

THE INVISIBLE BOY

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1. INT. DRAUGHTSMAN'S ROOM/OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

The metal arm of a crane. An imposing Roman portal. A lighthouse. The porticos of a provincial town...

They are drawings, scratched with apish brutality into the plaster of a white wall. The wall is covered in them, the scrawls fill every available square inch.

The DRAUGHTSMAN is in a corner, his face to the wall. He is a very thin man, with long hair that reaches down to his shoulder blades. He is cutting into the plaster with a punch, drawing what appear to be the views and monuments of a town by the sea, very quickly and accurately, rising to a maniacal crescendo.

His forehead is shining with sweat. For a moment he seems to lose his balance, as if suffering from vertigo, but he continues drawing. Behind him a mirror takes up the whole wall.

CUT TO:

It is a false mirror through which a BLOND MAN observes the scene with his cold blue eyes. Beside him a doctor in a white coat, concerned about the signs of extreme fatigue in the draughtsman's movements...

DOCTOR
(in Russian)
That's enough, let him rest.

The blond ignores him. He speaks into an intercom.

BLOND
He has started to collaborate, tell the General.

CUT TO:

The Draughtsman's hand clutches a tiny baby's blue woollen bootee. He strokes it with his thumb as though seeking inspiration from it, while continuing to draw frenetically with his other hand. The scrawl starts to take shape...

But suddenly the draughtsman's eyes pop open, as if electrocuted. He falls to the ground, trembling. A trickle of blood drips from his ear.

The blond comes in with the DOCTOR, who leans over the man.

DOCTOR
(in Russian)
He's dying, you've gone too far.

The blond is not interested in the Draughtsman. His attention is fully taken up by the drawing on the wall.

It is a building, only a sketch but rich in detail.

BLOND
(in Russian, to himself)
..Where are you.

2. EXT. SCHOOL – TOY SHOP - DAY

The same building as in the drawing... But now it is real. It is a middle school, swarming with children and their parents dropping them off.

Pulling up on his bicycle in front of the school is... MICHELE. The general and touching impression he gives is that of a nerd: rucksack on his back, brown hair in a bowl cut, big eyes, more mature than his 13 years, which light up when he sees...

The window of the toy shop next to the school. There inside is the object of his desire...

A Spider-Man costume displayed on a shop dummy, a little bit to one side compared to the other more macabre "HALLOWEEN COSTUMES" as a sign declares.

But Michele, his nose pressed against the glass, only has eyes for Spider-Man. Below the dummy, a price is displayed: "49.90 euros".

He goes to the door of the shop, and pushes it... but it does not open. Inside, the OWNER, a sullen old man who is reading the paper, shakes his head: "We're closed".

Michele gives a hopeful little smile, digs in his pocket... and presses a 50-euro note to the glass.

The owner approaches the door... but he does not open it. With a sadistic smile, he limits himself to tapping his fingernail on the glass of the door, TICK TICK TICK, indicating a clock symbol that announces the opening time: 8:30.

According to Michele's wristwatch it is 08:08. A look of disappointment crosses his face... But immediately the sight of a girl passing, reflected in the window of the shop, makes him turn round quickly.

STELLA. Stella is as bright as her name. A slender 13-year-old, deep brown eyes, a thin and enchanting little face. When Michele sees her, he feels like the world is going in slow-mo.

Stella is walking towards the school with a FRIEND...

STELLA'S FRIEND

...What time does the party start?...

Michele opens his mouth to say hello... But Stella passes by without even noticing him.

Michele takes a step forward and... BAM! A bigger boy in a hurry crashes into him: he did not even see him.

MICHELE

Oh, didn't you see me...?

Then he realises his banknote has slipped out of his hand!

The wind whips it up into the air; Michele grabs it back in midair a bit clumsily. He sighs in relief. Then DRIIINNNG! He hears the school bell ring.

With the air of someone expecting a tough morning, Michele slips off a shoe, hides the 50 euros in it and puts it back on. He runs towards the entrance.

3. INT. SCHOOL. CLASSROOM - DAY

The pixelated images of Stella's hair, a glimpse of her in profile...

Filming her, zooming in with his mobile, while everyone else is bent over their work in the classroom, is... Michele, who is sat behind her.

His sheet of paper – beneath the heading "MICHELE SILENZI, MATHEMATICS TEST" – is still blank, but he doesn't seem to be too worried.

And neither for now is MRS SIANI, an irritable-looking thirtysomething who is reading the paper with her glasses at the tip of her nose, in front of a blackboard on which are written the algebra questions for the test.

On the screen of his mobile, Michele sees Stella being hit on the back of her neck by a paper ball: she turns round exasperatedly and fires a dirty look at the perpetrator...

It is BRANDO VOLPI, designer clothes and the face of a wicked angel... The suspicious perfidy with which he looks at Stella betrays that he has a soft spot for her.

STELLA

(whispering)

Brando, what is it?

BRANDO

(whispering)

Tomorrow I've got the tennis final, are you coming?

Michele waits anxiously for Stella's reaction, but...

MRS SIANI (OFF)

Michele!

The teacher approaches him, holding out her hand, peremptorily.

MRS SIANI

The phone. Come on.

Resigned, Michele hands the phone over. The teacher casts a look at his blank sheet of paper.

MRS SIANI

Haven't you written anything yet? Do you want to repeat 3rd year like Casadio?

IVAN CASADIO -- 15, a bully, skinhead and the dangerous air of a budding sociopath -- sitting next to Brando, is carving the desk with a penknife.

IVAN

I repeated 2nd year as well, if you must know.

Someone laughs. Brando fist-thumps Ivan in a sign of approval.

MRS SIANI

Sorry, Ivan, I didn't mean to belittle your CV.

The teacher confiscates the knife from Ivan as well, and he sighs.

HEADMISTRESS (OFF)

Mrs Siani!

Everyone turns to the door. The HEADMISTRESS, a tall and thin fortysomething, is standing at the entrance to the classroom, looking serious. Next to her is a uniformed policewoman.

All the children stand up, noisily pushing their seats back. Mrs Siani looks embarrassed, having been caught with the knife in her hand...

MRS SIANI

Headmistress...

HEADMISTRESS

The Inspector would like to say a few words to the children.

There is a murmur among the pupils. Only Michele looks away, almost angrily...

The Inspector, GIOVANNA, is the same age as the headmistress, but she has a

different light in her very blue eyes, and her curly hair is gathered up. It is a look that is both reassuring and sensual.

GIOVANNA

Sit down. I'll only take a minute of your time.

The class sits back down. Giovanna speaks very calmly:

GIOVANNA

By any chance, did any of you see Martino Breccia yesterday after school or this morning?

The children turn to look at the empty seat in the first row.

STELLA

Has something happened to Breccia?

IVAN

He wanked himself to death...

There are a few sniggers. Giovanna ignores them.

GIOVANNA

Martino hasn't been home since yesterday afternoon and his mum is worried. So if you happen to see him or hear from him, tell him to go home, all right?

A murmur of comments breaks out... And Giovanna makes a sign to the teacher: "That's me".

MRS SIANI

Say goodbye to the inspector.

All the pupils – except Michele – say in chorus:

PUPILS

Goodbye!

GIOVANNA

(smiling at them)

Good luck with your test.

At this point she stares at Michele, as if she knew he were in difficulty. She walks towards the door of the classroom... Then she stops and turns back, looking for something in her bag. She pulls out a ham sandwich... And heads for Michele!

He freezes, caught off guard.

GIOVANNA

(quietly)

You forgot your snack.

MICHELE
(through gritted teeth)
Thanks, Mum...

He takes the sandwich, embarrassed, under the malign gaze of Ivan and Brando who are making “mummy’s boy” faces at him.

Giovanna waves goodbye and leaves with the headmistress. Mrs Siani goes back to her desk.

MRS SIANI
Come on, kids, finish the test. You’ve got five minutes to go.

Michele turns back to his test and... PLOP! A dark red drop falls on to the sheet of paper. PLOP! Another.

MICHELE
What the heck...!

He touches his nose: blood. A slight nosebleed.

MICHELE
(raising his hand)
Mrs Siani!

4. INT. SCHOOL. TOILETS - DAY

In the bathroom, with two pieces of toilet roll inserted in his nostrils, Michele runs cold water on his wrists. He looks at himself in the mirror, he appears disheartened, when... DRIIING! He freezes on hearing the BELL. Break has started.

Hurrying like someone who senses impending troubles, he closes himself in one of the cubicles...

And then PIERO, a first-year boy of Indian origins, runs in terror into the toilets. He sees Michele in the cubicle...

PIERO
(imploring him)
They’re coming! Let me in, this is the only one with a lock!

But Michele is terrified as well, he closes the door in his face and locks it. He listens...

IVAN (OFF)

Who's the lucky winner today? Ah, Apu!

PIERO

(in a panic)

My name is Piero... Put it down, please...

IVAN (OFF)

Listen to him whimpering!

PIERO (OFF)

Why have you got it in for me?

IVAN (OFF)

Well, you're the only person here, Apu!

Silence. Then a MURMURING. Michele starts to worry...

BAM! A BANG AGAINST THE CUBICLE DOOR and CRACK! A rifle butt crashes through the wood! A gap appears through which pokes the face of Ivan Casadio like Jack Torrance in "The Shining".

IVAN

Michiii! I'm the big, bad wolf!

And he opens the lock. Michele finds himself facing Ivan, who points an oddly shaped rifle at him, one with a tank attached to the butt.

IVAN

Sandwich.

MICHELE

(offering no resistance)

It's at my place in class, you can take it...

Near the sinks, Brando is searching Piero... from whom he takes 10 euros. Then he gives him a slap on the head.

BRANDO

Scram, dickhead.

Piero is off like a shot. Michele is about to leave as well, but Ivan pushes the rifle into his chest.

IVAN

Where are you going? The money, come on.

He starts to search him. He does not find anything in his pockets, but with his bad guy's guile he aims for his shoes. Holding Michele firmly, he slips one off and... there is the 50-euro note!

IVAN
Well, fancy that...

With a disgusted look, he passes it to Brando who slips it into his pocket.

MICHELE
Give me my money back! I need it!

BRANDO
And if I don't? You gonna get Mumsy to arrest us?

IVAN
(pulling his ear)
Or will your daddy beat us up?
(pretending to be sorry)
Oh. I'm sorry, you don't have a daddy!

Stung by these words, Michele goes to hit him, but Ivan holds him by the arms and laughs at his powerlessness.

MICHELE
Always better than having one in jail, you moron!

Ivan flies into a rage: he thumps him in the stomach.

IVAN
He's not in jail, he got out yesterday!!

..and Michele curls up on the ground, moaning.

IVAN
And I *am not* a moron!!

Brando places a hand on his shoulder to console him.

BRANDO
Let it go, partner.

IVAN
Yeah, in fact...
(to Michele)
Beat it. I'll give you a five-second start, cos I'm generous.

But Michele knows what's coming.

MICHELE
No, come on...

BRANDO

Five, four...

5. INT. SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - DAY

In the corridor a crowd of children opens up like the Red Sea at Michele's passage as he runs, shouting...

MICHELE

Out the way!

Behind him, near the door to the toilets, Ivan takes aim with his rifle, as Brando continues to count...

BRANDO

...Two... One...

PSS PSS PSS! -- a burst of pellets fire from the rifle...

That hit Michele on the back, exploding in bursts of red. It is not blood, but paint. Ivan's weapon is a paintball gun...

But it is still sore. Michele falls to the ground. The back of his jumper is full of holes and stained red. The greatest pain, though, is caused by the sneering laughter that rains down on him.

What's more, passing near him Brando steps on his hand. Michele cries in pain, while from the bottom of the corridor appears an elderly janitor...

Ivan

(hissing)

What the fuck do you want?

The janitor retreats. Ivan and Brando the undisputed rulers. From the floor, Michele, watches them move off.

6. (MONTAGE) EXT. VARIOUS STREETS/MICHELE'S HOUSE(STELLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Depressed, Michele rides his bike near the port, where a number of merchant ships are tied up. Michele goes past a rusting ship - the name of the hull is "MATRIOSKA" - and continues...

Now he is moving through a lower middle-class residential area. Quiet streets, low houses, each with its little garden. A small park with a few rides and a couple of swings.

And there is his house: an unpretentious two-floor detached house. Michele stops at the bins in front of it. He gets off his bike... and takes his ruined jumper

from his rucksack. He chucks it in a bin. Then he moves towards his gate, disconsolate. But then he stops...

Stella is arriving at her house on the other side of the road. When she sees Michele, she signals to him.

A bit incredulous, he approaches her, pushing his bike.

STELLA

Hi.

MICHELE

Hi, Stella...

STELLA

Have you got a costume for tonight?

MICHELE

I... I don't know if I can make it...

STELLA

Ah. OK.

(turning her back on him)

Well, anyway, it's at 8.

Michele sighs sorrowfully while she goes into her garden.

7. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Michele enters his house and immediately MARIO, a medium-sized light-coloured mongrel, runs up to him happily, carrying a rubber ball in his mouth that emits loud squeaks. But Michele does not want to play with him.

MICHELE

Be good, Mario...

He drops his schoolbag on the floor and looks into the kitchen.

MICHELE

Hello...

ANAMARIA, a young Peruvian home help, raven-black hair and stocky build, is ironing, while the TV shows a Brazilian soap. She has her daughter CANDELA, 6, with her: big black eyes, pigtails, wrapped in a bee costume right down to the wings and sting.

CANDELA

Michiii!

And she starts running round him, BUZZING like a bee, "BZZZZZ..."

ANAMARIA

Hola, Michi. There's lasagne in the oven.

Michele

Did Mum make it?

ANAMARIA

Mm-hm.

MICHELE

I'm not hungry.

8. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

On the screen of a laptop, STELLA'S FACEBOOK PAGE. Michele checks her status: "Single"... and the last post which says: "My best friend is imaginary".

The mouse cursor pauses over the request to be her friend. Michele hesitates...

Candela (OFF)

What are you doing?

Michele quickly lowers the screen.

Candela is at the door.

MICHELE

Candela, go away.

But the girl enters, leaping about like a mad bee, making a "Bzzzzz" noise. The room is full of superhero posters, comic collections and DVDs, placed like sacred objects in order on the shelves.

CANDELA

Bzz. I don't understand human language.

Bzzzzz...

Michele takes a key from a drawer, as Candela takes a comic from a shelf.

MICHELE

(without looking at her)

Candela, put it back!

Candela continues looking at his collection.

Having given up, Michele sticks his hand under the bed and pulls out a metal box that is locked with a padlock...

CLONK. Candela has lowered a lever that is sticking out of the wall. She does not understand what it is for; nothing happens, so she turns towards Michele,

flicking through a comic...

CANDELA

But even if he wears glasses, how come nobody recognises him?

A shadow falls towards her...

Michele's eyes open wide and he throws himself forward to save her. He sticks out his arms... And at the last moment stops the foldaway bed that was falling on top of Candela. Only now does the girl notice it, an inch above her head. And she smiles at Michele, who is holding the bed where it is with a bit of an effort.

CANDELA

Superman!

MICHELE

(pretending to threaten her)
I don't know how long I can hold this....

CANDELA

(stepping to the side)
Who sleeps here?

Michele finally lets go of the bed, and mumbles...

MICHELE

It's for my friends.

...while the bed, as it falls down, sends up a pile of dust.

Candela is puzzled - "What friends?" - but prefers to go back to the more pressing topic.

CANDELA

Eh? How come nobody recognises him?

Ignoring her, Michele crouches back down next to his box. He sticks the key into the padlock...

Candela is standing on the bed. She has put on a pair of toy glasses with eyes on springs that she makes bounce up and down as she jumps.

CANDELA

I'm the Bee Lady!! My sting is so poisonous!!
Bzzz bzzz bzzz!

Michele opens the box. Inside there is just a 5-euro note and a few coins.

MICHELE

Hell...

9. EXT./INT. CHINESE SHOP - DAY

"MASSIVE SALE!"

The announcement screams out from the entrance of the small Chinese shop.

DING DONG! Far from convinced, Michele enters the shop which is dark and slightly mysterious. On the shelves there is everything: underwear, pirate DVDs, spices, musical boxes, jars of medicinal compounds, rubber insects dangling from the ceiling, little macabre straw animals, birds in a cage flitting about unhappily, alongside a wide range of small electrical goods and detergents...

And there are also Carnival costumes. Some are recognisable, some a bit less so.

The OLD CHINESE SHOP ASSISTANT perched behind the counter is shelling a boiled egg with his fingers.

Michele approaches him with his 5 euros and change.

MICHELE

Have you got any superhero costumes?

The old man looks at the money with a bewildered air. HE SPEAKS CHINESE.

MICHELE

A costume...

(he makes a gesture to indicate
web shooting out his hand)

Spider-Man?

Perplexed, the old man imitates Michele's gesture: he has not understood a thing. Michele is about to leave, resigned, when...

CHINESE BOY (OFF)

What were you wanting?

A CHINESE BOY of about 15 with a quiff and dressed emo style has appeared from the back shop.

MICHELE

A superhero costume.

(showing him the money)

But this is all I've got.

The boy starts talking with the old man – very fast DIALOGUE IN CHINESE that is incomprehensible to Michele. But it appears the old man is trying to dissuade the boy from doing something, gesturing “no” with his finger. But the boy eventually brings the discussion to a close and does his own thing, turning to

Michele:

CHINESE BOY
Maybe I have the solution.

He vanishes into the storeroom, we can hear him rummaging... Meanwhile the old man makes Michele feel uncomfortable, staring at him steadily as he takes a bite of his egg.

The boy reappears with a miserable-looking acrylic costume: a kind of adherent beige playsuit with blue elasticated wrists.

MICHELE
What is that?

The boy attaches a little blue cloak to the costume and offers it to him, with forced enthusiasm.

CHINESE BOY
Xin-Xiao! A Chinese superhero! Really famous.

Michele is far from convinced. He has a feel at the plasticky material.

MICHELE
And what's his power?

CHINESE BOY
(he has no idea)
He...
(smiling a salesman's smile)
You'll find out!

Michele is not buying it. But, disheartened, he hands over his money anyway.

10. INT. POLICE STATION. GIOVANNA'S OFFICE - EVENING

On the desk lies a PHOTO OF MARTINO BRECCIA, the missing child: lively eyes, smiling and a bit overweight. His VOICE – with a spectacular French “r” – is playing on an audio programme from Giovanna's PC:

MARTINO (OFF/ON TAPE)
"It's me. I'm just calling to let you know that I've gone away, because... because I'm fed up. I'll be away for a bit. Don't worry..."
(an ANNOUNCEMENT is made on a LOUDSPEAKER)
"...Oh, can you say sorry to Mrs Siani about the maths test? I'll do it when I get back."

Sat at the table, Giovanna raises her eyes from the monitor and looks at her tall and skinny colleague LUIGI MINNELLA, deputy sergeant, 42, who is standing in a corner.

GIOVANNA

That's the message Martino Breccia left for his parents two hours ago. Where can he have spent the night...?

Luigi sighs, sharing Giovanna's concern.

GIOVANNA

It sounded like he was phoning from a station, didn't it?

(standing up)

See if you can hear what the loudspeaker is saying.

LUIGI MINNELLA

Of c-c-course, Inspector.

GIOVANNA

Luigi, we've been working together for ten years, you can call me Giovanna.

Timidly, Luigi returns Giovanna's smile. He looks at her with respect.

LUIGI MINNELLA

Y-Y-Yes, Inspector.

Giovanna lets it go, takes Martino's photo and has a look at that chubby, awkward face.

GIOVANNA

This lump is a genius at school. He had the Maths Olympics tomorrow. It's a bit strange him disappearing now, isn't it?

LUIGI MINNELLA

Maybe it's some k-k-kind of worry about how he'll p-p-perform...

Giovanna puts the photo down and goes to look out the window, pensively. The street is dead quiet.

GIOVANNA

Tomorrow morning, be outside the school. You never know.

11. EXT. MICHELE'S HOUSE - STELLA'S HOUSE - EVENING

A family car draws up and parks. Giovanna, still in her uniform, gets out, talking on her phone. She starts off...

GIOVANNA
(on the phone, tired)
Mum, stop beating about the bush...

She runs into an OLD MAN who greets her happily.

OLD MAN
Hey, Boss!

GIOVANNA
(smiling at the man)
Hey, there. Good evening.
(on the phone, tired)
No, I'm not talking to you, it's not me
trying to get you off the phone.

She reaches the gate of the house, continuing to talk on the phone.

GIOVANNA
And anyway, the problem isn't that he needs a
father figure... You want me to find a man...
(she is interrupted)
The word is single, not spinster!

She glances at Stella's house, MUSIC can be heard coming from there. A couple of kids in fancy dress are going in.

Clasping her mobile between her shoulder and head, Giovanna opens the door of the house...

12. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

...She goes into the living room, sighing into the phone:

GIOVANNA
We'll talk tomorrow, eh?

She hangs up. She has just seen...

Michele, sitting on the couch with his arms crossed.

GIOVANNA
Monster! Were you not going to Stella's party?

MICHELE

I'm not going! I look ridiculous.

Giovanna notices his pitiful beige costume.

GIOVANNA

(touching it, a bit disappointed)

50 euros for this? Well, it's...

(making an effort)

...Lovely. What is it?

MICHELE

(sniffing)

A Chinese superhero...

GIOVANNA

I bet no one else has one.

(smiling)

Let me see you, get up.

His mum's words get to Michele, though he is still grumpy. He stands up, but keeping his arms crossed.

GIOVANNA

You look great. Very macho.

Michele finally raises his eyes. He appears to give her the benefit of the doubt.

MICHELE

It's itchy.

GIOVANNA

It's not easy being a superhero.

(tidying up his hair)

Saving people in danger...

Michele looks her up and down.

MICHELE

Like Dad?

Giovanna snorts, he has picked the wrong topic...

GIOVANNA

Yes and no. Your dad was in the police, the same as me.

MICHELE

But he saved people in danger as well.

Giovanna nods sadly. Then she smiles.

GIOVANNA
Go on, get to your party.

Michele doesn't answer. He goes to the door. But before he goes out...

MICHELE
Don't wait up for me...

He laughs as he slips out, avoiding a cushion his mother throws at him.

13. INT. STELLA'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC, a noisy crowd of children in fancy dress who are dancing; one little HellBoy... a Sally from *Nightmare Before Christmas*... an Invisible Man with the raincoat, hat, bandages and dark glasses... a mummy... and three Harry Potters who move as a group.

In front of the TV, a group of youngsters are watching a VIDEO...

It looks like footage of a war shot in a forest by an amateur cameraman. Two "soldiers" can be seen in camouflaged uniforms, protective glasses, carbon black beneath their eyes, armed with paintball guns. This is all accompanied by a HARD ROCK TRACK.

The director of the film is Ivan who, with his Saw mask on top of his head, proudly comments on the images.

IVAN
Watch now! Watch, I get him!

We see Ivan fire a burst -- PSS PSS PSS!

BOY
(referring to the gun)
Where did you get it?

Ivan
On the Internet. It's a special American model,
you can't find it here.

CUT TO:

Uncomfortable in his acrylic costume, Michele scratches himself nervously, and just as nervously looks around, drinking bitter orange from a plastic glass. Every time anyone approaches him, he feigns self-confidence, moving clumsily to the rhythm of the music...

And finally Stella appears, dressed as an 18th-century French princess, with a tall

candy-pink hairdo and a fan held up to hide her face all the time... She goes round the room talking a bit with everyone, then moves towards Michele.

STELLA

Bonsoir... You came!

(keeping the fan up, she asks him
to guess)

Who am I?

Michele doesn't know what to answer. She lowers the fan, revealing a fake scar running round her neck.

STELLA

Marie Antoinette... after the guillotine.

And she sticks her tongue out, rolling her eyes upwards, imitating a corpse.

Michele smiles. But his smile dies as soon as he sees Brando approaching in a very accurate costume as Edward from *Twilight*: a young vampire, handsome and doomed, with his sharp fangs.

BRANDO

What did you come as? Dysentery?

MICHELE

(struggling)

It's a superhero... a Chinese one.

STELLA

(staring at Michele)

Really? I was in China. But I was only 4...

Brando stands there, watching them, but he is cut out, and he moves off chewing on his anger. Stella flashes a knowing smile at Michele... and he melts.

STELLA

...I've lived in loads of places because of Dad's work..

MICHELE

(suddenly worried)

How long are you staying here?

STELLA

(shrugging)

I've just got here... And Dad's travelling on his own now. They're getting divorced... *C'est la vie*.

At that moment the MUSIC STOPS abruptly.

BRANDO (OFF)
Your attention, please!

Stella and Michele turn round.

With Ivan standing beside him, Brando puts a DVD in the player, ignoring the protests of those who were enjoying the music.

The TV screen shows the first grainy images... of Stella!

Curious, everyone falls silent.

Brando stares at Michele, who turns pale: they are his pictures, the ones he took with his mobile... and they have a principal and single subject, declined with infinite variations on a theme: Stella.

Stella at school... Stella at break time... Stella in the gym performing artistic gymnastics with great bravura...

Michele would like to die. Stella turns increasingly red as the images appear...

Stella going into her house... Coming out together with her mother, a nervous and elegant woman... Stella sitting on a swing in the park near her house...

Stella, furious, runs to switch off the TV.

STELLA
What is this stuff?!

Ivan points his finger at Michele.

IVAN
Ask him.

BRANDO
We copied it off his mobile after Siani confiscated it.

Hurt and incredulous, Stella turns towards Michele.

STELLA
Is this true...?

General laughter confirms the verdict on Michele, who trembles, unable to say anything: Stella's look is hurting him, hurting him badly...

So he runs away, looking for salvation, towards the entrance... But Ivan plants himself in front of him, with his Saw mask pulled down over his face.

Michele is forced to do a turnabout and go and hide in the bathroom, slamming the door behind him.

14. INT./EXT. STELLA'S HOUSE. BATHROOM/STREET - NIGHT

THUMP! THUMP! In the BATHROOM Ivan and Brando's battering on the door rings out. Outside, there is a crash of THUNDER. The rain starts to PELT DOWN.

Poor Michele is locked in.

BRANDO (OFF)

Micheleeee... Come out, Stella wants to give you a kiss!!

IVAN (OFF)

Ooh, Steeella! My little Stella!!

MICHELE

(near to tears)

SHUT UP!!

The response from the other side of the door is crass LAUGHTER – drowned out by the crash of THUNDER that rings out. The bathroom light flickers.

Michele looks at himself in the mirror... and what he sees looks dramatically sad.

MICHELE

Stupid Chinese costume... What is your superpower? Make me vanish, make me invisible!

A flash of lightning, and BZZZ! With a crackle, the light fails. A profound darkness descends in the bathroom.

MICHELE

(sarcastic)

Thanks a bunch...

Beyond the door can be heard the frightened SQUEAL of the girls and the LAUGHTER of the boys. BA-DA-BOOM! Another clap of THUNDER...

The light comes back on. The bathroom is empty...

Through the open window can be made out the shape of Michele crossing the street beneath the downpour.

15. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

The ALARM CLOCK RINGS implacably: it is 7:00.

Michele is asleep, still wearing his Chinese superhero costume, lying facedown with his arms spread out, the cloak over his head.

With a grunt he hits the alarm clock with his pillow, SILENCING IT.

The sun is coming in the window, the leaves of the tree outside are still wet. It is a lovely day.

Michele sits up in his bed, he yawns with his eyes closed... and the dog Mario starts growling.

MICHELE
(half-asleep)
Mariooo, will you stop it? What's wrong?

The dog looks at him and yelps as Michele heads to the bathroom. He passes in front of the wardrobe mirror... that ONLY REFLECTS HIS COSTUME!

But it is only for a second, and Michele does not notice.

16. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Still with his eyes shut, Michele does a pee. Then he turns on the hot water in the shower, slips out of his costume and drops it on the floor. His back is pockmarked with little round bruises from the pellets fired by Ivan. He gets into the shower.

The steam fills the bathroom, increasingly thick...

CUT:

Michele gets some shampoo in his eyes. He tries to rinse them, keeping his head under the stream of water, then he rinses his hair and, still with his eyes closed, turns the water off.

He gets out of the shower, gropes for his bathrobe and puts it on, covering his head with the hood. Then he stands at the sink.

Toothbrush and toothpaste. He brushes his teeth. The mirror is steamed up, but gradually his reflection becomes clearer... And Michele stops, frozen.

ALL THAT CAN BE SEEN IN THE MIRROR IS THE BATHROBE AND THE TOOTHBRUSH MOVING ON ITS OWN!

Michele moans, the toothbrush slips from his fingers and... **THE TOOTHBRUSH REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR FALLS INTO THE SINK.**

Michele rubs his eyes, he touches his face to check its consistency, he lowers the hood of his bathrobe and... **THE MIRROR CONTINUES NOT TO SHOW HIS REFLECTION.**

Michele lets out a terrified scream, and takes a step back...

17. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

...back in the bedroom. He stands in front of his wardrobe mirror... that ONLY REFLECTS THE BATHROBE.

Michele touches his face again, his hair, his body. He raises his hands to his eyes, but HE CANNOT SEE THEM!!! He lets the bathrobe slip to the floor and THERE IS NOTHING IN THE MIRROR...

Michele starts to hyperventilate, he is shaking like a leaf. His head is spinning; if he does not calm down, he is going to end up fainting...

GIOVANNA (OFF)
Michi! Are you awake?

And without knocking his mother comes into his room.

Michele instinctively covers his groin with his hands and stares at Giovanna, in apnoea...

But Giovanna doesn't see him. As far as she is concerned, the room is empty.

GIOVANNA
(looking into the bathroom)
Monster? You here?

Giovanna moves round the room... and heads straight towards Michele!

He jumps to one side to stop her banging into him. He manages to get out the way but only just... and thumps his shin off the bed. It is a sore one, but he keeps his mouth shut, rubbing his leg, his face twisted in a grimace of pain...

But Giovanna heard the NOISE. She smiles.

GIOVANNA
What are you doing...
(bending down to look under the
bed)
...down there?

The dog is under the bed and appears to be terrified.

GIOVANNA
(perplexed)
Mario?

Michele takes advantage of the moment.

Reflected in the wardrobe mirror, A PEN RISES FROM THE DESK AND WRITES ON A SHEET OF PAPER... THEN THE SHEET OF PAPER FLOATS THROUGH THE AIR BEFORE SETTLING ON THE PILLOW.

Giovanna straightens up... Michele runs into a corner of the room... But he stands on the dog's rubber ball that emits a squeak...

Out the corner of her eye, Giovanna sees the ball rolling along the ground. She frowns. The ball has stopped now against the skirting board. Had it really moved?

She is distracted by the note on the bed. She picks it up...

"Left early. M."

She is even more perplexed.

IN THE MIRROR THE PEN IS STILL SUSPENDED IN MIDAIR... THEN IT QUICKLY "FLIES" DOWN TO THE DESK...

Giovanna only hears the slight TICK! as it LANDS ON THE DESK... She turns round. Nothing is moving. Then she hears a RUSTLING and gives a start... But it is only the dog emerging from under the bed...

...it goes over to sniff Michele's feet, whining. Michele, back to the wall, stands immobile like a statue. And...

Giovanna looks right into his face. It is weird: your mother looking through you without seeing you. Then Giovanna sits on the bed and smoothes down the covers with a sigh of maternal concern. Eventually she gets up...

GIOVANNA
(to the dog)
Coming?

...and followed by the dog she finally leaves the room.

As soon as the door closes, Michele lets out a sigh. But his relief does not last long.

MICHELE
What now!?

18. EXT. VARIOUS STREETS - CHINESE SHOP - DAY

Michele's bike has a strange rider: jacket, gloves, collar up, scarf up to his nose, sweatshirt hood pulled down and big dark glasses. Michele is wrapped up to the point of being unrecognisable. He pedals furiously.

Attached to the handlebars is a nylon bag containing the guilty costume.

A car overtakes him. There's a CHILD of 4 in it, face pressed to the window, and he looks astonished.

As Michele pedals, his trousers rise to reveal an area of TRANSPARENT LEG above his sock...

The car moves off and Michele brakes.

He is in front of the Chinese shop. He jumps down from the bike and takes the costume. He goes to the door... But he finds a sign there.

"FOR RENT"

Michele peers through the window.

The shop has been emptied. There is nothing left.

All that Michele can see is his own wrapped-up face reflected in the glass. He steps back, shocked.

19. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Children mill around outside the school, it will soon be time to go in.

From the other side of the street, a MAN observes them. He is dressed in black and is wearing dark glasses.

A police car appears round the corner. It stops. Luigi Minnella gets out of it and has a look about...

When he looks where the man had been standing, he is no longer there. He has vanished.

CUT TO:

Michele, all muffled up, pulls up on his bike in front of the school. He parks at a distance, among the trees. And he looks...

The entrance is bustling with children. Keeping an eye on the door is Luigi Minnella, leaning against a police car.

Hidden behind a tree like a spy, Michele dare not move any closer.

It is terrible to see Stella getting out of her MOTHER'S car, and the woman carefully sorting her hair before letting her go. Stella runs inside.

Minnella glances casually in the direction of Michele... And he hides behind the tree trunk. Then he slides down, until he is sitting on the ground.

He takes a glove off. He checks. He moves his hand... but to him IT IS

INVISIBLE. Beyond the cuff of his jacket he can see only air.

MICHELE

No... It's not true. This is a nightmare.

He takes off his glasses to rub his eyes that have filled with tears of desperation.

MICHELE

I'm a freak...

PSS PSS PSS! -- a burst of paintball fire.

Michele looks round the tree.

Ivan has chosen another child for his target.

Luigi Minnella moves towards him.

LUIGI

Oh, that's enough! C-come here, c-come on!

IVAN

(teasing him)

No way am I c-coming there!

And laughing he runs into the school.

Michele stands up, like he wants to go... Then he stops. He leans his head to one side, as if considering something.

He looks around. Nobody can see him. So...

He starts getting undressed. One bit of clothing after another. Gloves. Jacket. Shoes. Sweatshirt. Trousers...

He places his pile of clothes in a nearby bush.

He shivers with the cold but his mind is made up. When he walks towards the entrance, he is naked and invisible...

...apart from his SOCKS, WHICH ARE WALKING ON THEIR OWN!

This is what Luigi Minnella sees, as he gets back into the police car. He stares open-mouthed.

Then Michele notices his socks as well. With a gasp of surprise, he slips them off quickly and throws them away like they were on fire...

Luigi Minnella SEES THEM FLY AWAY AND DISAPPEAR BEHIND A HEDGE. Disconcerted, he moves in that direction...

Michele passes him close to him without being seen. And so, with his incredible new power, he is able to go into school.

20. INT. SCHOOL. CLASSROOM - DAY

The pupils are sat at their desks while Mrs Siani is taking the register. The usual start to the day...

If it weren't for the naked boy standing against the wall.

MRS SIANI
Mungiu, Oriani, Pierobon, Silenzi...

Michele's NEIGHBOUR answers:

MICHELE'S NEIGHBOUR
Absent.

MRS SIANI
(making a note in the register)
Silenzi absent... Volpi...

IVAN
He's at the final.

MRS SIANI
Of course, the tennis... Venieri,
Zucchi...

Michele looks about. His gaze falls on Ivan's bulky rucksack from which peeks out the barrel of the rifle...

Mrs Siani has finished registration and goes to the blackboard where she writes an equation.

MRS SIANI
All right, let's begin...

Sat in the last row, Ivan has attached a pair of headphones and is moving his head in time to the music, his eyes closed. All of a sudden... the barrel of the paintball gun appears beside his head... and PSS! PSS! -- fire two rounds.

Two bursts of red paint explode on to the blackboard, Mrs Siani is splashed...

At the same moment, THE RIFLE FALLS INTO IVAN'S HANDS, and he finds himself holding it, thoroughly taken by surprise.

The teacher shouts and turns round, frightened and angry. She immediately sees Ivan's rifle, as the class erupts in laughter.

21. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The peace of the school is shattered by the chilling SCREAM of Mrs Siani...

MRS SIANI (OFF)
CASADIOOOOO!!!!

...that makes the birds rise from the trees.

22. INT. SCHOOL. STAFFROOM - DAY

Mrs Siani, upset and with her dress sprayed in red paint which she is trying in vain to remove with a cloth, is complaining in a whimpering tone to the headmistress.

MRS SIANI
That boy needs to be locked up.

HEADMISTRESS
I understand your feelings, but his father has just got out of jail.

MRS SIANI
There. The father gets out and the son goes in

As the two women talk, near the door AN INVISIBLE HAND GOES THROUGH THE PILE OF MATHS TESTS LYING ON THE TABLE.

HEADMISTRESS (OFF)
I think suspension should be sufficient.

MRS SIANI (OFF)
If you don't expel him, I'll bring charges against him.

HEADMISTRESS (OFF)
Come to my office. I'll get you a coffee... No, a relaxing tisane. You can correct the tests later.

The headmistress exits, Mrs Siani follows her, but before leaving she turns round and has a good look: fine, there is nobody there. And so she locks the door.

The staffroom is deserted, and... A TEST EMERGES FROM THE SHEAF OF PAPERS AND SETTLES BY ITSELF ON THE TABLE. It is blank, apart from two drops of dried blood.

THE TEACHER'S REGISTER OPENS AT THE PAGE MARKED "ANSWERS TO CLASS TEST"... AND A PEN STARTS TO FILL IN THE ANSWERS ON THE TEST PAPER, signed "MICHELE SILENZI".

23. INT./EXT. TOY SHOP - DAY

Omissis.

24. EXT. BAR - DAY

Omissis.

25. EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

50 years old with a JFK-style quiff, smartly dressed, which contrasts with the transfigured look on his face... This is ERMANNNO VOLPI, Brando's father. He has a miniature video camera in his hand and is shouting severely:

ERMANNNO VOLPI
Come on, Brando! Show him how a Volpi wins!

Brando, elegant in his white outfit, is playing a tennis match on a red-earth indoor court against a boy of the same age who looks like a junior Nadal...

Ermanno, on his feet, in the first of the two rows of terracing, shouts instructions to him as he continues to film him.

ERMANNNO VOLPI
Smash back those backhands! Three more points and you'll be provincial champion!

Brando fires a contrite look at his father, a mix of obedience and resignation. Then he leans down to pick up a ball...

But the ball stays attached to the ground, as though it were made of lead.

Brando's eyes pop open incredulously: unseen, what is stopping the ball is... Michele's bare foot!

Brando tries to pick it up again, but the ball stays where it is. So Brando pulls at it more forcibly... and the ball suddenly yields. Brando, caught off-balance, falls on his backside, and is covered in the red earth.

He gets up quickly, confused: what the hell is going on? He tries to concentrate again, returning to the baseline. He throws the ball up, and is about to strike it... when, VERY CLOSE UP, in his ear, SOMEONE WHISPERS...

MICHELE (OFF)
Pssst!

And Brando completely blows his serve which ends up in the stand, almost hitting his father.

Brando looks around, terrified. But a dirty look from his father calls him back to

order. He gets ready to serve. He throws the ball up, he's about to hit it, when... a shove from Michele in his back pushes him forward.

BRANDO

Aaaah!!

He turns round, terrified, looking for whoever is responsible... but there is no-one there! He waves his racquet about as if trying to swat an insect.

ERMANNNO VOLPI

Have you gone mad?

26. INT. TENNIS CLUB CHANGING ROOM

The water from the showers spreads steam through the changing room, but Brando is still dressed. He is sitting on a bench with his hands in his hair.

Standing in front of him, his father is raging at him.

ERMANNNO VOLPI

How could you throw away this game? You had it won. You're a coward! You were scared.

BRANDO

But, Dad, something happened--

ERMANNNO VOLPI

No excuses. I'm not listening to you. you can walk home, that way you'll have a chance to reflect.

Having said this, Ermanno exits, furious.

Brando sits there, disconsolate, and shakes his head. When...

The SQUEAK OF A FINGER ON GLASS makes him raise his head: a number has appeared on the mirror, written with a finger on the steamed-up glass: "5".

Brando brow wrinkles, but he turns pale then... ON THE MIRROR THE NUMBER "4" GRADUALLY APPEARS.

And then "3" ... "2" ... "1" ... Brando moves back, petrified.

When the countdown ends, nothing happens until...

SCHLAP! A violent slap in the face makes him lose his balance.

Now we see Michele's face: with a look that is full of vengeance he takes Brando's racquet and thumps him of the bottom -- PAF!

Brando falls on to his hands and knees and whimpers.

BRANDO

Help!!!

Michele, showing no pity, stands on his hand, exactly as Brando had done with him.

Brando cries in pain. A stain appears on the front of his shorts: he has peed himself.

Michele bursts out into malicious laughter.

Terrorised by that LAUGHTER, Brando rushes out of the changing room, as Michele continues to laugh.

27. EXT. BAR - STREET - DAY

Omissis.

28. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

MICHELE'S BIKE "PARKS" ON ITS OWN, near the school.

Ivan is coming out the main door, and angry looking man gripping him by the neck: his FATHER.

IVAN'S FATHER

Get into the car.

(a slap to the head)

You are for it when we get home.

Michele enjoys the scene.

Ivan's eyes are full of tears: tears of rage. His father shoves him into the car...

And then Michele sees a group of girls in PE gear crossing the courtyard: they are coming back from PE along with their TEACHER. Among them Stella, who is chatting with a friend.

GYM TEACHER

Come on, girls, get showered!

Michele's face lights up.

29. INT. SCHOOL. GIRLS' CHANGING ROOM - DAY

The atmosphere is dreamy. A thick cloud of steam comes from the showers. Murmuring and laughter fill the changing room.

The girls move calmly: some in pants and vest, others already in bras. They dry their hair, they dress very slowly, rolling their long socks up their sinuous calves.

Michele, next to the lockers, cannot believe his eyes... And then Stella comes out from the showers, wearing a bathrobe.

She is a celestial vision. Michele gives a start. Then... THUMP!

He is covered by a big towel that missed the shelf it was thrown at. His presence is suddenly obvious.

Perplexed, the girls stare at what looks like a cartoon ghost. Beneath the towel, Michele is immobile.

The most thickset and brawniest of the girls approaches and slowly pulls a corner of the towel...

...revealing Michele. SUDDENLY VISIBLE. And naked.

It is just a moment: the girls SHRIEK IN UNISON. And Michele joins in. He shouts and covers his groin, terrified.

The girls flee the changing room like demented Furies.

30. EXT./INT. SCHOOL CAR PARK/GIOVANNA'S CAR - DAY

The car park is empty and a light fog makes it appear even lonelier.

In her parked car, Giovanna grips the steering wheel and leans her head on it, her forehead on her knuckles.

In the passenger seat Michele looks out the window at the still fog, the lamppost that has become almost invisible, swallowed up in the whiteness.

Giovanna turns her head to him but without raising it, almost as though she didn't have the strength.

GIOVANNA

I need you to help me, I can't do it on my own...
Do you understand? It's a miracle you weren't
suspended...

Michele does not react, but looks out the window.

GIOVANNA

...We girls like going one step at a time, Michi..
and getting undressed really is the last step...

She does not know how to continue. Michele seems to be made of stone, he is really embarrassed.

GIOVANNA
What's up with you? Has something happened?

MICHELE
(moaning)
No.

Giovanna exhales quietly. She sits up straight.

GIOVANNA
(trying to lighten things up)
What will I do? Will we go to the rotisserie? We could get chicken and chips...

MICHELE
(continuing to look out the car)
I'm not very hungry.

GIOVANNA
Me neither... How about a beer?

Michele cannot help laughing, the clear and contagious laughter of the little boy he still is. Giovanna laughs a bit as well. But Michele continues to look out the window. Giovanna stretches out a hand and gently caresses his head, with the excuse of sorting out his hair. Finally Michele turns round...

MICHELE
Mum...

He would like to tell her everything, maybe... But he hesitates... And in the end...

MICHELE
...Nothing.

And his nose starts bleeding. He does not realise. Giovanna passes him a hanky.

GIOVANNA
Your nose...

Michele blocks his nose. Giovanna's MOBILE RINGS.

GIOVANNA
(answering the phone)
What's up, Minnella?...
(suddenly serious)
What? When was this?
(she listens, then)
I'm on my way.

She hangs up. She does not want to tell him, but...

GIOVANNA

...Brandi Volpi has disappeared.

Michele remains frozen.

31. (MONTAGE) EXT. VARIOUS SETTINGS IN THE TOWN - EVENING

The town immersed in the quiet of the evening. Semi-deserted streets. The fog enveloping the ships moored at the port... The metallic arm of a crane... The lighthouse... The same glimpses of the town as the Draughtsman drew. As if a sinister forewarning were coming true.

GASPARRI (V.O.)

...You feel all wrong, alone... as if you were invisible in the eyes of your parents... your teachers, your own friends...

32. INT. SCHOOL. CLASS/CORRIDOR - DAY

Brando Volpi's empty desk.

GASPARRI (V.O. - CONT.)

But it's normal, guys, there's nothing wrong with you.

GIORGIO GASPARRI, 40 and wearing it well, casually elegant, is standing in front of the class and addressing the pupils in a friendly but serious tone. Behind him, Mrs Siani and the Headmistress nod at everything he says. Especially the Headmistress who it seems has more than a professional interest in the man...

Michele keeps his head down. The news of Brando's disappearance has provoked a gloomy atmosphere, but there is also the matter of his exploits in the girls' changing room: two girls in the third row look at him cruelly, then whisper something and laugh quietly. Michele would like to vanish...

He raises his eyes towards Stella, downhearted, like a whipped dog, as if to ask her forgiveness from the bottom of his heart.

Stella immediately looks away, embarrassed and annoyed. Michele sinks even further into despair.

GASPARRI

Fear, melancholy... these are important feelings. They can be useful as well if we learn how to manage them.

Gasparri looks slowly around the room, trying to catch some kind of reaction in the faces of the children. He starts walking round the classroom, passing behind Michele...

...who is looking anxiously at the clock above the teacher's desk: 12.56. Still four long minutes till the bell...

GASPARRI

I'm here to help you understand yourselves...
and to help us understand you.

A screwed-up piece of paper lands on Michele's desk, and he opens it up slowly. It says, "SILENZI IS A SEX MANIAC".

GASPARRI

Your classmate Brando left a note: "I want to be alone, don't come looking for me". Martino said the same thing to his parents. Why do you think they did that?

Michele lowers his eyes, and it is then that he realises that... HIS HANDS ARE BECOMING INVISIBLE.

GASPARRI

I was 13 once. It's a terrible... age.
(laughter)
You get spots, your voice changes... you're no longer a child, you're not yet an adult. I ran away three times when I was in middle school. I made my mother's hair turn white.

With a lucidity born of desperation, Michele pulls up the hood of his sweatshirt and extends the sleeves over his hands.

STELLA

Why did you run away?

GASPARRI

You think I can remember? What do you think?

The clock says 1.00, but the bell still hasn't rung...

MICHELE

(to himself)
Come on, ring!

Gasparri picks up on Michele's jumpiness and addresses him directly.

GASPARRI

What do you think?

DRIIING! Finally the bell rings. Michele slips away without answering, wrapping his scarf up to his nose.

Gasparri smiles and addresses the others who have remained where they were.

GASPARRI

Evidently he has a valid reason for running away as well.

(pausing)

I'm going to be here in the school for the next few days. I'll be delighted if you want to give me some of your time.

33. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - day

Michele enters his room and locks the door, extremely relieved. He is safe. But...

Candela (OFF)

But if spiders spit their web from their mouths,
why does Spider-Man's come out of his wrists?

Michele gives a start and then remains immobile facing the door, his back to Candela, who was waiting for him in his room, sitting on the bed, with a number of comic books spread out around her.

MICHELE

Candela, go downstairs...

CANDELA

Why?

MICHELE

Your mother says you can go down...

CANDELA

That's not true.

Michele wants to cry, his voice is breaking.

MICHELE

Candela... please...

CANDELA

Bah...

Candela gets up off the bed and, taking her time, sorts out her T-shirt, then very slowly, heads to the door, stopping behind Michele.

CANDELA
Will you let me past?

Michele opens the door, trying to keep his back to the girl, but his strange movements do not pass unobserved. For a moment, Candela thinks she has noticed something strange as she looks up towards Michele's face, but he turns away quickly, half-hidden by the scarf...

CANDELA
Are you not hot?

MICHELE
No...

CANDELA
Bye.

MICHELE
Bye.

He closes the door behind him, without looking. Exhausted, he takes a couple of steps towards the centre of the room, drops his heavy schoolbag and finally takes off his scarf and lowers his hood. He takes a deep breath...

CANDELA (OFF)
Haven't you got a head?!

Candela is still in the room, behind him: she simply did not leave the room. Michele lets out a scream of terror and Candela shrieks back. And from the ground floor...

ANAMARIA (OFF)
Que pasa, ninhos?

Michele drops to his knees and places a gloved hand over Candela's mouth.

MICHELE
Shhhh, please, don't say anything, I'll explain everything, shhhh...
(then, loudly)
Nothing, everything's fine!!

He tries to sound convincing, but his voice is trembling.

MICHELE
(to Candela)
I'm going to take my hand away: do you swear you won't shout?

Candela nods. Michele takes his hand away slowly. The girl, perplexed but not at all scared, stretches out her hand to Michele's INVISIBLE FACE and lets out a little shout of surprise when she touches it.

INTERNAL CUT

Michele – with a peaked cap on his INVISIBLE HEAD and wearing the glasses with the eyes attached on springs – is walking excitedly from one corner of the room to another while Candela observes him with deep interest, lying facedown on the bed, in one of those contorted poses that only young children can assume.

MICHELE

...When I put the costume on I didn't feel anything strange. No, I did... a bit of itchiness in my legs but I think that was because of the acrylic.

(he has an idea)

Maybe the power entered my body through my skin when I slept in it...

CANDELA

And if you wash, it goes away?

MICHELE

No chance...

Candela casts a look at the Chinese superhero costume, hanging from the handle of the window.

CANDELA

Maybe it's like magic pyjamas! If you wear them at night when you go to sleep, in the morning you've become invisible...

MICHELE

(not very convinced)

Magic pyjamas?

(thinking about it)

Well, it does kind of look like a pair of pyjamas.

CANDELA

Maybe it works if you wear it for a certain time, that's how long you stay invisible.

Michele scratches his head, thinks about this.

CANDELA

When is it you go back to being normal?

MICHELE

I don't know!

They are silent for a while, each lost in their own thoughts, Candela lying on her back looking at the ceiling, Michele sitting in a corner. Then Candela's gaze falls on the comics, and she smiles brightly.

CANDELA

You're a superhero!

MICHELE

What are you saying?

CANDELA

Yes, yes... You're "the Invisible Boy"! Now you have to help people.

MICHELE

What superhero? Who do you want me to help?

(shaking his head sadly)

I'm just a loser.

CANDELA

So is Spider-Man, he's a bit of a loser too without his costume...

Michi thinks about this, in silence. Candela is hyper.

CANDELA

I want to try the costume!!!

MICHELE

Forget it. I'm not even putting it back on. I'm going to burn it!

Candela crosses her arms and pulls a long face.

CANDELA

I'm going to tell everyone, then.

MICHELE

Do what you like.

CANDELA

(shouting)

MUUUUMM, MICHE...

Michele leaps to his feet and clamps his hand over her mouth again.

MICHELE
(whispering)
If you tell anyone, I'll kill you.

He has never spoken like that before -- cutting and bad. But he realises immediately he has exaggerated.

Michele
(removing his hand)
I'm sorry.

Candela looks at him in astonishment.

CANDELA
You've become bad.

MICHELE
(more gently)
You swear you won't tell anyone?

CANDELA
But you are going to go and help people in danger?

MICHELE
(keeping her happy)
Sure, Candela. Of course I am.

Candela looks at him with a hint of disappointment.

33A. INT. POLICE STATION. GIOVANNA'S OFFICE - DAY

Ivan's tense face, a black eye: a punishment perhaps from his father for being suspended. The boy is sitting in front of the desk, his father, grim, beside him.

IVAN
I don't know where he is!

Sat in front of him is Gasparri. Giovanna, on her feet a step behind him, fires a none-too-friendly glare at Brando's father: she has noticed the black eye. Then she turns to Ivan.

GIOVANNA
Really? You and Brando are best mates.

IVAN
Exactly! He hasn't run away,
he'd have told me.

GASPARRI
(finishing up, gently)
Thank you, Ivan.
We really appreciate your help.

Ivan's father garbs him by an arm and lifts him to his feet.

IVAN'S FATHER
(brusquely)
Let's go.

34. INT. POLICE STATION. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Giovanna is standing in front of the big window of the meeting room, where the town's police have gathered.

Everyone is looking at Gasparri, behind whom, stuck to the wall, are two photos of Martino and Brando.

GASPARRI
Martino Breccia: an overweight boy. Very intelligent and very sensitive... Often the two things go together. He has always expected a lot from himself, and now, with the Maths Olympics coming up, maybe the pressure became too much for him...

The audience of police officers listens carefully.

LUIGI MINNELLA
That's what I said, p-p-p...

GIOVANNA
(smiling kindly)
Performance anxiety.

GASPARRI
Then Brando Volpi. A junior tennis champion who makes a fool of himself in front of his trainer, who is also his father, and who is a very demanding man... After his defeat he wasn't seen again.
(holding his arms out)
Maybe those who are really responsible are us adults, and the expectations we place on our children... Yes?

Luigi Minnella has raised his hand.

LUIGI MINNELLA
So...so you think the d-d...

GIOVANNA
(finishing for him)
...The disappearances are voluntary?

Luigi looks gratefully at Giovanna.

GASPARRI
(looking at Minnella)
It's not me who thinks it. We've got a phone
call from Martino and a note from Brando.

GIOVANNA
So why did they send you here?

GASPARRI
So as not to cause too much alarm. The risk in
these cases is copycats. In '99 in Sassari there
was a similar case: one kid ran away from
home and, within two weeks, another six had
followed him. Thinks what would happen if all
the children decided to imitate Martino and
Brando?

Giovanna nods apprehensively.

GASPARRI
What's important for now is to transmit
tranquillity.

INTERNAL CUT

Giovanna and Gasparri are alone. Gasparri hurriedly places his papers back in his briefcase, while she studies him out the corner of her eye. It looks like she wants to tell him something.

GIOVANNA
My son is in the same class.

GASPARRI
I know.

He gives her a friendly look, full of comprehension.

GIOVANNA
So you're part psychologist and part
policeman...

GASPARRI

I can be totally a psychologist if you need to talk.

Giovanna smiles in embarrassment.

GASPARRI

If you need to, call me.

35. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM/BATHROOM - DAY

A COMICS ALBUM FLOATS IN MIDAIR.

Sitting on his bed, Michele is flicking through one of his favourite comics. The hero curses his power:

"IT'S NOT A GIFT BUT A CURSE!"

He hears THE FRONT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

GIOVANNA (OFF)

Monster, you here?

Michele is alarmed. He starts getting undressed quickly so as to be completely invisible. He has just dropped his sweatshirt to the floor when the door opens.

Giovanna looks at the empty room. She bends down to pick up the sweatshirt, folds it and places it on the bed.

She has a look in the bathroom, but Michele is not there. Giovanna sighs, with a hint of concern.

Then THE HOUSE PHONE RINGS. Giovanna leaves the room.

36. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. GIOVANNA'S ROOM - DAY

Giovanna picks up the cordless phone from next to her bed.

GIOVANNA

Hello... Hi, Mum.

She sighs. She opens a drawer and rustles about for something...

GIOVANNA

So-so. No, Mum, I'm not working too much. And then it's not work... Or rather that's not all it is.

She finds a packet of cigarettes. She lights one.

Michele is at the door, invisible. He looks at his mother in surprise: he did not know she smoked!

GIOVANNA

(exasperated)

No, Mum, I'm not smoking. You know I quit 12 years ago when Michi arrived...

(she falls back on to the bed)

It's him that's worrying me.

Michele tenses.

GIOVANNA

I don't know, he's strange. Nervous, hostile.

Yesterday, he did something...

(she is interrupted)

No, nothing... And now he's not in... I told him he has to tell me when he's going out.

(she is interrupted)

I don't know, he's changed. Sometimes I think he's angry with me...

Michele is saddened by Giovanna's pain.

GIOVANNA

Maybe I don't keep on at him enough, or maybe too much... At his age, you never know...

(she pauses, listening)

Listen, do you think it's possible that, unconsciously, he... he *feels* he was adopted?

WHAT?! Michele cannot contain a moan of shock.

Giovanna turns sharply, she heard him. She stubs out her cigarette, and looks out into the corridor: nothing, nobody.

Her face, terrified at the thought of having let slip the secret, goes back to normal when she realises she is alone.

GIOVANNA

(relieved, into the phone)

Yeah, I'm here... For a moment there I thought...

She goes back into her room, closing the door behind her this time.

Michele stays where he is, staring at the closed door. A tear runs down his cheek.

37. EXT. PARK/STREET- EVENING

The sky is growing dark. The neighbourhood park is deserted. The rides squeak in the wind, empty... apart from the swing, where Michele is sitting, desolate.

He is still invisible. He is looking down, staring at the ground, and his eyes are red from crying. Shivers of cold and despair rack his naked body.

Stella walks along the street that edges the park with her gym bag on her shoulder. She skips along, but taking care not to stand on the cracks in the pavement.

A SQUEAK makes her turn round in the direction of the park...

...where A SWING IS MOVING ON ITS OWN!

Stella frowns. She stops at the entrance to the park.

STELLA
Is someone there?

THE SWING SUDDENLY STOPS...BUT IT IS SITTING AT AN ANGLE.

Stella notices this unusual fact. And so does Michele. THE SWING RETURNS TO BEING PERPENDICULAR WITH THE GROUND.

Stella approaches. Cautiously.

Michele opens his eyes wide: he really was not expecting this. He sees Stella approach...

Stella reaches the swing, she looks about, as though she were trying to understand if there was anyone there. But nothing seems untoward, maybe it was just a gust of wind. But then...

MICHELE (OFF)
A-choo!

Michele is unable not to sneeze.

Stella snaps round. She is scared.

STELLA
Who's there?

No answer. Stella moves back. She stops at a safe distance. She is scared, but she is also curious.

STELLA
Is someone there?

Silence. Curiosity win out in Stella. She goes and sits on the swing next to the one that was moving on its own before.

STELLA

I never heard my imaginary friend sneezing.

She smiles uncertainly, waiting for a signal that does not come.

STELLA

(deliberately)

Well, maybe I was wrong. Or I'm mad, who knows? On the count of three, I'm out of here, OK? One, two, two and a half...

Two opposing wills are fighting inside Michele. he breathes out and...

...Stella sees HIS BREATH IN THE COLD AIR.

STELLA

I knew it!

(curiously)

Who are you? Are you a ghost?

(silence from Michele)

An angel? A...

(searching for the right word)

On the soil beneath his feet, A CIRCLE suddenly appears, WITH TWO DOTS IN IT... like an expressionless face, with just two bewildered eyes.

Michele drew it with his toe. He looks at Stella...

STELLA

Is that you?

...who leans down and finishes the drawing with a small stick, drawing an upturned mouth. A big smile. The same as appears on her own face.

On Michele's face too appears a timid smile.

STELLA

Will we see who can go highest?

She starts swinging. The swing next to her STARTS MOVING ON ITS OWN. Stella laughs.

CUT TO:

Seen from a distance, the two swings are moving, one with Stella, the other apparently empty...

The scene is being spied on by the man dressed in black with the dark glasses who was watching the children in front of the school...

CUT TO:

On the swing, Stella stops after a while, and so does Michele.

STELLA

(looking at the empty swing)

You want to be friends? I don't have very many here... My mother says I shouldn't open up too much to people I don't know, but in this case... Have you got a mum?

A few moments later we hear some little SOBS.

STELLA

Are you crying?

MICHELE

No.

STELLA

But you can speak?!

MICHELE

(sniffing)

Yes.

Stella leans towards him.

STELLA

Are you sad?

MICHELE

A bit.

STELLA

You want a sweet? It's my last one.
(offering it to him, then being struck by a thought)
You can eat, can't you?

MICHELE

Are you not afraid of me?

Stella laughs like this were a ridiculous idea.

STELLA

No! All right, I'll eat it.

And she does. Her phone BEEPS.

STELLA

God, I'm late. I have to go to training.

(getting off the swing)

I'll see you again, yeah?

(making a face)

Well, so to speak...

MICHELE

OK.

STELLA

OK, bye!

She picks up her bag and trots out to the street, waving goodbye to the void.

Left on his own, Michele sees a man who appears to be looking at him from a bench... it is the man in black.

A bit worried, Michele gets up, he heads to the gate of the park... And the man appears to follow him with his gaze. What, can he see him!?

Suddenly the man gets up. He has a retractable walking stick that he extends with a flick of his wrist. He walks along tapping the ground: he is blind.

Michele, perplexed, watches him move off in the opposite direction to him.

Then he leaves the park. His house is there nearby. Michele looks at it. He shivers with the cold while along the road the streetlights come on.

38. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM/STAIRS/MICHELE'S ROOM - EVENING

Omissis.

39. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

Omissis.

40. INT. SCHOOL. CLASSROOM - DAY

The ENGLISH TEACHER is writing sentences on the board.

In the class the atmosphere is gloomy. The rain is pelting against the steamed-up windows.

Nobody is in the mood for mucking about. Some of the pupils are silently copying down the English sentences on the board, mostly, though, they look blank and melancholy.

Stella is looking out the window, wrapped in her own thoughts.

Michele observes Stella, in the seat in front of his, his eyes full of torment. He pulls his sweatshirt sleeve down, to cover the blue cuff of the costume he is wearing beneath his clothes. Then slowly he leans forward...

..and brushes Stella's shoulder with his hand. She turns round, inquisitively.

MICHELE

(weakly)

Stella... I wanted... to say sorry... for that--

She raises her hand to stop him. A forced smile.

STELLA

It's all right.

And she turns her back on him again. Michele sighs, sinking into himself. But then he sees...

Stella drawing on the steamed-up window: a circle, a face. Two eyes... and a big smile.

And finally, unseen, Michele smiles too.

41. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

Omissis.

42. INT. STELLA'S HOUSE. STELLA'S ROOM - DAY

A POP SONG fills the air.

Stella is standing on her head, leaning against the wall of her room. She seems to be perfectly comfortable in this position. Suddenly she frowns, she has seen something...

The glass on her window has been slightly steamed up.

Stella smiles. She drops from her position and moves to the window. She presses a finger against the glass, a light caress.

Then she opens the window.

STELLA

You want to come in?

(looking around)

Are you in?

Michele is behind Stella.

MICHELE

Yes.

Stella gives a start.

STELLA

(closing the window)

You scared me.

(sitting on the bed)

Where are you?

The mattress moves under the weight of Michele. Then... SNIFF. She hears Michele sniffing.

STELLA

(smiling)

You've always got a cold.

MICHELE

Mh-hm.

STELLA

Are you cold?

MICHELE

A bit.

Stella takes a blanket and puts it over his shoulders and head, like a cloak. She is amazed to see the shape of a body.

STELLA

I knew you'd come back.

(silence from Michele)

Do you really exist?

MICHELE

I think so.

STELLA

If I close my eyes, can I see you?

She tries. She shuts her eye. Then she opens up her eyes again.

STELLA

No. It didn't do anything.

(pausing)

Maybe I should come closer.

She lifts up the blanket and gets under, next to Michele. Now both their heads

can be seen under the blanket.

STELLA
(from under the blanket)
Still nothing.

The shape of her head gets closer to Michele's, until... they kiss!

Beneath the blanket, Michele's eyes are wide open. It's a real kiss, as miraculous as his superpower.

But his happiness is shattered when HE SEES THAT HIS HAND IS STARTING TO REAPPEAR! He quickly pulls the blanket off...

STELLA
(alarmed)
What is it?

MICHELE
I have to go.

Michele rushes to reach the window, AS OTHER PARTS OF HIS BODY START TO REAPPEAR, and he wastes no time getting out into the rain that has started to pour.

In the middle of her room, Stella has no idea what is going on.

43. EXT/INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE - STREET – ANAMARIA'S CAR - DAY

From the shape in the rain - and from the limbs which have become visible now - Michele can be made out, STILL PARTLY INVISIBLE, AND RUNNING ALONG THE STREET. WITH EACH STEP ANOTHER PART OF HIS BODY BECOMES VISIBLE...

Beneath a colourful umbrella, Anamaria is getting into her car with Candela. The child's eyes suddenly open wide.

CANDELA
Look, Mum! There's Michele running naked in the street!

ANAMARIA

Yes, Candela, yes.

The car leaves. Candela peers out the rear window: with an entranced smile she contemplates Michele going back into the house.

44. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM/BATHROOM - DAY

Now that he's safe, Michele is also completely visible: he just made it. Nude, soaking, agitated, his eyes are lit by a new uncontrollable happiness.

On STELLA'S FACEBOOK PAGE her status has changed: she is no longer single, but... *"It's complicated"*.

He looks at himself in the wardrobe mirror, plucking up the courage.

MICHELE
I have to tell her.

INTERNAL CUT

Under the shower, he continues to repeat the same thing to himself:

MICHELE
I have to tell her...

INTERNAL CUT

As he dries his hair...

MICHELE
I have to tell her...

INTERNAL CUT

As he gets dressed in his best clothes...

MICHELE
I have to tell her.

He looks outside. It has stopped raining and a thick fog has appeared. The lights in the houses are already on. But not at Stella's.

45. INT. GYM - EVENING

Stella is standing on the beam, with her arms raised, ready to perform an exercise. She carries it out with elegance, but lands with a slight fault... and falls.

Her TRAINER looks at her with disappointment.

TRAINER
We have to work on your lining up. Maybe that triple Flak is still too difficult for you...

Stella nods slowly.

TRAINER
You continue... I'm going to go for a coffee...

Do you want anything from the bar?

STELLA

No, thank you.

She gets back up on the beam, staring with concentration at the piece of wood.

46.EXT. STREET - EVENING

Michele walks with the prompt gait of someone who has found the determination he needs inside himself. Mario trots along at his side.

MICHELE

(imagining a dialogue)

“What are you doing here?” “No, nothing, I’m taking Mario for a pee...!” No, I can’t say pee...

“I was taking Mario for a walk...” “What a coincidence!...”

47. INT. GYM - EVENING

The gym is deserted and immersed in a spectral silence. The windows on to the street are met by an impenetrable darkness.

Heaped up in a corner is all the equipment: the skittles, the tapes, the balls, the chalk for the gymnasts’ hands, the sashes.

Stella is still on the beam, concentrating on her acrobatics. She tries and retries the exercise that she is struggling to get right.

She hears a NOISE from the entrance. Stella turns round.

STELLA

Who’s there? Sonia?

(lighting up, her voice sweetening)

Is that you?

Now that she thinks she is being watched by her invisible friend, she tries the exercise again... And she finally manages it. She smiles to herself. But she does not have time to enjoy the moment, when...

STELLA

Ow!

Something stings her back. She looks at her shoulder...

...and sees a little dart sticking out!

Dismayed and frightened, Stella stretches her hand to remove the dart, but she cannot reach...

Her eyelids flutter slowly, she suddenly feels dazed.

We hear FOOTSTEPS, and a shadow reaches towards her...

48. EXT. GYM - EVENING

Michele walks along the deserted pavement. In front of him, through the thick fog, the lights of the gym: his objective is in sight. And he keeps rehearsing, talking to himself...

MICHELE

“No, I always come this way. You want me to get you home...? Will I get you home?”

Suddenly he sees something that freezes his blood.

A man dressed in black has emerged from the gym. And he is carrying Stella, inert, in his arms.

MICHELE

STELLA!!

The KIDNAPPER turns briefly, alarmed, and reveals a face hidden behind a mask made of some kind of grey material, without a mouth, that hides his features: it is a terrifying vision.

The man speeds up in what he is doing: he hurries towards his car, a black station wagon parked a few yards away...

Impulsively Michele starts running, and with him Mario...

The kidnapper has opened the boot, placed Stella inside... just as Michele reaches him.

Michele

Leave her alone!

The man aims a punch, but Michele, partly out of skill and partly out of luck, slips and avoids the blow.

Michele

HELP!!

The kidnapper closes the boot and dashes for the door.

Michele sticks out a leg and trips him up. The man falls to the ground. His mask rises up slightly, his chin is exposed, but his face remains hidden.

Mario flings himself at him, he bites his arm, growling. The man emits a strangled cry and shakes his arm to try and get the dog off...

Michele meanwhile is back on his feet and wants to join in the attack...

The kidnapper manages to grab Mario's neck and hurls him aside. The dog yelps in pain.

Michele throws himself at the man but BOOM! He gets an elbow to the face. He falls to the ground, with a cut on his forehead.

The man gets into the driver's seat... Michele gets up, unsteady on his feet... He throws himself against the door, just as the man starts the engine. Michele grabs the handle, pulls it... but the door is locked. And, tyres screeching, the car heads off.

Michele manages to hang on to the door handle, his eyes fixed on the kidnapper's horrible mask beyond the glass... but then the car accelerates... And Michele tumbles to the ground.

When he raises his head, it is too late. The car has moved off. It disappears round the corner.

Michele stays kneeling in the street. He is destroyed.

49. EXT. GYM - NIGHT

The blue flashing lights intermittently light up the façade of the gym. The police cars are parked outside, the police officers keep back the curious who are crowding around.

ONLOOKERS

- Were the other two kidnapped as well?
- Giovanna, what's going on?

But Giovanna, much as she would like to, does not have time for them. She takes her leave of Stella's shocked coach, closing her notebook, and moves off...

CUT TO:

Michele is sitting with his feet dangling from the back of an ambulance. A paramedic is disinfecting the cut on his forehead. But Michele is paying him no attention.

He observes Minnella consoling Stella's mother who is in tears.

Desolate, Michele lowers his gaze. Then he sneezes...

Giovanna arrives at that moment and sits next to him.

GIOVANNA

You all right?

Michele sniffs and looks her straight in the eye with an adult air that Giovanna has never seen in him before.

MICHELE
I didn't manage to stop him.

GIOVANNA
You did too much as it is.

Michele shakes his head: it is not true.

MICHELE
How's Mario?

She looks at Mario who is being placed on the rear seat of a police car.

GIOVANNA
He's just got a small fracture, a night at the vet's and we'll get him back home, good as new, you'll see.

MICHELE
He was good, he bit him.

Then he looks at Stella's mother... and Giovanna, seeing him in such pain, swells up with love and concern. She puts an arm round his shoulder and pulls him to herself, protectively. She is unrecognisable, the pain has transfigured her. She cannot stop sobbing.

GIOVANNA
You'll see, we'll find her.

But Michele remains stiff, her embrace leaves him cold, after what he discovered about Giovanna. He continues looking at Stella's mother. She is unrecognisable, the pain has transfigured her. She cannot stop sobbing.

50. INT. SECRET BASE. TEST ROOM - NIGHT

There she is, Stella: she is still alive. Still wearing her gym outfit, she bears no marks. But her wide-open eyes betray great fear.

She is lying on a padded bed, and has various sensors, like electrodes, stuck to her temples and forehead. An intense, almost blinding light, is hitting her in the eyes...

The two MEN IN WHITE COATS leaning over her are only obscure outlines, with the light behind them.

Round about, the metal walls are covered in technological instruments and monitors display sinuous graphs, the result of the input coming from Stella's

brain...

STELLA

(terrified)

Where am I?... Who are you?...

MAN IN WHITE COAT 1

(Russian accent, kindly)

We're friends, Stella.

And with a light and expert touch of his hand, covered with a latex glove, he lowers her lip, exposing the gum - and takes a sample of saliva with a swab.

STELLA

Let me go, I want to go home...

MAN IN WHITE COAT 2

(Russian accent)

You'll go home soon, don't worry. But first we want to ask you some questions. You don't mind, do you?

Stella trembles, struggling not to give in to panic.

51. INT. SECRET BASE. CELL - NIGHT

CLACK! A hand lowers the lever that closes a reinforced door with an opening in the shape of a porthole.

Stella enters... And behind her the man starts closing the door. It is only for an instant, but his face is recognisable: it's the Blond Man who at the start was guarding the Draughtsman. Then the door closes with a resounding CLANG!

In the cell are the first boy who disappeared, MARTINO BRECCIA – short and chubby as in his photo, wearing a distinguished-looking smoking jacket and a pair of slippers - and Brando Volpi in his tennis gear. At Stella's arrival, they leap from the beds where they were lying.

STELLA

(astonished)

You two are here?

They answer in unison:

BRANDO AND MARTINO

They got you as well!

They hug a bit clumsily, to try and buck each other up.

STELLA

So you didn't run away from home!

MARTINO

(indignant, with a French 'r')

Run away just before the Maths Olympics?
Madness.

Stella only now notices Martino's strange outfit.

MARTINO

(clearing his throat)

It's my smoking jacket.

INTERNAL CUT

Not long after, the three children fall silent and pensive. Martino is lying on one of the beds. Brando sits on the floor and throws a tennis ball against the wall, making it bounce and catching it on the rebound.

Stella looks up, ten feet up, to a little window where a ray of light enters: she studies the prison where they have been locked up: it is strange and disturbing with those damp metal walls, narrow but with a high ceiling, like the bottom of a well.

STELLA

So they forced you to leave those messages
for your parents?

Brando nods mournfully. And Martino starts off:

MARTINO

Yeah. I'd thought of leaving a coded message
for my folks to let them know I'd been
kidnapped, but those men forced me to read
the phrases they had written! They made me
say them three times because they didn't think
I was convincing the first two, and then...

BRANDO

OK! We get it!

STELLA

(conciliatory)

Yes, Martino, that's clear. But the point is: what
do they want from us?

The tennis ball stays in Brando's hand. Silence.

MARTINO

All they do is ask us questions. They're treating us like lab rats. I can't stand all this psychological pressure.

Stella straightens herself up, and sits. She is trying to understand...

STELLA

They asked me when I discovered I was good at gymnastics. And if I know how to do other things. I said to them, "What things?", but they didn't answer.

MARTINO

They asked me, "What's the square root of 131,071?" What nonsense: it's a prime number. It doesn't have a square root.

BRANDO

They asked me about tennis...

MARTINO

Maybe they're aliens.

(working himself up)

Disguised as humans! Maybe they can read our thoughts... even now!

(opening his arms)

Empty them! Don't think of anything!

He closes his eyes, concentrated and... THUMP! The tennis balls hits him on the head.

MARTINO

Ow!

BRANDO

Fatty.

MARTINO

Stop it!

BRANDO

Lardass.

MARTINO

I'm not fat! I've got a slow metabolism!

Stella ignores them, thinking out loud...

STELLA

They know things about us.
(pointing at Brando)
They know you're good at tennis...
(looking at Martino)
...and you...

BRANDO

Are a big ball of fat!

STELLA

(giving Brando a dirty look)
That you're good with numbers...

MARTINO

(smiling timidly)
And that you're good on the beam.

STELLA

Exactly.

MARTINO

Maybe they're looking for children with a
special talent.

BRANDO

Yes, but why? What does it mean?

They fall silent. Nobody knows what to say. Brando starts throwing the ball again, disconsolate.

STELLA

...That we have to escape.

52. INT. SECRET BASE. LABORATORY - NIGHT

One of the mysterious kidnapers of the children is sitting in front of a control panel with slightly dated technology that seems to be from the '80s. On the monitors are Cyrillic characters. Perforated paper emerges from a printer...

The hand of another MAN, whose face we cannot see, tears off the piece of paper. There is a dressing on his wrist with bloodstains visible on it, the signs of where Mario bit him: this is the man who kidnapped Stella.

The COMPUTER OPERATOR looks at him anxiously.

COMPUTER OPERATOR

(in Russian)
Well, Commandant?

The man with the bandage, still seen from behind, angrily crunches up the printout.

COMPUTER OPERATOR
(answering his own question in
Russian)

We have to keep looking.

53. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

Michele is getting worked up in his sleep... And he suddenly wakes up, gasping for breath. He jumps upright, frightened... Then he takes a deep breath. It was just a nightmare...

CANDELA (OFF)
You have to save Stella.

Michele turns... There's Candela. Standing next to the bed.

MICHELE
What?

CANDELA
You were talking in your sleep. "I have to save
Stella... I have to save Stella..."

Michele, serious, gets out of bed and starts looking around the room. But he does not find what he is looking for...

CANDELA
What are you looking for?

MICHELE
My costume! It's gone!

54. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. LAUNDRY - DAY

Michele bursts into the laundry and looks around. Piles of clothes that have already been washed are tidily piled on the shelf.

The costume is not among them.

The washing machine, then. Michele opens the door, pulls out the damp clothes, one after another, throwing them to the floor...

Meanwhile Candela appears at the door.

MICHELE
There it is!
(pulling out the costume)

Now I just have to dry it...

He unfolds it... and looks at it, perplexed.

The costume seems to be smaller. Much smaller.

MICHELE

No, no!! It's shrunk!

He pulls frantically at the material, but there is nothing to be done: it only took one wash to render the costume super-small.

CANDELA

Will it still work?

MICHELE

If I can't put it on, how will I know!?

Then his look changes. He looks at Candela, with a suggestion in his eyes.

55. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

Candela's clothes are lying at her bare feet.

The girl is wearing the costume. She is shivering a bit with the cold, the material is damp, but she is putting up with this stoically, her teeth chattering.

CANDELA

I'm cold... How much longer will I have to wait?

Standing in front of her, waiting, Michele is a mask of stone.

CANDELA

Maybe it only works with you...

From below the NOISE OF THE DOOR opening.

GIOVANNA (OFF)

Hi! I'm home!

Michele rushes from the room...

56. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. STAIRS/LIVING ROOM - DAY

...He goes down the stairs, furious.

He goes to meet Giovanna who is coming in from work, exhausted. She does not realise Michele is spoiling for a fight.

GIOVANNA

(she yawns)

Oh. You're up? I was at the station all night, I'm done in...

Michele plants himself in front of her, giving her a withering look.

MICHELE

Was it you who washed my costume?

GIOVANNA

(justifying herself)

It was stinking, Michi.

MICHELE

You've ruined it!!

Giovanna is stunned by his hysterical rage.

GIOVANNA

I'm sorry. I'll try and sort it...

MICHELE

YOU CAN'T SORT IT! I HATE YOU!

A CRACK APPEARS ON THE GLASS OF THE WINDOW. Nobody notices it.

Anamaria, having heard the shouting, looks into the living room.

ANAMARIA

Michi, non se habla así con tu madre.

Michele points at Giovanna, raging.

MICHELE

She's not my mother!

(to Giovanna)

YOU'RE NOT MY MOTHER!

THE CRACK IN THE WINDOW GROWS LARGER.

Michele runs away. He slams the door violently behind him AND THE WINDOW SHATTERS COMPLETELY.

Giovanna is shocked.

57. EXT. STREET - DAY

Michele pedals furiously along the road, his eyes brimming with tears. He goes as fast as he can. Without turning round. Desperate.

58, EXT. BEACH. BATHING ESTABLISHMENT - DAY

Michele, with the red eyes of someone who has just finished crying, stares at the choppy sea, sitting on the sand in front of the closed bathing establishment. He shivers, but stays there, exposed to the wind, defeated, lonelier than ever...

ANDREIJ (OFF)

The costume doesn't matter.

Taken by surprise Michele turns.

A man, dressed all in black and wearing dark glasses, ANDREIJ, is standing in front of him: it is difficult to judge his age, but he must be over 40. Michele leaps to his feet and steps back, ready to flee. He has recognised him: it is the mysterious blind man who seemed to be staring at him in the park.

He is about to say something to him, but the man beats him to it, speaking in a slight Russian accent:

ANDREIJ

Yes. You've seen me before.

Michele points his finger at him and is about to say something, but again the man gets in first:

ANDREIJ

No, it wasn't me who kidnapped your friend.

MICHELE

(astounded)

How do you know what I'm thinking?

The blind man takes out his retractable walking stick, and starts to walk with its help...

MICHELE

But... who are you?

The blind man turns for a moment and smiles calmly.

ANDREIJ

My name is Andreij.

Then he starts walking again.

ANDREIJ

I'm your father.

Michele, shocked, stands there dazed, staring at him.

Then his face lights up, he rebels against this upsetting revelation.

MICHELE

My father is dead! He was a policeman. He
was killed by a stray bullet during a robbery.
He was a hero and...

He stops, a mass of confusion... Is it possible that all that is false?

Andreij has stopped and is waiting. Then he sighs, and when he speaks he does
so with a calm, controlled sadness.

ANDREIJ

This is what you were told.

(smiling faintly)

But if you give me a little time, I'll tell you the
truth. Which is much harder to believe...

Michele does not answer. He is shocked. But he wants to hear, he is too curious.
Andreij can feel it. And he continues.

ANDREIJ

How do you imagine Russia?

ALTERNATING WITH:

MONTAGE OF FLASHBACK - RUSSIA

59. EXT. TUNDRA. SNOW-COVERED FIELDS/WOODS - DAY

Moved, it becomes the last scene of the montage of flashbacks.

60. EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Omissis.

61. INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Omissis.

62. EXT. CITY OF THE SPECIALS. SQUARE - DAY

Moved and changed (becoming 58A).

63. INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Omissis.

64. INT. TEST ROOM - DAY

Omissis.

65. INT/EXT. SPECIALS' BUILDING. VARIOUS SETTINGS - DAY

Omissis.

58A EXT. CITY OF THE SPECIALS - DAY

Beyond the dark tips of the pines of the snowbound forest, a small city rises in the middle of the tundra beaten by an icy wind.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

That's where I was born. I had a normal life.
My family. Friends. Then in 1986, everything
changed.

A military bus with its windows blacked out moved slowly along the road that leads to the city.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

There was a nuclear disaster.
The radiation killed lots of people and made
others sick... and yet others, as the years
passed... changed.

The bus stops in an open space in the middle of the town's buildings, a town which is a lot more technological than it looks from a distance, that sort of Soviet technology that is a bit out of date but solid.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

Their DNA was altered. The "Specials" they
called them. The radiation had given them
powers.

The doors of the bus opens and lets out men and women of all ages, escorted by armed troops. There is a THIN MAN walking with a stick... a GIRL who is barely into her adolescence... A thin, pale BOY... And behind him appears ANDREIJ IN HIS 20S, without glasses, rather with lively, limpid eyes, but also eyes that are scared.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

And those powers attracted the attention of a
paramilitary group, led by a general who has
nostalgic for the Cold War. The Division.

The soldiers escort the passengers of the bus towards an imposing, square construction: the Division Building.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

They hunted us. Using force they gathered

together all the Special they knew about in a city that officially had been abandoned. In Siberia in the middle of nowhere. There were about 50 of us at the start. But others kept coming. They were young, mostly. Scared.

One by one, the Specials enter the building. A terrified Andreij takes a last look around him, before he is shoved inside by a guard.

58B. INT. DIVISION BUILDING. TEST ROOMS - DAY

In a white room, the girl we saw getting off the bus IS MOVING A GOLF BALL BY THE POWER OF HER THOUGHT, making it float in the air and then bounce from one part of the room to another.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

They locked us up there. And carried out their research. For years. Many years...

The ball becomes so fast that all that can be seen of it now is its trail... and it crashes with an against the reinforced glass from behind which three scientists are observing the experiment. The blow is so powerful that the reinforced glass is dented.

CUT TO:

Two scientists going along a corridor...

SCIENTIST 1

(in Russian, annoyed)

The tests are negative. This boy has now powers, he's no use to us, a waste of time!

They enter the white room and stop, perplexed: there is nobody there.

SCIENTIST 2

(in Russian)

Where is he?

All of a sudden, the other scientist's face lights up: he has thought of something. He looks carefully round the room.

SCIENTIST 1

(in Russian)

Maybe he is invisible.

His friend starts to smile as well... And then...

DROP! From above a drop of blood falls on to his forehead. The scientist touches his face and, puzzled, looks at his fingers that are stained red...

He raises his eyes.

Up above, hanging on to the ceiling, a terrified YOUNG BOY floats in the air like a balloon. Another drop of blood falls from his nose. DRIP!

CUT TO:

In another room, a skinny adolescent with hair down to his shoulders is drawing a five-pointed star in a wall, scraping the plaster with a punch. In his other hand he is holding the severed head of an old teddy bear; it is the DRAUGHTSMAN WHEN HE WAS YOUNG...

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

They wanted to understand how we worked, to be able to use us as weapons. Just think, an invincible army... perfect weapons...

Behind him, laid out on a long table, are a dozen white boxes, identical apart from the symbol on their lids: one has a cross, another a circle, another a square...

A scientist in a white coat (the doctor seen as an older man in scene 1) runs along them until he reaches the one with the five-pointed star on it, he opens it and extracts the headless body of an old teddy bear. The scientist takes notes.

CUT TO:

The sad face of the young Andreij, lying on a camp bed. Sensors attached to his shaven head sent signals to complicated equipment. On a row of monitors, watched by two doctors from the Division, fluctuating graphs appear, an X-ray vision of his brain...

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

I was one of their favourite guinea pigs. The only one who could read minds.

58C. INT. DIVISION BUILDING. CANTEEN - DAY

Two armed guards keep an eye on the Specialists who, slow and docile, take their seats at the large canteen table.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

But like all the others, the more I used my

power, the more my body was worn out. Many of us became sick. I started to lose my sight. The powers have their dark side too, one day you'll understand that as well.

ANDREIJ IS A FEW YEARS OLDER: he now wears thick glasses and has the pale air of all the other Specials. He sits next to the thin man who got off the bus just before him: now the man is in a wheelchair.

A couple of place away, the boy who can levitate is tiredly grasping the edge of the table, as though it were a sad habit: out of control, his body rises from the chair, floating upwards.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

And there was another problem for the Division, All the Specials were sterile... All... except me and your mother.

A young woman of about 20, long blond hair, beautiful and scared, is led into the canteen: it is YELENA.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

I remember the day she arrived. Yelena...

Andreij continues eating, eyes lowered. Then he raises them and sees yelena who is sitting down on the other side of the table.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

In her mind I could see a fear that was as great as mine. As well as the same hope to start living again.

Fearful, Yelena catches Andreij's eye. She smiles weakly at him. After a moment's hesitation, he smiles back. It is the first moment of love.

58D. INT. DIVISION BUILDING. CLINIC - DAY

Yelena's sweating and straining face... she is lying on a hospital bed wearing a white tunic. She is giving birth. With a final, painful effort, the CHILD enters the world...

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

Then you were born. The first child of the Specials.

Under the gaze of a large group of scientists and military men from the Division, the child is immediately picked up by a doctor who takes him away.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)
They were behind themselves.

Yelena protests helplessly. Her eyes are full of tears.

CUT TO:

Andreij's eyes: behind his glasses, one is cloudy, perhaps already blind. Standing next to Yelena, he is worriedly watching...

The newborn baby carefully laid down on a bed, surrounded by men in white coats and soldiers in uniform, on the other side of the soundproofed window of this technological nursery.

Faced by this coming and going of doctors and equipment, Andreij and Yelena exchange a pained look. Andreij squeezes her hand, as if to give her strength, to seal a pact.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)
And that was when your mother and I escaped.
We knew they'd have taken you away from us.

59. EXT. TUNDRA. SNOW-COVERED FIELD/WOODS - DAY

Big snow-covered fields, swept by a bitter wind. The trees in the woods have been reduced to black skeletons by the winter cold, beneath a leaden sky. Nothing is moving... apart from two figures hobbling through the snow.

They are Andreij and Yelena, panting and exhausted. She is struggling to keep up, he is wearing a rucksack and carrying a newborn infant in his arms who starts to cry, wrapped up in a hooded outfit. They are fleeing. Behind them can be heard incomprehensible SHOUTING and the BARKING of a pack of dogs...

Yelena slows down and stops. Her face is distorted by the effort, her bright eyes have been reddened by the wind.

YELENA
(*in Russian*)
You go on. Save yourselves...

ANDREIJ
(*in Russian*)
No, we'll go through the woods...

YELENA
(*in Russian*)

This is the only chance... I'll try and distract them.

A few moments to decide. He does not want them to split up, but he knows that Yelena is right. They look at each other for the last time with death in their eyes. They exchange a kiss, their last. A quick one, bursting with desperate love...

CUT TO:

Their pursuers are ten or so SOLDIERS, with a pack of dogs. Carrying their rifles, they start to climb a slope...

CUT TO:

Beyond the rise, Yelena watches Andreij run into the woods with the baby... The HOWLING of the dogs draws ever closer...

Yelena starts getting undressed. She quickly takes off her jacket, pullover, trousers, and boots. She is only wearing an adherent black jumpsuit made from a strange opaque material that goes right down to her toes.

And then... she walks towards their pursuers.

There they are. As soon as they see her at the top of the rise, they raise their rifles...

But YELENA BECOMES INVISIBLE.

Two SHOTS. That miss. The soldiers don't know where to aim...

YELENA (OFF)

Hey!

They all turn. Yelena has reappeared 30 yards away: she has gone in the opposite direction to Andreij, to lead the pursuers astray.

They point their guns, but... YELENA VANISHES again.

Other SHOTS that miss. Then the soldiers run towards the spot where they saw Yelena for that brief moment.

WOMAN (OFF)

Here I am!

She has reappeared further away... and VANISHES a moment later.

The soldiers shout at each other and run towards her...

All of them, except one, who lets the others do the work. It is... the BLOND, YOUNGER, but with the same hard face, the same icy blue eyes.

He looks at Yelena's footprints in the snow. He follows them with his eyes to the point in which THEY ARE STILL APPEARING, CREATED BY INVISIBLE FEET, there in the distance...

With glacial calmness, the Blond takes aim.

THE TRAIL OF FOOTPRINTS CONTINUES ON... Yelena is about to take shelter behind another bank of snow...

The sight of the Blond's rifle points at the apparently empty air above the footprints... His finger squeezes the trigger... BOOM!

A CRY of pain from Yelena.

CUT TO:

...Its reaches the ear of Andreij who is fleeing in the woods. It is as though that bullet hit him. He wants to weep. But he does not slow down. He holds his baby tight and continues fleeing.

CUT TO:

At the spot where the Yelena's footprints vanish, a pool of blood appears.

The snow is flat where the body has fallen... which quickly BECOMES VISIBLE. Yelena, hit below her shoulder, looks at the sky, her eyes open wide...

CUT TO:

Andreij, in tears, continues to run through the snow, the newborn baby clutched to his chest.

WE GO BACK TO:

THE BEACH

Michele, stunned by these revelations, stares at Andreij.

ANDREIJ

Your mother passed on her gift to you, and sacrificed herself to save you.

Michele is overwhelmed. He looks at the sea in confusion and repeats his mother's name, as if to make it more real...

MICHELE

Yelena...

Andreij gives him a moment to take in what he has been told. His look conceals a melancholy affection. Then...

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

I took you around Europe and I always hid our tracks. I found a few friends who helped us as we fled. Then I realised that sooner or later they'd have caught me... But I didn't want them to get you as well. So I chose the quietest place possible for you to grow up...

66. EXT. TUNDRA. WOODS/SNOW-COVERED FIELD - DAY

Omissis.

67. EXT. BAR IN MICHELE'S TOWN - DAY

Omissis.

68. (FLASHBACK) EXT. MICHELE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Little MICHELE, AGED 10 MONTHS, is asleep, wrapped in a blanket, in Andreij's arms. His father has a black patch over his left eye, while the right is all red, behind his glasses. But he is still able to observe...

Michele's house, with all the lights off.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

...And I left you with a woman who had just arrived in town. When I saw her, I could tell she was a good person...

Andreij places the child on the doormat, then rings the bell and move away quickly.

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

And who wanted a child more than anything else. Who would have loved you. I was right.

The door opens and the light falls on the sleeping baby.

69. EXT. WHARF/SEAFRONT - DAY

Michele and Andreij are near to a wharf on the seashore.

ANDREIJ

It was easy for a policewoman to falsify the registry office records and present you to the world as her own son. Nobody knew her here. It was the right choice even if it was risky. She's your mother in every way possible...

Michele seems to be suffering. Talking about Giovanna bothers him.

ANDREIJ

No. Don't think anything bad about her.

MICHELE

I'll think whatever I like... And you stop poking about in my head.

ANDREIJ

I can't help it.

MICHELE

(challenging him)

And what am I thinking now?

ANDREIJ

That you believe me. You think I told you the truth and you want to trust me.

MICHELE

Can you read everyone's minds?

ANDREIJ

If they're near to me. Like that angler there, for example.

He looks at an old ANGLER sat not far away on the wharf with his fishing rod.

ANDREIJ

(concentrating)

At this precise moment he is asking himself if he should call the police. An adult and a boy in an isolated spot... He's going to decide soon. We don't have much time.

The angler is watching them out the corner of his eye, pretending he is checking the reel of his fishing rod. He realises he is being observed and sits back comfortably on his seat, looking at the sea while nonchalantly digging in the inside pocket of his jacket. He pulls out a mobile phone.

70. INT. POLICE STATION. GIOVANNA'S OFFICE - DAY

Giovanna is standing in her office, talking on the phone.

GIOVANNA

He's still not back?... All right, Anamaria, call me right away if he comes in.

Frustrated, she hangs up. She is about to go out – when Gasparri sticks his head in the room.

GASPARRI
Everything all right?

GIOVANNA
(angrily)
No. Everything is not all right. We should have raised the alarm immediately, I felt they hadn't run away from home... I should have followed my instinct instead of...

She stops.

GASPARRI
...Instead of listening to me.

Giovanna sighs.

GIOVANNA
Excuse me.

She collapses on to a seat, her hands in her hair.

GASPARRI
(concernedly)
What's going on?

Giovanna looks at him.

GIOVANNA
Am I speaking with the policeman or the psychologist?

GASPARRI
You're speaking with a friend.

Giovanna thinks for a moment, until she finds the strength to reveal:

GIOVANNA
Today Michele said to me that I'm not his mother.

GASPARRI
Why?

GIOVANNA
Because it's true.

Gasparri seems to be very struck by this.

GIOVANNA

I don't understand how he could have found out... I've never told anyone this.

(looking at him)

Can I trust you?

He moves closer to her... They look each other in the eye...

Luigi throws the door open. There is a moment of embarrassment - and secret jealousy – in seeing Giovanna and Gasparri so close, then:

LUIGI MINNELLA

We got a c-c-call!

WE GO BACK TO:

THE WHARF

Michele and Andreij are still near the wharf.

ANDREIJ

We have to go.

He goes to move, but Michele stops him.

MICHELE

Wait. I don't have any power! It was the costume that gave me it!

ANDREIJ

(smiling)

All that did was unblock something in your mind. It would have happened anyway, you're growing up... Have you had any nosebleeds recently?

Michele nods.

ANDREIJ

It happens to some when the power starts to manifest itself...

(placing a hand on his shoulder)

The costume means nothing. The power is inside you.

Michele looks serious, struck by these words.

Then they set off, walking behind the angler who keeps his eyes fixed on the sea.

He does not realise that, as he passes, Andreij almost strokes the back of his neck with his open hand.

The gesture provokes only an imperceptible change of expression on the man's face, as he continues to watch the waves.

ANDREIJ

(to Michele)

You have a lot of doubts now, but you have to believe me. You are the most special of the Specials. You are precious for them, your gift is powerful, and it doesn't weaken you...

They emerge on to the esplanade.

MICHELE

But if I'm not even able to control it...

ANDREIJ

At first it manifests itself at very emotional moments, without you really wanting it, but you'll soon learn to control it, you'll see.

Michele thinks about this. Something does not add up.

MICHELE

But if they're looking for your son, me, I mean... why did they kidnap Stella who's a girl?

ANDREIJ

All in good time.

He slips a hand into his coat pocket and pulls out a small cloth package.

ANDREIJ

It's not very good for you going about naked in the depths of winter. Your mother had the same problem. So they made this.

He offers him the package. Michele hesitates, he does not take it.

ANDREIJ

The material of the outfit reacts on contact with your skin. When you become invisible, so does the material. Always wear it under your clothes... And think of it as a gift from your mother.

This time Michele takes it.

ANDREIJ

Now listen to me: you have to get away. Right now. I can't take you with me.

MICHELE

Why not?

ANDREIJ

There's no time to explain, the police are coming.

(bending down to him)

The Division knows you're here. I don't know how they found out, but they do. So get away. Become invisible, take a train and get as far away as you can. I'll find you.

(stroking his head gently)

Our minds are in contact. They always have been...

A SIREN CAN BE HEARD APPROACHING...

ANDREIJ

I know you want to save your friend, but it's too dangerous. You have to get away!

Then he moves off, pulling out his stick and tapping it along the pavement.

Michele goes to follow him, to say something, but...

A police car flies round the corner and screeches to a halt in front of him...

...and Giovanna's car appears too, SIREN blaring.

Michele stands there, frozen, not knowing what to do, apart from impulsively hiding Andreij's gift in his jacket.

Giovanna gets out, agitated. Gasparri is with her.

GIOVANNA

Michele!

Michele looks at her... then turns round.

Andreij has vanished.

71. EXT. SEAFRONT - DAY

Michele is sitting on the esplanade wall. Beside him, Gasparri offers him an ice cream.

GASPARRI

I like it even when it's cold.

Michele shakes his head, he doesn't want any. But he lets him have a tired, polite smile. Then he turns to look at...

Giovanna who, not far away, in the company of Luigi Minnella, is finishing questioning the angler. The man looks confused and repeatedly shakes his head. Giovanna leaves the angler to Minnella, so she can go back to her son and Gasparri.

Michele is tense. What will the witness have said?

GIOVANNA

It's incredible. He says he can't remember a thing, either about the man or the boy. He doesn't even remember calling us!

Michele is astounded... and relieved. Surprise appears on Gasparri's face as well.

Giovanna hesitates for a moment before turning to Michele: the brutal truth is still hanging in the air between them, unresolved.

GIOVANNA

And what were you doing here?

Michele looks at her, uncertain. Maybe he should tell her everything, but...

MICHELE

...Nothing.

GIOVANNA

You didn't see anything?

Michele slowly shakes his head, looking away from her. Giovanna is in increasing difficulty with him.

GIOVANNA

Don't disappear like that again, all right? You understand? Never.

(more sweetly)

I'm going to get Mario from the vet's now. You go home, please. As soon as I get back, we'll talk, OK?

Michele avoids looking at her. Gasparri comes forward.

GASPARRI

I'll take him if you want.

GIOVANNA
(gratefully)
You'd be doing me a big favour.

72. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michele rushes in while Gasparri follows him calmly.

GASPARRI
(taking his jacket off)
Will we watch a bit of TV?

But Michele is not even listening to him, and he dashes up the stairs.

73. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

Michele is standing in front of the mirror. He is wearing the jumpsuit Andreij gave him. The material is blacker than black. It is an unnatural colour. It appears to capture the light.

Almost fearfully, Michele touches the material. There is padding on the elbows, shoulders and knees. Curiously he looks at the feet of the jumpsuit: there is a series of soft little cushions on the sole. He presses them and they immediately go back to their original shape.

He carefully observes himself, front and back. It is a perfect fit. Let's see if it works now...

Michele closes his eyes, concentrating. He furrows his brow with effort, slightly opens his arms, raises his chin, scrunches up his eyes until it hurts and opens them again...

Nothing, he is still there, reflected in the mirror.

He tries again, this time bringing his hands up to his temples and scrunching up his eyes even more and more and more...

GASPARRI (OFF)
Everything all right up there?

Michele opens his eyes, he hears Gasparri who IS COMING UPSTAIRS. He is still completely visible. He quickly slips his sweatshirt over the jumpsuit and anxiously looks for his trousers. But where are they? Where are they?

Gasparri is at the door. HE KNOCKS.

GASPARRI (OFF)
Michele?

Michele is in a panic, he sees the handle turning...

Gasparri comes in... and sees Michele in bed, with his legs under the covers. He is reading a comic.

GASPARRI

Ah, excuse me, you didn't answer...

MICHELE

I didn't hear you...

GASPARRI

I made tea and there are some biscuits... if you don't have something, your mother will take it out on me.

He gives him a conspiratorial smile.

74. INT./EXT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. VARIOUS SETTINGS/GARDEN - DAY

Gasparri blows on his tea, sitting at the table.

GASPARRI

How are you getting on? It's a difficult age you're at, big changes...

Michele, sitting at the table in front of him, says nothing; he looks at the cup he is holding in his hands.

GASPARRI

It's the age when all the potentialities you have inside emerge.

Michele raises his eyes, curious about this observation.

GASPARRI

Biscuit?

He passes the packet of biscuits to Michele. In moving, Gasparri's jacket sleeve rises a couple of inches, enough for Michele to see...

A dressing on his wrist, with two little bloodstains on the gauze: the exact point where Mario bit Stella's kidnapper.

Michele freezes in his seat.

And Gasparri notices. He stares into his eyes. A look that is like a powerful electrical shock. Now he knows that he knows.

It only lasts a moment. Gasparri withdraws his hand.

GASPARRI

Have you already started to discover *your* potentialities?

MICHELE

(murmurs)

...I need to go to the bathroom...

He gets up. Gasparri does nothing to stop him, he stays in the kitchen while Michele moves to the living room, not giving in to his fear, without accelerating. He turns round. Gasparri is out of sight.

Michele runs to the front door, lowers the handle... But the door does not open.

GASPARRI (OFF)

I locked it.

He has appeared on the threshold. He approaches, slowly.

GASPARRI

With the bad people you get about these days...

Michele jumps and knocks over the lamp in the halls that smashes on the floor, and rushes for the stairs...

But Gasparri blocks his way. Michele swerves... He goes back into the kitchen... And a moment before Gasparri reaches the door, he manages to close the door and lock it.

THUMP! THUMP! Gasparri is hitting it with his shoulder.

He glances at the kitchen windows, but Michele already knows it is impossible to escape from there: they have grilles.

THUMP! THUMP! The lock is not strong, it won't last long.

GASPARRI (OFF)

Come on, open up! I don't want to hurt you!

Michele looks around, in a panic...

The sideboard. The cutlery drawers.

Michele opens one... And takes out a knife.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! The lock starts to give...

Michele wields the knife. He could try and defend himself with that, a useful weapon. Or else...

Something changes in his look. He drops the knife.

And he starts getting undressed, just like his mother all those years ago. He takes off his top, trousers, shoes... He is wearing the black jumpsuit.

THUMP! THUMP!

Michele breathes heavily. He has to do it, he has to find a way... He thinks back to the words of his father:

ANDREIJ (V.O.)

The power is inside you.

THUMP! CRACK! The locks gives, Gasparri bursts into the kitchen...

And Michele isn't there. The room appears to be empty and silent.

GASPARRI

Young Andreijevic! You're the same as your mother! We've been looking for you for 13 years. All we knew was your age and school, nothing else. We took the most gifted pupils. But what we missed was the one with the most surprising gift...

He stands in front of the door to block the exit.

GASPARRI

How long can you stay invisible, mmm? Is it sore when you activate your power? Headache, nausea?

A RUSTLING captures his attention...

THE CUTLERY DRAWER OPENS ON ITS OWN. THE KNIVES HOVER IN THE AIR... AND FLY TOWARDS GASPARRI.

One injures him on the shoulder. Gasparri throws himself behind the table to escape the hail of knives. Then something hits him on the head. THE WOODEN CHOPPING BOARD MOVED BY INVISIBLE HANDS. Gasparri screams in pain.

THE DOOR MOVES... Michele has run out: we hear his FOOTSTEPS.

Gasparri gets back up. He takes a moment to reflect. Then he runs to the sideboard and opens a drawer...

CUT TO:

Michele runs up the stairs... Then Gasparri appears at the foot of the stairs and starts following him. With a bag of flour in his hand.

He rips it open. He takes a handful and tosses it in front of him. A white cloud expands in the air... and A PART OF MICHELE'S FOOT BECOMES VISIBLE.

Gasparri follows Michele along the corridor, throwing FLOUR THAT REVEALS OTHER PARTS OF MICHELE'S BODY. Now Michele is easily identifiable as he runs into his room, leaving white footprints on the floor...

HIS SEMI-VISIBLE HAND OPENS THE WINDOW...

Too late. Gasparri grabs him, he pulls him back with a jerk, denying him his last way out.

Michele tries to brush away the flour with his hands. But it is useless. He withdraws into a corner of the room.

Calmly, Gasparri stems the bleeding on his neck with a hanky. He speaks to Michele in a tone of good-natured reproach:

GASPARRI

You need to work on your aim...

Michele BECOMES VISIBLE with great naturalness.

GASPARRI

(admiringly)

...But you already have *excellent* control.

You're much more powerful than your mother...

And we'll be able to make you even more powerful.

MICHELE

(hesitantly)

Really?

GASPARRI

Really. What could you do in the midst of normal people? This is no world for you, they'll all think you're a freak. Instead you're special, you're unique...

Michele seems to be giving into Gasparri's words as he gets closer and closer...

MICHELE

(whispering)

All right.

Gasparri is a couple of steps away...

And Michele lowers the lever on the wall. Gasparri looks at him, perplexed... And

the foldaway bed falls on him!

But with a lightning reflex Gasparri blocks it with his hands, before it can crush him. He smiles.

GASPARRI

Nice try. Shame.

And Michele gives him a kick in the balls.

Gasparri's eyes roll in shock and pain. He bends in two like a puppet, gasping for air... And now the bed lands on him! PA-TA-BOOM!

Michele runs to the window, climbs on to the sill...

Gasparri is crawling out from under the bed...

Michele climbs out. He hangs by his arms from the windowsill. Then he leaps...

...and lands on the grass in the garden. He takes a deep breath. He closes his eyes... AND BECOMES INVISIBLE AGAIN. Brushing the flour off himself, he runs away, as fast as he can.

75. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - EVENING

The front door opens... Giovanna comes in with Mario whose paw is bandaged. He is all right, just limping slightly.

Giovanna presses the light switch but the light does not come on: the hall light lies smashed on the floor.

Heart in her mouth, Giovanna moves into the living room and kitchen, looking around her in alarm: flour on the floor, knives lying all over the place, the kitchen door off its hinges...

GIOVANNA

Michele? Michi?

She pulls out her mobile and dials a number. A few moments later, MICHELE'S MOBILE RINGS in his bag on the floor.

Giovanna ends the call. Her anguish increases.

DING-DONG! Someone rings the doorbell. Giovanna rushes to open it...

...and is greeted by Andreij.

76. EXT./INT. GASPARRI'S CAR - VARIOUS STREETS - DAY

Gasparri is driving his car, furious and looking worse for wear. His rage-filled

eyes scour the neighbourhood streets in search of Michele. Meanwhile, he is speaking hands-free on his phone:

GASPARRI

(in Russian)

He managed to get away, the little bastard...

(pausing, listening)

No, anyway he won't get far... As soon as he calls his mother we'll locate him! If the police intervene, we'll get rid of the other three.

And he ends the call. Suddenly he thinks he sees something... A boy who looks really like Michele just went round the corner on a bicycle.

Gasparri accelerates into the hairpin bend, and pulls up alongside the boy... but it is not Michele.

Gasparri SWEARS IN RUSSIAN. He does a U-turn - cutting up a scooter that is coming in the opposite direction.

Only now do we realise that, wrapped in his new costume and being jolted about by Gasparri's reckless driving... Michele is there, invisible, in the back seat!

Gasparri drives on like nothing had happened. The traffic light in front of him is red, he would like to drive on but the traffic stops him; his is forced to wait...

And the scooter he cut up pulls up alongside him. It is being ridden by Ivan!

IVAN

Oi, idiot! What kind of fucking driving is that?!

Then he recognises Gasparri and his face takes on an amazed look.

IVAN

Ah! It's you...

Michele, in the back seat, is incredibly tense. And, as if that were not enough, he realises HIS NOSE HAS STARTED BLEEDING! He cups his hands around his nose, but this is not enough to stop the nosebleed...

GASPARRI

(to Ivan)

Go home, you moron.

Ivan's eyes pop open.

IVAN

Who are you calling a moron?!

Gasparri tears off when the light turns green.

Ivan zooms off, following him. He catches up with Gasparri and pulls up alongside him, shouting:

IVAN
I'm not a moron, all right? I have an attention disorder... ADD it's called!

Gasparri makes an annoyed face.

Ivan starts to aim kicks at the car door.

IVAN
And you're mean to be a psychologist?!
I'll knock the crap out of you!

Ivan spits on the window. Gasparri is briefly flabbergasted... then he suddenly changes direction, trying to knock the boy off the road. He doesn't succeed. Ivan is even angrier.

Gasparri opens the glove compartment between the seats, revealing various sophisticated-looking electronic devices, a Geiger counter, a grey mask...

And a small dart gun. That is what he was looking for... But then he sees something.

There are drops of blood on the backseat.

Gasparri brakes.

GASPARRI
We have company...

He raises the pistol and turns to the backseat, but instantly THE REAR DOOR OPENS ON ITS OWN.

Michele tumbles out into the street... and a moment later, Ivan is there.

IVAN
(to Gasparri)
I'm going to smash your face in, OK?

THE SUSPENSION LOWERS ON HIS SCOOTER... Michele, invisible, has jumped on. Ivan turns round, astounded.

MICHELE
Go!

IVAN
(dazed)
EH?!

MICHELE
(all at once)
Ivan, shit, there's no time to lose! MOVE IT!!!

WHOOSH! A dart whizzes past Ivan's head. He turns to Gasparri who is pointing the gun at him.

Terrorised, Ivan goes off like a rocket.

MICHELE
Hurry!

Panic and incomprehension in his eyes, Ivan turns his accelerator as far as it will go.

Gasparri's car goes after them...

As Michele, clinging on to Ivan, shouts at him:

MICHELE
Go! Faster!

IVAN
I don't take orders from someone without a face!

And saying this he pulls off a sudden and daring manoeuvre...

76A. EXT. ALLEY/STREET - DAY

..Driving the wrong way up a narrow alley.

But their pursuer is hoot on their heels, and starts catching up.

IVAN
What kind of psychologist is he? I've seen lots of them, but never one...

MICHELE
(exasperatedly)
He's not a psychologist!! He's a Russian spy, I told you... It was him who kidnapped Brando and Stella!

IVAN
A psychologist who kidnaps children...

MICHELE
HE'S NOT A PSYCHOLOGIST!!

IVAN
He kidnapped Brando, eh?

MICHELE
(suddenly terrified)
WATCH OUT!

A van is reversing out of a warehouse, blocking Ivan and Michele's road. Michele screams in terror...

Gasparri stretches his hand out of the car window, points his dart gun and SSSS! He fires...

Ivan manages to steer the scooter through the narrow gap: miraculously he and Michele get through...

And Gasparri is forced to slam on the brakes.

GASPARRI
(in Russian)
Shit!

Looking back, Michele shouts with joy: they have given Gasparri the slip, and emerge into a wider street...

But the scooter starts to swerve - Michele sees a dart has hit Ivan in the shoulder, and he starts to lose consciousness.

IVAN
(talking nonsense to himself)
Go to the port. The sheds...

The scooter swerves scarily...

MICHELE
IVAN!

But Ivan has fainted. Michele leans forward to grab the controls over Ivan's shoulders, just a moment before the scooter crashes into a parked car.

THE SCOOTER CONTINUES ON ITS OWN WITH IVAN IN A FAINT AND APPARENTLY NOBODY STEERING IT.

This is the sight that greets a florid-faced old man at the door of a pub. Astounded, he looks down at the beer he is drinking. Has someone slipped him a mickey, or what?

77. EXT. VARIOUS STREETS - EVENING

Omissis.

78. EXT. BAR - EVENING

Omissis.

79. EXT. PIER FISH SHEDS - NIGHT

Michele is visible again. He lets the unconscious Ivan slip on to an untended patch of grass, at the edge of town near the sea. Around them a few old and rickety wooden sheds.

As soon as Ivan finds himself lying down, he moans blissfully, clearly wrapped up in a pleasant dream.

IVAN
(murmuring in his sleep)
Mrs Siani... Don't, that tickles... I won't tell
anyone we're kissing...

Michele looks revolted. Then, unexpectedly, he smiles: he has long dreamt of this moment...

BAM! He gives him a slap in the face... that wakes him up with a start.

IVAN
(holding his face)
Ow!

Ivan gets up, dazed... And finds Michele standing there, in his black jumpsuit, staring at him impatiently.

IVAN
YOU! You're gonna pay!

He throws himself at him... but MICHELE VANISHES!

Ivan stops. He is incredulous. He shakes his head as if trying wake himself up.

MICHELE (OFF)
Do you want calm down?

Ivan whirls round. And there is Michele again. Ivan does not get it. He opens his mouth as if to say something but he has no idea where to start.

MICHELE
If you behave, I'll explain everything.

80. INT. SECRET BASE. CELL - NIGHT

In the cell of the kidnapped children, meanwhile, Martino's chubby and rosy face is turning red with effort.

MARTINO
Ow! Stop moving about!

There are feet on either side of his face! Someone is using him to stand on... Brando. He is standing on Martino's shoulders. They are climbing the wall near the high window, but are at least a three feet short.

BRANDO
Shut it, fatty!

STELLA (OFF)
Shhh! Stop it!

Brando looks down at Stella, who is looking at the little window with a determined air.

BRANDO
Maybe we should forget it. If they catch us...

But Stella has swung into action. She leaps on to Martino, and places one foot on his joined-together hands...

MARTINO
(laughing)
Ah! Ah! You're tickling me.

...and "climbs" Martino, with surprising agility, ending up alongside Brando.

MARTINO
(suffering)
Hurry up.

Brando, for a moment, finds himself face to face with Stella. It looks like he is about to speak to her, but she does not give him the time. She places a foot in his hands and climbs on to his shoulders.

She stretches. She put out her arms... and reaches the window.

MARTINO
I don't think I can hold on...

BRANDO
(to Stella)
Can you do it?

Stella is stretching her arms. She is clinging to the window and... she pulls herself up. She swings her legs. She hooks one over the bottom of the window. A bit of an effort, and she rolls out, sliding her thin body into the narrow gap... She has done it!

81. EXT. SHIP - NIGHT

Stella rolls out of the little window, then quickly gets up. She turns round...

...and in front of her lies the sea! Dark as night, but perfectly recognisable through the blankets of fog.

Stella looks about her, incredulous: she is on a ship!

The kidnappers' base is a merchant ship anchored in the port: slipping out of their prison, Stella has ended up against the balustrade of the ship...

She takes two steps back, breathing heavily... And her blood freezes. Someone is looking at her through a porthole.

Stella lowers her head in a flash, but too late: the man must have seen her, and yet...

Stella raises her head for a second look... and effectively there is no danger. The man on the other side of the porthole is a shrivelled old man in a wheelchair, and he is unconscious.

Stella waves her hand, just to be sure: no reaction. Reassured, she breathes a sigh of relief. But then

She hears a VOICE. Someone is SINGING.

Stella sticks her head out. On the multi-level bridge, she can see, on the highest balustrade, a SENTRY on guard duty. He is dressed like a normal sailor with a woollen hat, but he has a gun at his side.

Stella looks at the nearest mooring rope that leads to the quay. She tests it with her hands, thinking of slipping down it... But the noise of FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS stops her. The sentry is coming down, there is no way to get out into the open.

Stella pulls back sharply. She flattens against the wall... Which has just been newly painted. She has dirtied her hands and clothes. And there is a paint tin sitting there with a big brush on top of it...

She sees something above the bridge. A light, a big one. Fitted on to a mobile base.

She takes the pot of paint... She waits until his patrol takes the sentry away from the stairs...

As soon as the path is clear, she runs. Silently and rapidly.

As the guard stops for a smoke at the prow, Stella, at the stern, climbs the stairs with ease. Towards the light.

82. EXT./INT. SHEDS - NIGHT

Ivan removes the padlock from a chain on the entrance to one of the fish sheds on the pier. Michele is behind him.

IVAN

It's unbelievable. A power like that in the hands of a loser like you. I'd know what to do with it.

Ivan put the key which is attached to a chain back round his neck, turns on the light and pushes open the door.

Michele enters and looks around. It is a wooden shed, furnished with an old sofa, a metal locker and various war posters on the wall. The light is a bulb attached to a wire hanging from the ceiling.

MICHELE

Is this yours?

IVAN

It's my secret hideout. If you were a superhero, you'd have one as well. But you're not a superhero. There are no invisible superheroes.

MICHELE

(offended)

The blonde in the Fantastic Four? She becomes invisible.

IVAN

(playing it down)

Pfft! What a slapper, her. She's with that guy whose arms extend, whose legs extend... you think he's not got anything else that extends?

MICHELE

(annoyed)

Stella has been kidnapped and I'm wasting time with you.

IVAN

Brando's has been kidnapped as well! And we don't know where they are. So cool it with the being-a-phenomenon routine. Let's call the police!

Michele raises his eyes to heaven.

MICHELE

I've already told you we can't, mo...

(he is about to say "moron" but stops and falls back on...)
...momentarily we can't: police no can do.

IVAN
Why are you talking weird?

MICHELE
If they see the police arriving, they will kill them.

They fall silent for a moment.

MICHELE
Why have you got a secret hideout?

IVAN
My father... Best to steer clear of him since he got out, you know...

Michele hesitates for a moment, then...

MICHELE
Sorry for getting you suspended.

IVAN
Ahhh... of course, it was you!

He thumps him on the arm.

IVAN
...Apology accepted.

Michele rubs his painful arm. They fall silent again. Thinking what to do. Helpless.

MICHELE
If only the others could tell us where they are...

IVAN
I'd find a way.

MICHELE
Yeah, sure...

IVAN
I'd send a signal or something.

Michele leans against the window and looks out. Suddenly, in the distance, A BEAM OF LIGHT PROJECTS INTO THE SKY. At first Michele pays it no

attention, but then...

He sees that, as it reflects on the low clouds, THE LIGHT FORMS A MILKY SHAPE: TWO BLACK DOTS IN THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A STYLISED FACE!

Finally Michele recognises it: it is Stella's drawing!

He opens the door and runs out of the shed. He looks up.

MICHELE

Ivan, you're a genius!

Ivan follows him out happily.

IVAN

Yeah!

(becoming confused)

What did I say?

MICHELE

That light! It's a signal from Stella! She's calling me.

Ivan peers, he focuses on the light, with the air of someone who has a surprise up his sleeve.

83. EXT. SHIP/PORT - NIGHT

Stella is still next to the light. She looks at the beam of light projected into the sky. An increasingly thick bank of fog diminishes the power of the light and hides the image of the face with its two eyes. Stella finds it harder to cling to the hope that her signal will have been seen...

Instead it has been seen. But by the wrong person.

The sentry sees the spotlight is lit and pointing towards the sky which is peculiar. He frowns. He runs towards the stairs...

The sound of his FOOTSTEPS warns Stella. She squats down against the metal base of the spotlight. She sticks her head out and sees...

...the feet of the sentry hurrying towards her.

Stella slides round to the other side of the spotlight, holding her breath. The man SAYS SOMETHING IN RUSSIAN into a walkie-talkie and stretches his hand out to the switch for the spotlight...

84. INT. SHED - NIGHT

Using a different key that he carries round his neck, Ivan has flung open the steel locker in his shed...

IVAN

Ta-ra!

Michele cannot believe his eyes...

The locker contains paintball arsenal. Laid out as if on show: five pistol hanging up, paint pellets, a military camouflage overall, helmet, goggles, gloves. And a black holdall with a zip.

MICHELE

This is an arsenal!

IVAN

They're weapons, stupid!

Michele shakes his head: no point explaining...

Ivan takes the black bag, opens the zip, and pulls out...

...a terrifying paintball gun. It looks like an AK-47.

IVAN

(proudly)

Now we're talking.

85. EXT. SHED - NIGHT

Michele emerges impatiently.

MICHELE

Shift! How long are you going to be?

Finally Ivan appears: and he looks like a soldier. Rifle in his hand, camouflage outfit, blackening under his eyes.

IVAN

Captain Ivan Casadio ready for his mission.

Michele is about to comment... But IN THE SKY, THE BEAM OF LIGHT VANISHES. The symbol disappears.

IVAN

She's put it off!

MICHELE

Or someone else did!

IVAN
(not understanding)
Eh?

MICHELE
Forget it. Let's go.

They get on to the scooter. Ivan accelerates.

The scooter's taillight moves off into the hazy night. Towards the great adventure.

86. EXT. SHIP - NIGHT

Stella is hidden a few inches from the guard, at the feet of the ship's spotlight. She holds her breath, terrified. The man would just have to lean forward to see her... And he does...

But Stella is no longer there. The perplexed sentry looks around the ship's bridge, cloaked in fog. He leans over the balustrade, looking beyond it... Nothing.

He cannot see Stella hanging by her hands from the walkway, right below him, her feet swinging in the void. It is not easy to hang on, Stella won't be able to keep it up for long... But fortunately the guard moves off, just enough to let Stella look down, judge the jump... and carry it out.

After a drop of about six feet, she lands comfortably on the lower walkway. She looks about. The coast is clear. But what can she do?

The noise of the guard's FOOTSTEPS coming back down the stairs forces her to make her mind up. She is on the point of being found, and she can no longer go back up. She has to play all her cards at once.

She stands up on the parapet, and looks at the cold, black water... She takes a deep breath to pluck up her courage and bends her knees, ready to dive, when...

CLICK – the dry sound of an automatic weapon being cocked at her back.

Stella freezes. She turns round... and she finds herself facing the black hole of a gun barrel. It is being held by the Blond, who smiles and invites in an uncertain and mocking Italian:

BLOND
Go on. Jump.

87. EXT. PORT/SHIP - NIGHT

Ivan and Michele get off the scooter and continue on foot.

They have arrived at the port. They continue to look around: warehouses,

containers, moored ships...

MICHELE

(frustrated)

What now? It could be anywhere.

Then they hear a SCREAM and snap round...

On the bridge of the "MATRIOSKA", Stella is dragged away by the Blond, who harshly rebukes the sentry: he grabs him by the scruff of the neck and shakes him, making him lose his hat. Then he disappears with Stella through a door in the tower...

MICHELE

Stella!!

IVAN

Shhh!! No talking during the mission.

The sentry looks in their direction... And the two boys flatten themselves to the ground like a couple of improvised soldiers. They crawl behind a container.

IVAN

They're in there, you were right!

Michele stares at the ship. Stella can no longer be seen... And the guard is coming down towards the gangplank that links the pier and the ship.

MICHELE

I have to free them.

Ivan takes up a sniper's position, levelling his gun.

IVAN

(addressing the guard, looking forward to it)

That's it. Come on, closer.

MICHELE

What are you wanting to do?

IVAN

You become invisible. Once you're up there, throw the guard's hat into the water, so I know you've made it.

Michele

(impatient)

The problem is how to get up there.

IVAN

Ivan will deal with that.

(solemn)

I've been waiting for this moment my whole life.

Michele makes a face, not very convinced. Then he gets to his feet, closes his eyes... AND BECOMES INVISIBLE.

He emerges from their hiding place and walks quickly towards the gangplank: the feet of his jumpsuit with their cushions do not make any noise at all, like the paws of a cat.

CUT TO:

Ivan carefully takes aim, then kisses the keys he carries around his neck, a good luck gesture before firing...

CUT TO:

Michele is a few yards from the gangplank and sees the guard, an armed and dangerous-looking thug. Even if he tried, he could not get past him. He bites his lip doubtfully, when...

PSS! PSS! PSS! -- a burst of pellets covers the guard's chest, and, stunned and knocked off balance, he falls into the water.

Michele smiles incredulously.

CUT TO:

Ivan exults, triumphantly, imitating in a low voice the roar of a crowd.

CUT TO:

Michele goes up the gangplank. When he is halfway he sees another GUARD arriving, who heard the first one fall into the water.

He hurries: if the guard gets on to the gangplank, he is done for... One step, two steps...

And he makes it -- he reaches the ship a moment before the guard jumps on to the gangplank: he avoids him by a hair's breadth. He breathes a sigh of relief. That was close.

CUT TO:

Ivan is still exultant when he sees...

THE GUARD'S HAT FLY INTO THE WATER. A moment of relief... which immediately turns to tension: the second guard is coming down the gangplank, threatening, looking around.

IVAN

Oh, bugger.

And so he runs comically back along the pier, beating a retreat.

88. EXT./INT. PORT - SHIP. DIVISION'S BASE - NIGHT

Michele is a few steps away from a metal door that leads to the ship's command tower... And the door opens, taking him by surprise. The Blond emerges...

Michele has to do a pirouette to avoid being hit.

Luckily the Blond does not realise he is there, although he is very close to him, at his shoulders. The Blond is busy looking at the pier where the guard went, and HE SPEAKS RUSSIAN into his walkie-talkie. The GUARD'S REPLY arrives...

Michele meanwhile sees the guard who was taken out by Ivan, dripping wet, coming up the steps of the pier. Then he sees...

Gasparri who rushes along the pier and up the gangplank. He is aboard in no time and starts TALKING IN RUSSIAN with the Blond, an agitated conversation, which continues as the two go into the inside of the ship...

Michele, having plucked up his courage, follows them, managing to get in a moment before they close the door.

They cross a landing and go down a narrow stairwell. So far it looks like a normal ship, and none too new. The only unusual element is a control monitor attached to the wall at the bottom of the stairs.

The monitor displays live images from the bridge of the ship.

But then, beyond another door, the Division's base is revealed for what it really is.

It is like entering another world. The belly of the ship is a concentration of computers and machinery for medical analysis.

Having crossed the laboratory, Gasparri and the Blond enter a sort of control room, full of monitors being watched by a man from the Division -- the same one who was analysing the results from the tests on Stella.

Michele stretches to look over Gasparri's shoulders: the monitors transmit the AUDIO-VIDEO FEEDS FROM A SERIES OF HIDDEN CAMERAS.

One is showing the inside of the POLICE STATION, where Luigi Minnella can be

seen struggling with the coffee-and-snacks vending machine. The machine is stuck and Minnella is going crazy trying to get it to work...

Another monitor shows the front seats of Giovanna's car. She is driving and at her side is sat Andreij!

Michele is petrified.

GASPARRI
(in Russian)
Anything new?

COMPUTER OPERATOR
(in Russian)
I'd say so, Captain... Look.

GASPARRI
(in Russian)
addressing the monitor
Andreij. I knew you'd turn up.

On the monitor, Giovanna and Andreij are talking...

ANDREIJ (ON THE VIDEO)
...And it was me who brought Michele to you. I know it's difficult but you have to believe me, Giovanna...

BLOND
(in Russian)
They're looking for the boy as well...

ALTERNATING WITH:

89. INT./EXT. GIOVANNA'S CAR - VARIOUS STREETS - NIGHT

At the wheel of her car, Giovanna is incredulous and confused.

GIOVANNA
...I felt that Michele was special, but not like that...

Andreij delicately places a hand on her shoulder.

ANDREIJ
I'm sorry. I'd have left you alone, if Michele weren't in danger.

Giovanna looks out of the car. She is checking the street and at the same time

trying to get her thoughts under control.

ANDREIJ

Thank you. You've been a wonderful mother.

GIOVANNA

You think? It doesn't seem that way to me... I was young. In a mess. I only joined the police to annoy my mother. And then I find this kid in my arms.

WE GO BACK TO:

THE DIVISION'S HEADQUARTERS

At Gasparri's shoulders, Michele watches the monitor...

GIOVANNA (ON THE VIDEO)

I had to tell so many lies to everyone and to him, above all. At police academy I'd fallen in love with one of my colleagues, a guy from Genoa... He was killed on his first operation, some luck, eh... I told Michi he was his father...

(pausing)

Michele is the best thing that ever happened to me...

Giovanna's words strike Michele in the heart. He cannot help taking a step back, he brushes the wall with his back... and makes a tiny NOISE - CLING!

And Gasparri turns towards him.

Michele is frozen. Immobile. He holds his breath.

Gasparri seems to stare right into his eyes...

He takes a step forward. He is getting closer, eye to eye... Michele is terrified...

But then... Gasparri looks away. HE WHISPERS SOMETHING TO THE BLOND IN RUSSIAN. The Blond nods.

The two of them move off... And Michele, having recovered from the shock, follows them. They pass in front of a room, Michele glances in...

It is the test room, where the men of the Division interrogated the kidnapped children.

Then the corridor forks. It continues on one side, while on the other it ends at a red door. Gasparri and the Blond are aiming for that. It is watched over by a

GUARD who, after the two men have entered, plants himself in front of it. It is impossible for Michele to get past. What is to be done?

The answer arrives a moment later. Michele's eyes open wide, in the grip of a mixture of emotions: surprise, happiness, fear...

Because the red door is opened once again by the Blond... who is dragging Stella by the arm!

They approach Michele. He does not know how to intervene...

Stella
Leave me alone!

BLOND
Shut up!

Along the corridor, a row of doors with portholes...

90. INT. SHIP. CELL - NIGHT

Brando and Martino's faces peer upwards to the window Stella escaped through.

BRANDO
She's not coming back. You should have listened to me.

MARTINO
(trustingly)
She'll have got to land, she'll be calling for help now.

CLACK! The lock of the cell is deactivated, the door bursts open... And the Blond throws Stella in; she falls heavily, and looks up at the other two, worn-out.

Martino and Brando are terrified. The Blond fixes them with a stare that transmits an immutable, sadistic tranquillity...

91. INT. SHIP. CORRIDOR CELLS/CELL - NIGHT

BLOND
I'll be back shortly. Dasvidania.

This is what the blond says, seen by Michele. Then he closes the reinforced door and turns back, ISSUING AN ORDER IN RUSSIAN INTO THE WALKIE-TALKIE and going back through the red door.

The computer operator and the two guards from outside enter the corridor, passing very close to Michele, and they too disappear through the red door. The Blond must have called a meeting.

But for Michele the important thing is the cell where Stella has just been locked up... and the guard who is still there.

Michele has a quick look around... and when he reaches a T-junction with another corridor, he sees another GUARD.

He cannot open the cell without getting rid of the two guards first. He looks around, uncertain and very tense -- until he sees something that captures his attention.

CUT TO:

The guard is standing in front of the red door, immobile, his face expressionless, until... PSSST!

Someone is attracting his attention... but there is no-one to be seen. The noise is coming from the bottom of the corridor.

The guard advances, perplexed, hand on his holster...

And behind him we see THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER RISE FROM THE GROUND, HANG IN THE AIR...

Again the guard hears PSSST! -- he turns round sharply and...

He just has time to see THE EXTINGUISHER FLY TOWARDS HIS HEAD - PAM!

CUT TO:

Hearing the noise, the other guard runs to the scene, and as soon as he rounds the corner...

HE TRIPS OVER AN INVISIBLE OBSTACLE -- Michele's leg. The guard tumbles to the floor... And then he sees...

A PISTOL FLOATING IN THE AIR, AIMING AT HIS FACE.

THEN HIS OWN PISTOL IS SLIPPED FROM ITS HOLSTER AND IT GOES TO JOIN THE OTHER.

Michele (OFF)

Open the cell.

THE PISTOLS WAVE IN THE AIR: it is a sign to get a move on.

The guard MURMURS SOMETHING IN RUSSIAN, scared, as if to say, "All right, don't shoot". Then he reaches the cell, in front of which the other guard is struggling to come to his senses after the bang on his head... and then he is

frozen when he sees his colleague being threatened with two pistols that are floating four or five feet above the ground.

The guard starts to open the door...

CUT TO:

CLACK! Stella, Martino and Brando see the door open!

And the two guards come in with their hands raised!

AND TWO PISTOLS THAT REMAIN SUSPENDED IN THE AIR behind them!

Michele is at the door of the cell -- and there they are! Brando, Martino and Stella! It pains him to see her like that, frightened, pale... But it is wonderful to have found her.

STELLA
(realising)
You're here!

Martino and Brando are in shock. Who is Stella talking to?

BRANDO
...What...?

MARTINO
(to himself)
...They must have given me drugs.

MICHELE (OFF)
Shhh! Come outside!

STELLA
You saw my signal!

Michele takes her by the hand and accompanies her out. Martino and Brando come out in turn, their eyes wide open.

Martino
(to himself)
...Really powerful ones.

For their benefit, MICHELE BECOMES VISIBLE AGAIN.

Michele
(whispering)
You want to get a move on?

Brando
(hoarsely)
Oh, bugger. Silenzi.

MARTINO
Really powerful ones.

Michele
(to the guards)
You be good, eh.

And then CLANG! He closes the door.

Michele
(to the others)
Good to see you again, guys. Follow me!

92. INT/EXT. GIOVANNA'S CAR/ROAD - NIGHT

Moved and changed (becoming 93A)

93. INT. SHIP. DIVISION'S BASE - NIGHT

Two guns in his hand, Michele leads the group towards the exit, through the various areas of the secret base, in the belly of the ship. There are no Division men about: their road is clear.

MARTINO
(looking around himself)
Have you noticed what old computers...?

MICHELE
This way!

They reach the stairs where, not long before, he went down following Gasparri and the Blond. Michele looks at the monitor.

The bridge of the ship appears to be deserted.

Michele goes to climb up the stairs, but...

STELLA
Wait. There's someone else we need to free.

BRANDO
In your dreams!

And he starts to climb the stairs. Michele stops him, grabbing his arm.

MICHELE
(to Stella)
Who?

Stella
(gasping)
An... an old guy. I saw him when I was trying to
escape. They're holding him prisoner.

Michele is dubious. Then he decides.

MICHELE
...All right.

Stella smiles, full of admiration.

BRANDO
I want to get out of here!

Michele hands him one of the two pistols.

MICHELE
You get them out of here.

An important responsibility, that Brando accepts with a bit of hesitation. He takes
the pistol...

Stella
(to Michele)
I'm coming with you.

MICHELE
No.

MARTINO
Allow me to point out that you don't have time
to argue...

STELLA
(to Michele)
You don't know where they're holding him, I do.

MARTINO
...because, I mean, they could come back any
time...

Michele
(to Stella)
OK.

Brando and Martino start to go up the stairs.

Michele and Stella go back.

93A. INT./EXT. GIOVANNA'S CAR/STREET - NIGHT

Giovanna and Andreij continue their search, driving round the town. Andreij seems to be closed in himself. concentrating, as if feeling in the air for signals only he can sense.

Giovanna turns to look at him. This man is still a mystery to her, an enigma who fascinates and bothers her.

GIOVANNA
What did you do all these years?

There is a hint of melancholy in Andreij's voice.

ANDREIJ
I was alone!

GIOVANNA
(sorry, confused)
Alone?

ANDREIJ
I... see people, Giovanna. And I often do not
like what I see.
(with a quick, sincere smile)
But that's not the case with you.

Giovanna stores this information away, trying to organise her thoughts.

GIOVANNA
You never thought of taking Michele back?

ANDREIJ
I missed him every single day. But the way I
am... I wouldn't have been a good father to
him.
(he finishes up)
You cannot understand.

Giovanna is about to ask him something else, she wants to understand - but Andreij suddenly leans forward

ANDREIJ
Stop!

Giovanna stops the car, alert.

GIOVANNA

What is it?

Andreij does not answer, he is concentrating on something...

A man armed with a rifle is running towards them...

Giovanna immediately moves her hand towards her gun...

ANDREIJ

(stopping her)

No!

The armed man is none other than Ivan. On seeing Giovanna in her car, he freezes.

Andreij is almost talking to himself. Evidently he is reading Ivan's mind.

ANDREIJ

...He knows where Michele is.

93B. INT. SHIP. DIVISION'S BASE - NIGHT

A deserted corridor... in which appear Stella and A PISTOL FLOATING IN MIDAIR.

MICHELE (OFF)

You take it. I'm a more difficult target...

The pistol ends up in Stella's hand.

MICHELE (OFF)

Which way?

Stella

That way... then left.

They carefully go through a door. Still no sign of the Division's men.

Stella stops at the top of a narrow stairwell.

Stella

(whispering)

Michi! Here!

We see Michele now: he starts to climb the stairs, followed by Stella...

Until they reach a corridor that is different from the others: the walls are curved. It looks like a tunnel, full of tubes, illuminated by a disturbing reddish light that makes it even more claustrophobic.

From further on. we hear various VOICES SPEAKING IN RUSSIAN.

ALTERNATING WITH:

94. INT. SHIP. STAIRS - NIGHT

Meanwhile Brando and Martino have reached the top of the stairs... Martino peers through a porthole, sees the pier...

MARTINO
We've made it!

But when Brando tries the handle, the door does not open. Brando's eyes fill with panic.

BRANDO
It's locked!

He continues trying, pulling the door, but in vain.

BRANDO
No, no, please, open...

Martino presses his face against a porthole, looking outside. So near, yet so unattainable.

At that moment we hear a SHARP BANG inside the ship...

WE GO BACK TO:

THE CORRIDOR WITH THE CURVED WALLS

CLUNK! A bulkhead comes down like a guillotine, behind Michele and Stella.

Michele turns towards Stella, frightened...

And she gives him a cold smile.

STELLA
(*in Russian, loudly*)
COME!

The Blond and the two guards who were watching the outside of the ship come in through a door. All three of them are armed.

Michele is astounded.

STELLA
Show yourself, Andreijevic.

Almost against his will, MICHELE BECOMES VISIBLE.

Stella points the pistol at him.

95. EXT. PORT - NIGHT

Omissis.

96. INT. SHIP. CLAW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stella is the first to go in... And then Michele, kept under the aim of the Blond and the two guards.

The room is narrow, a cabin with curved dark metal walls. The two guards Michele had locked in the cell are there...

And the old man in the wheelchair. Inert as when Stella saw him through the porthole. His look is blank as though he were sleeping with his eyes open.

MICHELE
(desperate)
Stella... Why...

STELLA
I'm not Stella.

Stella hands her pistol to the Blond, then she approaches the old man, who slowly raises a wrinkled hand... And he squeezes her arm.

Stella's eyes roll upwards. She faints and falls to the ground...

And the old man's eyes -- his name is CLAW, as we will soon discover -- fills up with life.

CLAW
I have another name.

CUT TO:

A quick FLASHBACK

The young man in the wheelchair in the City of the Specials.

CLAW (V.O.):
But I prefer the nickname the heads of the
Division gave me all those years ago... "Claw".

WE GO BACK TO:

CLAW'S ROOM

Michele is close to tears.

MICHELE

What have you done to her!! STELLA!!

He tries to run to her, but the Blond holds him back, sticking the gun in his back.

CLAW

(to the Blond)

Please. With respect.

The Bond lets go of Michele and takes a step back. Michele gasps, upset. Stella is still, unconscious.

CLAW

Don't worry. When my mind seizes someone else's, there are no side effects.

(a self-indulgent smile)

A bit of a headache perhaps.

Michele is hardly listening to him. He is thinking of a counterattack, he narrows his eyes...

CLAW

(tranquil)

You're wasting your time, Michele. You got away from me at your house, but there's no escaping me here.

MICHELE

(angry)

You've never been at my house.

CLAW

Oh, yes, I have.

ALTERNATING WITH:

97. (FLASHBACK) EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Outside the school, Gasparri is about to cross the road...

CLAW (OFF)

Excuse me...? Could you give me a hand?

Gasparri turns round. The Claw is there in his wheelchair. Solicitous, the psychologist goes to him...

And the old man clutches at his arm.

Gasparri's face changes immediately.

CLAW (OFF)

That was me.

98. (FLASHBACK) INT. CLAW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stella, who has just been captured by the Blond after her attempted escape, is next to Claw who grabs her hand...

99. (FLASHBACK) INT. SHIP. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Gasparri is with the Blond -- we have gone back to when Michele was following them inside the ship, at the moment when they passed the door watched over by the guard.

Suddenly, Gasparri falls to the ground...

Soon after, Stella appears in that corridor.

CLAW (V.O.)

Just like I was your friend Stella, until a moment ago.

STELLA

(in Russian, to the Blond)

Take me to the cell... He has to think I'm your prisoner.

FLASHBACK - CORRIDOR WITH THE CELLS (scene we have already seen)

Stella, held by the Blond, passes close to Michele.

STELLA

Leave me alone!

BLOND

Shut up!

WE GO BACK TO:

CLAW'S ROOM

Claw continues his monologue directed at Michele:

CLAW

(with fake resignation)

Now I have gone back to my old body. You will understand why I prefer those of others. And it is so easy. All I have to do is touch them. As easy as it is for you now to activate your power. You're just like me, Michele. We are both Specials.

MICHELE

(hissing)

I'm not like you.

AND HE BECOMES INVISIBLE.

Claw smiles, looking forward to the spectacle.

The Blond stretches, alert... AND HIS PISTOL FLIES OUT OF HIS HAND. The other guards struggle to find Michele, waving their arms in the air... Until one of them bends over, struck by an invisible kick. Michele is coming out on top, but Claw seems anything but worried.

CLAW

Yes, get it out your system!

ALTERNATING WITH:

99A. EXT. PORT/SHIP . NIGHT

Giovanna, Andreij and Ivan run towards the port, the view of the pier still hidden by the containers. Andreij hangs on to Giovanna's arm so she can guide him...

GIOVANNA

I can't believe it was Gasparri.
Where's the boat?

They emerge from behind the containers...and there it is the "Matrioska".

IVAN

That's it!
(looking at the ship)
The guards have gone.

The trio move more quickly, Giovanna has her gun in her hand. She and Ivan see Martino and Brando waving behind a porthole. They have seen them and are calling for help.

GIOVANNA

There they are! Up there!

WE GO BACK TO:

CLAW'S ROOM

A guard falls to the ground, struck by the invisible Michele, who continues to fight...

Claw has seen enough: he looks to one of the guards... who grabs Stella, pointing his gun at her head. She moans, half-unconscious.

CLAW
Stop mucking about now.
Let's talk about serious things.

In the room we can hear an AGITATED BREATHING.

CLAW
(more firmly)
Stop, I said! Think of your friend!

MICHELE GRADUALLY BECOMES VISIBLE AGAIN. And when we see his face, it is that of a terrified child who is trying not to cry. But a tear still runs down his cheek.

Having reduced Michele to powerlessness, with Stella being held by a guard, Claw makes a sign to the Blond...

Who immediately ISSUES AN ORDER IN RUSSIAN into the walkie-talkie.

A moment later, AN INTERMITTENT ALARM starts to sound.

CLAW
Are you ready, young Andreijevic?
Time to go!

99B. INT. SHIP. STAIRS - NIGHT

The ALARM is deafening, accompanied by intermittent lights that illuminate the stairs in red flashes.

Martino and Brando are pressed against the porthole. They see the trio of rescuers approaching the gangplank to come onboard...

BRANDO
Heeelp!
(to Martino, happily)
They're coming to save us.

MARTINO

What is this alarm?

Martino looks down - and the monitor on the wall has stopped showing the images from the bridge. Now the screen is showing something more sinister.

“92, 91. 90...” - it is a countdown!

MARTINO
(to himself)
Uh-oh!

99C. EXT. PORT/SHIP - NIGHT

THE ALARM can be heard off the ship as well. Giovanna, Andreij and Ivan are about to reach the gangplank - but Andreij grips Giovanna's arm, stopping her.

ANDREIJ
(alert)
Wait!

GIOVANNA
(anxious)
What's going on?

ANDREIJ
It's going to blow up.
(looking at the ship,
he concentrates)
The boy has seen the countdown...

GIOVANNA
What do you mean?!

Ivan takes a step forward, his eyes wide.

IVAN
“Blow up”? As in a bomb?

Giovanna looks up towards the porthole, sees the frightened faces of Martino and Brando... and slips from Andreij's grip.

ANDREIJ
No! Michele isn't with them,
we have to get away!
Giovanna fires him a last, furious look...

GIOVANNA
Now it's you who doesn't understand.

..before running up the gangplank. In a burst of courage, Ivan follows her, leaving Andreij on the pier.

In a few moment Giovanna and Ivan jump on to the bridge and reach the door behind which Martino and Brando are stuck: we hear their DESPERATE BANGING - BOOM, BOOM!

Giovanna tries the door, but in vain.

MARTINO AND BRANDO (OFF)

Heeelp!

GIOVANNA

I'm here! Don't worry, I'll get you out!

But from her face is apparent she does not know how to.

IVAN

Your gun!

Giovanna nods, really tense. She points the gun at the lock, is about to fire...

IVAN

No, not like that!

Giovanna stops, shocked.

IVAN

May I?

And he quickly takes her gun and points it at the lock at a different sharper angle.

IVAN

Like that. Otherwise the bullet will ricochet.

(To the children inside)

GET BACK!

And, having said this BOOM! - HE FIRES

The handle breaks... and the door bursts open, shoved by Martino and Brando, their eyes wide in a mixture of fear and relief.

GIOVANNA

Michele and Stella?

MARTINO

They're inside, they went back!

GIOVANNA

Get out of here, quick!

Ivan drags the two boys towards the gangplank.

IVAN

Quick, this place is going to go up!

Giovanna, instead... plucks up her courage, and enters the ship, gun in her hand.

100. EXT. SEA/DINGHY/ SHIP - NIGHT

Omissis.

101. INT. SHIP. DIVISION BASE - NIGHT

Giovanna flings herself down the stairs, passes the monitor - "57, 65, 55..." and enters the Division's base, as the ALARM continues to sound. As she moves along, She looks around at all that strange equipment...s

She reaches the corridor with the cells...

BOOM BOOM BOOM! -- LOUD BANGING. Someone, inside one of the cells, is banging desperately against the door...

Hope appears in Giovanna's eyes... She opens the door, hoping to find Michele and Stella...

But instead she finds Gasparri.

GIOVANNA
WHERE IS MY SON?!

Gasparri is lost. He is confused.

GASPARRI
I don't know, I don't remember a thing. I woke up in here!

GIOVANNA
I don't believe you! Take me to him!

Giovanna looks for the mechanism to open the bulkhead, the only way to continue down the corridor with the cells.

ANDREIJ (OFF)
Giovanna!

Andreij has appeared at the end of the corridor with the cells.

GIOVANNA
I have to find Michele, he's still here.

ANDREIJ

Not any more. Trust me, Giovanna.

At that moment A VIBRATION RISES THROUGH THE FLOOR, ACCOMPANIED BY ECHOING MECHANICAL NOISES IN THE BOWELS OF THE SHIP...

102. EXT. UNDERWATER VIEW. SHIP/SUBMARINE - NIGHT

A MINI SUBMARINE DROPS AWAY FROM THE HULL OF THE SHIP, AND MOVES QUICKLY AWAY

102A. INT. SUBMARINE. CLAW'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Blond's hand opens the cover of a porthole, revealing the view outside.

Black. Water.

Michele closes his eyes. It is over, he is trapped.

CLAW

See? We're on our way. Our submarine is a bit out of date and very uncomfortable... but it is pretty fast.

When Michele reopens his eyes, they are red from crying.

Claw smiles at Michele.

CLAW

Are you not happy? Your friend Stella's here as well. We'll put her in the rescue capsule now and send her safe and sound to the surface.

HE ISSUES ORDERS IN RUSSIAN and the guard stops pointing his pistol at Stella, who is slowly coming round. The Blond takes her in his arms and deposits her delicately in a steel egg with a porthole: the capsule.

Michele cries silently.

CLAW

I'm sorry I'd to threaten her. I wouldn't behave that way. But... So many years spent as victims!

(becoming heated)

Forced to hide ourselves! Defend ourselves against everyone! You can understand me, can't you?

MICHELE
(sobbing)
Take us back... Please...

CLAW
Soon you'll thank me. As soon as you are able
to hug your mother again

Michele opens his mouth, astonished.

MICHELE
...She's dead...

CLAW
How I wish you had your father's power... that
way you could read my mind and know I'm
telling the truth.

MICHELE
It's a lie! You killed her, it was you!!

CLAW
(smiling, mournfully)
No, no! At one time, humans without powers
were in charge of the Division, it was they who
hurt her. But they didn't kill her. And now the
Division is ours! The way it should have been
from the start!
(pause)
Your mother is alive. And she is waiting for
you.

He scrutinises Michele's eyes, satisfied. He sees he is confused.

CLAW
Yes... You believe me. You're starting to
understand that I'm not lying. And I never will
to you. Because one day you will be in charge
of everything. It's your destiny.

Michele does not react. His defences are crumbling.

CLAW
We are your family.

And he offers him his hand. Michele looks at that hand proffered like a
persuasive invitation. He hesitates. And then...

...he moves his hand towards the old man's.

Stella sees this scene.

STELLA
(murmuring)

...No...

ALTERNATING WITH:

103. INT. SHIP. DIVISION BASE - NIGHT

Omissis.

104. INT. SHIP. CORRIDOR WITH THE CELLS - NIGHT

Omissis.

104A. INT./EXT. SHIP/PORT - NIGHT

THE QUICK STEPS of Giovanna, Andreij and Gasparri echo in the belly of the ship. Giovanna runs, dragging the two men, a desperate rush towards the stairs...

On the monitor: "11, 10, 9..."

Breathlessly the trio start to rush up the stairs...

And emerge on the bridge. They run to the gangplank... and just as they step on to it, and HUGE BANG comes from the ship... and an ENORMOUS FIREBALL SHOOTS UP FROM IT.

Giovanna, Andreij and Gasparri tumble on to the pier at the last moment, thrown there by the blast, as THE SHIP IS CONSUMED BY A FAIREBALL.

BOOOOOOOOOOM! IT EXPLODES!

The trio on the pier are covered in debris and smoke...

And they reach the three children who had taken shelter behind a container: of Ivan, Martino and Brando, only the first has the courage to peek round the corner to see the explosion...

Then, after the explosion, Giovanna too raises her eyes. The ship is wrapped in flames and smoke.

Giovanna's eyes fill with despair.

GIOVANNA
Michele...

WE GO BACK TO:

105. EXT. SEA/DINGHY - NIGHT

Omissis.

106. INT. CLAW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Omissis.

CLAW'S ROOM

THE ECHO OF THE BOMB causes a tremor in the submarine.

The throbbing is not very severe, but it is sufficient to cause a flash of awareness in Michele's face...

...and he immediately pulls away he hand he was proffering.

MICHELE
No! I'll never go with you!

Claw grimaces in disappointment face.

CLAW
In that case your friend will die. Kill her.

Two guards put their safeties off and move towards Stella.

Michele clenches his fists, his body starts to vibrate with an explosive energy.

MICHELE
NOOOOOOOOO!

SHOVED BY A WAVE OF TELEKINETIC ENERGY, THE TWO SOLDIERS ARE FLUNG AGAINST THE WALLS, AND LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS.

Claw's face lights up, fascinated.

CLAW
Extraordinary.

Two other soldiers try to attack Michele, but he, stretching his hands out, MAKES THEM FLY AWAY.

The Blond remains and, fearful, he does not move a muscle.

But it is not over: in the silence of that suspended moment, we hear a CRACK.
Everyone turns to...

...the porthole. Whose glass is cracking -- thanks to the force generated by Michele.

The smile vanishes from Claw's face and he blanches.

And a moment later... THE WATER STARTS TO ENTER THE CRAFT.

AN ALARM sounds in the cabin.

The Blond throws himself against the porthole to try and limit the damage, but it is too late...

The porthole gives and a powerful jet of water crashes into him, knocking him over.

CLAW
What have you done?

Michele gives himself a shake. He runs towards Stella, who has just come to her senses. He gets into the capsule beside her and, a moment before closing the door, he catches the eye of Claw who is immobile with the water up to his chest.

CLAW
(sorrowfully)
Your mother will be very disappointed.

Michele is upset, but...

MICHELE
It's not true, my mother is dead.

And he quickly closes the watertight door.

He is safe... At least until he realises the instructions are all in Cyrillic.

MICHELE
What now?

Stella studies the control panel, concentrating.

STELLA
I told you I'd travelled a lot.

And saying this she presses the launch button.

107. EXT. UNDERWATER VIEW. SUBMARINE/CAPSULE - NIGHT

WHILE THE SUBMARINE SINKS, THE SAFETY CAPSULE UNHOOKS FROM THE TOP OF IT AND STARTS TO HEAD TOWARDS THE SURFACE.

108. EXT. SEA/FISHING BOAT - NIGHT

A fishing boat off the coast. Its lights reflect in the dark water...

When we see THE CAPSULE WITH MICHELE AND STELLA ABOARD EMERGE AT FULL SPEED. It rises up and then bounces back down to the sea, rocking until it settles down.

The FISHERMAN warily points his light in the direction of that steel egg...

And he gives a start when -- CLANK! -- the hatch of the capsule opens.

Stella and Michele's little heads peer out.

109. EXT. HARBOUR OFFICE - NIGHT

A column of smoke rises in the dark sky: in the distance, hidden by the containers, the destroyed ship continues to burn.

Everyone is on the pier now, next to the harbour office. Various uniformed port officers are helping the police.

Giovanna hugs Michele hard, then shakes the hand of the fisherman who brought Michele and Stella ashore, while Luigi Minnella is giving blankets to the two frozen children and also to Brando, Ivan and Martino.

Michele's face is exhausted but radiant, in among the others: not only did he save Stella but for the first time he looks like a child with lots of friends.

Luigi Minnella is marching Gasparri along and goes up to Giovanna.

LUIGI

What will we d-d-do with him?

GASPARRI

I told you, it's nothing to do with me! I'm a psychologist!

He slips out of Minnella's grasp and escapes. He runs off, desperate, the victim of a situation he does not understand. But for Minnella he is merely a criminal to be caught.

He runs after him and with a skilful move gets him under control. They both end up on the ground, panting.

LUIGI

You're under arrest. You can give us your explanations later, is that clear?

(he pulls an arm
behind his back)

You have the right to keep silent, you have the right to make one phone call...

And CLACK! He handcuffs him. Amused, Giovanna approaches.

GIOVANNA

Luigi.

Luigi leaps to his feet, keeping Gasparri immobilised.

LUIGI

Did I do something wrong?

GIOVANNA

You're not stuttering.

Luigi makes an astonished face: "Really?" Then he realises and tests himself.

LUIGI

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

Feeling for him, Giovanna laughs, while Minnella rattles off tongue-twisters, radiant.

GASPARRI

(muttering)

Psychosomatic...

Meanwhile, nearby...

110. EXT. HARBOUR OFFICE - NIGHT

Michele and Stella are sitting on the pier with two police blankets over their shoulders.

STELLA

It's the most incredible thing that ever happened to me.

(pause)

I'd my first kiss with Michele Silenzi!

She looks at him, full of tenderness and gratitude, then takes his hand and

squeezes it. Michele almost faints with emotion. They smile at each other and stay where they are, silent.

But then Michele's attention is drawn to Andreij, in the middle of the pier, who is extending both his hands, concentrating. His hands vibrate, as though they were sending out a force...

Michele frowns: he has understood what his father is doing... he wants to cancel everyone's memories!

As Andreij is dealing with the fisherman, Michele jumps up and rushes over to him.

MICHELE

Don't do it.

Andreij looks at him without answering.

MICHELE

Then nobody will remember anything!

ANDREIJ

It's only you they'll forget. Nobody will know about the invisible boy.

MICHELE

Why?

ANDREIJ

They all know you're special now.

MICHELE

Exactly!

ANDREIJ

You'll always be in danger.

MICHELE

I don't care!

ANDREIJ

I do. You mustn't live a life like the one I had to.

MICHELE

No, I don't want that! I don't want everything to go back to how it was before

He looks at Stella and seems desperate. But his father's look is resolute. Michele sighs.

MICHELE
What will happen after?

ANDREIJ
You'll go back to your normal life. And you'll be safe.

MICHELE
But will my power disappear?

ANDREIJ
Your power can't disappear. It's inside you. With time, you'll understand how to use it.

MICHELE
What about you?

Andreij does not answer.

MICHELE
You're going away...

He is broken-hearted: he's about to lose his father having only just found him again.

ANDREIJ
I have to go. But I will always know when you need me..

Michele nods sadly. He knows the moment has come.

ANDREIJ
Nobody must see you after I've cancelled their memory of you... For them it will be as though you were never here this evening.

Michele looks at the people there. Soon none of them will remember his heroics: Giovanna, Brando, Martino, Stella...

MICHELE
Give me just a minute...Dad.

Andreij nods. Michele gives him a big hug, his eyes swollen with tears. Andreij ruffles his hair, a caress.

Then Michele pulls away and goes back to Stella.

He sits next to her. He looks at her with damp eyes.

STELLA
What's going on, Michi?

MICHELE

You're going to forget about me.

STELLA

What are you saying? That's impossible!

Michele, depressed, looks into her eyes... and kisses her.

Stella's eyes widen. Then she closes them.

And Michele too abandons himself to that chaste, sweet and sad kiss. As though it were his last.

MICHELE

(with a sad smile)

Goodbye, Stella.

Stella watches him move away, a bit dazed, and then goes back to staring out at the sea. She does not realise that Andreij – after exchanging a look with Michele – passes his hand behind her neck.

Michele looks at his beloved one last time, then BECOMES INVISIBLE. And once he has disappeared, it is as though he had never been there. Unseen, he sits apart on the pier and lowers his head, disheartened.

After a while, he turns and looks around for his father. He is not there.

He seems to be able to make out, far away, on the wharf, a shape that is moving away, quickly, in the dark.

Michele smiles sadly. If it is not a farewell, it is a goodbye. Or at least that is what he hopes.

111. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. MICHELE'S ROOM - DAY

Michele opens his eyes. In an instant, the memories of the night before assault him. He enjoys them for a moment, then...

GIOVANNA (OFF)

Michi! Breakfast!

112. INT. MICHELE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY

Michele enters the kitchen, still in his pyjamas.

The table is set for breakfast. Candela is sitting on the floor staring at the TV, next to Mario who is curled up beside her: as soon as the dog sees Michele, he barks happily. Annamria is busy at the cooker, Giovanna is on the phone.

GIOVANNA

The important thing is that they're safe.

(she listens)

No... it's a bit complicated to explain...

Michele stops for a moment to look at her: his mother who remembers only what she needs to.

CANDELA

(slyly)

Hi, Michi.

MICHELE

Hi, Candela.

The girl continues to stare at him, slyly.

GIOVANNA

(on the phone)

Really? I didn't see myself.

(hesitant)

How was I?

(she listens and smiles)

Thanks, Mum. Thank you. Yes...

I'll call you tonight.

And she hangs up. She addresses the group at the table.

ANAMARIA

Apparently they made me out to be a heroine
on the news!

Then she stops. She is suddenly moved, her eyes full of tears.

GIOVANNA

And Mum said she was proud of me for the first
time...

(pausing)

and to think I can't remember what the hell
happened?

Anamaria looks at Giovanna full of admiration.

ANAMARIA

(to Michele)

Ninho! Your mum is a heroine,
did you know that?

Michele smiles. Candela looks at him electrified... she seems to be saying to him,
"I know it was you!"

GIOVANNA

Monster, I'll take you to school today. You deserve it after what you did.

Michele looks at her questioningly. What does she mean?

GIOVANNA

Mrs Siani called me, she was astounded. You got 8 in maths!

Michele smiles furtively.

113. INT./EXT. GIOVANNA'S CAR/SCHOOL - DAY

The car stops in front of the school. Michele looks at Giovanna. Her face is tired but satisfied.

MICHELE

You were good, you brought them home.

GIOVANNA

I promised you, didn't I?

They smile at each other. Michele's look is warm, full of melancholy but also of love, and acceptance.

MICHELE

Bye... Mum.

He opens the door, gets out... but then he goes back and hugs her hard. He plants a kiss on her cheek – which Giovanna accepts with happy surprise – and off he goes.

114. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

"WELCOME BACK"

This is what the banner hanging in the school courtyard says.

A small party has been organised for Stella, Martino and Brando, with pizza, drinks and balloons. All the children form groups around the survivors. Ivan fist-thumps Brando, happy to have his partner back. Stella though is silent. She is drinking from a can of lemonade with a straw. She is smiling, still a bit bewildered.

Michele looks at her. On his own, in a corner, he is realising the bitter truth. He is invisible once more, but not in that sense. He sighs mournfully, lowering his head. His look is not sad, but it is different. Grown-up.

115. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The end of the school day. Michele moves among the pupils who are swarming out towards home, indifferent. Nobody notices him, no one acclaims him. His incredible feats have been erased for ever.

It seems like déjà-vu, but it is only life getting back into its routine: this time too Ivan and Brando approach him menacingly. They are enemies once more, and battle-hardened.

IVAN

Where are you running off to?

BRANDO

Are you pleased I'm back?

Michele smiles tiredly.

MICHELE

Ivan, you're not really stupid... You just have an attention deficit disorder, but it's not that serious, you can control it. And you, Brando, if you want to take your problems out on someone, take them out on your father.

Ivan freezes. Brando blushes.

BRANDO

Eh?

MICHELE

You wanna beat me up? Go ahead.

He opens his arms wide. Nobody moves. The two bullies are too astounded, too cut to the quick to do anything to him, and Michele moves away calmly.

MICHELE

Excuse me.

He heads off. Stella passes near to him and he looks at her hopefully, searching in her eyes for the slightest sign of recognition... but nothing. Stella looks through him as though he were not there.

Michele sighs and sticks his hands in his pockets. Then...

MICHELE

A-choo!

Stella snaps round. She leans her head to one side as though struck by a sudden, irrational thought. She smiles...

Michele's face lights up with joy. Who knows? Maybe not everything has gone back to how it was before...

STELLA

You want to walk me home?

Michele nods. The two of them walk off along the street.

116. INT. DIVISION HQ - THE GENERAL'S ROOM - DAY

CAPTION:

"SOMEWHERE IN SIBERIA..."

Beyond the glass of the big floor-to-ceiling window, the tundra opens up, blasted by gusts of icy wind that create eddies above the compact snow.

In the room, a white owl opens its wings and tucks its head down between its shoulders. It closes its eyes, perched on its stand, a chain around one claw.

We are in a huge room, furnished in cold Soviet style. A SOLDIER crosses it, head down.

SOLDIER

(in Russian)

The mission failed, General. The Special Andreij got away from us...

On the armchair facing the window, a presence can be felt.

Silence, only the noise of the wind outside lashing the tundra.

The soldier swallows.

SOLDIER

(finishing up late)

...Sir.

The armchair swings slowly in the direction of the soldier... BUT THERE IS NO ONE IN IT AND ITS SPRINGS CREAK AS THOUGH SOMEONE WERE RISING FROM IT.

The soldier moves his eyes around the room, his body immobile but his heart beating really hard, and then...SLAP! The soldier's head flies violently to one side, struck by an invisible slap. And in front of him appears...

YELENA. Michele's mother. She is still beautiful, her sinuous body wrapped in a black jumpsuit very similar to the one she was wearing during her escape 12 years earlier. Time has not passed for her. Only her eyes are different: now they seem to be made of ice.

With a slight gesture, Yelena dismisses the soldier. She remains alone in the big room, she moves to the Afghan cigar box on her desk and extracts a white mouse by the tail.

She places it in the palm of her hand, caressing it. Then, MURMURING A DARK LULLABY, she places the mouse on the ground in front of the owl's perch. Disorientated, the mouse looks about, sniffing the air. A BEAT OF WINGS... The owl stands out against the backlight of the window, its claws out.

Yelena stares out, her look as cold as the ice of the tundra. Softly she sings the dark lullaby.

117. (FLASHBACK) EXT. TUNDRA. SNOW-COVERED FIELDS - DAY

Big snow-covered fields, swept by a bitter, strong wind. The trees in the woods have been reduced to black skeletons by the winter cold, beneath a leaden sky. The HOWLING of the dogs draws ever closer...

Yelena and Andreij look at each other for the last time with death in their eyes. They kiss, a quick one, bursting with desperate love... Yelena gives a last tender look at newly born Michele as Andreij turns and starts running again with the baby towards the woods, revealing...

The tiny face of ANOTHER NEWBORN BABY poking out of the rucksack he is carrying on his back. It is identical to Michele, the same eyes and same wispy hair on which, though, is attached a little clasp in the shape of a flower.

Wrecked, Yelena watches them move off. She murmurs to herself the LULLABY we have heard already: but this time it sounds different, very sweet and desperate... She notices one of Michele's blue-wool booties, abandoned on the snow. She picks it up.

THE END