

1 EXT. PIATA VIRIDIA LUXURY RESORT

WE OPEN on EMELINE (28), a tall woman with dark curls and pale skin who dons a knee-length, couture dress with matching evening gloves, a choker, and black dress shorts and stockings held up with garters. She runs a hand along a rail that overlooks a cluster of luxury hotels. Bronze-backed neon lights distinguish them as different establishments, though many of said lights flicker. She looks up.

Beneath the deep ocean - where piashanas (piranha whales) and various fish swim above and around the district's glass enclosure - stands the most refined hotel. Gold and sea-green neon lettering hung between two, seashell patterned pillars, and marked the building as "Piata Viridia Luxury Resort". EMELINE clenches her fist around the rail.

EMELINE

Beautiful, isn't it? Your little district. A
place where freedom reigns for the artist,
for the actor, and yet you trapped me.
Doesn't feel much different with you gone.

She removes a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from the folds of her sash, holds one of them to her mouth as she flicks her lighter on. With it between her lips, she leans against the rail

and scans the building up and down as she closes the lighter and places it back. After taking the cigarette from her mouth, she exhales and lets out a bitter chuckle.

EMELINE

Your place, Esekren. Same place you locked up your whores, filmed them in whatever way pleased you that hour, that day. Same place you collected women like me and conditioned them to be your perfect statue.

EMELINE wipes her eyes, takes another drag, and scoffs.

EMELINE

By **the great** Zmaj, I need a drink.

A TV beneath the hotel's neon sign flickers on, and an animated, rubber-hose mascot spins into view. She grins at the audience, which reveals a gap between her two front teeth, then bows. The audio distorts, and EMELINE shakes her head as it crackles into something comprehensible.

ANNOUNCER

Remember, citizens of Maedreithjn: your safety is of utmost importance to us, your leaders. If you face any issue, contact one of the numbers that follow our program. For now, a message from Lienkiel Esekren, the

organizer of our most splendid Piata Viridia
Luxury Resort.

The ANNOUNCER winks and dances atop a stream of phone numbers,
then the screen fizzles into a gray, which then transitions into
a pre-filmed interview. A man with light hair and a tidy suit,
sits with his legs crossed in an ornate seat. He smiles as the
interviewer, who sounds a lot like the rubber-hose ANNOUNCER,
introduces him: LIENKIEL ESEKREN. EMELINE flips the TV off, then
slides down against the rail and coughs on her forming tears.
The coughs descend into weak laughter.

LIENKIEL (ON TV)

I'm a proud, long-term sponsor of Piata
Viridia and the surrounding district.
Purchase a hotel room - or rent one of our
apartments - and we'll treat you to a life
of luxury. As a Viridian resident, we'll
offer-

EMELINE drops her cigarette to the ground and stomps on it where
she sits, then covers her ears.

EMELINE (MUTTERED)

'Proud long-term sponsor', hm? Not anymore.
Surprised they still run you. I mean, look
at you, Lienkiel.

She gestures forward, looks up at the TV as it plays in the background.

EMELINE

You're dead. Shot dead, close range with a revolver. You don't protect anyone, never did. Linger more than the cigarette smoke and, by the Zmaj, that clings to my clothes: that dusty, stale smell it leaves behind. Who am I kidding? You cling to my skin like a damn lunatic. Stick around, prod for my attention. Well, guess what? You've got it. Nothing but a memory and you've got every blasted ounce of it.

LIENKIEL (ON TV)

...and while you're here, I'll make your stay worthwhile. If you face any issue, make sure to contact-

EMELINE throws both hands forward.

EMELINE

Let me guess, you? Your screwed-over front-office? Yeah, I've heard it all before.

She produces and lights another cigarette, as if they're easy things to throw away. When she realizes she did so, she curses herself as she exhales a cloud of smoke.

EMELINE

You changed me, Lienkiel. And not for the better. Should've seen it coming in: nobody can survive so deep without going a tad insane. Look at you, look at me. I've lost my mind.

EMELINE snuffles as she smokes the cigarette again, and those snuffles devolve into something more: tears, which she struggles to hold back.

EMELINE

Yeah, that's right. You're the issue to keep an eye out for - were, anyways, before you had me shoot you dead. Made a mess, huh? Got blood aaaalll over that dress you had me in. Not so different from your scripts, is it? Role switch, is all. I'm not your little speck of stardust anymore.

LIENKIEL (ON TV)

Thank you for your time, citizens of Maedreithjn. As said prior, remember we, as

your leaders, care first and foremost for
your safety. With that-

EMELINE chokes on the smoke and her laughter, curls her legs to her chest and rests her head in her free hand. Before she can speak again, the choking becomes sobs. She hugs her knees to her torso, buries her face in them as a light stream of smoke spirals upwards from the cigarette held between two of her fingers.

LIENKIEL (ON TV)

-concludes this program. Have you any
questions, you may contact the following.

The same rubber-hose ANNOUNCER reappears on the screen after LIENKIEL'S interview fades to black. Beside them reads the same list of numbers as before, which the ANNOUNCER reads aloud this time around. The audience hears these through a distortion as EMELINE cries quietly into her knees.