

THE SKIN I LIVE IN

**Script by
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**Based on
“Tarantula”
by Thierry Jonquet**

A caption on a black screen: "...the uninterrupted coming and going of the tiger behind the bars of his cage so that he shouldn't miss the one, fleeting instant of salvation..." (Elias Canetti)

EL CIGARRAL AND SURROUNDINGS. COUNTRY MANSION

The vast estate of El Cigarral lies two or three miles from Toledo. The first access to the house – a palatial mansion built in the 18th century and renovated on various occasions over the years- is a gate which gives onto the road. The impenetrable wrought iron entrance, some fifteen feet high, is set in a stone wall.

After passing through the first gate and continuing for some 200 yards along a dirt road surrounded by bushes and olive trees, there is another gate, as high as the first, set in a peripheral wall which protects and marks the perimeter of the house. This second gate leads into a first patio at the far end of which there is a gate which gives access to the noble part of the house. In the first patio, a door leads into the kitchen, inside which there is another door which connects it to a pantry which in turn leads to the large entrance hall of the house.

Beyond the gate, there is another patio ("the orange tree patio"), a garage and another gate through which a garden can be seen...

The mansion rises up amidst olive trees, totally isolated. It is impossible to see it from the road. Likewise, from inside the mansion, it is impossible to see the road. All the windows of the various rooms have grilles.

The first floor of the house is vast, open plan and with very high ceilings, rising up to 45 feet in some places. The hall is decorated with both classic and modern furniture, an eclectic mixture of styles where nothing is out of place. On one of the walls there are reproductions of two large nudes by Titian and other works alluding to female beauty and health. On the ground floor is the pantry door which leads into the large kitchen. Each corner of the great hall has two doors, forming an angle. One of them is that of Robert's office, the others lead into different rooms and an inner corridor. A painting nine feet high dominates the frontal part of the hall, it is a blatant copy of Baldessari. The painting shows an amplification of a photo in black and white of a group of schoolchildren, probably classmates. To judge from their clothes and hairstyles, it was taken in the early 60s. The typical photo of a school group. The artist has covered the children's faces with different colored circles, in the style of Baldessari. We are struck by the impossibility of identifying the children.

A wooden staircase leads from the ground floor up to the first floor. From below we can see four doors up there which lead to rooms or corridors.

"El Cigarral" was a luxurious private (almost confidential) cosmetic surgery clinic. The ground floor and part of the first are inhabited by Marilia (70), the housekeeper, Vera (25), the only patient, and Dr. Robert Ledgard. The place doesn't look like a clinic. It looks more like the entrance of a charming hotel without any guests. There is grandeur in the empty spaces and these give the impression that a powerful person lives there, deliberately isolated from the outside world: Dr. Ledgard.

SEQ. 1 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA’S ROOM. INT. MORNING

An inverted woman, that is, with her head on the floor and her feet in the air, is resting her heels against the wall (she’s doing a headstand), motionless. She’s wearing only a bodysuit, which clings so tightly to her skin that she looks as if she’s naked and asexual. The surface of the second skin bodysuit is a special kind of lycra, made from various pieces which are fitted to the various volumes of her body, like those Olympic swimsuits that were banned because they were faster than human skin. Unlike those swimsuits, the second skin bodysuit covers her whole body, including the extremities, feet, hands, fingers and toes. Some of the zips can be seen on the outside. We can also see the seams joining the various pieces that make up the garment. The bodysuit makes the woman look like a robot hybrid or a mannequin.

Seen from a distance, the color of the bodysuit can be mistaken for skin; close up, we see that it is nude color and we can distinguish the texture of the lycra and the seams, like scars. The genital protuberance is flat. From a distance, the woman looks like an asexual nude.

The wall against which she is resting her heels is covered with graphics that are in general indefinable, written in various colors, with black predominating. There are also phrases, drawings and lines. Lots of lines or strokes, some two inches long at most.

If we move closer to the wall, we can see that the signs are dates, written with black, red and cream eye pencils. (Perhaps it’s too soon to show this, better later.) One after another, the dates form a visual texture, like a pattern on the wall. The days pass chronologically. There are also drawings, copied from some work by Louise Bourgeois. (Or based on them.) And phrases. Some words are illegible, others are not. Names of places. Words superimposed.

Vera’s body is throbbing beneath the second skin bodysuit. She isn’t very tall, but she has a well proportioned, fibrous body. She looks about 25. She is slim, the skin on her face is smooth and soft, almost glowing. Her hair is dark, shoulder length, tied back casually. She is doing some yoga exercises. At first she would give the impression that she’s a doll that has been abandoned in a clean, aseptic attic, if it weren’t for the walls covered with written symbols. She moves around a yoga book lying open at the postures she is executing with precision. Near the wall with the graphics we can see various elements for practicing yoga. And balls of different sizes. Two of them 30 inches in diameter, one 20 inches and another 15 inches. She uses the balls for certain postures. There are also smaller balls, like beach balls.

The two large balls are covered with pieces of cloth joined together, like an irregular patchwork. We can see the joins, woven or tied.

On one of the side walls, there are two bars, like those in a dance studio. A white table with curved edges and a circular mirror fitted into the wall, at eye level.

The dates on the walls go from 2006 up to 2012.

In the center of the room, there is a bed, not very big, on a tatami and covered by a blood red bedspread. The walls and the floor are grey. Two windows, with grilles, through which we can only see trees and an area of lawn. High ceilings. A two-seater couch is the only piece of furniture apart from the bed. With the exception of a little, ellipse shaped table next to the bed, on which there is a circular, cordless white lamp. It is switched on by touch.

The rest of the room is open-plan. There are no cushions on the couch. Piles of books, stacked one on top of another, forming a chance sculpture. All the protruding lines are curved. On the white, there are several figures made of plasticine and various pieces of cloth and sacking (clearly inspired by Louise Bourgeois, there are two books by the artist on the table).

A closet, also built-in. The external moldings show that it's a closet. And the little metal door of a dumb waiter. Beside it, an interphone, with a keyboard.

The television screen, placed at a normal height, is tightly riveted to the wall by the four corners, ensuring that it is immobilized.

There is also an extractor-suction tube that reels back into the wall. A sophisticated evolution of the extractors used to clean car interiors. The wall opposite to where Vera is doing her headstand is empty of graphics and drawings. In the center of the wall, a dark, transparent pivot, like an eye, is obviously hiding a camera.

Cut

Vera opens the closet door. Several dresses are hanging from the upper rail, but they have been savagely ripped apart, as if a tiger had got into the closet and, insane, shredded them. She picks one of the torn dresses (which are hanging from harmless plastic hangers). It's made from flimsy material, the back of it is missing and all that is left of the top part has been torn into strips.

Vera puts on the dress and goes over to one of the wooden bars where she pulls tightly on the strips at the front of the dress. Using a nail file, she cuts several strips of material which she then applies to the surface of the balls or the plasticine figures.

SEQ. 2 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. MORNING

In the kitchen, as well as a little plasma television, there are two internal control screens. They show, in black and white, all of Vera's room, from two different angles. These two complementary screens are set above a very old stove, which doesn't work, inside a fireplace that doesn't work either

Marilia, the housekeeper at El Cigarral, is preparing Vera's breakfast. She opens a drawer in the kitchen where she keeps the pharmacopoeia, a good supply of hormones, vitamins, anti-depressants, tranquilizers, etc. She opens another drawer in which there is a gun lying next to sealed sets of cardboard cutlery. She takes out a set consisting of a knife and fork, obviously fragile. She dissolves some tablets in a plastic cup full of water. She puts the cup and the cutlery on a tray, along with the rest of the breakfast. On the tray there is also a book, "Runaway", by Alice Munro. On the large central table,

there are clothes she has just ironed or washed. Two bodysuits, one black, the other flesh colored.

The kitchen is large, it has two doors, one leads to the interior of the house and another to one of the patios, the dustier one. The center is dominated by a large wooden table. A long worktop full of drawers runs along two of the walls, in an L-shape. The absurd fireplace, six feet high, is in the center of the biggest wall

SEQ. 3 - EL CIGARRAL. GROUND FLOOR. INT. MORNING

Marilia comes out of the kitchen (with the tray in her hand and the bodysuits under her arm) through the door that leads to the great hall. She walks across the floor to the wall where the dumb waiter is installed. She opens the door and places the tray inside. She leaves the clean, folded bodysuits alongside it.

SEQ. 4 – EL CIGARRAL. GROUND FLOOR. INT. MORNING

On the ground floor, Marilia passes three servants, two Philippine men and a Bulgarian woman, who are cleaning. She disappears through the door leading to the kitchen.

Marilia is a healthy, energetic woman who looks younger than her age. Her hands are those of a working woman, but she is dressed with (cinematic) “genre” distinction. Her attitude is that of a woman with class who is also close to the earth, ancestral, practical and decent.

SEQ. 5 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT.

SEQ. 6 – VERA’S ROOM. INT.

On the screens in the kitchen we can see Vera taking the tray from the dumb waiter in her room and placing it on the white table, next to the wall.

There is an interphone next to the dumb waiter. Vera presses the button and speaks. More or less at that moment, Marilia comes into the kitchen.

VERA

Marilia, are you there?

MARILIA

Yes.

She has just come into the kitchen.

VERA

Send me up more sacking. And I also need glue and double sided tape.

Marilia presses one of the buttons on the interphone, which is near the entry phone with its video, and answers Vera, whom she can see on the two surveillance screens.

MARILIA

I can't get them until tomorrow.

VERA

All right. (Smiling subtly) Listen, I also wanted a needle, thread and scissors.

MARILIA

I presume you're joking!

VERA

(Admitting it) Yes.

Cut.

SEQ. 7 – LECTURE HALL, COLLEGE OF DOCTORS. INT. DAY

A horseshoe-shaped lecture hall, with wooden desks worn by use with just one armrest, distributed along some thirty tiers. If it were a theater, the stage would be down on the lower part, in the center. From that spot, standing at a lectern and with a screen behind him, Dr. Robert is talking about the face to a group of specialist surgeons who half-fill the lecture hall. He is using animated graphics, which appear on the screen behind him. Several heads, in synthetic image, illustrate the processes he is talking about. The illustration, although explicit, is not at all gory, it's very aseptic.

DR. ROBERT (OFF)

Our face identifies us. Through it, we reflect our emotions, we relate to others, we share in their lives and make them share in ours. The face is not, as is said, the mirror of the soul, it is the mirror of one's humanity.

For victims of a fire, it isn't enough to save their lives. They need to have a face, even if it is that of a dead person. A face with features, so they can gesticulate. Without expressions to accompany them, words fall short.

I have participated in three of the face transplants that have been carried in Spain and I can tell you that it was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life.

He turns to the video which illustrates what he is saying.

ROBERT

In order for a shapeless mass to acquire the features that will give it expression, we have to mold the

muscles, articulating the facial musculature with the corresponding nerve endings.

Cut.

SEQ. 8 - MATERNITY HOSPITAL ON O'DONNELL ST. EXT. NIGHT

Dr. Robert arrives at the maternity hospital on O'Donnell Street in Madrid, designed by the architect Moneo. A characteristic building of pure lines, with transparent *sanitary green* colored glass. On the canopy of the building we can see, in large letters, MATERNITY. Near the door, several staff members are smoking in groups of two or three. Three eccentric tourists are taking photos of each other in front of the building.

The car driven by Dr. Robert (the spectator still doesn't know him) disappears through the entrance to the hospital's underground parking lot.

SEQ. 9 – HOSPITAL PARKING LOT. INT. NIGHT

Dr. Robert is looking for a convenient place to park. He is steering with one hand while with the other he's sending a missed call over his cell.

He hasn't finished parking when a male nurse who is on night duty appears, wearing a white coat, his bleeper in full sight, etc. He greets Dr. Robert and hands him a blue plastic bag.

Dr. Robert places a bundle of bank notes in the nurse's hand, an almost imperceptible gesture in the darkness of the parking lot.

SEQ.10 – EL CIGARRAL. FIRST GATE. EXT. NIGHT

Dr. Ledgard uses a remote control to open the gate by the main road and drives in along the dirt road.

Cut.

SEQ. 11 – EL CIGARRAL. SECOND GATE. EXT. NIGHT

He reaches the second gate and opens it the same way, with a remote control.

He drives through and parks the car in the orange tree patio. He takes the blue container he was given in the underground parking lot.

SEQ. 12 – EL CIGARRAL. DR. ROBERT LEDGARD'S LABORATORY. INT. NIGHT

THE LABORATORY: Under some semi-circular arches and a wall whose surface is not smooth but which also forms arches, all in brick, a transparent methacrylate structure has been installed. This contains Dr. Ledgard's laboratory. If there are no lights reflected in it, it looks as if the laboratory is floating between the arches. The arches on the walls and ceiling give the place a neo-gothic atmosphere.

The laboratory contains all the technical advances. There are several computers, on whose screens various parts of the human body are moving in synthetic image, as if floating in space. Male members, female members. An insectarium with various captive insects, ants, mosquitoes, flies, wasps, etc.

There is also matter. Containers in which various textures of artificial skin are being cultivated. Of course there is a microscope. And a life-size, headless mannequin, lying on a table that is the same size. The mannequin's body has got marks like those on an anatomical map and is an exact reproduction of Vera's body. Depending on the angle, at times it looks like a naked, dead woman.

A sterile hood. The cultivation is done inside an incubator, a kind of transparent refrigerator.

Robert comes into the changing area of the laboratory with the blue container. He opens it. Inside, there is a white polystyrene box. He gets changed and puts on a lab coat and latex gloves. He goes into the sterile structure and checks the material (the placenta which the nurse gave him. Inside the polystyrene box, there is a bag of frozen blue gel, next to a little bag of blood.)

With a syringe, he takes a sample through the container valve and places it on a Petri dish. He examines the blood flow through the microscope. The cells which form the blood appear on a computer screen, creeping along slowly.

Cut.

He opens a refrigerator and puts the container holding the bag with the rest of the blood inside, in order to freeze the stem cells. (In a torpedo of liquid nitrogen, with its manometer, connected to the large thermo-barometer)

Cut.

SEQ. 13 – STAIRCASE AND LANDING. INT. NIGHT

Robert is going up the stairs of the house. He's going to his room. When he reaches the landing, he walks past another door. He pauses for a moment, as if hesitating, but decides to go on to his own room, which he enters through the next door.

SEQ. 14 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Robert comes into his room. On the bedside table there is a photo of his daughter Norma, when she was 10. And another photo of a woman which we don't see clearly as

it is submerged in darkness. It is his dead wife and we only get a vague idea of her features.

The whole room seems to have been decorated around a large plasma screen, six feet long and five feet high, which presides over one of the walls. On each side of the screen, there is a bookcase and a chest of drawers. In front of the screen, there is a leather chaise longue covered with soft cushions. Among the cushions, there is a copy of the English edition of “The Selfish Gene” by Richard Dawkins. A small wooden side table next to the chaise longue. Everything is simple, with quality and balanced geometry.

On the table, as well as Hermès ashtrays, scientific journals and some recent press clippings, there is a multiple remote control. Robert presses it. It’s the first thing he does as soon as he comes into the room, automatically, like a regular tic. Inside the plasma screen, Vera’s room comes alive. Obviously, there is a camera installed on the other side of the wall which captures a simultaneous and very complete image of the room. In the background, the little round bathroom we saw in Seq. 2, separated from the bedroom by frosted glass, and the wall covered with signs and words. There isn’t much light in the room.

Robert, sitting on the chaise longue, looks at the image on the screen for a while. Motionless, relaxed, unhurried.

He gets up and opens one of the little drawers in the chest to the left of the screen. He takes out a little box, like a pencil case, which contains an opium set. Several little balls inside a little container. A lighter and a pipe for smoking it.

SEQ. 15 – WHAT IS SEEN ON THE BIG SCREEN

Vera is lying on the other side of the bed, naked, with her back to the screen. Despite the darkness, Robert is contemplating the perfect curve of her shoulder and hips, the roundedness of her buttocks, outlined against the background of the wall covered with graphics.

He leaves his room and goes out to the first floor landing. He walks the few yards separating him from the next door, the door into Vera’s room.

SEQ. 16 – EL CIGARRAL. LANDING, DOOR OF VERA’S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

He stops in front of the door of Vera’s room. He takes a key from his pocket and unlocks the door.

SEQ. 17 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA’S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

He comes into the room and locks the door behind him. Although he took delight in looking at the woman’s body while he was in his room, when he is alone with her he speaks in a neutral, distant tone. While he’s turning the key on the inside, he says: “I’ve

brought you some opium”. When he turns, he finds her lying unconscious on the bed with a gash in each wrist and also cuts on her breasts. There is blood on the sheets, not much. On the floor, there are the covers of several books, the edges stained with blood. Vera has used the sharpened edges to cut herself. Piled up on the floor in disorder are three books by Cormac McCarthy, one of them “Blood Meridian”. (The author was chosen at random, Vera had picked hard backed novels which had covers with sharp edged paper, which served her purpose.)

ROBERT

No, it’s impossible!

His tone is one of surprise and annoyance.

He reacts quickly and takes her in her arms.

Cut.

SEQ. 18 – EL CIGARRAL. HALLWAY TO OPERATING THEATER. INT. NIGHT

Dr. Robert runs along a corridor with Vera’s naked body in his arms, until he reaches a door with a sign over it which says “Operating Theater”. They go inside.

SEQ. 19 – EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. NIGHT

The place is fitted out with the latest technology. A glass case contains all the instruments. The sight of all those pieces together, gleaming and scrupulously arranged, is horrific.

Under the theater light, Dr. Robert can see that the cuts aren’t deep and keeps repeating, “I don’t understand”.

Vera is very pale. The paleness of her body is gleaming inside the operating theater and in some way is defiant. Her eyes are closed and she is doing “deep breathing”, for which she fills her chest with air that she then expels very slowly. Her ribs and chest move in time with her breathing. It’s her way of focusing on herself and rejecting her surroundings. A wide velcro belt is around her waist and keeps her motionless on the table. The moving of her chest is impeding Robert, who is disinfecting the wounds on her breasts.

ROBERT

Do you mind breathing more gently?

Vera opens her eyes and spits at him with her look.

VERA

If you want me to stop breathing, kill me!

ROBERT

Don't talk rubbish!

VERA

How long is all this going to go on?

She isn't just referring to her wounds being dressed. Robert avoids giving a direct answer.

ROBERT

Your skin is softer than I thought.

VERA

If you don't finish it, I will.

ROBERT

If you'd wanted to kill yourself, you'd have cut your jugular, or at least you'd have tried to. In any case, I didn't know your skin was so soft.

Vera closes her eyes again, in silence.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 20 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. MORNING

Robert is having his breakfast with his back to the plasma television in the kitchen. A program is announcing the Carnival celebrations to be held in Madrid, but he isn't paying any attention to it. He is engrossed in an article he's printed from the Internet. He is wearing comfortable lounging clothes.

Marilia comes into the kitchen from the patio, through the door that is almost covered with ivy. It is still early. She is carrying a plastic container which she puts on the table, next to the breakfast, as if it were part of it.

MARILIA

Here it is, it was extracted from the animal
when it was still alive.

Still eating the last mouthful of breakfast, Robert takes the container full of blood and goes out of the kitchen.

SEQ. 21 – EL CIGARRAL. EXT. LABORATORY. CONT.

Robert goes into the laboratory with the container. We see part of the garden outside.

Cut.

SEQ. 22 – INSIDE THE LABORATORY

Now dressed suitably, he looks like an astronaut, he extracts a blood sample from the container with a pipette. He places a perfectly round drop on a Petri dish. He studies it under the microscope. We see the cells of the pig's blood on the computer screen. Fresh blood.

Cut.

SEQ. 23 – LABORATORY. INT. DAY.

Dr. Robert, wearing a white coat, is standing at the far end from the entrance, separated by a transparent door. He takes from the centrifuge two test tube racks, each one holding four test tubes. He takes one in his right hand and with the left he introduces a pipette, taking great care not to touch the walls of the test tube, and adds a small amount of blood (about twenty drops).

Then, with another pipette, he adds a reactive to the blood sample which after the spin will cause them to separate into different phases depending on the density.

Cut.

He places the last rack, laden with lab tubes, in the centrifuge. He closes the top and programs the number of revolutions per minute and the functioning time.

Cut.

Passing of time.

He opens the centrifuge and extracts a rack with four test tubes. He takes one tube and holds it up to eye level. We can already observe the three phases in which the original blood sample has divided. With great care he extracts the central phase, the most transparent of the three, with a fine Pasteur pipette.

The very fine Pasteur pipette hovers over a Petri dish, in the center of which there is a drop of pig's blood, and it deposits several drops of the transparent stem cell carrier phase, to carry out the genetic transfer.

He opens the transparent doors of the incubator and puts the Petri dish inside.

Cut.

The image of some insectariums full of insects serves to fill the passing of time.

SEQ. 24 – LABORATORY. INT. DAY

He opens the incubator. We see, on different shelves, various round containers with liquid in which different sized pieces of skin are being cultivated. Dr. Robert takes out one of these recipients. The skin that is floating in the liquid has got irregular edges.

He places the container between the mannequin's legs (the mannequin that is a replica of Vera's body). With some surgeon's tweezers, and demonstrating great skill, he places the piece of new skin tissue over one of the areas that are marked (like a map) on the mannequin's abdomen. And he adjusts it to the marks, cutting the skin with scissors.

The mannequin doesn't have a head, it ends at the neck. Dr. Robert continues practicing on an area of the neck and this shot dissolves into the next shot (without moving the camera). The effect is as if the mannequin had grown a head. Vera's head. The surgeon is finishing applying the last pieces of new skin to her neck. The only difference with the mannequin is that under the skin we can see the redness of the abrasions to which Vera's skin has been submitted, in order to replace it with the new transgenic skin.

ROBERT

Now it really is true that there'll be no more burns.

VERA

You told me that over a year ago.

ROBERT

I was too hasty.

SEQ. 25 – EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. DAY

TESTING THE NEW SKIN

Vera is strapped to the operating theater by Velcro belts. Robert is trying to burn her arm with the bluish flame from a laboratory lighter.

ROBERT

Is that burning you?

VERA

No.

Robert insists with the flame until Vera pulls her arm away with a slight exclamation of pain. (He also does tests for hardness, etc.)

SEQ. 26 – EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. DAY

He holds a little glass hood containing a mosquito against Vera's skin. Far from trying to sting her skin, the mosquito fights to get out of the hood. It must be clear that the mosquito feels trapped in the glass hood and that it is repelled by the skin on Vera's arm.

ROBERT

Tell me if you notice a bite from the mosquito.

Vera shakes her head. Robert waits.

ROBERT

And now?

Vera shakes her head again. She looks at Robert with cold astonishment.

Over this block we start to hear off screen Robert's monologue from the following sequence.

SEQ. 27 – BIOTECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE. LIBRARY. INT. EVENING

A modern building, designed by the visionaries Fernando Higueras and Antonio Miró, among the first Spanish architects to succumb to the charm of exposed concrete, in the 60s.

A circular library, with several floors. All the walls are filled with books. There are desks for the readers which, in this case, are occupied by eminent surgeons. All those attending the function, like the books, are bathed in a slightly ghostly light. On the first floor, on a little improvised stage, Dr. Robert is presenting his new discovery, with a red curtain behind him and a lectern as the only decoration.

ROBERT

I have given the name GAL to the artificial skin on which I've been working in recent years. This skin is resistant to every insect bite, so it will be a natural barrier against all diseases caused by mosquitoes, etc. Malaria, for example. GAL also shows great resistance to temperature change. I've carried out rigorous quality controls on tissues implanted in mammals, specifically with atimic mice, and the results have been spectacular, which leads me to suppose they would be equally positive in human mammals. I'm thinking in particular of burns of any degree. The artificial skin would cover the dermis, creating an impenetrable barrier against all the infections to which it is exposed.

The words "human mammals" causes a certain controlled reaction among the guests. They whisper among themselves.

Cut.

**SEQ. 28 – DRINKS PARTY FOR SURGEONS AND MEDICAL AUTHORITIES
IN A LARGE RECEPTION ROOM IN THE SAME BUILDING. INT. NIGHT**

We should see it written somewhere that this is the Biotechnology Institute. The new skin invented by Dr. Ledgard is the dominant theme. The guests are drinking with delight. There is excitement, skepticism and suspicion in the air. Some surgeons, such as Dr. Robert's collaborator, are enthusiastic. Others are more skeptical.

In one corner, the president of the Institute is talking in private to Robert. At one point, the collaborator tries to join them, but he sees that they are too deep in conversation.

PRESIDENT

What does the name GAL mean? Are they initials?

ROBERT

No, that was my wife's name. She was burned to death, in a car accident.

PRESIDENT

Oh, I'm sorry... In your presentation you said that the skin is resistant to bites from mosquitoes, including those which spread malaria. What makes you think that?

ROBERT

Artificial skin is much tougher than human skin, and it smells different. It has been shown that the malaria mosquito distinguishes human skin by smell. GAL smells different and it repels the mosquito.

PRESIDENT

And how can you prove that?

ROBERT

I've done tests with large pieces of tissue, and I put a mouse in an insectarium with all kinds of mosquitoes.

The president is pensive.

PRESIDENT

That's not enough. How did you manage to make the skin tougher?

ROBERT

Well... (He hesitates)

PRESIDENT

There's only one way. By mutating it.

ROBERT

(Admitting it) Yes, that's what I did.

PRESIDENT

Transgenesis?!

ROBERT

(Hesitating) Yes. I transferred genetic information from a pig's cell to a human cell.

PRESIDENT

A pig's cell?

ROBERT

It's much stronger than ours!

PRESIDENT

You're insane! You know that the application of transgenic therapy is absolutely forbidden in human beings!!

He finishes his drink with a long gulp and takes another one from a tray carried by a passing waiter.

ROBERT

I do know that. And, I'm sorry, but I think that it's the ultimate paradox! (He protests) We intervene in everything around us, meat, fruits, vegetables, clothes... everything! With in vitro fertilization, we're already selecting the embryos that our wives will gestate and from which our children will be born. (He takes a drink) Why not take advantage of scientific advances to improve our species? Have you thought of the number of diseases we could cure with transgenesis?! Or the genetic malformations that could be avoided?

PRESIDENT

(Ordering him) Don't go on! I know the list by heart and there isn't a day I don't think about it! (He pauses) But that doesn't prevent me forbidding you to continue with your research on skin, or I'll be forced to report you to the scientific community. Apart from what you and I may think, bioethics is very clear in this respect.

ROBERT

(In an apologetic tone, he accepts the verdict with a nod) Don't worry, GAL was a personal adventure. I did it as a tribute to my wife and with the sole aim of extending my knowledge.

SEQ. 29 – CLOAKROOM, BIOTECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE. INT. NIGHT

The collaborator coincides with Robert while they're waiting for their overcoats or raincoats.

Robert is somber and not very communicative.

COLLABORATOR

(Tipsy, nostalgic) I remember the first time you spoke to me about this experiment. It seemed like a dream to us then!

ROBERT

(Annoyed, warning) And it has to stay like that! The president has ordered me categorically to give it up, sine die!

COLLABORATOR

Shit! It sounded like the business of the future.

ROBERT

It will be. But you and I won't be the ones to benefit from it.

COLLABORATOR

If you stop investigating, will you at least go back to surgery? Your old patients will be delighted when they find out.

ROBERT

I don't know.

COLLABORATOR

We've got a waiting list for operations in El Cigarral!

Robert stands looking at him. He doesn't say anything.

SEQ. 30 – EL CIGARRAL. THE ORANGE TREE PATIO OR ARCHED GATEWAY. EXT. NIGHT

Robert drives along the dirt road and parks the car in the orange tree patio.

SEQ. 31 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

He isn't drunk, although he had more than one drink at the party, but he's moving in a much more uninhibited way than is usual for him.

He goes into his room. He switches on the camera, the plasma screen is filled with the image of Vera on her bed. The woman is lying against the pillows at the head of the bed, (facing the camera), “absorbed” reading a book. (“An Angel at My Table”, by Janet Frame). Enveloped in the tight fitting, dark nude colored bodysuit, her figure has adapted with apparent naturalness the pose of the naked women in the paintings by Titian on the other side of the door. The bodysuit doubles the sensation of nakedness, although we can’t see her sexual organs or her nipples. Robert pours himself a drink and lies down on the chaise longue, in front of the screen, in a contemplative position that is totally symmetrical with Vera’s image. Using the remote, he draws the woman’s face towards himself, zooms in on her and holds her in a large close up.

He looks at her and gets up. Seen from behind, Robert seems tiny compared to the size of Vera’s face.

He opens the chest of little drawers. He takes out the little box, like a pencil case, which contains the opium set, including a lighter and an ashtray.

SEQ. 32 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA’S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Vera hears the lock being turned. The door is opened from outside and Robert comes in. She stops reading and looks at Robert as he locks the door behind him. Then he comes over to the bed and sits on the edge, next to her feet. In silence, he opens the little box and begins the rite of lighting the little opium ball in the pipe. His eyes travel over Vera’s body. It’s the first time he does this openly. Vera lays the book aside and sits up on the pillow so he can see her clearly.

VERA

Do you like what you see?

ROBERT

(Taken by surprise) What do you mean?

VERA

Is there anything you want to improve?

Robert looks at her again and evaluates the pleasure she provokes in him.

ROBERT

No. I don’t want to improve anything.

VERA

So does that mean I’m finished?

Robert takes two puffs and offers her the pipe. She gestures to him to finish it. Robert looks at her and carries on enjoying the sight of his own work. He’s never done this before in her presence. He’s helped by the alcohol and the sensation of having reached the end of a process.

ROBERT

Yes... And you can boast of having the best skin in the world!

Vera is excited by the news and the novelty and doesn't lose a moment in trying to advance things.

VERA

And now what?

ROBERT

Now I'm going to light this opium ball again...

VERA

I'm talking about us, about me. If I'm finished, what are you going to do with me?

Robert looks at her, perplexed. He wasn't expecting this and he doesn't want to think about it now. He's even annoyed by the idea.

ROBERT

I don't know. I'll think about it.

Vera changes her posture, she sits on the bed and moves closer to him.

VERA

When?

ROBERT

(Angry) If you keep on about it, I'll leave!

Vera still hasn't puffed on the opium, she's lucid and determined to force the conversation before Robert leaves. She can't waste this opportunity.

VERA

Don't you think the simplest thing would be to live?

Robert looks at her, bewildered.

VERA

(Clarifying) Live together!

ROBERT

(Bewildered) Live together? How?

VERA

Like everyone.

ROBERT

You and I aren't like everyone.

Vera doesn't give up, she continues, improvising.

VERA

Look on it as another one of your experiments.
Living together as equals.

For Robert, the conversation is over. He gets up and walks towards the door. When he is about to put the key in the lock, Vera gets off the bed and, running over, stands between him and the door. With her body, she prevents him from opening it. In one hand she is holding the little box with the opium set and in the other the lighter. She drops the lighter into the box.

VERA

Here. I could set the house on fire.

But what she is doing is setting a fire inside him. We get the impression that he is in her hands, that it is she who is forcing him to confront a subject that confuses him and that he would rather ignore: the future, survival.

VERA

(Impassioned, she murmurs) I'm yours, I'm made
to measure for you... And you've just told me you
like me!

ROBERT

Did I say that?

Robert tries to escape, but Vera continues to prevent him with her body and her words.

VERA

I know you look at me. We practically live
in the same room.

Robert finally manages to break loose. He opens the door, unsettled by Vera's calm, challenging presence. He leaves the room and tries to close the door. In his haste, he drops the key on the floor. Vera remains standing by the door, on the inside, hearing Robert's clumsy, nervous movements. Robert has the keys, but she is in control of the situation.

SEQ. 33 – EL CIGARRAL. LANDING. NEXT TO THE DOOR OF VERA'S ROOM

Robert turns the key clumsily. He can feel Vera looking at him from behind the door, as if this didn't exist.

SEQ. 34 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

He comes into his room. From the enormous television screen, Vera is still looking at him, colossal in her close-up. Confused, agitated, Robert takes the remote and turns off the screen.

SEQ. 35 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DAY

Marilia is at the worktop on the left of the kitchen. She is slicing tomatoes and placing them on a slice of bread or on a plate.

Robert is finishing his breakfast, with his back to the two black and white monitors, on which we see Vera in her room.

SEQ. 36 – WHAT IS SEEN ON THE SCREENS (VERA'S ROOM)

Sitting at the white table, Vera takes a head on which she had been working. It's inspired by Louise Bourgeois' sculptures, like everything she does. Alongside she has a book by the artist, open at a page with illustrations. During the whole scene, Vera is busy with this.

In the kitchen:

The plasma television is showing images of Madrid in carnival time. They announce the traditional Grand Ball in the Bellas Artes building in Madrid, as in other years. Robert hits the remote lazily, cutting off the program.

Marilia notices Robert's mood. She knows that expression, a mixture of helplessness and confusion. He's annoyed by the feeling that the two women can read him so easily.

MARILIA

(Muttering grumpily to herself) You couldn't settle for putting a chin on one woman, cheekbones on another, a nose... shoulders on another...

ROBERT

What are you muttering about, Marilia?

She puts down a plate with sliced, dressed tomato, a cup of coffee and toast on the big table where Robert is breakfasting.

MARILIA

(Reproachfully) You shouldn't have put her face on her. If I'd been here, I'd have warned you of the danger.

ROBERT

She may look like her, but Vera isn't the same.

MARILIA

(Without concealing her deep unease) But she looks too much like her. Have you decided what you're going to do with her?

This is the second time in 24 hours he's been asked that same question and it annoys Robert. Marilia sits down at the table, as if to show the importance of the question.

ROBERT

No.

MARILIA

You'll have to kill her, (Robert looks at her and spontaneously rejects the idea) or keep her hidden here for the rest of her life.

Marilia's remarks have their effect. However much he doesn't want to think about it or talk about it, the reality is as inevitable as the morning light. And it repeats itself, time and again.

ROBERT

Why are you in such a hurry to get rid of her?

MARILIA

If you don't kill her, she'll kill herself. (She stands up)
History repeats itself.

She goes over to the worktop where she was before. With her hand, she scoops up the remains of tomato and orange and throws them in a garbage bin under the worktop.

ROBERT

No! It won't repeat itself! Vera is much stronger, she's a born survivor!

He says it almost admiringly, or as if that quality were due to him.

MARILIA

(As she tidies up the worktop) You're sick, Berto. If you don't get rid of her, what you're feeling now will end up devouring you, like a cancer! By the time you realize, it'll be too late.

ROBERT

How can you be so sure of what I feel, if even I don't know?

MARILIA

That's why. And because I know you... like you were my own son!

A few moments of reflection tell Robert that Marilia is right. Something exploded within him during that last conversation with Vera and it has started to possess him, like an alien.

It seems that he's taken a decision.

ROBERT

Dismiss the servants, and don't hire anyone else.

He gets up before she arrives.

MARILIA

(Fearful) Are you going to send me back to Bahia again? Let me stay!

Robert pauses on his way to the patio.

ROBERT

Wouldn't you like to go to the carnival?

MARILIA

No! I've seen enough carnivals! (Pleading) And you need me here, Robert! Whether you kill her or not!

Robert turns to the door without saying anything. And he goes out.

SEQ. 37 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. MID AFTERNOON

In order to dismiss the servants, Marilia has dressed as a strict housekeeper. Uniform, keys hanging from her waist, the straight platinum wig.

She makes up some excuse, they have to go back to Brazil, and they aren't needed anymore... She dismisses them, coldly wishing them luck.

SEQ. 38 – EL CIGARRAL. ROAD. EXT. MID AFTERNOON

The servants come out through the gate leading to the road. Not very far away there is a bus stop where they can get a bus to the city. They talk among themselves, looking puzzled.

A man dressed as a tiger, with boots and a cape -half his face is covered by a mask that imitates the face of a tiger and the other half is painted with the same design as that of the skin in his costume- sees them come out and walk off towards the bus stop.

Whoever he is, this character has taken great care with his costume. The tail is sticking out from under the cape and he's wearing tiger skin gloves which have long nails stuck on the outside. He is tall and well built. He rings the bell beside the gate.

SEQ. 39 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. MID AFTERNOON

SEQ. 40 – EL CIGARRAL. FIRST GATE. EXT. MID AFTERNOON

In order to cook, Marilia has put an apron over her uniform. She takes a tasty potato omelet off the cooker.

After hearing the entry phone ring two or three times, Marilia picks up the receiver and, looking at the screen of the security camera installed at the gate by the road, she sees the strange character. Even though the housekeeper remembers that it's carnival time, she distrusts the person dressed as a tiger.

MARILIA

(Dryly) What do you want?

TIGER MAN

(In a friendly tone) To see my mother, I haven't seen her in over ten years.

MARILIA

(Coldly) If you're talking about one of the servants, they've just left and they won't be back.

TIGER MAN

I saw them, but she wasn't one of them. My mother is prettier.

Marilia doesn't hesitate to threaten him.

MARILIA

Get out of here or I'll call the police!

The man dressed as a tiger pulls down his tights and shows his naked ass to the security camera. He has a large mole, clearly visible, between his buttocks

Marilia raises a hand to her mouth, astonished. She knows exactly to whom the mole and the ass belong.

The man pulls up his tights.

TIGER MAN

Marilia, I'm your son Zeca.

Astonished, she knows that her son's presence doesn't bode anything good.

MARILIA

(She murmurs, nostalgically) Zeca! (She scolds him as if he were a child) How dare you come here...?!

ZECA

(Tenderly, theatrical) Let me in! It's carnival and we're both very far from Bahia and I'm homesick! I've put on the costume I used to wear when I was little. Remember?

As if she could forget. Marilia remembers it perfectly. Zeca is insane and he's dangerous, but he's her son. As a child, he loved tigers.

MARILIA

(Murmuring) My little tiger!

ZECA

(Buttering her up) I just want to see you for a minute.

MARILIA

(Warning) Alright. You can see me and then you're leaving!

ZECA

(Obedient) Whatever you say.

MARILIA

Follow the dirt road and, when you reach the second gate, it'll be open...

Confused, moved by her maternal instinct, she opens the first gate.

SEQ. 41 – EL CIGARRAL. DIRT ROAD. EXT. MID AFTERNOON

The sun is very low.

The tiger man walks along the dirt road. He looks at the trees lining it on both sides.

He reaches the second gate. He rings the bell with his gloved hand and feline nails. He pushes one of the heavy gates and this swings open.

Zeca walks on, admiring the extensive grounds.

Cut.

SEQ. 42 – KITCHEN DOOR, WITH THE FAÇADE COVERED IN IVY. INT./EXT. MID AFTERNOON

Marilia comes out of the kitchen. The man in the tiger costume appears through the door that connects the dirt road and the patio. Marilia recognizes his way of walking,

both heavy and light, as arrogant and cocky as ever. Despite the costume, she doesn't doubt that it's her son Zeca.

When he comes up to her, he gives her two kisses on her cheeks. First he takes off the mask that is covering the upper half of his face.

Only his chin is made up, as a continuation of the mask. At close hand, we can see in detail two large scars on his cheeks. His head is shaved. Marilia doesn't invite him in. She deliberately stands in the middle of the doorway.

The tiger man is very impressed by El Cigarral.

MARILIA

(Inquisitive, without letting him get familiar)
How did you find us?

ZECA

I've been in Spain for a while. One day I saw Robert in the newspaper... he was giving a... (he gets stuck for words) I don't know, something, in Madrid... I went there and then I followed him here...

He has trouble remembering details, at times he speaks like a punch-drunk boxer.

ZECA

Aren't you going to invite me in?

MARILIA

No! I'm not allowed visitors.

Zeca opens the door and smells the omelet that Marilia has just made.

ZECA

That smells great! I'm hungry.

He pushes his mother to one side and goes into the kitchen.

MARILIA

Brute!

Cut.

SEQ. 43 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DUSK

The two internal security screens aren't in Zeca's field of vision. He is sitting at the far end of the central wooden table. He is absorbed watching the television while devouring the potato omelet, accompanied by a green salad and Marilia's tense expression as she sits beside him. Marilia is boiling over with impatience, but he doesn't care. The news

starts on the television. (Zeca still hasn't seen or hasn't paid attention to the two black and white security screens).

The tiger gloves with their claws are lying at his side, on the table, and his cape is hanging over the back of a traditional rush-bottomed chair.

SEQ. 44 - TV NEWS PROGRAM. INT. DAY

A news reader is calmly reeling off the headlines and introducing the corresponding videos.

NEWSREADER

This has been a day marked by the carnival and by the robbery at the Bulgari jeweler's, in the heart of Madrid...

It happened last night and today we have had access to the first images available. They were recorded by one of the 24 security cameras that protect the famous jeweler's. As well as the thief who appears in the image, the police are looking for an employee of the jeweler's who's been missing from his home in the last 24 hours.

After some images of carnival, we see the façade of the Madrid branch of the Bulgari jeweler's. Marilia is still sitting beside Zeca, watching him. When he hears the name of the jeweler's, Zeca looks attentively at the television, tense and furious.

(Cont.)

SEQ. 45 – VIDEO FROM THE JEWELER'S SECURITY CAMERA. INT. DAY

On the video, in black and white, and with some interference (it's from one of the security cameras), we can see three men quickly taking jewelry that is displayed on trays inside various glass cases in the store. The windows onto the street are closed. One of the thieves walks past the security camera (the image slows down) and his face can be seen for a few seconds. He is just wearing a woolen cap. His face has got two large scars, one on each cheek. It's Zeca, without the tiger make up. He is easily recognizable.

SEQ. 46 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DUSK

Zeca, furious, grabs a remote that is on top of the table and quickly turns off the television, as if he were shooting the presenter who has just given the news. He carries on eating, talking with his mouth full.

ZECA

(Indignant) They can keep looking! All the bastard had to do was put the cameras out of action, but he

changed his mind at the last minute and left one operating. (Sinister) He'll be rotting in Hell now!

MARILIA

Then... the police will be looking for you!

She looks uneasily at the clock on the wall. The atmosphere darkens. The sun is disappearing from the kitchen. That's her son Zeca, a constant source of danger.

ZECA

(It isn't a question, it's a statement) If it wasn't for Carnival, I wouldn't have been able to go out on the street. I guess you can hide me for a few days.

MARILIA

Hide you here?! That's impossible! (Lying) We've got lots of patients... A lot of people come here!

He ignores what his mother is saying. Marilia gets up and goes over to the kitchen door that leads out to the patio. She looks outside, nervous.

ZECA

I'll know where to hide. And I want Robert to operate on me and change my face.

He points to his scars. Marilia turns to Zeca, incredulous, indignant and contemptuous.

MARILIA

Robert operate on you? When he gets you on the table, instead of giving you an anesthetic, he'll give you a lethal injection! How could you think Robert would operate on you after what you did to him?!

ZECA

I'll have to blackmail him with something! Do you think if I kidnap you, I could force him to do it?

MARILIA

You're out of your mind! I'm just a servant! And anyway, Robert isn't in Spain!

ZECA

All the better. I'll stay here until he gets back.

SEQ. 47 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DUSK

Zeca gets up.

MARILIA

Where are you going? What do you want?

ZECA

A drop of liquor.

MARILIA

It's all over there.

She gestures with her hand. Zeca goes over to where the bottles are, next to the big fireplace and the two black and white screens. Marilia is getting more and more uneasy.

MARILIA

(Urging him) Take the bottle, take whatever you want, but just go away!

(Cont.)

SEQ. 48 - EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DUSK

On the screens, Vera is practicing a series of postures, on top of the largest ball. She is wearing the same light nude bodysuit she had been wearing in the morning and, from a distance, she looks as if she's completely naked.

SEQ. 47 (CONT.) – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DUSK

Zeca looks at the two screens. He doesn't realize that it's a closed circuit system. He's fascinated by the female figure. (At this moment, Vera is rolling on top of the ball, presenting very attractive images in which her body, her ass, her legs and her torso take on a very sexy, sculptural importance, increased by the nakedness of the body stocking.)

TIGER

What's that?

MARILIA

(Nervous, tense) It's a film! Come on, get out of here!

Marilia has shouted louder than she intended. (Meanwhile, she gets up and goes over to the other worktop, the one at the other side of the kitchen from the bottles). Zeca can't see her because he has his back to her, engrossed in the screens.

SEQ. 48 (CONT.) WHAT IS SEEN ON THE SCREENS

Zeca is watching the screens and the movements of the woman he thinks is naked. Vera interrupts her exercises, as if she had heard Marilia's shout. She slides deliberately over the ball until she is sitting on the floor. She strains her ears, listening to the noises that

come to her from outside. She goes over to where the camera is, and her face can be seen perfectly at the bottom of one of the screens.

SEQ. 47 (CONT.) – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DUSK

Zeca is looking closely at Vera's face.

ZECA

She reminds me of...

Marilia opens one of the first drawers under the worktop and takes out the little gun that Robert left there for her. She threatens her son with it. Less than six feet away, Zeca is drinking from a bottle of liquor while staring at Vera on the two monitors. He has just said "She reminds me of...", but Marilia doesn't let him finish the sentence. She shouts:

MARILIA

She doesn't remind you of anyone! Go away
or I'll shoot!

(On the screens, Vera also hears that second shout) Zeca turns, he looks at the weapon as if it were a mere formality. It's obviously loaded.

ZECA

You wouldn't do that to your son... (He goes
up to her, still looking at the screens. Vera is motionless,
listening closely)

MARILIA

You're not my son. I just gave birth to you.
Get out of here. And don't come any closer!

Marilia keeps aiming at him. Her son walks slowly towards her.

She is more scared that he is. The tiger man stops and looks at the screens again. His tone is totally different, he is amazed rather than surprised.

ZECA

(Intrigued) It's her! What's she doing here?

MARILIA

(Aiming at him, hysterical) It's not her!
How could it be her! (Screaming) Don't come
near me! Go away!

Zeca dives at Marilia and overpowers her with ease. In the confusion the gun goes off, the bullet shatters a glass containing some orange juice.

SEQ. 49 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DUSK

Vera hears the sound from her room. There's no doubt about it, something is happening in the kitchen. She goes over to an interphone and presses a button to speak to Marilia in the kitchen.

SEQ. 50 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DUSK

SEQ. 51 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DUSK

Marilia and Zeca are listening in the kitchen, near the screens, on which we see Vera from the back and in profile, in general shots.

VERA

Marilia? I heard a noise, it sounded like a shot... Is anything wrong?

Zeca puts his hand over Marilia's mouth and pulls her towards him, immobilizing her.

VERA

I heard voices too... Marilia?

Marilia, with Zeca's hand over her mouth, is unable to answer.

SEQ. 52 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Intrigued, Vera stands by the interphone. She takes a few aimless steps. She has no doubt that something strange is going on in the house. To relax, she adopts the meditation pose, sitting on the floor on a half moon-shaped cushion, and tries to focus on her breathing.

Cut.

SEQ. 53 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

Marilia has a large napkin stuffed completely into her mouth. She can only moan and breathe through her nose. Zeca finishes tying her hands behind the back of the chair on which she is sitting. When he is done with that, he leaves the kitchen.

SEQ. 54 – EL CIGARRAL. GROUND FLOOR. STAIRS, LANDING. INT. NIGHT

And he comes out into the large hall. On the ground floor, there are four doors, like those on the first floor, all in the corners. He decides to start downstairs. He opens all the doors and glances inside. They are all open, but none is the one he has seen on the screens. They look like luxury hotel rooms. One of the doors is that of Robert's office. He's not interested in it.

He races up the stairs. On the first floor, there is a large L-shaped landing which gives onto the banister and continues into the interior of the house. There are also four doors on the landing.

Vera can't focus on her breathing, the sound of Zeca's footsteps and the constant opening and closing of doors is distracting her. Zeca's footsteps can be heard getting closer.

SEQ. 55 – EL CIGARRAL. DOORS AND ROOMS. INT. NIGHT

The first two rooms don't interest him, they are empty and, like those downstairs, they look like abandoned luxury hotel rooms. He tries to open a third door, on the other corner of the landing. It's locked. He knocks and this time he gets an answer.

SEQ. 56 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

SEQ. 57 – EL CIGARRAL. LANDING. DOOR VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Inside, Vera breaks off her meditation and runs over to the door. Zeca can almost hear her breathing. From inside, Vera asks uncertainly:

VERA

Who is it?

ZECA

It's me, Zeca. Let me in.

VERA

I can't.

ZECA

Why?

VERA

I haven't got a key.

ZECA

Has Marilia got it?

VERA

I don't know. What are you doing here?

Zeca doesn't answer, he runs down the stairs.

SEQ. 58 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

Marilia, gagged and tied to the back of the rush-bottomed chair, can see on the screens what is happening in Vera's room (Vera talking at the door). She can't hear the conversation but she can imagine it.

Preceded by the sound of his heavy footsteps, after a few seconds, Zeca appears, breathless. He has come racing down the stairs. As soon as she sees him, Marilia gestures at him to take off the gag and free her hands. Given the inevitability of the situation, she has decided not to put up any resistance but to help him instead. Her gestures show an obvious change of attitude. Zeca takes off the gag, slowly pulling out the drool covered napkin. It seems incredible that such an amount of cloth fitted in Marilia's mouth. Zeca warns her:

ZECA

If you scream, I'll smash your face! Where's the key for that door?

MARILIA

In that drawer. (She nods towards a corner of the kitchen) At the back, in an envelope.

Zeca opens the drawer and rummages impatiently through the contents.

MARILIA

(Insisting) At the back...!

He looks at the back and finds an envelope with "paper clips" written on it.

ZECA

(Furious) There's only this envelope and it says "paper clips"!

MARILIA

That's to throw off, idiot. Look inside!

Zeca finds a key inside the envelope. He goes over to the chair where Marilia is sitting.

MARILIA

(Pleading) Untie me!

ZECA

No, I don't want you to call the police.

MARILIA

I swear I won't call anyone! Untie me, please!

Zeca takes the drool covered napkin, obviously intending to put it in Marilia's mouth again.

MARILIA

(Terrified) No! Not the napkin, no!

ZECA

Yes, or else you'll scream.

MARILIA

I swear I won't! Untie me, please!

Zeca doesn't listen to her. Marilia presses her lips tightly together to prevent him putting the napkin in again. Zeca grabs her by the throat with one of his huge hands. He could strangle her with that hand.

ZECA

Open it!

She shakes her head. Zeca squeezes her throat tighter. The woman's cheeks start to turn purple, until finally she opens her lips. Zeca puts part of the napkin into her mouth.

ZECA

Open your mouth wider! Wider!

This time it's harder to get the whole napkin in.

ZECA

Open it wider! Before, it all went in, dammit!

Zeca insists and his mother's mouth gives way. Marilia's face is purple and her eyes are bulging from the effort, panic and hatred. She can only breathe deeply through her nose.

Cut.

SEQ. 59 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

We can see Vera on the screens, walking aimlessly around her room. A thousand thoughts are racing through her mind. This is the first break in routine in years. How could she make use of this new situation? If she, at least, knew what was happening.

She tries to sit down and carry on meditating, but she can't manage to focus. Again, she hears the sound of the Tiger's strides, coming closer until they stop on the other side of the door. Vera bounds over next to the door, pressing so close to the wall that she seems to meld into it.

SEQ. 60 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

SEQ. 61 – EL CIGARRAL. LANDING. DOOR OF VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Inside her room, Vera is waiting, pressed against her side of the door. She hears how someone arrives and puts a key in the lock.

She has no idea what's happening, but her instinct makes her wary. She breathes unsteadily, on the alert. Is this a new strategy by Robert to punish her?

When the man dressed as a tiger opens the door, he can't see her because she's hiding behind it. With all her strength, Vera pushes the door. The blow takes him by surprise and he staggers. He falls to the floor on the other side of the door.

SEQ. 62 – EL CIGARRAL. LANDING-STAIRS. INT. NIGHT

Vera jumps rapidly over Zeca's body. When she is about to get away, Zeca reacts and grabs her by the ankle in mid-air. Vera falls onto the rug which covers the parquet floor. She tries desperately to get free, kicking furiously, but Zeca pulls her towards him without much effort. He dives on her and Vera almost disappears completely beneath the man in the tiger costume. Zeca, stronger and bulkier than Vera, just has to lie on top of her to paralyze her. Vera tries in vain to move her arms and legs.

The contact with the woman's body unleashes the lust in the animal, who licks her face, her throat, her shoulders, hungrily, feverishly. Vera tries to fight back but she can't do anything. Zeca is holding her by the wrists, her arms outstretched, and it's as if they were nailed to the floor.

Vera is having trouble breathing. The man's body is weighing on her like a steam roller. She thinks that the tiger's arrival is Robert's doing: the culmination of his revenge. She wants to be sure.

VERA

Did Robert send you?

The man dressed as a tiger is still intrigued.

ZECA

No. But how did you survive? I left you burning like a torch!

Vera doesn't understand a word of this. As on so many occasions, she has to improvise. She doesn't even understand what she herself is saying. But it's important to keep her aggressor talking.

VERA

He saved me! (she begs him) Get me out of here!
I'll go with you wherever you want!

ZECA

You're saying that because I'm on top of you and you can hardly breathe.

During the conversation he keeps licking her, caressing her, etc. He's surprised by the texture of the body stocking. He'd thought she was naked. "What is this? I thought you

were naked”, he says, fondling her breasts. He takes her hand and places it on his crotch so she can feel the size of his erection.

VERA

(Passionately) Ask me whatever you want!

ZECA

What can you give me, apart from a great fuck?

VERA

(Talking just to talk) I don’t know. Lot’s of things!
I’ll do whatever you ask!

Zeca has just had an idea that is a continuation of the conversation he had with his mother. Perhaps the woman he is crushing with his body can save him. He stops licking her and raises his head.

ZECA

You could help me with Robert. How do you get on with him now?

VERA

(She says something, to see if she gets it right)
Fine...

ZECA

Fine... and he’s got you locked in?

VERA

(Improvising) You know what he’s like!

TIGER

Yes. I’ll kidnap you and take you with me, maybe that’ll soften his heart and he’ll fix my face.

VERA

(Enthusiastically) That’s it! If you kidnap me, you can ask him for whatever you want!

ZECA

I’ll kidnap you, but first we’re going to fuck!

VERA

No...

(At some point, he opens the zips on the body stocking and watches in fascination as Vera’s flesh sprouts from inside it.)

Zeca gets to his feet, picks her up and throws her over his shoulder, like a sack, but not in a violent way. Vera doesn't offer any resistance, she doesn't struggle. She is still thinking about how to make the most of this situation. Despite her posture, she suggests:

VERA

Let's go out to the garden!

ZECA

What for? I'm sick of screwing in the open air!
This tiger wants a bed!

SEQ. 63 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Image of the flesh-colored bodysuit on the bedroom floor, like the skin that a snake has just sloughed it off. Alongside, in an untidy heap, the tiger costume.

This image acts as an ellipsis.

Zeca's ass is bare but he is still wearing his tights and boots. He has just penetrated her. Vera gives a cry. Zeca thinks it's one of pleasure. Vera is struggling to hide from Zeca the disgust and horror that she's feeling. She can't do anything except turn her head to one side, so as not to see him and so that he doesn't see her pursed lips and bulging eyes.

Vera tries to concentrate on her breathing, but she hasn't got the slightest control of herself.

Zeca is riding her like an animal. He doesn't need her participation but he thinks her reaction is strange.

ZECA

What's wrong, don't you like it?

VERA

You're hurting me... it's very big...

TIGER

It's the size it always was... It used to drive you crazy.

VERA

Yes... and it still does. (Almost sobbing) It's driving me crazy. It's driving me crazy.

But her tone and her expression contradict her.

TIGER

Just shut up! You're being weird and you're distracting me...

And he puts his hand over her mouth.

SEQ. 64 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

Marilia, tied to the chair, is watching inexpressively all that is happening in Vera's bedroom.

Her concern isn't so much for Vera as for Robert. She's afraid he'll meet with Zeca.

She hears the sound of his car and the kitchen door opening. Robert appears, he stops dead, struck by the image that is being reproduced by the two black and white screens: a naked man moving his pelvis violently on top of a naked, horrified Vera.

Marilia is making guttural moans to get Robert's attention, but he can't take his eyes off the screens.

Cut.

SEQ. 65 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

With his back to the door, Zeca starts to come inside Vera. He curves his back, and grunts so loudly with pleasure that he doesn't hear the door opening softly. Robert appears with Marilia's gun in his hand.

Zeca collapses exhausted on top of Vera's body. From his breathing, it seems he's about to fall asleep any minute.

Robert's eyes blaze with envy and hatred, alternately. Both feelings belong to the present and the past, alternately.

Zeca bites Vera's body, he sees that his teeth don't leave any mark, his desire grows and he bites her even harder, as if he were really eating her. Robert notices how resistant Vera's skin is.

SEQ. 66 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

Freed from the chair, Marilia is rubbing her wrists. She doesn't take her eyes off the scene that is playing out on the two black and white screens.

MARILIA

(Murmuring) Kill her! Kill him!

SEQ. 67 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Vera sees how Robert aims his gun at Zeca but he doesn't say or do anything, so that the animal won't realize. Robert is rigid, as if paralyzed, his legs rooted to the floor.

SEQ. 68 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Robert stops aiming at Zeca and aims at Vera instead. Robert is watching the scene from the past. (*He is seeing his wife and Zeca, naked on the bed in his room, in the same position, but Gal is roaring with pleasure.*) And Vera knows that, if she doesn't manage to drag him back to the present, she is lost. For some reason she doesn't understand (it would be so easy to let herself be killed and end all this!), she looks at Robert and transmits intensely to him her desire to live. And the fervor in her eyes drags Robert back, not only to the present but also to the future, because Vera's eyes radiate not only a desire to live but also immense gratitude.

Robert surrenders to Vera's message. He points his gun at Zeca's body again.

The visual dialogue between Vera and Robert is carried out behind Zeca's back. Robert aims at the mole that Zeca has between his buttocks and fires. The tiger's head jerks back. Robert fires at his torso again, taking care not to endanger Vera.

The blood splatters the woman. She pushes Zeca's head off her, her whole body shaking.

Robert runs over and helps her push off what remains of Zeca. He puts his arms round her and she clings to him. And, trembling, she manages to murmur "Thank you".

SEQ. 69 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

Marilia is watching the end of the duel from the kitchen. She turns her back on the two screens, defeated.

She has lost one son and the other has just signed his death sentence.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 70 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

From black. The black is gradually flooded with red.

(She has previously changed and is wearing more suitable clothes for what she is doing, an old housecoat and something else) Marilia is cleaning up the blood in the room and on the bed. She takes the red bedspread, now even darker because of the blood, and the sheets off the bed. Everything is soaked in blood.

Vera watches her as she works. She is curled up on the couch, smoking an opium pipe. Beside her, the little box that looks like a pencil case, where Robert keeps the set.

Marilia is talking, as if she were praying to her son's blood which she is cleaning. Her housecoat gradually becomes stained with blood until it is soaked. Her monologue has got Lorca-esque overtones.

MARILIA

(As in a prayer) When they were children, they only played at killing each other. I knew that one day they'd really kill each other.

Vera, drugged, is listening to her. She supposes that she's talking about Robert and the man in the tiger costume. Zeca.

VERA

(Slowly, due to the effect of the drug) The tiger and Robert?

MARILIA

Yes. They're brothers, although neither knows that. At least I didn't tell them. I had Zeca by a servant who disappeared very quickly. And Robert is Mr. Ledgard's son. The fathers were very different, but the two were born insane. It's my fault. I've got insanity in my entrails. I'd worked in the Ledgard house since I was a girl. Mrs. Ledgard was sterile and, when my Robert was born, they kept the baby, and said she'd given birth to him. But I was the one looked after him all his life, from the day he was born.

Cut.

SEQ. 71 – EL CIGARRAL. ONE OF THE PATIOS. EXT. NIGHT

Marilia has built a pyre in the center of one of the patios, the one leading to the garage, and she is burning the bed clothes and everything that was stained by Zeca's blood, except herself.

Vera is with her, sitting beside her on a garden bench. The women's faces are lit by the bonfire.

VERA

Zeca was talking to me as if he knew me.

MARILIA

He confused you with Gal, Robert's first wife... Unlike Robert, Zeca grew up far away from me. When he was seven, he was already transporting drugs...

SEQ. 72 – FLASHBACK BRAZIL. STREETS IN THE SLUMS. EXT. DAY

The 70s. A child is running through a street in the slums... Images that arise from the fire.

SEQ. 73 – FLASHBACK BRAZIL. BRAZILIAN MANSION. INT. DAY

We also see Robert, as a child, experimenting with animals in a hiding place in a Brazilian mansion.

SEQ. 71 (CONT.) – EL CIGARRAL. ONE OF THE PATIOS. EXT. NIGHT

MARILIA

About... (she hesitates) twelve years ago, Zeca came back to the mansion one day. He was on the run from a gang and asked us to help him. I hid him in a shed, but Gal found him, she took a fancy to him and they ended up running away together... Robert wanted to kill them, but what happened was even worse.

SEQ. 74 - FLASHBACK, BRAZIL. A ROAD. EXT. DAY

A car in flames.

SEQ. 71 (CONT.) - EL CIGARRAL. ONE OF THE PATIOS. EXT. NIGHT

MARILIA

Their car crashed. Zeca survived and ran away but she... (She sighs, exhausted) Robert found her horribly burned but with a flicker of life... He snatched her back from death at the last minute. For months, he did the impossible to save her. (Murmuring) But I knew that death would come back sooner or later to claim what was his.

She turns her grief-stricken face to Vera.

MARILIA

Robert worked day and night, doing endless research, He never slept. (She is growing weak) He only rested when he sat by her bed. She was covered with gauzes. He'd watch over her, for hours, intoxicated by the smell of burned flesh.

SEQ. 75 – FLASHBACK BRAZIL. GAL'S ROOM. INT. DAY/NIGHT

Robert, sitting by the bed where his horribly burned wife, covered with pieces of gauze, is fighting against death.

He is sitting in a kind of rocking chair that moves with the slightest impulse of his body. The sound of the rocking chair marks the passing of time.

SEQ. 76 – EL CIGARRAL. ONE OF THE PATIOS. EXT. NIGHT

While she is telling her story, Marilia's mood is wracked by grief. Her voice is growing weaker.

MARILIA

After the accident, we lived like vampires, in total darkness and without any mirrors. To everyone's surprise, after several eternal months, Gal started to improve. (She sighs) What a madman's love can do!

We start to hear a hypnotic child's song.

MARILIA

One day, when she could stand on her own, Gal heard little Norma's voice in the distance, singing a song that she had taught her...

SEQ. 77 – FLASHBACK BRAZIL. GAL'S ROOM. INT. DAY/NIGHT

Gal, in bed, reacts when she hears Norma singing.

SEQ. 76 (CONT.) – EL CIGARRAL. A PATIO. EXT. NIGHT

MARILIA

(The song can be heard clearly) ...And she got Emotional. For the first time in many months, she got emotional... It was like she felt alive again. (She weeps) Gal felt a longing to see her daughter, she hadn't seen her since the accident. That longing made her euphoric and it gave her the strength to get up and go over to the window, without help from the nurse. When she opened the window, she suddenly saw her image reflected in the glass. She didn't look like a human being, she was a lump of charcoal. She gave a scream that was heard throughout the mansion. She opened the windows wide and threw herself out... (She pauses)

SEQ. 78 – FLASHBACK BRAZIL. GAL'S ROOM. INT. DAY

Gal gets up and walks unsteadily over to the window. She opens it and suddenly sees her reflection in the glass. The image horrifies her. She screams and throws herself out the window.

SEQ. 76 (CONT.) - EL CIGARRAL. A PATIO. EXT. NIGHT

MARILIA

She fell on the lawn, near where the little girl was singing. (She is weeping)

SEQ. 79 – FLASHBACK BRAZIL. GARDEN. EXT. DAY

In the flashback we see that Norma, 10 years old, is singing “Pelo amor de amar” (“For the Love of Love”) beneath a palm tree, more or less under the window of her mother’s room. She is singing the song for her mother and, as she sings, she is playing with a little kitchen set.

The child sees how her mother, unrecognizable, opens the window and throws herself out. When she sees her on the ground, near her, she stops singing and screams in horror.

SEQ. 76 (CONT.) – EL CIGARRAL. A PATIO. EXT. NIGHT

MARILIA

Years later, little Norma went to look for her mom and chose the same path that her mother had taken... through the window.

Cut.

SEQ. 80 – EL CIGARRAL. ONE OF THE PATIOS. EXT. NIGHT

Robert drives his car into the patio. He parks and gets out.

He is exhausted, his clothes are mud stained. He is happy to see Vera and Marilia sitting at the same bonfire, together and free. For a moment he feels that the three of them form a family. It is a new and wonderful feeling.

He takes a bloodstained blanket and rug from the trunk.

SEQ. 81 – EL CIGARRAL. A PATIO. EXT. NIGHT

And he comes up to the two women sitting at the almost extinguished bonfire. He throws the bloodstained blanket and rug on the embers of the bonfire.

MARILIA

What did you do with the body?

ROBERT

I buried it well.

MARILIA

Did you pray for him?

ROBERT

Yes... everything you told me.

Absorbed and serious, Marilia revives the fire. Her son's blood starts to burn like when he was young.

Vera and Robert exchange glances of mutual support. He is looking for shelter and finds it in Vera's eyes.

Robert has started to move forward in the process that scared him so much, "a new life that includes tenderness, uncertainty and dedication. A life that aims to prolong the feeling of that moment, that of a family group that has survived all the curses".

ROBERT

(To Vera) Shall we go inside?

VERA

Yes.

The two walk towards the house. Marilia stays behind, poking the fire, murmuring strange prayers.

Cut.

SEQ. 82 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Robert and Vera are laying on the bed, covered by a bedspread, their arms around each other. Robert is a happy, exhausted man, excited and sexually aroused. He is behaving like an adolescent in love, immersed in a dream of which he has been unaware until the last minute.

Vera is in pain, especially in her erogenous areas. She isn't filled with the same tenderness as Robert, but she pretends convincingly.

VERA

(Delicately) You don't mind if we leave it for tomorrow?

ROBERT

Whatever you want... but hold me!

They continue to lie tenderly in each other's arms, face to face. Robert doesn't tire of looking at her. He controls his effusiveness, he doesn't want to overwhelm her. There is no awkwardness between them.

ROBERT

Don't worry. I'll wait. The last thing I want is for you to feel uncomfortable.

VERA

Thank you... (She warns him) I'm going to fall asleep.

And she turns her back on Robert, ready to go to sleep. He embraces her from behind, and presses his body against hers. When Vera sinks her head into the pillow, she almost disappears, swallowed up by it. We only see one eye.

ROBERT

Sleep, my love.

Vera opens the only eye we can see, inquisitive and puzzled, surprised by what she has just heard. It's the first time she's heard that word from Robert's lips.

The image dissolves into the following.

SEQ. 83 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Dissolve from the previous sequence.

Vera and Robert are sleeping, their bodies entangled and their heads together. They could transmit their dreams to each other. An orchestral melody floods the image of the two sleepers. (The orchestra is playing a version of "Pequeña flor" ("Little Flower"), in which the sax is dominant. A soft, hypnotic sax that transports the narrative to another place, specifically to the region of Galicia, six years earlier).

SEQ. 84 - FLASHBACK. COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BALLROOM. INT. NIGHT

Caption: Six years earlier

The figure of the saxophonist playing "Pequeña flor" fills the screen. We can only hear the music. The song makes time stand still. Gradually, the other sounds of the party mingle with it until there is quite a din.

Dr. Robert is at the wedding of Casilda Efraiz, a very rich, much operated woman, in a spectacular country house. Casilda Efraiz is a beauty of indefinite age and her cosmetic surgery operations have left no aftereffects. We see the two of them through the couples who are dancing, at times blocking them completely from view.

Apart from the orchestra, the ballroom is filled by lots of friends, members of the provincial jet set, and some international guests. There are quite a few young people, from local rich families or guests of the younger section of Casilda's family.

At the opposite end from where Dr. Robert and Casilda are sitting, there is a bar where a little group of eager-eyed youths, rural gems, are ordering drinks and joking among themselves. One of them is Vicente, 25 years old.

At this stage of the evening, the guests have scattered through various rooms in the house to dance, mingle and lose their composure a little. The speeches were made some time before. Even though this is six years earlier, Robert looks the same.

While she is talking to Dr. Robert, Casilda, still wearing her wedding dress, is keeping an eye on Nikos, her new husband (who, slightly drunk, is dancing on the floor with various women). He has a glass in his hand and toasts her from a distance. Casilda returns the toast, overflowing with happiness.

CASILDA

Thank you, Robert. I owe this wedding to you.

ROBERT

Don't exaggerate. Nikos adores you.

CASILDA

Without your help, he'd adore me less.

SEQ. 85 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BALLROOM. INT. NIGHT

While they talk, Robert is keeping an eye on his daughter Norma, 18 years old. A little disoriented, she is looking around with apprehension and curiosity. The girl suffers from some kind of nervous disorder. In any case, her uneasy, shy expression goes unnoticed amidst the general ruckus.

Casilda's granddaughters, a little older than Norma and much more uninhibited, are trying to draw her into their group. Norma is the same girl whose photo we saw on Dr. Robert's bedside table, and in Marilia's story, when she was a child.

CASILDA

Your daughter is getting on very well with my granddaughters!

Robert looks over to where his daughter is.

CASILDA

She looks much better. At least she isn't scared of people now.

ROBERT

Yes. It's unusual that she hasn't come to ask if we can leave.

CASILDA

She's wonderful, and she's having a great time.

At the other end of the ballroom, the lively granddaughters are gossiping among themselves about boys. They have already noticed the eager-eyed group surrounding Vicente. They ask Norma if there is anyone she likes and she gestures doubtfully, shrugging her shoulders. She looks at Vicente. He has his back to her, he turns, sees her looking at him and smiles at her. Embarrassed, she smiles back. Norma tells one of the granddaughters that her dress, with its bolero, is suffocating her. The granddaughter gives her a fan which Norma uses. She looks at Vicente again. The boy hasn't stopped looking at her. From a distance, sitting beside Casilda, Robert sees the smiles on both the young people's faces.

Cut. Time passes.

SEQ. 86 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BALLROOM. INT. NIGHT

The rhythm has changed. Now Concha Buika and her Orchestra are singing a song with a frantic rhythm, an Afro-Cuban version of "Se me hizo fácil" ("It Was Easy"), by Chavela Vargas. The guests are dancing like lunatics, some posturing, out of rhythm, slightly ridiculous. Alcohol has removed their inhibitions. Two or three drunken ladies, getting on in years and rather stout, are fighting over Nikos, the groom. The poor man, charming by nature, is trying, from a sense of duty, to dance with all three. Casilda comes to his aid and frees him from his admirers. Although the song is fast paced, she dances pressed tight against her husband. Happy.

Cut.

SEQ. 87 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BALLROOM. INT. NIGHT

Robert is moving among the guests who are drunker now than in the previous scene. Someone asks him out to dance, but he declines the invitation. As he walks, he looks around for his daughter. He can't see her in the ballroom or in any of the adjoining rooms.

SEQ. 88 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. LEAFY GARDEN. EXT. NIGHT

Robert goes out to the garden. It is over a hundred years old, a natural botanical reserve. He goes down a few steps and three paths open out before him, leading into the leafy garden: to the left, to the right and in front of the door through which he has just emerged. He chooses the one to the right. He walks along aimlessly, simply enjoying the pleasant stroll, although the reason he came out was to look for his daughter.

Cut.

Robert continues walking through a thickly vegetated area. He stops, he thinks he hears some moans, not very far away. He looks in the direction they're coming from. He can see some figures moving in the bushes. Voices and moans. He stops. For a moment he is afraid that his daughter may be part of the group. He moves closer until he sees that it is the granddaughters in the middle of an orgy with some young men. Hidden in the bushes, he makes sure that Norma isn't among them.

Cut.

**SEQ. 89 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. LEAFY GARDEN.
EXT, NIGHT**

He is walking along one of the other paths when he sees Vicente racing past on his motorbike.

Cut.

He is still walking. His eye is caught by something shining at the end of the path. He walks up to it. It's a shoe. One of his daughter's shoes. Nearby he finds the other one. And a little farther on, her bolero. Robert gathers up everything, with a growing feeling of panic. Several yards ahead, he makes out a woman's bare legs, the body half-hidden among the undergrowth. He runs up and finds his daughter's unconscious body lying under the thick trunk of an old magnolia.

Robert raises her by the shoulders. He touches her face and tries gently to revive her. When Norma comes round, the first thing she sees is the face of her father, murmuring endearments. She doesn't recognize him, she thinks he wants to molest her and she hits him with her hands. He is unable to control her.

SEQ. 90 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Robert and Vera are lying on the bed, their heads very close together, "as if they were transmitting their respective nightmares".

Robert is still asleep. Over his face, gleaming with sweat, we can still hear Norma's screams. Robert wakes with a start, very upset. He sees Vera sleeping beside him. That calms him down.

Vera is dreaming too, and her dream is no less disturbing.

SEQ. 91 – FLASHBACK “VINTAGE & IMITATIONS” BOUTIQUE.
GALICIAN CITY. INT./EXT. DUSK

SIX YEARS EARLIER

In large letters, above the store window, a sign says “The best designer labels. Previous seasons and original imitations.”

During the sequence, night gradually falls.

In the store window, Vicente is dressing a scarecrow with a beautiful dress by Chanel or Gaultier. He has hung a bracelet and a purse on the outstretched arms.

He finishes and goes into the main area of the store.

Here, in the spacious interior, the most expensive designer labels are on show, with models from previous seasons at reasonable prices. Gaultier, Prada, Armani, Diane Von Furstenberg, Vivienne Westwood, Galliano, Chanel, Alexander McQueen, some Brazilian, Portuguese and Japanese designs. They also have a section with luxury imitations and lots of vintage, second hand.

Cristina, the sales assistant, is saying goodbye to a client. Despite her slightly masculine attire, Cristina is a very attractive young woman.

Vicente takes a dress off a hanger. It's by Dolce & Gabbana, with a pattern of large flowers and very fitted. He holds it out to Cristina.

VICENTE

Here, a gift from the house. Put it on and we'll go partying!

CRISTINA

Thank you, but I'm meeting my girlfriend.

VICENTE

Put it on anyway. I'd like to see you wearing it.
I bet it'll look fabulous on you.

He holds it up against himself, with very little style, as if show her how good it would look on her.

CRISTINA

If you like it so much, wear it yourself.

Vicente puts the dress back on the hanger.

VICENTE

You're making a big mistake!

CRISTINA

Why? Because I don't like men?

VICENTE

Because you don't like me! Anyway I've got pills that'll put you in the mood.

Vicente takes out a little transparent envelope with some pills. He takes one.

CRISTINA

You shouldn't take that shit...

Vicente's mother appears.

MOTHER

Vicente, stop bothering Cristina!

VICENTE

I'm leaving!

MOTHER

Where are you going?

VICENTE

Home, to get changed.

MOTHER

Why's that?

VICENTE

I'm meeting the guys... I think we're going to Casilda's party.

MOTHER

(Surprised) Were you invited?

VICENTE

Jorge knows one of the granddaughters. We're just going to the dance.

Looking at Cristina (his mother doesn't see this), he takes out another pill and swallows it quickly.

VICENTE

(To Cristina) Well? Are you coming?

MOTHER

Leave her alone, you nuisance!

Vicente goes towards the door. He passes Agustín and his son who are coming in. Agustín has got a large suitcase.

SEQ. 92 – BOUTIQUE IN GALICIAN CITY. INT. DUSK

The new arrivals go up to Cristina. When the mother sees them, she stays where she is, out of curiosity (she probably knows who they are).

AGUSTÍN

Good afternoon.

CRISTINA AND MOTHER

Good afternoon.

AGUSTÍN

My wife has left us and I wanted to know
if you'd be interested in her clothes.

He puts the suitcase on the floor. Cristina and the mother look at each other, a little puzzled.

MOTHER

Josefina?

AGUSTÍN

Yes. There are some very interesting outfits.

MOTHER

The truth is we don't have sizes for fat women.
Maybe we could use them.

SEQ. 93 – FLASHBACK. STREET, GALICIAN BOUTTIQUE. FAÇADE. EXT. DUSK

Vicente gets on his motorbike, parked near the boutique, and starts it up.

SEQ. 94 – FLASHBACK. COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BALLROOM. INT. NIGHT

It is the same situation we saw before, now told from the other side of the room. The orchestra is playing the song we heard before ("Pequeña flor").

While Robert is talking to Casilda, on the other side of the room Vicente is joking with his friends at a bar. Suddenly he feels that someone is looking at him. He turns and sees Norma, who is with Casilda's granddaughters. The girl is scared when she's discovered.

Vicente smiles at her, she relaxes and smiles back. The granddaughters are whispering and flirting with the group of boys standing around Vicente.

Cut.

SEQ. 95 – FLASHBACK. COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. DOOR LEAFY GARDEN. EXT. NIGHT

Casilda's granddaughters come out into the large garden, through the same door Robert used. They are accompanied by Vicente's friends. Some have got drinks in their hands and they're handing round a joint. Or they exchange pills. The last to come out are Vicente and Norma, a little apart from the group.

The granddaughters immediately get involved with the boys and disappear along the path to the right. Norma waits for Vicente to take the initiative. Alone, next to the door, both silent, they look at each other as if wondering "now what?" Vicente thinks the girl is delightful. Of the three paths, they randomly choose the one in the middle. Norma has a slight nervous tic.

NORMA

Your friends have gone.

VICENTE

That's better, isn't it? I'm Vicente.

NORMA

I'm Norma.

He takes her hand. Norma lets him do so and looks at him curiously.

SEQ. 96 – FLASHBACK. LEAFY GARDEN. ON THE PATH. EXT. NIGHT

They walk along the middle path which branches off into several other paths. The vegetation forms a natural arch.

Norma seems more relaxed, despite her nervous tic.

VICENTE

Are you high?

NORMA

(Puzzled) High? (She doesn't understand)

VICENTE

Have you taken any pills?

NORMA

Yes, Cipralex 20, Deprax 100 mg and 2 gr.

of Trankimazín. I don't take Rohipnol anymore.
Oh, and Lyrica, of course!

She says this as if everyone took Lyrica, a very strong anti-epileptic drug.

VICENTE

Holy shit! I'm high too.

She doesn't understand, but she likes the boy, and Vicente, over-stimulated by the pills, couldn't like her more.

VICENTE

You're not from here.

NORMA

No. What about you?

VICENTE

I am. But I want to get away.

Norma stumbles (the ground is very uneven) and twists her ankle. She falls to the ground. Vicente catches her as she falls and kisses her while the girl takes off her shoe. The heel is broken. She interrupts the kiss and shows him the shoe. They straighten up and she throws it far away. They both laugh.

NORMA

I'm sick of high heels!

Norma kicks out her foot and the other shoe flies off. She seems liberated and much more excited. Still laughing, she takes off the jacket of her dress and throws it away too. Her laughter is getting shriller. Vicente takes these last gestures by Norma as an irresistible invitation. If he weren't so high, he'd realize that the girl isn't horny, just unbalanced.

NORMA

And of this jacket too! All these clothes give
me claustrophobia. If I could, I'd go naked all
the time!

Vicente is amused by Norma's childish, savage attitude. She had seemed so demure at first.

VICENTE

Wait, I'll leave you naked...

Half joking, Vicente pulls down the straps of her dress. The sight of her breasts inside her bra inflames his libido. He moves closer and kisses her shoulders, her throat, her mouth. Norma lets him.

VICENTE

You're very pretty, and different... I'm different too.

NORMA

Are you in treatment too?

VICENTE

No. Do you think I should be?

SEQ. 97 - FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. IN FRONT OF THE MOSSY WALL. UNDER THE MAGNOLIA. EXT. NIGHT

Norma can't answer the question because Vicente is kissing her passionately on the lips while they lie on a bed of winter hydrangeas, which are growing in the shade of the magnolia.

Vicente, aroused, is moving on top of Norma's body. He pulls down the straps of her bra and eats her breasts feverishly. He put his leg between hers and pushes them apart. Norma, passive, lets him do all this, she doesn't know what to expect, but she likes Vicente.

Vicente slides his hand down and puts it under her skirt. He slips it inside her panties. The girl is intrigued. From her moans, it seems she is aroused too. Vicente keeps caressing her under her panties. He opens his fly and presses his pubis against the girl's.

SEQ. 98 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BALLROOM. INT. NIGHT

On the improvised stage in one of the house's great rooms, Concha Buika, accompanied by the piano, is dedicating her next song.

CONCHA

On the groom's request, I'm going to sing
“Necesito amar”(“I Need Love”).

I would also like to dedicate it to the bride,
with all my affection.

Concha listens to the piano introduction of the song, which is the Spanish version of “Pelo amor de amar”, the same song which Norma-child was singing to her burned mother, from below her window, on the day of the tragedy. Concha sings it with a personal lyricism, with mellowness and tenderness.

SEQ. 99 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. UNDER THE MAGNOLIA. EXT. NIGHT.

Vicente is trying to penetrate Norma. She lets him carry on until she hears, in the distance, the song by Concha Buika. She goes rigid, distracted (a distraction he will use to try to penetrate her). The song sounds familiar to Norma, it takes her a few seconds to realize that it is a version of “Pelo amor de amar”. Moved by the painful memory, she tries to push Vicente off her, but he ignores her. Norma hits him on the shoulders and gives a hysterical scream. Vicente puts his hand over her mouth and begs her not to scream.

Norma gets scared and bites the back of his hand as hard as she can. The song can still be heard in the distance. Vicente grunts with pain and, in a reflex action, slaps her across the face. He hits her harder than he intended and Norma loses consciousness. He looks at his hand, it’s very painful. He looks at Norma’s body, unconscious, her legs open and her dress in disarray. The pain in his hand wipes out his desire.

SEQ. 100 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. BY THE MOSSY WALL. EXT. NIGHT

Vicente gets up. He puts his penis away, adjusts his clothing and looks at Norma, unconscious on the grass, with her breasts uncovered. He doesn’t want to leave her like that.

He arranges her hair and her clothes. He covers her legs with her dress and closes them. He wants to leave her looking presentable and to erase any sign of violence, but he doesn’t completely succeed. He does everything with a meticulousness that is very like tenderness.

And he runs off.

SEQ. 101 – FLASHBACK COUNTRY HOUSE IN GALICIA. LEAFY GARDEN. EXT. NIGHT

Vicente gets on his motorbike. He passes next to one of the paths leading out of the house. In the maze of paths that make up the garden, Robert happens to see the motorbike and Vicente passing one of the few lamps in the garden.

Cut.

SEQ. 102 – FLASHBACK. “VINTAGE & IMITATIONS” BOUTIQUE. INT. DUSK

DAYS LATER

Cristina is serving a client. Vicente, deep in somber thought, is at the till counter, sewing some little dolls to put in the store window. He’s got a sticking plaster on the back of his hand where Norma bit him.

Cristina finishes with the client and goes up to Vicente.

VICENTE

(Serious) Cristina, if I left, you'd stay on in the store with my mother, wouldn't you?

CRISTINA

(Surprised) Yes. But where are you going to go?

VICENTE

I don't know. I'm sick of this town.

He puts away the doll, or whatever he's working on, and picks up his jacket. It's somewhere in the store. Cristina follows him.

CRISTINA

That's because of all that stuff you take.

VICENTE

I haven't taken anything for a week.

CRISTINA

Then it's because you haven't taken anything.

VICENTE

(Smiling) What's it to be? Am I taking something or not?

CRISTINA

It's best if you don't!

Vicente has put on his jacket.

VICENTE

I'm going out for a while.

His mother appears at the corner which gives onto the passage way into the back room.

MOTHER

Will you be home for supper, Vicente? Or will you be back at all hours?

VICENTE

I'll be home for supper. I'm just going out for a while to clear my head.

Cristina watches as he goes out the door. Then she says something to his mother about an order.

SEQ. 103 – FLASHBACK. “VINTAGE & IMITATIONS” BOUTIQUE. EXT. DUSK

He comes out into the street and gets on the motorbike. He starts the engine and races off.

A dark van, parked across from the store, also drives off.

SEQ. 104 – FLASHBACK. ROAD IN GALICIA THROUGH A WOOD. EXT. NIGHT

Vicente is riding his motorbike through a wooded landscape. The dark van appears in the background. To judge from the speed, it doesn't seem to be following him.

SEQ. 105 – FLASHBACK. ROAD IN GALICIA 2. EXT. NIGHT

The motorbike drives across the Galician landscape, followed at a prudent distance by the van. The motorbike disappears round a bend. The van is driven by a man dressed in a nondescript way. His face is unfamiliar and totally inexpressive. (He's wearing a silicone mask.) He looks towards where the motorbike has disappeared. And he accelerates.

We see the motorbike in the distance, from the van driver's point of view. We are getting closer to the motorbike.

The dark van appears in the motorbike's rearview mirror, getting closer until finally it is on a level with the motorbike. The van, therefore, is going in the wrong direction, occupying the left hand lane on a road with only two lanes, without any hard shoulder and lined by thick vegetation. Vicente shouts at the van driver.

VICENTE

What are you doing? Are you crazy?

The van bumps slightly against the motorbike, a bit more than a scrape. Vicente is scared and accelerates to get away from the van. We see the motorbike's speedometer. The needle shows the increase in speed.

SEQ. 106 - FLASHBACK. ROAD IN GALICIA 3. EXT. NIGHT

The van accelerates too and drives straight at the motorbike. Vicente can't do anything to avoid the collision. An instant before the vehicle runs him down, he jumps off the motorbike and rolls over on the ground which is covered with weeds which cushion his fall. It's at turning off the main road, the start of a side road.

When he gets up, he checks himself. He has a few scratches but he doesn't feel them. His bike is lying by the roadside. Vicente goes over to it, muttering insults at his aggressor.

VICENTE

(Shouting) Son of a bitch!

The van has stopped on the other side of the road. We can only hear the sound of the engine. There's no one to be seen. After the deafening noise of the pursuit, the silence creates a kind of abyss. We can only hear the nocturnal sounds of the woods.

The driver, neutral and expressionless, appears from the other side of the van. Vicente is furious until he sees that the man is coming towards him with a gun in his hand.

VICENTE

(Very nervous) But... have you gone crazy!?
Don't shoot!!

Trembling, Vicente raises his arms and steps back.

The man takes a few steps towards him and fires. Vicente staggers and crashes to the ground.

The man bends over Vicente's body and pulls out one of those darts which hunters use to anesthetize large game animals being captured for circuses or zoos. He puts the gun away and goes over to the door in the back of the van. He opens it and pulls out some ramps.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 107 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. DAY

Thick darkness. Vicente wakes, he rewinds in his memory like you pull in a fish that is about to escape from the hook. Where is he? Is it day or night? Despite the darkness, he can make out that he is in a large space. And he remembers having been hunted in the woods when he was on his motorbike. In the distance, in front of him, he can make out that there is a door because of the cracks at the sides. It's as if the outline of the door were drawn with (interrupted) strokes of light. He feels his wrists and his ankles. They are attached, separately, with chains to a metal ring sticking out of the stone wall behind him. He is wearing nothing but the tee shirt with which he left home and his shorts, both dirtied with dust.

His hands and feet aren't tied together. The chains only allow him to move a distance of some six feet. His new world is reduced to those dimensions. In the distance, there is a pile of dust covered junk, but his six feet of chain don't give him access to them. His foot knocks against a plastic bowl full of liquid. The blue color of the container takes on a certain shape in the dark. The surface of the liquid moves and reflects fragments of light. Vicente carefully puts his hand into the liquid in the bowl and raises it to his lips. It tastes like water, and he is thirsty. He kneels like an animal in front of the bowl and laps up the water. Despite the darkness, he can make out that the space spreading out before him is enormous.

Leaning back against the stone wall he becomes aware of his state. He puts a hand to his chest and feels under the tee shirt. He's sore there, as if from the jab of an injection. He remembers that someone shot him near the road. He touches his hand and gets the impression that the dressing on the bite there has been changed. (It's different from the one he'd put on at home.)

The place where he is, a kind of enormous storeroom, communicates with another area on the right, which naturally he can't see. A little light is coming from there. Vicente supposes that it's daytime. How many hours have passed since he was hunted?

He stands up and tenses the chains as far as his strength allows. And he shouts:

VICENTE
Help! Help!

Chained, tense, standing there, with the stone wall behind him, he reminds us inevitably of Prometheus chained.

SEQ. 108 – FLASHBACK. GALICIAN TOWN. EXT. DAY

Vicente's mother is going to the local police station. It's the second time. She's haggard, she looks much worse than before. The second "Help" is heard over a close up of her, walking along the street.

SEQ. 109 – FLASHBACK. GALICIAN TOWN. POLICE STATION. INT. DAY

The woman comes into the police station. She walks quickly to the main office and goes in. The policeman invites her to sit down.

MOTHER
I've been told you know something...

Looking serious.

POLICEMAN
We found his motorbike, completely wrecked,
at the cliffs by Finisterre.

MOTHER
(Shaken) And the body?

POLICEMAN
Nothing. The waves will have carried it out to sea.

The mother hangs her head, trying to take in the news, but she can't accept it. She shakes her head repeatedly.

POLICEMAN

We're very sorry, ma'am...

MOTHER

My son is alive.

POLICEMAN

But we've told you...

MOTHER

That they found the motorbike... but what about my son?! He may have been kidnapped. Until his body appears, you have to keep looking for him, please!

POLICEMAN

(Impatient) We've been over this already, ma'am. Don't insist.

MOTHER

You have to keep looking. My son is alive!

POLICEMAN

If he is alive, he's far away from this town. All his friends that we've questioned, even your store assistant, agree he was sick of the town and wanted to leave.

MOTHER

(Deaf) But he told me he'd be back for supper! Cristina was a witness! If he didn't call me, it's because something happened to him!

SEQ. 110 – FLASHBACK. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC. FAÇADE AND SURROUNDINGS. EXT. DAY

Dr. Ledgerd arrives in his car at a welcoming Psychiatric Center, a large pleasant house with lots of trees and lawns. A peaceful, agreeable place.

SEQ. 111 – FLASHBACK. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC. ENTRANCE-CORRIDOR. INT. DAY

Robert comes into the building. He knows the way. He goes along a corridor and arrives at the door of a room. He knocks softly.

SEQ. 112 – FLASHBACK. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC. HIS DAUGHTER'S ROOM. INT. DAY

In the corner of the room, Norma, with a deranged expression, is looking at Robert who is coming through the door. The room is totally bare and lacking in life. A simple bed. An amorphous armchair. The floor and the walls are of a very similar cream color. A closet, built into a corner of the room, matches everything else. There are no objects. It is a hymn to emptiness, to absence.

ROBERT

Hello, love. It's me.

Norma is wearing a loose, shapeless nightgown and her hair is very short. She doesn't recognize him. She looks at him with loathing, goes over to the closet and shuts herself inside. Her father goes over to the closet and begs her from outside:

ROBERT

It's me, Norma! It's dad!

The only response he hears is a kind of grunt of rejection. A horrifying guttural sound.

The ward psychiatrist appears, followed by a nurse. He asks Robert to accompany him while the nurse takes care of the patient.

NURSE

It's me, Norma. You can come out, the men have gone away.

SEQ. 113 – FLASHBACK. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC. CORRIDOR. INT. DAY

Out in the corridor, Robert, very upset, is with the psychiatrist who is treating him in an amiable way but without being servile.

ROBERT

Couldn't you put her in a dress, and let her hair grow? Her appearance makes her look even worse than she is!

PSYCHIATRIST

We've tried. But she can't bear any clothes that are even slightly fitted. She tears them off. And she pulls her hair out.

Robert remains silent, resentful and powerless.

PSYCHIATRIST

Dr. Robert, I think you shouldn't come to see her so often.

ROBERT

(Protesting) She's my daughter!

PSYCHIATRIST

But she doesn't recognize you. And she gets worse when she sees you. In her mind, she's convinced you attacked her.

ROBERT

(Helpless) But... I just found her lying there! Why can't you get that into her head?

PSYCHIATRIST

She identifies you with the rapist. Perhaps we were too hasty in letting her go out.

ROBERT

(Reproaching him, indignant) It was your idea that she should start mixing with people!

PSYCHIATRIST

She was overcoming her social phobia. How was I to know that someone would try to rape her when she was with you?

Dr. Robert looks at the psychiatrist as if it all were his fault.

Cut.

SEQ. 114 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. DAY

DAYS LATER

Vicente looks much worse. His hair is in a mess, he's got several days of stubble, his lips are cracked. The basin is empty. He tries to lick the bottom, like a dog, but it's useless. The tee shirt and shorts are hanging on him like dirty rags.

Faintly lit by the diffuse beam of light coming from the right of the storeroom and through the cracks in the door in front of him, Vicente can distinguish things among the pile of junk: a table, cases, stacks of magazines and newspapers, books, toys. A doll house, and several dolls which seem to have been thrown into a toy pram, a kitchen set with its little accessories, beach games. There are also the remains of farm tools, a broken bicycle. The light filters the outlines and volumes of the various objects, forming a large still life. On one of the walls, he can make out a collection of sickles, painstakingly arranged like in those works of art (Arman) that consist of the repetition of an object. The effect is psychotic. Spread out on both sides of a pole are countless axe heads of various sizes. Arranged in an obsessive-expository way.

The little light coming around the corner of the wall disappears.

When it appears again, another day, Vicente is lying down. He has just wakened and he discovers a fresh basin of water. He dives on it like an animal and sinks his head into the liquid.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 115 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. NIGHT

Vicente is lying on the floor, thinner, dirtier, without any strength. He hears noises. He doesn't know where they're coming from. A door opens in the part of the storeroom he can't see, that corner from where the light is coming. The noises are getting closer. Vicente gathers what little strength he has and gets to his feet. Someone appears in the central recess to his right. He can only make out the silhouette. Vicente races over the six feet allowed him by the chains.

VICENTE

(Shouting) Please, get me out of here.
I haven't done anything!

(The visitor is carrying a flashlight under his armpit. A beam of white light moves nervously along the floor and walls, as the man who has just arrived moves around.)

The man in the recess who is working with something is Robert, without the mask he was wearing when he pursued Vicente in the van. But Vicente doesn't know him and he can't see his face. Robert doesn't approach, he remains next to the recess, working with something Vicente can't see.

VICENTE

I'm very thirsty, I'm hungry!

MAN

(Neutral, impassive) You'll get something to eat
and drink now.

VICENTE

I haven't done anything...! This is a mistake...!

MAN

It's possible, everyone makes mistakes...

Suddenly Vicente is surprised by a powerful stream of water that throws him back against the wall. It is a thick stream coming with force from a hose that the visitor is aiming at Vicente. The powerful stream moves up and down over Vicente's body. The water bounces off his skin with force. Vicente turns round. After moving over his back, the stream focuses on his buttocks, his ass. First his shorts cling to his skin and then they slide down. Vicente tries to pull them up.

MAN

Turn round!

Vicente obeys. The stream of water travels over the front of his body. His shorts slide down again. In an ironically modest gesture, given the stark circumstances, he covers his genitals with his hands. The stream continues to move over his body.

The stream ceases. The shower is over.

SEQ. 116 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. NIGHT

Robert comes up and throws a towel at Vicente. It falls over his head and shoulders (Robert had been carrying it rolled up under his arm along with the flashlight). Vicente covers himself anxiously with the towel and rubs himself hard. He is shivering noisily. Despite the violence of the stream, in the end he's grateful for the shower after so many days of captivity and filth.

MAN

I'm going to chain you to the table.

VICENTE

Why? I haven't done anything.

Robert doesn't even answer him.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 117 - FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. NIGHT

Vicente is chained to a table which is next to other objects, covered in dust, which have been dumped in the storeroom, piles of magazines, etc. His situation has improved. He can sit in an old armchair and cover himself with a dressing gown which is too big for him but is in good condition. There is an old reading lamp on the table that still works. The room is large although he is condemned to just six feet. There are boxes of books and magazines. Most of them on fashion, decoration and art. Boxes of toys, and other objects that are no longer used. Near the table and armchair, there is a mattress base, covered by an old carpet: his bed.

Vicente hears Robert's footsteps behind him, coming down some stairs. It's the second entrance, which connects with the storeroom by a vaulted tunnel. The tunnel is also full of junk. Stony faced and inexpressive, or insensitive rather than inexpressive, removed from any feeling, Robert comes up from behind to the table where Vicente is chained. The boy is so afraid he doesn't dare turn round, so as not to cause annoyance, he is a broken animal. Robert leaves a tupperware container on the table.

ROBERT

Eat.

VICENTE

Thank you.

He opens the container. Inside there is a large portion of white rice. He starts to eat with his fingers. Robert looks at him for a moment, turns and starts to walk away. Without stopping eating, he's too hungry to do that, Vicente begs him to stay.

VICENTE

Wait! Don't go. We have to talk. I've been on my own here for a long time.

Nothing shows that Robert is listening to him, there is no reaction. He carries on walking through the tunnel, disappearing up the same stairs from where he appeared, while Vicente keeps eating with his fingers, still talking, his voice growing fainter.

SEQ. 118 – FLASHBACK. CEMETERY, EXT. DAY

A SUNNY DAY

Dr. Robert, surrounded by colleagues and the psychiatrist who spoke to him at the clinic, is burying his daughter Norma. Dr. Robert has a stony, weary expression. A priest is performing the ceremony in front of an open hearse in which the coffin is lying.

One of his friends remarks another in an undertone: "It's horrific. Throwing herself out a window. She was just a child!"

Robert's face is as inexpressive as the mask he used with Vicente. Turned to stone with grief. He is surrounded by colleagues, their wives (operated and made up despite the occasion and very well dressed) and a few more people. Not many, but elegant and operated on.

Cut.

SEQ. 119 – FLASHBACK. CEMETERY, EXT. DAY

The cemetery workers are doing their job. The mourners line up to offer their condolences. When it's the turn of Norma's psychiatrist:

PSYCHIATRIST

I'm sorry. We did what we could.

ROBERT

It wasn't enough and you did it very badly! I'm going to lodge a complaint about the hospital, and about you in particular, for homicidal negligence!

PSYCHIATRIST

Please, this isn't the place...

Some more friends come up to Dr. Ledgard to offer their condolences. The last one is his collaborator, who hugs him.

COLLABORATOR

Are you sure you want to work today?

ROBERT

Yes...

COLLABORATOR

You should rest, and try to forget...

ROBERT

I couldn't sleep. And working will keep my mind occupied. Conform it to the whole team. Thank you.

Cut.

SEQ. 120 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. NIGHT

By the light of the reading lamp, Dr. Robert is preparing to shave Vicente.

He has previously tied the boy's hands behind his back.

He spreads cream over his face. Then he shaves his cheeks with a blade.

Vicente tries to distract him, anything except that silence and the sound of the blade sliding over the skin on his face.

VICENTE

My mother will be very worried. I've never been away from home for more than three days without calling.

Robert doesn't react. His expression is still far removed from any emotion. He carries on shaving the beard and wiping the blade on a little towel on top of the table.

VICENTE

You have a daughter, don't you?

ROBERT

Why do you say that?

VICENTE

Because of the toys... (He points to the piled up dolls)

ROBERT

My daughter is dead. We buried her today.

VICENTE
(Surprised) Oh! I'm sorry.

He doesn't dare ask any more questions. He sits very still, terrified that Robert might slit his throat.

Cut.

SEQ. 121 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STOREROOM. INT. NIGHT

Robert finishes shaving him. He takes a hand towel from the little case in which he'd brought the shaving gear.

ROBERT
Now I'm going to put on some aftershave.

VICENTE
Why are you shaving me now?

DR. ROBERT
That's a good question.

He soaks the little towel with liquid and applies it to the boy's face, over his nose, pressing firmly. Vicente writhes in the chair, his spasms don't last long, the chloroform on the little towel takes effect very quickly.

Cut.

SEQ. 122 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. NIGHT

The instruments glitter threateningly in the dark. Robert comes into the operating theater and lays Vicente's naked body on the table. He covers the body with a green antiseptic sheet and attaches it to the table with Velcro.

We hear a bell.

Robert goes out of the theater into an adjoining room where the medical staff get changed and scrub up.

SEQ. 123 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. ROOM ADJOINING OPERATING THEATER. INT. NIGHT

There is an entry phone on the wall, next to a mini video screen. The entry phone rings. On the screen, we see the collaborator and, behind him, two cars next to the railing by

the road. "I'll let you in", Robert says. And he presses a button. The gate opens on the video screen. The two cars drive in.

Cut.

SEQ. 124 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. ENTRANCE. STAIRS. CORRIDOR. INT. NIGHT

They come into the house. One of them is Robert's collaborator. (We've seen him before, in the cemetery).

Cut.

SEQ. 125 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. ADJOINING ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Separated by a door from the operating theater, there is a little room where the doctors change their clothes and scrub up. There is also a table and a coat rack.

The four men put down their briefcases and start to take off their jackets. They hang them on the coat rack.

ROBERT

(By the table, on which there are four folders, each with documents and an envelope) You've got all the paperwork here.

SEQ. 126 – OPERATING THEATER. INT. NIGHT

The operating theater is kind of metal bunker, with enormous lamps hanging from the ceiling like tentacles. First of all the collaborator and Robert come in, with caps, masks, and their hands washed and still damp, held upwards so that no drop of water should fall in the theater's antiseptic atmosphere. They put on their gloves and then their overalls, in silence, like a rite.

The theater is equipped with the most advanced technology. While he puts on his overall, the collaborator looks at Vicente's face.

COLLABORATOR

He's very young. He looks like a boy.

ROBERT

He's twenty seven and knows exactly what he wants. This is a particularly confidential case.

The antiseptic sheet is covering Vicente's body up to the chest. The collaborator raises it slightly and looks at what is obviously the genital area.

The anesthetist comes in.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 127 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. ROOM ADJOINING OPERATING THEATER. INT. DAWN

Fade in from black.

The four men who participated in the operation finish dressing. Robert hands them all an envelope each, containing money, under-the-table payment, and a folder with documents.

He says goodbye.

COLLABORATOR

If there are any complications, call me.

ROBERT

Very well. You needn't come back. I'll take care of the post-op.

COLLABORATOR

(A little surprised) As you wish. But call me if there's any problem.

ROBERT

Of course.

The doctors leave.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 128 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. DAY

Fade in from black, Robert's face seen from Vicente's P.O.V., on the operating table.

Vicente slowly opens his eyes. He's connected to a monitor and is on a drip. His consciousness slowly advances through the mists of the anesthetic. He looks around vaguely. The slightest movement requires a huge effort. He slowly understands what his situation is. (Although he can't conceive of its exact dimension.) He's in an operating theater and, judging by the two drainage tubes to which he is connected and the drip, he has just been operated on. He still doesn't know for what or why.

Robert is watching him impassively as he returns to the world of the non-anesthetized.

Speaking with difficulty.

VICENTE

What's happened? What have you done to me?

ROBERT

A vaginoplasty.

VICENTE

(With no strength) A vagino...? No!

SEQ. 129 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY.

It is the same space that we saw at the beginning as Vera's room. Now it is almost empty, there is just a chair, the white table, the mirror set into the wall and the bed, which is between the windows, not in the center. The walls are a smoke grey color, and the floor is a slightly darker grey.

Vicente is wearing a light dressing gown, fastened at the waist with a hook and eye. It doesn't have a belt. The stark, monochromatic room makes him seem thinner and smaller. He climbs up on the only chair, in front of the white table and near the wall with the dumb waiter. He lifts up the dressing gown until his crotch is revealed. This way he can get a detailed view of his genital area in the round mirror set into the wall. Where there had been a penis and testicles, there is now just a soft incision, still a little swollen. His pubis is shaven. Although it's not a total surprise, the visible confirmation of his genital change plunges him into despair.

He is thinner, but the rest of his body hasn't changed. He hears the sound of the lock being turned. He lowers his dressing gown and gets down from the chair, instinctively moving away from the door. He moves slightly hunched over, like an animal traumatized by the memory of the beatings it has received.

It's Robert. He comes in and locks the door behind him. Vicente looks at him, shaken and terrified. The psychological beating to which he has been submitted is very obvious. Dr. Robert looks at him, he guesses that he's been looking at himself in the mirror. He's got a box in his hand.

ROBERT

Listen carefully to what I'm going to tell you,
Vicente. It's very important.

Vicente looks at him with fear more than anything. He shies away from him.

ROBERT

As you have just seen, the operation was a success, but the tissues that form your vagina are still very tender and could stick together. (From his expression, Vicente is imagining that horrible possibility). Don't worry. It's easy to prevent that. You have to keep the new orifice open and manage, bit by bit, to make it deeper. Think

that your life depends on that orifice, that you breathe through it. In this box there are several dildos of different sizes. Start by inserting the smallest one. It will hurt at first, but in a few weeks the largest one will fit without any effort and the skin will be perfectly healed.

(While he's talking, he takes dildos of various sizes out of the box.)

SEQ. 130 - FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT.
DAY

Vicente is lying on the operating table, immobilized by the strips of Velcro that are tying down his wrists and torso. The part of the table on which his legs are lying is raised and his legs are separated, just as in a gynecological examination. Dr. Robert's head is sticking out at the vertex formed by his legs, very close to his new sex organs. He is examining the vagina.

ROBERT

This is looking very good. How long have you been using the last dildo?

He removes his head from Vicente's crotch and takes off his gloves. He leaves the metal instrument with which he had separated the walls of the new vagina on a little kidney-shaped metal tray. This instrument is known commonly as "the duck" because its shape recalls a bird's beak.

VICENTE

Four weeks... Can I go now?

Robert looks at him, almost surprised.

ROBERT

Go where?

VICENTE

(Doubtfully) Home.

ROBERT

But we're just getting started.

Robert uses his shoulder to push the swinging door that separates the theater from the other room, where he washes his hands and leaves the kidney shaped metal tray in the sink. While he's washing "the duck", he hears Vicente's voice.

VICENTE

(Defenseless, weak) What else are you going to do to me?

ROBERT

You'll see, when the time comes.

VICENTE

Why are you doing all this to me?

Cold as ice, Dr. Robert dries his hands and comes back into the theater, next to the table where Vicente is lying, immobilized.

ROBERT

Do you remember Casilda Efraiz's wedding, in that spectacular country house? I'm Norma's father, Norma was the child you raped...

Vicente tries to penetrate the hazy memories of that night.

VICENTE

I don't think I actually raped her...

ROBERT

What do you mean, "I don't think I actually raped her"? Have you lost your memory?

VICENTE

(Sincere, pleading) I was so high that night... I can hardly remember it.

ROBERT

(Stony) Well, I didn't take anything. And I'll never forget it.

Gripped by panic, Vicente murmurs:

VICENTE

What are you going to do to me now?

The final shot of the sequence is a close up of Vicente, uneasy at the idea of his future.

This shot dissolves into a morphing with the first shot of the following sequence. (The answer to his question)

SEQ. 131 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY

YEARS LATER

The eyes and the size of the head are the same. In the close up of this sequence, the head doesn't have any hair, and we only see the eyes, mouth, ears and part of the nose. The rest of the face is covered with a post-operative mask made of transparent white silicone.

The body that is supporting the masked head has got two beautiful breasts. It is naked from the waist up.

ROBERT

It's a pity you can't see your whole body...

(Given the height at which the mirror is set into the wall, Vicente can only see his face.)

Dr. Robert touches his shoulders as if he were touching a piece of fabric. On the naked body we can still see the joins of the different pieces of the same skin, it's like an epithelial patchwork. They are visible signs, scars that are still pink colored, which make Vera's body (beneath which Vicente is throbbing) into a map, divided into provinces.

The breasts have a perfect drop, they don't seem to be the result of surgery. Robert cups both of them in his hands.

ROBERT

They don't look pneumatic now, do they?
(He admires them) They're like drops of water
sliding along a glass surface.

Robert doesn't hide his enthusiasm and looks at the masked face, waiting for an approving remark, but his victim's lips are still closed and tense. The Doctor is more animated than in the previous sequences. Vicente, however, has taken refuge behind a wall of silence which we guess must be torturous. The calmness with which he bears the usurpation of his body is provided by chemistry.

ROBERT

The marks on the skin will disappear. There's
still work to be done, eh? But, for your peace of
mind, I can tell you that there won't be any more
burns. And I've brought you this bodysuit to
protect your body.

He gives him a full bodysuit like the one we've seen in other sequences.

ROBERT

It'll protect you, it'll give you firmness and
it'll mold you. Get used to wearing it all the
time, like a second skin.

He hands him the light garment which he was carrying over his arm so that he can put it on. Vicente (Vera, naked and masked) sits on the chair to put on the new garment. He starts with the feet.

Cut.

He finishes putting on the body stocking. It still gives the impression of nudity, but it's a sculptural, asexual, robotic nudity. (A mixture of Diabolik and Fantomas). Vicente

hasn't finished pulling up the zip on the back. He asks Dr. Robert to help him. His voice has changed too, it now has that metallic timbre of some transsexuals.

SEQ. 132 - FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY

When Dr. Robert is pulling up the zip from behind, Vicente-Vera gives him a violent, unexpected elbow jab in the lateral ribs. Robert is left breathless, doubled over in pain. Without giving him time to react, Vicente kicks him as hard as he can in the genitals. Dr. Robert falls to the floor, doubled over. In a flash, Vicente-with-Vera's-body takes the room key from his pants pocket. He opens the door. He goes out and locks the door behind him.

SEQ. 133 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. STAIRS. INT. DAY

He runs down the stairs. His body is weighing him down, the previous effort has exhausted him. Although the body has a female shape, Vicente-Vera runs like a boy.

SEQ. 134 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY

Robert gets his breath back. He always carries two keys to Vera's room. He takes a remote control out of his pocket, presses it and this automatically closes all the doors out of the house, including the gates.

SEQ. 135 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. GROUND FLOOR – LANDING. STAIRS. INT. DAY

On the ground floor, Vicente keeps trying to open the front door, he tugs and hammers on it furiously, uselessly. He hears Dr. Robert's footsteps coming slowly along the corridor before reaching the L-shaped landing.

Vicente runs into the kitchen. We hear a metallic sound and the opening and closing of drawers. Dr. Robert appears on the L-shaped landing. He is walking unhurriedly to the top of the stairs.

When Vicente (with the black bodysuit and the mask) comes out of the kitchen with an enormous knife in his hand, Robert is already at the top of the stairs. He's carrying a gun which he is pointing at the ground. Vicente-Vera is trapped in the abstract design of the carpet that covers the hall floor. He looks at Robert and raises the knife in a threatening gesture. His rage makes his voice seem more like Vicente's than in the previous sequence.

VICENTE-VERA

(To Robert) Stay where you are, and throw me down
the key of the doors, or I'll come up and slice you open!

Robert starts walking slowly down the stairs, step by step. Vicente-Vera sees that he's got a gun hanging from his right hand.

SEQ. 136 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. GROUND FLOOR. INT. DAY

Vicente-Vera is still threatening him, but sight of the gun changes the objective of his threat.

VICENTE

Stay where you are! Don't move or I'll slit my throat and you'll have lost your toy!

ROBERT

(Defiantly) You won't do that.

And he carries on walking slowly down the stairs.

Vicente puts the knife to his throat and makes a deep gash.

He falls to the floor bleeding. Robert races down to help him. He picks him up from the floor.

Cut.

SEQ. 137 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. DAY.

Vicente-Vera, masked, is lying on the operating table again. Robert finishes stitching the gash on his neck. Fortunately, he didn't cut his jugular although it was a close thing

DR. ROBERT

We were lucky.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 138 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. OPERATING THEATER. INT. DAY

Weeks later.

Fade in from black.

Robert's hands remove the aseptic mask from the face. What he reveals is the face of a beautiful woman, with very short hair, about a quarter of an inch long. Vicente opens his eyes.

ROBERT

I can't keep calling you Vicente. From now

on, your name is Vera.

The man christens his work with a name that transmits authenticity.

Cut.

SEQ. 139 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA’S ROOM. INT. DAY

Vera is wearing a dark nude colored second skin bodysuit. Her hair is as short as in the previous sequence. There are three very feminine dresses laid out on the bed and she is looking at them as if they were strange objects. They are simple, flimsy garments and on the blood red bedspread they acquire a great representative power, they are three female figures.

Vera looks at them with the expression of a feline an instant before it devours its prey. She bounds onto the bed in one movement, like an animal. And using her feet, hands, mouth and teeth, she tears the three dresses into a thousand pieces.

It’s her way of reacting to an imposed gender that she rejects with all her heart.

Cut.

After her explosion against the dresses, the room is covered with scraps of material. Vera uses the retractable vacuum tube to gather them up. She does this aggressively too. The force of the vacuum swallows the scraps of material with animal voracity.

Cut.

She opens the dumb waiter. Inside there are only eyeliners and lipsticks and other kinds of make-up. There is also a book about learning to put on make-up. Vera scrabbles around among it and takes two eyeliners and a lipstick. She leaves the rest in the dumb waiter. She closes the metallic doors. She presses a button and sends it down to the floor below. Then she goes over the interphone panel on the wall. She presses a button and speaks.

VERA

I don’t know if you’re there. I’m returning the
make-up book and the paints. Do what you want with
them.

With one of the eyeliners, or charcoal sticks, she goes up to the wall next to the door, and more or less half way up, at eye level, she draws a stroke. One day of life. She has decided to carry on living and keeping track of her days. She wants to be aware of the passing of time.

SEQ. 140 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA’S ROOM. INT. DAY

Vera is lying on the bed, checking the television channels. She discovers that there are only three. One is devoted to art. Another shows documentaries. And on the third one there is a woman, with curly hair and wearing a leotard and woolen pantyhose, sitting casually on the floor. Vera tries to see more channels but all she gets are the same ones, like a loop. On the third channel, the same woman with the curly hair says something that interests Vera sufficiently so that she stops to listen to her.

WOMAN ON SCREEN

...There's a place where you can take refuge, a place that is inside you, a place to which no one else has access, a place that no one can destroy. In order to reach that place, there is yoga, an ancestral technique. It's a place where you'll find peace, where you'll find tranquility and freedom. But you must practice conscientiously, intensely and then you'll manage it, you'll be free.

Vera can't take her eyes off the television. The message has touched her soul. That woman is talking directly to her. She goes up to the wall next to the locked door and writes "Yoga books" next to about twenty strokes (twenty days), like the one she drew in the previous sequence. A prisoner's strokes. She always writes at eye level, which coincides with half way up the wall.

SEQ. 141 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY

In the room there is now a bright red plastic ball about 30 inches in diameter and a small two-seater couch in the area near the dumb waiter. And a plasma television, screwed to the wall.

A close-up shows a yoga book lying open, with the illustrations of two postures and their names in Hindustani. Vera repeats the same asana, her body shows her flexibility and her inexperience. When she tries to do a twist, she falls to her knees.

Cut.

Vera is sitting on the floor, leaning back against the 30 inch ball. On the Art channel they are showing a documentary about the varied work by Louise Bourgeois. Vera is looking excitedly at the figures created by the artist. She feels very connected to all her work, especially the heads made of sacking and the dolls made with the artist's underwear. You can see the seams on the dolls and how they embrace each other. Vera thinks about herself, about the evolution of her body, about her own seams. The duality of the sexes of some of the figures also attracts her attention, and the delicacy of the drawings.

SEQ. 142 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. THE PATIO THAT GIVES ONTO THE KITCHEN DOOR, THE ONE SURROUNDED BY IVY. INT./EXT. DAY

Robert's car drives into the first patio. Marilia and Robert get out, each one by their respective door. Marilia would like to embrace the air with her arms. She is exultant. While Robert takes her wheeled case out of the trunk, Marilia looks at the building

MARILIA

(Full of affection and admiration) My Cigarral!
How I've missed it! These four years have been so long!

ROBERT

Has it been that long?

MARILIA

Four years and two months! (To Robert) I thought
you'd forgotten about me! I thought that, at least,
when Norma died you'd call me. My poor little girl!

Robert takes out the wheeled case, she is carrying a bag.

ROBERT

I'd rather not talk about her, Marilia.

MARILIA

As you wish, but I'm going to miss her so much!
(in another tone) I'm very thirsty.

They go into the kitchen.

(Despite the effusiveness, it is obvious that what we have here is a lifelong servant and the master of the house. The affection between them does not erase the social differences.)

SEQ. 143 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DAY

Marilia finds a bottle of water on the wooden table in the center. There is also a glass. Robert gives her a glass of water. Marilia drinks it thirstily while she looks around the kitchen. She disapproves of the untidiness and the dirt but refrains from saying anything.

ROBERT

Don't look at the worktops.

But Marilia has already looked at them.

MARILIA

Everything has to be cleaned.

ROBERT

Call an agency and hire whatever staff you need.

She sees the two black and white screens which show Vera's image from two different angles of the room. Vera is working on a plasticine head, covering it with pieces of different textures. She uses a nail file to cut them. Beside her, on the white table, a book by Louise Bourgeois is lying open. Obviously Vera is copying her.

MARILIA

Have you installed more televisions?

ROBERT

They're not televisions. It's to control a patient.

Marilia looks at the monitors and looks back questioningly at Robert.

ROBERT

I'll explain later. From today, you'll be taking care of her. But you don't have to go into her room. She cleans it herself.

MARILIA

Are there more patients?

ROBERT

No, just her.

Marilia would ask a thousand questions, but she senses that Robert doesn't want to go any farther into the matter of the unknown resident.

SEQ. 144 – VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY

If we think of the wall by the door as a blank page, there are only two or three lines written, about half way up.

Vera gets up on the wooden chair and starts to write, on the highest part of the wall, at the left, the date, 10-09-2006, the day Vicente was kidnapped in the wood in Galicia.

Focused on her task, and with her eyes wide open in excitement, she continues writing dates, the days after the kidnapping, then the weeks, the months. At times, instead of the date, she only writes the words "I breathe". She fills the walls with signs, words, dates and little drawings. A diary of the last six years.

SEQ. 145 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

That same day, at night.

Robert comes in from the patio where he has just parked the car. Marilia is finishing preparing supper. She is wearing an elegant uniform from when El Cigarral was a luxury clinic.

ROBERT

You've put on your uniform! You don't have to, if you don't want to.

MARILIA

(Happy) I like the uniform, because that means we're together again...

Since he has come into the kitchen, despite the novelty of Marilia's presence, Robert is more interested in what is happening on the two screens of Vera's room. Marilia notices his interest. She goes up to him while Robert moves closer to the screens to see in detail what Vera is doing at that moment, on top of the chair, against the wall. (She is still writing non-stop, but the surveillance shot is so general that the dates can't be seen) Robert looks at the screens.

MARILIA

Who is she?

ROBERT

I told you already. Her name is Vera.
(To himself) What's she doing now?

MARILIA

She's writing on the wall. She called me on the intercom and asked me who I was and what date today was. (Surprised, not understanding) When I told her, she started writing on the wall!

ROBERT

Don't trust her and never open her door. If you ever have any problems, call me.

SEQ. 146 – VERA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Vera is still writing dates, tirelessly. The image is taken inside one of the screens, so it's in black and white and is cut through with the typical video lines. She is now at 2007. Robert looks at the screens, he understands what Vera is doing and he doesn't like it. She had seemed totally adapted and this means that something to which he has no access is bubbling inside her mind.

SEQ. 147 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. NIGHT

Robert is sitting at the wooden table, having supper. Marilia is watching him eat.

MARILIA

She asked me for newspapers and magazines.

ROBERT

No. No press.

MARILIA

Plasticine and scraps of material. And more large balls.

ROBERT

I'll see to it.

Marilia looks over at the image on the black and white screens.

MARILIA

She reminds me of someone.

ROBERT

All the women I've operated on end up reminding you of someone.

MARILIA

Yes, but this one even more... If she had hair, the face is identical.

Robert purses his lips. He doesn't want to talk about this anymore. Marilia understands and doesn't insist.

SEQ. 148 – FLASHBACK. EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY/NIGHT

Vera is alternating dates and strokes on the wall. And the few things that make up her life, all of them essential.

Days, months, years pass. The wall gradually fills with numbers, drawings copied from the books by Louise Bourgeois, quotes. Yoga postures. At times, the eyeliner is black, or brown, there are even things written with lipstick or colored in. The wall is starting to take on a very expressive hieroglyphic texture.

The quotes state simple facts. "Breathe", "breathe", or "I breathe". It's repeated hundreds of times. "Hear how the air comes in through your throat. And how it leaves." "Opium takes me away from everything." "Art is a guarantee of sanity". Linked to these images we see her "dressing" the yoga balls, with fragments of dresses and torn underwear, and making dolls from plasticine. Everything absolutely Louise Bourgeois.

"I've managed to meditate for 40 minutes"... (Another bit of writing somewhere else.)
"I was there for an hour today. An hour inside me and out of here."

We see Vera mediating, breathing, totally concentrated, not moving a single muscle of her body. This image melds with a shot of the wall full of signs. The effect is as if she were part of the wall, and all the signs, the dates of her captivity, were written on her body. She is wearing a dark nude colored bodysuit.

Grand ellipsis.

The wall is almost full. Lying on the floor, her hair now shoulder length, Vera is writing the latest date, the present one: 18-02-2012.

End of flashbacks.

SEQ. 149 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DAY

Return to the present

In the kitchen, Vera is trying to help Marilia make breakfast, but Marilia is looking at her in a hostile way. Vera has invaded her domain. Marilia is wearing an apron and has the gun in her pocket. There is an obvious bulge. Although she says nothing, Vera notices it. She isn't wearing the bodysuit, she's just wearing one of Robert's shirts, which is very big for her. The garment not only serves to dress her, it also demonstrates her new status in the house.

While Marilia is making scrambled eggs, Vera sets the tray. She is surrounded by lethal objects. There is a set of knives, of all sizes, attached to a magnet on the wall just in front of her. Vera takes one of the largest knives and starts to slice a pineapple. Marilia never takes her eyes off her. She is horrified by the sight of the enormous knife in her hands.

MARILIA

What are you doing?

VERA

(Neutral) I'm slicing pineapple.

The sharpened blade of the knife is glittering in the morning light. Marilia keeps looking at her.

VERA

Don't look at me like that. I'm not going to do anything to you.

MARILIA

I don't trust you.

VERA

If you trust me, everything will be much easier for the three of us.

Marilia puts the scrambled eggs on the tray. She goes to take it, but Vera gets in ahead of her.

MARILIA

Give me the tray.

VERA

No. I'm going to take it up.

Vera slides the tray carefully across the worktop and pulls it towards her.

MARILIA

(Very serious, hurt) You just have to put it in the dumb waiter.

VERA

Thank you.

And she goes off towards the door with the tray.

Cut.

SEQ. 150 – EL CIGARRAL. VERA'S ROOM. INT. DAY

Vera pushes the door of her room. It's open. It's the first time that she has gone in there voluntarily and that the door is open. She has come to get the tray she has just sent up in the dumb waiter. She steps into the room and looks in surprise at the wall on her left. Shaken, she looks at the surface on which she has written "her diary" for years. Only a few hours have passed since the last time she saw it, but time has taken a giant step in those few hours. And there she is, looking at the logbook of her survival. (Countless "I breathe", figures inspired by Louise Bourgeois, dates, yoga postures. Her life during her captivity.) Suddenly she remembers that, on the opposite wall, is the black eye that hides the camera through which Robert can see her. She is terrified by the possibility that he is seeing her at that moment. She recomposes the expression on her face, she wipes away the emotion provoked by this encounter with the wall and adopts a neutral expression. She turns to the dumb waiter, at the opposite end of the room.

Unhurried, calm, she looks around the wrecked room. The mattress stained with the tiger man's blood is still in the center of the room. The plasticine imitations of the Louise Bourgeois sculptures are still on the white table.

She opens the dumb waiter and takes out the tray with breakfast. And she goes out of the room.

SEQ. 151. EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. DAY

Robert wakes when he hears the door of his room opening.

From his point of view, he sees Vera, totally out of focus, coming up with a tray stacked with plates, cups and glasses, a varied succulent breakfast, for two. Still dazed and half asleep, he doesn't really understand what's happening. When he manages to focus, Vera greets him with a smile as she sits in front of him in an armchair and places the tray between the two of them.

VERA

Good morning. Breakfast.

It takes Robert, dulled and insecure, a while to react. For a moment Vera is afraid he won't remember the previous night, but he quickly dispels her doubts.

ROBERT

Thank you.

Even so, he can't help glancing at the knife, but he represses his surprise and controls his unease. He strives to make the situation seem as natural as possible.

ROBERT

Where's Marilia?

Vera pours coffee for both of them.

VERA

In the kitchen, grumbling. She doesn't like anyone else looking after you.

Robert sits up against the pillow, he takes a slice of strawberry and, while he savors it, he asks her, as if thinking aloud.

ROBERT

Last night, before we went to bed, we talked a lot and we made a promise, or did I dream it?

VERA

You didn't dream it. You promised me there would be no more locked doors, that I could see all the television channels, that I was free... and I promised you I'd never leave you...

Vera's eyes are shining.

ROBERT

Don't let me down.

VERA

That's all I have, Robert, your promise and mine...

Cut.

SEQ. 152 – EL CIGARRAL. KITCHEN. INT. DAY

The screens of Vera's rooms aren't showing any image. They are blank. Marilia, dressed to go out, is in front of the screens, as if she were in front of a bricked up

window. She doesn't approve of Robert having turned them off. On the other side of the worktop, Robert is meticulously cutting slices from a leg of ham. Marilia can't hide her displeasure and concern. She opens a drawer, takes out her little gun and puts it in her pocket.

MARILIA

Have you thought carefully about what we're going to do, Robert?! When we're in the street, she can just push me and run off!

ROBERT

She won't do that. She promised me.

MARILIA

(Scandalized) And you believe her?! You're like a child! You always have been when it comes to women. And look where it got you!

ROBERT

That's enough, Marilia!

MARILIA

(Muttering) This is madness!

They hear Vera's footsteps coming down the stairs. They turn when she appears in the kitchen. Vera has put on a dress for the first time. She shows herself to Robert, as if asking him for approval. Robert looks besotted, she's beautiful. The dress is one of those that he gave her a long time before and Vera kept it, she didn't tear it up like the other dresses. As if she had kept it for this occasion.

VERA

(Charming) I've put on the stilts. (She's talking about the shoes). So I can get used to them.

The three are on edge.

ROBERT

Buy everything you want. Marilia has got the cards.

VERA

Thank you...

She gives him a spontaneous, effusive kiss on the mouth while Marilia watches skeptically.

Cut.

SEQ. 153 – ROAD BY THE FIRST GATE. EXT. DAY

In front of the El Cigarral gate which leads onto the road, Marilia and Vera get into a chauffeur driven rental car. In the distance, a few miles away, Toledo is spread out before them.

Cut.

SEQ. 154 – SHOPPING STREET IN TOLEDO. EXT. DAY

Marilia and Vera are walking along a busy shopping street. The years of imprisonment mean that Vera is overwhelmed by crowds and by open spaces. She feels breathless.

Men in the crowd are looking at her with desire. It's a new experience for her. There are two men who look at her and then pretend they didn't. In any case, Vera isn't feeling well. She's breathing heavily. She's losing her balance. Her head is spinning.

Marilia doesn't take her eyes off her. She doesn't know if she's pretending. She doesn't trust her, but the fact is that Vera is getting paler by the minute. And she's walking a little unsteadily. She grabs on to Marilia's arm.

MARILIA

What's wrong with you?

VERA

I feel ill... My head's spinning...

She leans on Marilia, she looks as if she's about to faint. Men are looking at her.

MARILIA

What do you mean, your head's spinning!
Come on, you're attracting attention.

VERA

I think I'm going to faint.

MARILIA

Wait...! We'll go in here!

Marilia drags her into the first store she comes to.

MARILIA

If this is all an act, you'll be sorry!

SEQ. 155 – TOLEDO. PREVIOUS SEASON CLOTHING STORE. INT. DAY

It's a women's clothing store. As soon as they come in, a salesman notices Vera. He likes her and comes up to offer his services.

Vera tells him that she's feeling dizzy and she looks as if she is. The salesman immediately takes care of her. He invites her to sit down and then goes off to get her a Coca Cola.

Once she's seated, Vera looks around. The place reminds her of her mother's store. It's the same kind. Good designer clothes from previous seasons. That makes her feel sad and safe.

The salesman brings her a glass of Coca Cola. After a few sips, Vera soon recovers. The fact of being in an enclosed space makes her feel better. She notices a flowery dress by Dolce & Gabbana. She stands up to get a better look at it. It's the same dress she offered to Cristina in the first sequences, before going to Casilda's wedding party. Apart from the dress, she can see through the window that two of the men who had been looking at her are still hanging around outside. They're pretending otherwise, but they're undoubtedly on the lookout.

Marilia keeps watching her. She had thought Vera was pretending, but she sees now that she wasn't. Even so, the woman is uneasy.

Vera turns to Marilia.

VERA

(To Marilia) I'd like to try on this dress (referring to the one by Dolce & Gabbana).

The salesman is delighted about her decision.

SALESMAN

But of course. I'll take you to the changing room.

Marilia follows them.

SEQ. 156 – EL CIGARRAL. GARDEN. EXT. AFTERNOON

Robert and his collaborator are standing in front of a rustic wooden table, with three bonsais, in the patio which is next to the kitchen. Behind them, all we can see is an ivy-covered wall. Robert is devoting all his attention to the bonsai, manipulating a branch. He carefully winds a very fine wire around it so that the branch follows the direction of the wire. It's a task that requires concentration and delicacy. Robert has already shown that he has very skillful hands for delicate operations.

Beside him, Fulgencio, his collaborator, is watching him, uncomfortable at Robert's obvious lack of interest in him. He has a newspaper folded under his arm, and he's carrying a briefcase.

COLLABORATOR

Are you upset with me about something, Robert?

ROBERT

No, but as you can see I'm very busy.

COLLABORATOR

I've come to talk to you about El Cigarral, about the clinic.

ROBERT

I told you over the phone. I had another talk with the president and I've decided to stop using El Cigarral as a clinic.

COLLABORATOR

(Annoyed) If things are done carefully, there's nothing to be afraid of...

ROBERT

It's not just that. I've got other plans that have nothing to do with an operating theater.

COLLABORATOR

(Proposing) If you're not interested in operating, we'll rent the clinic from you. I'm speaking on behalf of all the team you already know. Our most important patients love how isolated this place is...

ROBERT

(Forcefully) I said no, Fulgencio! (The collaborator looking at him in bewilderment) And now I'd be grateful if you'd leave me alone... Forgive me for not seeing you out, but you know the way.

They're at the front door. Robert goes inside. The collaborator watches him go to his office. He's puzzled by Robert's attitude and obviously humiliated.

SEQ. 157 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S OFFICE. INT. DAY

After crossing the hall, Robert comes into his office. He has just sat at his desk when the collaborator appears. Robert opens one of the drawers to take out a pack of cigarettes. There's a gun in there. He lights the cigarette and looks at the collaborator with a bored expression. The conversation takes on a gangster-like tone.

ROBERT

Are you still here?

COLLABORATOR

(Enigmatically) I'm leaving now, but before I do I'd like you to take a look at today's paper.

The collaborator comes up and from the other side of the desk he leaves down the copy of the newspaper that he had under his arm. He opens it in the middle and points to an article. With one glance, Robert sees what it's about.

The headline is very expressive. "200 young people missing in the last ten years". (In Spain several organizations have sprung up, dedicated to looking for missing persons, working via Internet and in collaboration with Interpol and the Spanish police.)

The article is illustrated with about ten black and white photos. Almost all are of adolescents or children who disappeared twenty, fifteen, ten, five years before. Vicente is clearly recognizable in one of the photos. The collaborator points to him.

COLLABORATOR

Vicente Guillén Piñeiro is the boy who had the sex change with us. He disappeared from his home on September 10, 2006, as you can see.

Robert isn't looking at the newspaper. He carries on smoking. The two have abandoned any pretence of polite behavior.

ROBERT

(Coldly) And...?

COLLABORATOR

I was always surprised that that boy wanted to have a cunt, without taking hormones or anything.

ROBERT

All he wanted was the cunt. Now he's much more muscular, he's working in Los Angeles as a porn actor and making a fortune. Why are you bringing this up now?

COLLABORATOR

It says here that his mother is still searching desperately for him.

ROBERT

(Threatening) Don't go there, Fulgencio!

But the collaborator isn't intimidated. He pulls a folder with documents from between the pages of the newspaper and leaves it on the desk.

COLLABORATOR

All the documents you gave us were false...

ROBERT

It wouldn't be the first time we turned a blind eye to false documents! Why do you think our

clients prefer this place?

COLLABORATOR

(Sure of himself) You know what I think?

ROBERT

No, and I don't care.

COLLABORATOR

I think you kidnapped him and you've been experimenting with him, in every sense!

Robert glares at him.

COLLABORATOR

You told us that you'd tested GAL, your new skin, on atimic mice. Knowing you as I do, I think you wouldn't have the slightest scruple about testing it on human beings too. On Vicente, for example. Have you any idea what would happen to you if the scientific community found out that you used transgenesis on someone you had previously kidnapped?

ROBERT

I don't like threats because they end up infecting me.

He takes the gun from the desk drawer and aims it at the collaborator.

ROBERT

You don't know what you're talking about!
Get the hell out of here!

Robert continues aiming the gun at him. The collaborator starts to leave.

SEQ. 158 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S OFFICE. INT. DAY

But Vera appears at that moment, they almost bump into each other. She is wearing the flowered, fitted Dolce & Gabbana dress which shows off her splendid figure. She also has a classic Dior purse under her arm. Neither of the two men heard her come in. In fact, she had been outside for a moment, listening.

Robert has his besotted look again when he sees her. He puts the gun in the drawer but she has seen it.

Vera greets the collaborator with a gesture to which he responds, stunned.

VERA

(To the collaborator) If you're talking about me, Dr. Robert didn't kidnap me. And what is that transgenesis thing? A cream? If I'm here, it's because I came of my own free will. My name isn't Vicente, it's Vera. Vera Cruz! And I was always a woman!

Given Vera's forcefulness, the collaborator falls silent. He looks her up and down. And indeed that woman doesn't look anything like the boy he remembers from the operating theater. He takes a last look at Robert. And he smiles enigmatically, imagining the relationship between the two. And he goes off.

SEQ. 159 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S OFFICE, HALL, STAIRS. INT. DAY

Vera leaves the Dior bag down on a side table, near the desk, sits on the arm of Robert's chair and puts her arms round him. Robert is filled with pride at the way Vera handled the collaborator. He doesn't notice that Vera gets a glance at the open newspaper, long enough to see her photo among those of the other missing people. She looks at it for an instant, she knows she can't go to bits right now. So that Robert doesn't notice her reaction, she starts to kiss him passionately, hungrily. Delighted, he lets her do it. Vera asks him for a cigarette which he lights for her.

Marilia announces from the center of the sitting room.

MARILIA OFF

I'm going to make supper.

And she goes off to the kitchen.

VERA

What are you going to do with that man?

ROBERT

I don't know. He's a real pain in the ass.
(He thinks) Although it wouldn't be such a bad idea to rent El Cigarral to them... but I don't like being blackmailed! (He makes plans as he goes along) I'll have your papers soon.
Would you like to travel?

Vera's face lights up with expectation.

VERA

Yes! I'd love to get out of here. Well, you know what I mean!

They walk towards the bedroom.

ROBERT

We could even go and live in another country.
Where would you like to live?

Vera's eyes are shining with happiness.

VERA

In Paris, and study sculpture!

ROBERT

Alright then. We'll go to Paris.

VERA

And what about Marilia?

Marilia is in the kitchen. She doesn't hear them, but it's as if she was listening.

ROBERT

I'll send her to Bahia.

VERA

Don't tell her yet. She's very jealous.

Cut.

SEQ. 160 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT, FULL MOON

Very little light: the lamp on the bedside table and the light from the full moon coming through the two windows. The moon is projecting the grid of the window grilles onto the floor.

The disheveled bed (the sheet with the turndown embroidered with flowers and a darker colored bedspread) shows that Robert and Vera have been rolling around in it for a while.

They are naked. Robert is on top of her. Vera's legs are open. Robert, kissing her passionately and noisily, is trying to penetrate her. Vera can't repress a moan of pain.

Robert stops.

ROBERT

(Annoyed) Is it still painful?

VERA

(Apologizing) Yes.

He can't hide a frustrated expression. He doesn't want to force her, but he's aflame with passion. During all the dialogue he is breathing heavily.

ROBERT

Will we do it from behind?

VERA

That would hurt even more! Wait, just today
I bought a lubricating cream.

ROBERT

Then get it! What are you waiting for?

VERA

It's it in my purse.

She jumps out of bed and searches among the shopping bags she has left on the leather chaise longue from which Robert used to look at her on the screen of the huge television. She can't find her purse. She is in despair. She keeps searching, but everything is very disorderly and the purse doesn't appear.

VERA

(Complaining) I'm sure I had it in my new purse, but I
can't find it.

ROBERT

You left it downstairs, in my office.

Vera snatches up a transparent robe she'd bought that afternoon and goes out.

VERA

I'll go and get it. I'll be back in a second.

ROBERT

(Aroused and impatient) Hurry!

SEQ. 161 – EL CIGARRAL, CORRIDOR - STAIRS. INT. NIGHT

She leaves the room and goes quickly downstairs, trying not to make any noise so that Marilia won't hear her. The robe literally "flies" over the stairs, like a bird with black wings.

SEQ. 162 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S OFFICE. INT. NIGHT

She goes into the office. She doesn't turn on the light. She doesn't need to look for the Dior purse, she remembers perfectly where she left it. She picks it up and puts it on the desk. She opens the drawer, takes out the gun, and puts it in her purse. The newspaper is still on the desk, lying open as it was in the previous sequences. She turns on the desk lamp in order to see Vicente, smiling at her from the newspaper page. "Her mother is looking desperately for him". Her eyes shine, a host of emotions explode inside her. But she can't cry, she can't allow herself to do that. She hears Robert's voice in the distance.

She gives a start, for fear he might be seeing her, but his voice is coming from the bedroom.

ROBERT OFF

Vera, hurry up!

Vera is afraid that Robert's voice may have wakened Marilia, and that's what has happened.

She turns off the desk lamp and runs out.

SEQ. 163 – EL CIGARRAL. MARILIA'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Marilia is trying to sleep, but she clearly hears Robert's call of desire. And she knows he's not calling her. Uneasy, she rolls over in bed and grumbles in annoyance. The new couple is keeping her awake.

SEQ. 164 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

When Vera comes into the bedroom, her expression is very different from when she got out of bed, minutes before. Her face is expressionless, she finds no pleasure in revenge, there isn't even a feeling of revenge within her. If it were possible to avoid it, she would, but she can't. There's no other way to end her captivity.

ROBERT

(Joking) I thought you'd gone.

VERA

(Serious) Not yet.

From the door, she puts her hand in her purse and tosses a tube of lubricating cream to Robert. Robert catches it in mid-air with an explanation of delight.

ROBERT

Come on, baby! What are you doing?

Vera leaves the purse on one of the two little armchairs. She takes out the gun and points it at him.

VERA

I'm going to kill you.

Robert can't believe what he's seeing and he certainly doesn't understand it.

ROBERT

Is this is a joke...?

VERA

Call it what you want.

She walks slowly over to the bed, aiming at him all the time. She takes off the safety catch.

ROBERT

(More disappointed than terrified)
But... you promised!

VERA

I lied.

She is very close to the bed. She doesn't want to talk any more. She shoots him in the chest, an accurate shot that echoes round the room. Robert, who was sitting up waiting for her, lurches onto his left side. Vera looks at him, still aiming the gun at him. There is a look of pain and disgust on her face. Robert's blood splatters on the embroidered flowers on the sheet. Robert dies among the flowers.

SEQ. 165 – EL CIGARRAL. MARILIA'S ROOM. STAIRS. INT. NIGHT

Marilia hears the shot. She gets slowly out of bed. She's floating inside her nightdress.

She takes the little gun from the purse she was carrying when she went to Toledo with Vera. And she stealthily leaves her room on the ground floor, her hair disheveled, pointing the little gun at the silence and emptiness of the great hall.

She crosses the rug with the abstract design. She doesn't see anything. She doesn't hear anything. At the foot of the stairs, she shouts so that Robert can hear her in his room.

MARILIA

Robert!

There's no answer. She imagines the worst. She goes up the stairs. She arrives at the closed door of Robert's room.

SEQ. 166 – EL CIGARRAL. DOOR OF ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

She knocks on the door with the barrel of the gun. Three dry raps. She remains outside.

MARILIA

Robert!

VERA (OFF)

(From inside, quietly) He's sleeping.

MARILIA

I heard a noise.

Vera's voice sounds sleepy. We don't see her.

VERA (OFF)

Yes, so did I. Go back to bed, Marilia, it wasn't anything.

SEQ. 167 – EL CIGARRAL. DOOR ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

Marilia takes a step to leave, but she turns. No one can convince her that she didn't hear a shot. How could Robert be asleep if he had called Vera a minute before? It doesn't make sense.

SEQ. 168 – EL CIGARRAL. ROBERT'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT

She cautiously opens the door of the room. She looks over at the bed and discovers Robert keeled over on his left side. A trickle of blood is falling from the bed to the floor, where a pool has formed. The stain of his blood is very dark. Marilia gives a harsh shriek that comes straight from her gut. A scream that is more animal than human.

MARILIA

Robert! My son!

She looks at both sides of the room. She doesn't see Vera. She doesn't see anyone. She aims the barrel of her gun at the curtains on the two windows, thinking that Vera could be hiding in either of them.

MARILIA

Come out of there! Bitch!

But no one moves. Except for herself, the room and all it contains seem turned to stone. She takes a step towards the bed. Half way she is stopped by a shot in the chest. And Marilia collapses. At the foot of the bed, hidden behind the tails of the eiderdown, a gun is sticking out. Vera appears behind the gun, she was hiding under the bed. Marilia, lying on the floor, dedicates her last look to her, as Vera slides along the floor.

MARILIA

I... knew it.

Her expression and her final breath are frozen after those words.

Vera comes out from under the bed. She wipes the prints from the gun with the duvet and leaves it there. She takes off the black, transparent robe and puts on the Dolce & Gabbana dress. Before this, she had taken Robert's pants and searched in the pockets until she found several keys and a wad of notes.

SEQ. 169 – EL CIGARRAL. THE DIRT ROAD. EXT. NIGHT

Vera is walking along carrying a leather bag belonging to Robert. In the background, the imposing profile of the palatial mansion is outlined against a sky with a full moon and a myriad of stars.

When she walks along the dirt road and she only has to go through the first and last gate, Vera turns her head and looks at El Cigarral for the last time.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 170 – “VINTAGE & IMITATIONS” BOUTIQUE. EXT. MORNING

The name of the store has changed, or it has been lengthened. Perhaps at the beginning it only said “Vintage” and now they’ve added “Imitations”. A taxi stops in front of the boutique. They have just opened. Vera goes into the store. She’s carrying the leather bag in one hand. And she’s wearing an orange-brown leather jacket over the flowered dress.

SEQ. 171 – “VINTAGE & IMITATIONS” BOUTIQUE. INT. MORNING

There is no one in the entrance. Vera almost prefers that. She looks slowly around the interior of the store. There is a recess that gives onto a narrow passageway that leads to the back room. She sees a few changes, the clothes are displayed in different places, on hangers that seem to start in the ceiling. As if the dresses were floating in space. The counter where the till used to be is also changed. But the atmosphere is the same. Vera walks towards the recess, trembling with emotion. Without hurrying and with the sensation that she has all the time in the world for herself, also with curiosity and fear.

She arrives at the start of the passageway. At the other end, in the back room, her mother, much older than the last time she saw her, is examining some accounts with Cristina. Her mother is sitting, wearing reading glasses. Cristina is standing at her side. Her hair is long, but tied back in a casual bun. More adult and prettier than she remembered her. The two women look at the girl who greets them with a timid “Good morning” from the far end of the passageway. The mother looks her quickly up and down, her expression unchanged. And Cristina is looking at her too, very interested, thinking, “Where did this honey come from?”

Going back to her books, the mother says to her:

MOTHER

You see to her, Cristina.

Vera has registered the two reactions, the mother’s absolute indifference and Cristina’s immediate interest. And they are both a shock for her. When Cristina is coming to the end of the passageway, Vera turns and takes a few steps into the store, to gather her strength.

CRISTINA

How can I help you?

VERA

I don't know where to begin, Cristina.

CRISTINA

(Astonished) Do you know me?

VERA

I'm Vicente. I've just escaped... I was kidnapped...
I was given a sex change. I had to kill two people
to get away. You have to help me.

Cristina is dumbstruck, her eyes wide as saucers. She can't say a word.

VERA

Do you remember the dress? (She's talking
about the one she's wearing, by Dolce &
Gabbana) Before Casilda's wedding, six years
ago, I told you that I'd give it to you, just to see
how it looked on you. And you told me that, if I
liked it so much, I should put it on. It was just the
two of us, do you remember?

Cristina remembers perfectly the dress, the moment and her reply. She never thought that such a simple phrase would so quickly become a sinister condemnation. Premonitory and sinister. She is stunned. Vera's story is anything but rational, but Cristina believes it and bursts into tears. She can't say anything.

The mother appears in the recess, she looks at the two girls who are facing each other, in silence, and with shining eyes.

MOTHER

(Uneasy) Is anything wrong, Cristina?

CRISTINA

(Between sobs) Come here a moment, ma'am.

The mother comes up to them. As she comes closer Vera's eyes fill with tears too. The mother looks at them, bewildered. What can be happening that those two girls are crying?

MOTHER

But, what's happening? Why are you both crying?

VERA

(Barely audible, in a faint voice) I'm Vicente.

Slow fade to black.

The End