

ANASTASIA'S PYRAMID

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FADE IN:

EXT. BOAT - MOVING - DAY

SUPER: THE COAST OF NEW ENGLAND, 1975

It's a windy, cloudy day. An old skiff makes its way through the choppy sea.

ALICE, 30, a woman of thin build, long dark hair and soft features wearing warm clothes stands near the bow of the boat. A couple of suitcases rest at her feet.

In the stern, a BOATMAN, 70, with a weather-beaten face and surly manner, holds the handle of the outboard motor.

Alice notices something blurry in the distance, a piece of land that could be a small island.

ALICE

Yes, I think I see it now.

The boatman glances up at the sky while slowing the skiff down.

BOATMAN

If we hurry, you may still escape the storm, ma'am.

Alice glances up; she sees dark, dense clouds.

BOATMAN

Although it probably won't be raining there; when it rains in the town, the island doesn't see a drop.

She looks at him in surprise.

ALICE

How come?

The boatman takes his time before giving an answer.

BOATMAN

I don't have an answer for that. It just happens. That place is quite peculiar...

The boatman notices that his words have left an impression on Alice.

BOATMAN

What's sure is that you are going to meet a couple of months' fog. It's just another of the island's "privileges".

Alice looks at him in incredulity, as if thinking that he is just trying to scare her for fun.

BOATMAN

We don't know why either. I guess you'll find out.

The boatman guns the outboard motor and the boat moves faster. Alice turns back towards the island...

EXT. PIER/BEACH - DAY

A beach with light colored sand. At one edge of the shoreline, there is a pier. The sky is clear now.

BOATMAN

Didn't I tell you? Clear sky.

The skiff approaches the pier and the boatman moors the boat while Alice climbs up the ladder to the pier.

Once the boatman has handed up her luggage, Alice pulls out her wallet from inside her purse and offers him a couple bills.

BOATMAN

No need, it's already been taken care of.

ALICE

All the same, take it. You have been very kind.

The boatman looks at the bills with no interest while untying the mooring rope. Then he goes back to the stern and starts the motor.

BOATMAN

Take care of yourself, young lady.

After a few seconds, the skiff is quickly moving away from the pier.

Alice puts the bills back in her wallet. Then her eyes meet a wallet picture of her, looking some years younger, with a smiling mature couple, her mother and father.

She watches the photo for a few instants, a gloomy look in her face.

After placing the wallet back in her purse, Alice picks up her things and starts walking along the pier. Besides the sandy beach, most of the island is made up of dry bushes and stones.

Farther inland, on the crest of a small hill, stands a vast mansion protected by a wrought iron fence.

As soon as she reaches the beach, Alice crouches down and picks up a fistful of sand. She smiles.

The quiet is broken by loud BARKING.

In the distance, TWO HUGE BLACK DOBERMAN DOGS are running towards her. They bark as they show their teeth.

Scared, Alice stands up and takes a few steps back. Then she stumbles against one of the posts of the pier and falls on the ground.

The dogs keep coming closer. They are but a few yards away. She covers her face with her arms..

MAN (O.S.)

Freund!

The dogs stop still right in front of Alice, who lowers her arms while they start sniffing at her curiously.

Someone offers his hand to her.

It's EDMUND, 50, an elegant man with intensely blue eyes. The silk handkerchief tied around his neck grants him a certain distinction. He looks at her worriedly.

EDMUND

Are you alright?

Alice nods. Edmund helps her up.

EDMUND

I just had to say "Freund". That is "friend" in German. They obey immediately.

ALICE

(annoyed)

Well, I couldn't know that.

EDMUND

I apologize, I expected you a bit later. Why did you come so soon?

The dogs approach Edmund, who caresses them.

ALICE

The boatman... I don't really know his name...

EDMUND

(joking)

Nobody actually knows his name.

ALICE

Well, he said that a huge storm was coming, so we-

EDMUND

-The sailors and their stories about storms! He just wanted to be back in town to be the first to get to the local pub!

Edmund laughs as she smiles.

EDMUND

I'm Edmund Welcker, the person who hired you and the owner of all this.

ALICE

Alice. Alice Wilkinson.

They shake their hands.

EDMUND

Welcome home, Alice. I must say that your references are really impressive.

Alice nods, gratefully. Edmund examines his right hand, a bit sore.

EDMUND

And I see you know how to shake hands like men. You even hurt me a little... Oh, my God... You... You...

Shocked, Edmund shows her his hand. The top half of his little finger is amputated.

EDMUND

You tore off half of my finger!

Alice looks at him, bewildered. An instant later, Edmund starts roaring with laughter.

EDMUND

It's just a bad joke I usually make to newcomers.

Alice smiles, out of politeness.

EDMUND

I lost it many years ago, a silly accident at home.

Edmund picks up one of her suitcases.

EDMUND

Honestly, I was really thrilled you accepted. I had gone through several candidates the agency sent over, but your case was totally different...

(beat)

I loved your profile from the very beginning! And it even had a picture to prove your beauty!

ALICE

(blushing)

Thank you. Well, yes, I think I'm good with children. At least that is the opinion of the people I've worked with.

EDMUND

Important people, certainly.

ALICE

Yes, I've been lucky, especially after...

Alice stops herself from finishing the sentence.

EDMUND

Oh, that... Yes, I remember reading about your parents' loss. Was it... a couple of years ago?

ALICE

Two years and three months.

Edmund remains in silence for a second.

EDMUND

Well, that's another reason why this will be your place. We fully understand you. In our family, we also have our own tragedy.

Edmund looks thoughtful. She stares at him expectantly, but he just smiles.

EDMUND

Come on, grab that suitcase and come with me.

Alice picks up the second suitcase and they start walking up a path that leads to the top of the hill.

EDMUND

And, of course, consider yourself on your own island.