

COLPE

Screenplay by
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OVER BLACK:

Background noises are audible.

MARIO (V.O.)
Got something you wanna tell me?

1. INT. MARIO'S STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Psychologist **MARIO MONTANARI** (45), seated in his chair, is concluding a session with his patient, **VALENTINA** (20).

MARIO
Is someone hurting you?
If you don't tell me who this
person is, I can't help you.

VALENTINA (O.S.)
(whispering)
I shouldn't even be here. He doesn't
want me to keep coming.

MARIO
His name stays in this room, you know.

VALENTINA (O.S.)
Doesn't matter who he is, I just need
to get away from him.

2. INT. ALESSANDRO'S STUDIO - NIGHT

A hand switches on a portable recorder.

ALESSANDRO (O.S.)
Monday, March 4th. 6:00 PM.
Patient: Mario Montanari.
(pause)
How're you feeling today?

MARIO (O.S.)
Like the world's crashing down on me.

ALESSANDRO (O.S.)
Crashing down on you... You think the
weight's solely yours to carry?

MARIO (O.S.)
I don't know. I can't think straight
anymore.

ALESSANDRO (O.S.)
Why don't we start from the beginning?

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE

3. INT. MARIO'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Digital clock on the desk reads 6:35 PM. Mario and his **PATIENT** (25) conclude their session.

PATIENT
Time's up, right?

MARIO
Yeah, we'll have to wrap it up.

They head toward the studio's exit. Mario opens the door, forces a smile, and bids farewell to the patient.

PATIENT
See you next week.

As she exits, Mario walks down the hallway and opens the waiting room door.

4. INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mario enters to find **MATILDE**, a woman around 30, sitting with downcast eyes.

MARIO
(heading to the desk)
Good morning.

MATILDE
(rising)
Are you Mario Montanari?

MARIO
That's me.

MATILDE
I found this.

She hands him a receipt with his name on it. Mario examines it closely.

MARIO
It's from one of my patients.

MATILDE
(choked up)
Valentina... my sister...

MARIO
Everything alright?

MATILDE
Don't you feel any shame?

MARIO
What are you talking about? Valentina
hasn't been to therapy in a month.
What happened?

MATILDE
(teary-eyed)
My sister's dead! She killed herself!

Mario, incredulous, widens his eyes.

MARIO
What?

MATILDE
(angrily)
And it's your fault!

MARIO
Please calm down. Why don't you sit
for a moment and...

MATILDE
(interrupting, tearfully)
My sister's dead because of you, you
heard me? And don't tell me you didn't
give her anything.

MARIO
You're talking about medication? I
didn't...

MATILDE
(cutting him off)
You're a murderer!

Mario falls silent for a moment.

MARIO
You're not listening to me and
apparently you didn't listen to
Valentina either.

In the silence, the woman's eyes brim with anger. **ALESSANDRO** (60s), one of the psychologists sharing the office, enters the waiting room drawn by the chaos. He sees Matilde yelling at Mario.

MATILDE
What are you insinuating???

ALESSANDRO
What's going on?

Alessandro steps between her and Mario.

MATILDE
You bastard!

ALESSANDRO
I think you should leave! Now!

MATILDE
(yelling)
You'll pay for this!

The woman breaks into desperate sobs as Alessandro forcefully ushers her out. Mario staggers back, leaning against the wall to steady himself. He hears muffled shouts, his heart pounding. He pulls out a tranquilizer bottle from his pocket, takes a pill, and swallows it.

END FLASHBACK

5. INT. ALESSANDRO'S STUDIO - NIGHT (CONT. FROM SCENE 2)

Alessandro and Mario sit across from each other, separated by a small table. Mario slouches in his chair, gazing downward as he recalls the scene.

ALESSANDRO
She accused you of being responsible for her sister's death. How did that make you feel?

MARIO
It was Heartbreaking. Can't shake off that word: "Murderer". Like all the work I've done vanished in a second.

6. INT. MARIO'S STUDIO - NIGHT (CONT. FROM SCENE 3)

Mario remains in the waiting room, staring into space, his eyes tired and hollow.

MARIO (V.O.)

And if that wasn't enough, the phone calls started soon after.

Mario steps out into the doorway, takes a deep, desolate breath. His cell phone starts ringing from inside his studio. Mario walks down the hallway and enters the room. Seeing an unknown number, he hesitates for a moment, then answers.

MARIO

Hello?

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

(on the phone)

Hello, Dr. Montanari, it's Thomas Bianchi from "La Stampa." I know you haven't made any statements about Valentina's passing yet...

MARIO

(cutting him off)

I've been getting calls from you journalists for days. I'll say it again: I have nothing to say.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

(on the phone)

People want to know, Mr. Montanari... How did the girl get the Xanax?

MARIO

Leave me alone.

Mario ends the call and tosses the phone carelessly onto the desk. The landline phone on the desk emits a busy tone. Mario sits on the chair, motionless, staring into space.

VALENTINA (V.O.)

We're doing it again, aren't we?

7. INT. MARIO'S STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Valentina sits across from Mario. Mario observes her calmly.

MARIO

What do you mean?

VALENTINA

You're looking at me, waiting for me to say something, and I'm doing the same, hoping you'll start the conversation.

MARIO

We don't have to talk, we can just stay silent.

Valentina lowers her gaze.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You know, not everything we feel pleases us. And it's normal to try and hide it. Why don't we start from there? Does silence bother you?

VALENTINA

When I'm silent, I start thinking.

MARIO

You still think about your parents?

VALENTINA

About how they left us so quickly.

Valentina sighs with profound sorrow.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)

The other day, I heard a dog escaped from a property near my sister's house, and it got hit by a car.

MARIO

And how did that news make you feel?

VALENTINA

In the end, I'm not so different from that dog. Just an open gate, no attention, and I find myself wandering alone... without guidance.

(pause)

And a car hits me.

END FLASHBACK

8. INT. MARIO'S STUDIO - NIGHT (CONT. FROM SCENE 6)

Mario still sits in the chair, staring into space.

ALESSANDRO (V.O.)

And then?

9. INT. ALESSANDRO'S STUDIO - NIGHT (CONT. FROM SCENE 5)

Alessandro and Mario face each other.

MARIO

On my way home, I passed by The Ambra,
the place where I met my wife. Now
it's a small liquor store.

Mario lowers his gaze again.

MARIO (CONT'D)

And I went in. Couldn't find a good
reason not to. Usually, I find one.
I bought a bottle of Whiskey and
went home.

ALESSANDRO

Was Andrea already there?

MARIO

She came right after me.

ALESSANDRO

Another fight?

MARIO

Yelling, lots of yelling. More than
usual.

Mario sighs deeply.

MARIO (CONT'D)

And she ended it with, "I hope at
least you're better as a psychologist
than you are as a father".

ALESSANDRO

You think you're not a good father?

MARIO

Maybe... I don't know. When Andrea was
born, we weren't expecting her. We
were both very young. Maybe too young.
And I was so obsessed with my career.

ALESSANDRO

Do you think things got worse after
that night a year ago?

MARIO

I don't want to make excuses. I was an
absent father even before my wife
died. Truth be told, I was an absent
husband too. But I'm realizing it only
now.

ALESSANDRO

What do you think all this has to do with Valentina?

MARIO

In some way, I didn't just feel like her psychologist, I also felt like her father.

(pause)

And as the good father I proved to be, I didn't give enough weight to what she told me. She talked often about someone, never told me who, but it was clear she was seeing someone. She said she felt safe, even though sometimes she made her do things against her will. Beneath those words was a cry for help, and I tried to give it to her, but I couldn't. Maybe because I was trying to prove to myself I could be a better father. My daughter seemed to have drifted away, but Valentina was there, waiting for someone she could rely on. And I wanted to be there for her, as if somehow I could make up for the mistakes I made with my daughter.

ALESSANDRO

What about Valentina's sister? How do you think she felt?

MARIO

Helpless, as if someone took her own daughter. After all, she had to provide for both of them at 30. Being present couldn't have been easy. You know how hard it is to be a parent? You never know what they're doing... what they're thinking.

Alessandro leans forward and turns off the portable recorder on the table.

ALESSANDRO

You know what I think? I think you're wrong!

MARIO

What do you mean?

ALESSANDRO

Valentina was really fragile. Like glass. You and I... we... know it.

Mario's now confused.

MARIO

We?

ALESSANDRO

But it's not true that you didn't do enough. In fact, you did too much. You were about to ruin me, you know?

MARIO

I don't understand, Alessandro!

ALESSANDRO

You were really making her believe there was a chance to escape. But such a fragile creature, without guidance, can't go far. Like a dog without a leash, it's bound to end up under a car.

Mario widens his eyes.

10. INT. MARIO'S STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Valentina sits in the chair opposite Mario, looking around nervously as her hands tremble.

VALENTINA

I wasn't sure I'd come back.

MARIO

Why? Valentina, you know this is a safe place. You can tell me anything.

Valentina remains silent, avoiding Mario's gaze.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You want to know what I think instead?

Valentina nods.

MARIO (CONT'D)

I think you're scared. But I also think you came here for a reason.

VALENTINA

And what would that be?

MARIO
You tell me. Is there something you
want me to know?
(pause)
Is someone hurting you?

Valentina looks up at Mario.

MARIO (CONT'D)
If you don't tell me who this person
is, I can't help you.

VALENTINA
(whispering)
I can't, I shouldn't even be here. He
doesn't want me to keep coming.

Someone knocks on the door.

MARIO
(loudly)
Hold on!

Mario leans over the chair towards Valentina.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Valentina, I need you to listen
carefully now.

A tear rolls down Valentina's face. Someone knocks on the door
again.

MARIO (CONT'D)
(loudly)
I said hold on!

The door opens, and Alessandro enters, holding a stack of files.

ALESSANDRO
Sorry to interrupt, Mario, but there
are some files you should...

Alessandro looks up and sees Valentina, who, recognizing the
voice, spins around towards him, terrified. The two look at each
other for a moment without saying a word.

MARIO
Leave them in your office, Alessandro.
I'll come sign them later.

Mario observes Alessandro and Valentina as they look at each
other.

ALESSANDRO
O-Okay... I'll wait for you in my
office then.

Alessandro closes the door. Valentina now looks down, her eyes wide and her breathing erratic. Mario is about to speak, but Valentina jumps up...

VALENTINA
I'm sorry, I can't do this!

...and rushes out of the office without looking back.

MARIO
Valentina!

END FLASHBACK

11. INT. ALESSANDRO'S STUDIO - NIGHT (CONT. FROM SCENE 9)

Mario snaps back to reality. His eyes are still wide open.

MARIO
(looking up)
YOU! You're the person Valentina was
talking about! The man who manipulated
her!

ALESSANDRO
I loved her. And I tried to show her
the right path. If only you hadn't
tried to make her rebel, maybe she
wouldn't have stopped listening to me.

Alessandro, as he speaks, gets up and goes to the bookshelf. He returns to his chair with some documents in hand. The recorder that was on the table is gone.

MARIO
It was always you!

ALESSANDRO
You see, Mario, when a dog's not on a
leash, it's never a good thing! It can
become dangerous, try to escape, or
attack those trying to help it. That's
why it was necessary first to calm
her, make her docile, and only then
send her to someone she could trust,
who would guide her towards the right
way, my way. And you, Mario, couldn't
even do that.

MARIO

You didn't send her to me to help her,
but to help YOU maintain control!

ALESSANDRO

I knew that you, as fragile as you
are, would come to tell me everything
afterward. After all, screw
professional secrecy, right? I have
the documentation here to report you.
I bet the Council will be pleased
after I've reported everything.

MARIO

(voice trembling)
Why? Why did you do all this?

ALESSANDRO

You did it all. And at first, it was
just a coincidence.

MARIO

But you were the one giving her Xanax,
weren't you?

ALESSANDRO

It was to keep her calm. She was
stressed, paranoid, didn't know who to
trust anymore. But I never thought it
could end like this.

MARIO

Valentina died because of your damn
pills! You took advantage of a twenty-
year-old girl. A child. YOU'RE SIXTY
FUCKING YEARS OLD!

ALESSANDRO

I already told you, I loved her!
Age doesn't matter.

MARIO

Did you hear what I said? She's dead!
Because of you! And you didn't even
feel the slightest remorse. What the
hell are you? And now everyone thinks
I'm the monster.

ALESSANDRO

You know, it's funny how things went
on the right track without me
basically doing anything. I just had
to send Valentina to you, asshole.

Mario stands up from the chair and takes a step toward Alessandro with clenched fists, standing in front of him, furious. Then suddenly, his face relaxes.

MARIO

Have a good day, Alessandro.

Mario grabs his briefcase and exits the studio. Alessandro, with a satisfied look, gets up and puts on his jacket. He goes to grab the recorder but sees it's gone.

ALESSANDRO

NO!

CUT

FLASHBACK

As Alessandro turns towards the bookshelf, Mario reaches out for the recorder, takes it, and turns it back on.

END FLASHBACK

Alessandro is petrified in front of the desk.

ALESSANDRO (CONT'D)

NO, DAMN IT, NO!

FLASHBACK

The recorder is turned on in Mario's briefcase.

END FLASHBACK

12. INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mario holds the recorder in his hand with a satisfied smile as he walks down the hallway.