than one?

Autumn looks at him, back to reality. Shakes her head "no."

MEG
(confused)
Isn't that why we're--

Don waves Meg off. He realizes Autumn's jumped topic again.

DON
Who do you mean, Autumn?

Autumn shrugs.

DON
The frenemies?

Autumn gets up and goes to the window. She leans against the glass. She's done.

Don turns to Meg who's become emotional. He offers a smile.

MEG
What now?

DON
It's not as bad as you thought. The incident triggered something. It may have sent her backward a bit, but with another session or two we'll have a game plan.

MEG
Did she tell you where she used to find her imaginary friends?

Don shakes his head.

MEG
Online obituaries.

DON
(mild surprise)
Maybe it's time she ventured out with some real friends.

MEG
Really? Even after--

DON
Especially now.

They look at Autumn. She's a million miles away.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Young families trick-or-treat as twilight settles.

Four costumed TWEENER GIRLS ring Autumn's doorbell.

Two are goth. Two are zombies, one with a bloody hatchet in the head, the other with obvious strangle marks on her neck. The latter has longish dark hair with bangs.

The door creaks open. The girls try to peer in. A recorded spooky laugh track plays from inside.

SKANKY GOTH GIRL/CHELSEA

Autumn?

Autumn leaps out at the girls, evoking a collective screech. She's punked out with blue hair - half goth, half zombie.

CHELSEA

Nice outfit!

GLOOMY GOTH GIRL/GRACE

(disappointed)

Couldn't decide whether to go goth
or zombie, huh?

Autumn steps out. She shouts back before closing the door.

AUTUMN

See ya later, Mom.

MEG (O.S.)

Eleven sharp! ...Have fun.

The girls head down the street.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - SAME

Concerned, Meg sneaks a peek out the window. Bites her nails.

MONTAGE - TOO OLD TO "TRICK OR TREAT":

- The girls brazenly "trick or treat" at multiple doors
- Homeowners are surprised at their age, but give the girls candy anyhow
- A mom with 2 young kids refuses to give them anything
- Autumn, chipper Chelsea and shy hatchethead/SUE write "I TURN TRICKS FOR TREATS" in soap on the windows of the car in front of the mom's house
- Gloomy Grace and Strangled Zombie Girl stand off to the side, watch the mischief in apparent silent protest

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