

EXT. WOODS - DAY

SFX of birds chirping, a gentle wind through trees. CHARLIE, is reporting what he's sees.

CHARLIE

Its a meadow, I guess. I'd call it a meadow. No, no. Its too small for a full-fledged meadow. Maybe it's a glade. Or a dale? And there are some deer over there, to my left about 20 yards away, and a little one over there, to the right a bit. They're just munching on grass.

He takes a few steps.

CHARLIE

The grass, it seems so real. I can see the dew getting on my shoes. Good thing I wore suede. Nice one. Fuck I just got these.

(Suddenly addressing a chipmunk)

Oh hi. Hi there. Here's a little chipmunk guy. What's that? Are you trying to tell me something? What's the matter buddy?

The Chipmunk is chattering at him, and then abruptly the animals all run off. Wind picks up.

CHARLIE

Hey wait, where you going? Guys? Chipmunk friend? Hello?

Suddenly Charlie's cut off by the voice mail he's been leaving.

VOICE MAIL

If you are satisfied with your message, please press one. To delete and re-record your message press 2.

The sound of the bucolic woods disappears with gigantic reversing swell, like its being sucked back into a genie's bottle. Suddenly, we're on a busy street in the flatiron district of Manhattan.

CHARLIE

(relieved)  
Oh thank god.

Charlie presses a key on his phone. There's a beep prompting him to leave a message.

CHARLIE  
Uh Hi Dr Sadler, this is Charlie. I just left your office- I *thought* we had an appointment today, I mean its Thursday so we definitely had an appointment unless.... Well, you know, unless its not Thursday.

He asserts his sanity.

CHARLIE  
But it *is* actually Thursday and we *did* have a meeting so, yeah. And I just had another, uh, episode. The usual. We can talk about it next week. Anyways, hopefully you're ok. Just, uh, let me know what's up.

INT. BODEGA - CONTINUOUS

He hangs up and walks into a bodega. The BODEGA OWNER is behind the counter.

CHARLIE  
Hey do you have juicy fruit?

BODEGA OWNER  
What?

CHARLIE  
Juicy fruit. Its gum. Yellow package?

BODEGA OWNER  
No, no sorry.

CHARLIE  
Ok. What day is it?

BODEGA OWNER  
The 23rd.

CHARLIE

No, I mean, what day of the week.

BODEGA OWNER

Oh, its Thursday.

CHARLIE

Yeah, that's what I thought. Thanks.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

He leaves the Bodega.

CHARLIE

Hey Siri, call Amber.

SIRI

Ok. Dialing Amber, mobile.

It rings, AMBER (think Lena Waithe) picks up. Amber is Charlie's best friend, and also a patient of Sadler's.

AMBER

Charlie, what the fuck man?

CHARLIE

(sarcastically)

Oh. Hi Amber, how are you?

AMBER

I'm working man. You know I can't take calls when I'm working!

CHARLIE

Then why did you answer?

AMBER

Because I'm so bored, man. Like, out of my mind. I've been sitting here guarding this door for three hours. Not one person has gone through. Not in, not out, nothing.

CHARLIE

So you're just sitting there?

AMBER

Yeah man. Sitting on a stool. My ass is numb, can't feel a thing. You could stick a fork in it.

CHARLIE

I don't want to stick a fork in it.

AMBER

I said you could, not you want to. Man, I swear this job is a joke, a really terrible, sad, joke.

CHARLIE

You have a really fucked up sense of humor, dude. Listen, have you heard from Dr Sadler?

AMBER

I was going to ask you that! What the hell? I went to my appointment yesterday and he was a no-show! And I have important issues I need to go over with that man.

CHARLIE

Tell me about it. 5th avenue just turned into a forest and chipmunks were trying to tell me bad news.

AMBER

(Her tone changes, her voice gets quiet)

Oh shit.

CHARLIE

What? What's happening?

AMBER

Its my boss. I got to go.

CHARLIE

Ok but--

She hangs up.

CHARLIE

We need to find Sadler. What if he's in trouble?

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

CHARLIE (LATE 30'S) is recording notes for his psychiatrist, who's asked him to document his hallucinations. Charlie is annoyed he has to do this, but is trying to get on board with the idea.

CHARLIE

Ok, Dr Sadler. I'm going to go along with this 'recording' experiment idea of yours, but only because you've disappeared. When you're back, I reserve the right to NOT do this, because I really don't want to... Which you know, because we talked it about it two weeks ago, when we were meeting face to face, like normal doctor-patient interactions...

He takes a breath, resets.

CHARLIE

But I'm cool, I'm game. I want to *participate in my wellness*. I just really dislike the idea of having a permanent record of my broken-ness. I know, I know, you don't like that word. See, now I'm doing it wrong.

He walks across the living room, gathering his thoughts. He sits down and sips coffee.

CHARLIE

Yes, that's coffee. I haven't cut down on the caffeine like you suggested. But that's not even on the table.

Another sip.

CHARLIE

Alright let's keep this quick, I have to get to the group session at Pauline's house. Ugh. Also not my favorite thing.

Coffee.

CHARLIE

Ok, so I was on my way to our appointment, and suddenly all the buildings disappeared and became a giant forest. And I was standing in a clearing, with these cute, gentle, friendly deers. Deer. Deer? Fuck I'm so distracted I

don't even know the plural of Deer anymore.

More coffee.

CHARLIE  
(asserting himself)  
I know its 'deer.'

He gets back to the point.

CHARLIE  
(energized by the story)  
The deer were just grazing, and sniffing things, then suddenly they pulled a *full Bambi*, looking all around, alert, tense. They sniffed the air, and their ears twitched around like little satellite dishes looking for a signal. And whatever it was-- I couldn't hear anything-- but whatever it was, they got scared and ran away.

He pauses.

CHARLIE  
I would consider an image like that a really bad omen if it was real. But its not real, right, Dr Sadler? Isn't that what we're doing here. Reinforcing the fact I can tell difference between reality and... whatever this other stuff is.

He gets up from his chair and starts walking through his apartment.

CHARLIE  
Ok. That's what I've got. This feels pretty dumb, honestly, doctor. But I'm in your hands. I mean, since we started, well, you know. Its been a lot better. So if this is what you want to try, I'm in. Even if it's dumb as fu--

He cuts himself off. SFX of a gentle breeze and birdsong, a woodland scene.

CHARLIE

Um, so there's a little woodland creature, like a chipmunk or a squirrel or something, standing next to my keys right now. He seems friendly, I'm not afraid or anything. And now he seems annoyed that I'm talking about him, so he's walking down the counter... and behind the box of cereal... and he's gone. Great. Ok I've got to go. Good talk.

The SFX switch back to his apartment: the sound of Charlie grabbing keys and shutting the door as he leaves.

INT. PAULINE'S LOFT - EVENING

A group of Sadler's patients are meeting for the monthly group session, which Pauline hosts. We meet PAULINE, who is transgender, and leads the group sessions, HAMISH the Scottish Tennis Pro with a soft side, CLARENCE a black struggling stand up comedian, and SUE ELLEN, who's so motherly you expect her to be wearing an apron and rubber gloves at all times.

Charlie enters the fancy condo.

CHARLIE

Hello?

PAULINE

(mid conversation with Sue Ellen)

Sue Ellen, did you like "Screaming With Your Inner Voice?"

I think the author's amazing.

SUE ELLEN

Oh Pauline! Yes. I couldn't put it down... So powerful. And, it just made me think about the way I've been treating myself, you know?

PAULINE

Well that's the thing! Its such an important first step!!

SUE ELLEN

And the part where he's saying that the Harry and Hermione were secretly

doing it in Hagrid's barn?!  
Scandalous!!

PAULINE  
I don't think that was in there,  
Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN  
Really, Pauline? Are you sure?

PAULINE  
Yes, I'm a hundred percent sure. JK  
Rowling is dead to me.

SUE ELLEN  
You mean it wasn't a Harry Potter book?

PAULINE  
No!

SUE ELLEN  
So I made it up. Just another  
hallucination.

PAULINE  
I think so, babe.

SUE ELLEN  
Oh motherfucker!

Sue Ellen starts crying a bit as Charlie sits down.

CHARLIE  
Hi Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN  
(crying)  
Hi Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Hi Clarence, Hey Hamish.

CLARENCE  
What's up Charlie?

HAMISH  
Hey.

CLARENCE



Hey I really have to get out of here by nine. I got a gig downtown, so...

HAMISH

You still doing stand up, Clarence?

CLARENCE

Yes. Yes, Hamish, I'm still doing stand up! You ask me that every fucking session man. What are you, my mom?

HAMISH

Aw brother, I'm sorry. I didn't realize. I really... I support you man. If you want to do stand up, you go for it. I've got your back.

CLARENCE

Ok cool well here's a flyer I go on at ten.

HAMISH

Yeah I'm busy. But still, I *support* you.

CLARENCE

Fuck you, Hamish.

SUE ELLEN

(clearing her tears)

Oh, guys, I went to my appointment yesterday and Dr Sadler didn't show up. Is that weird?

HAMISH

He's never missed an appointment with me. Never even rescheduled.

CHARLIE

He missed mine too. This morning.

PAULINE

He's probably just got a cold. He's not a robot.

SUE ELLEN

I guess I'll just reschedule for next week.

PAULINE

Ok well we can keep this quick,  
then. Does anyone having any pressing  
issues they need to go over?

Awkward silence.

PAULINE

No? Sue Ellen? Ok. How are we all doing  
on our verifications?

HAMISH

I had a pretty good one today. Yeah  
I was at Chelsea pier, working with  
one of my clients on the courts, and  
my dog showed up...

He stops himself and adjusts. Pauline is very precise in how  
they phrase things.

HAMISH

NOT my dog. The dog I see in my  
hallucinations. He showed up and, you  
know here I am with a basket of about  
200 tennis balls... cause I'm a tennis  
instructor, right?

CLARENCE

(annoyed as fuck)

We know, Hamish. Everyone knows.

HAMISH

And my... the dog, he was really happy  
and wanting to play and stuff. But:  
I tuned it out, man. Completely tuned  
it out. I was a boss.

SUE ELLEN

Nice one, Hamish. Good for you.

General agreement from the other patients.

HAMISH

Thanks.

PAULINE

Ok that's really good, Hamish. Super.  
But let's not forget, Dr Sadler wants  
us to *verify*, not just ignore.

HAMISH

(annoyed that this little  
victory isn't good enough  
for Pauline)

I know, Pauline, I know! But I was in  
the middle of a lesson. I couldn't ask  
my client if he saw an imaginary golden  
retriever running around!

CHARLIE

I get it. All good man.

CLARENCE

I had a pretty good one this week.

PAULINE

Go ahead, Clarence.

CLARENCE

I was heading to lunch, and it was,  
like, midtown at noon so it was a  
madhouse, you know? And all of the sudden  
four guys started following me in the  
crowd. They're wearing all black,  
hoodies up, tactical vests. Scary as  
fuck man. But I just stop, and go sit  
down on a bench- this is like 47th and  
6th, right, so those big buildings all  
have like benches and shit outside.  
So I sit down on a bench near this old  
lady. The guys are still following me,  
they're like positioning themselves  
around- one over there by the hot dog  
stand, one over there by the schwarma  
guy.

HAMISH

Shit man. That's scary.

SUE ELLEN

Oh Clarence! That's terrible.

CLARENCE

I just sat there for a while, talking  
to the old lady about dumb stuff, you  
know, the weather, shit like that. And  
I was going to ask her if she could  
see them, the guys in black, but before  
I got a chance, they disappeared. Gone.  
Couldn't see them anywhere.

PAULINE

Well that's a really good try,  
Clarence. So good.

CLARENCE

Thanks I felt pretty good about it.  
Plus, I got the old lady's number.

HAMISH

Ew.

CHARLIE

Oh shit.

CLARENCE

Best hand job I ever had.

SUE ELLEN

Awww noooo.

CLARENCE

Its like, they really perfected the  
art of the hand job back in the day...  
you know? Now everyone just jumps right  
in and starts fucking. Back then it  
was a slow burn. Old school.

PAULINE

Clarence! Jesus. Ok. Moving on.  
Charlie?

CHARLIE

I, uh. Wow. That's really gross,  
Clarence.

CLARENCE

Don't judge me.

CHARLIE

Ok, I've been pretty good lately.  
These weird woodland scenes keep  
happening- like wherever I am will  
disappear, and suddenly I'm in a forest  
with little deer and birds and  
chipmunks.

SUE ELLEN

Cute!

CHARLIE

Not cute, Sue Ellen.

PAULINE

Remember guys, we don't use the substance of each other's hallucinations against each other! Come on! We know this! No matter what we see, or hear, what we all need is reality.

CHARLIE

Anyway they've all been kind of ending the sameway- all the animals get scared and run away. Like something bad is coming.

HAMISH

I know that feeling.

CHARLIE

So does the old lady on the bench.

CLARENCE

Nice one, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

PAULINE

Ok well my turn. I've been seeing things pretty often lately, its really got me a little shaken. Basically, every time I enter a room, I can see and hear the walls turning into place. Like the room just changed, and there are huge gears and motors that move the walls around like, like a set on stage or something. Or like a theme park, like Harry Potter world. Its fucking terrifying. Plus, it happens so fast, its hard to get the verifications, you know? I'll ask someone how long they've been there, or if the room has been redecorated, stuff like that.

HAMISH

Smart. Good move.

PAULINE

Thanks, Hamish. Sue Ellen, how about you?

SUE ELLEN

Its been a tough one for me guys. I'm serious. I guess because usually my hallucinations are things that I think people say to me, but then... you know, its just in my head, so. I have a really hard time keeping things straight at work. Like I was talking to this one guy about a file that we couldn't find, and I swear right in the middle of it he told me he'd killed his dad.

CLARENCE

Oh shit.

CHARLIE

Yikes.

PAULINE

Oh, Sue Ellen. What did you do?

SUE ELLEN

I lost it. I couldn't verify anything- no one else was listening, you know? So I just excused myself and went to the ladies room.

PAULINE

Baby steps, ok? We can't be perfect at this, we just need to take the right steps, and you totally are.

SUE ELLEN

I'm so tired of this shit, Pauline. I know we're not supposed to care what kind of hallucinations we have, but... I'm sorry, I really shouldn't...

PAULINE

No, no- go on.

SUE ELLEN

I'm just FUCKING PISSED! Charlie sees woodchucks and bambi! Hamish sees a

golden retriever!! What do I see?  
Nothing. I just hear people say TOTALLY  
FUCKED UP SHIT. All the time. My son,  
Randall, the other day he turned to  
me at breakfast and said he was going  
to stab his own eyes out with a fork!  
I freaked out and he was like "Whoa  
mom its ok, I just asked for some more  
bacon."

HAMISH

(being the good coach)

That's really tough, Sue Ellen. You're  
going to have to dig deep, you know?  
You can do it. I know you can.

CLARENCE

Yeah, Sue Ellen, you got it. Make sure  
you're getting some "me time."

SUE ELLEN

Not everyone is a serial masturbator,  
Clarence.

CLARENCE

That's not what I meant. But you know,  
since you brought it up...

SUE ELLEN

You're worse than my teenagers.

CLARENCE

You'll feel better, I swear.

PAULINE

Ok guys let's wrap it up. I know  
everyone wants to get home, and I have  
a call with Shanghai in 20 minutes so...

CLARENCE

Of course you do.

HAMISH

(in his doggy voice)

That's a good boy!

People start to stand up and say good byes.

INT. DRUGMART - THE NEXT DAY

The sounds of the street fade as Charlie enters a store.

ELECTRONIC GREETER

(a robotic voice)

Welcome to DrugMart! You're in the *right*  
*place!*

CHARLIE

(to himself)

Well that's not true.

He walks to the back of the pharmacy and approaches the counter, where MAHMOUD (30's, Indian-American) is tending the counter. Mahmoud and Charlie have history.

CHARLIE

(a bit too loudly)

Hello?

MAHMOUD

Oh great. Listen, man, I don't want any trouble ok? Let's just do this, and you can get out of my face.

CHARLIE

Mahmoud, you asshole, why does it have to be like this? I'm a fucking paying customer. Just give me my meds ok?

MAHMOUD

Did you already order the refills? We're really busy right now, you know. The holidays.

CHARLIE

Yes. Of course I did. When do I not?

MAHMOUD

Alright! Take it easy, let me check.

CHARLIE

And put on gloves for fuck's sake. Sick people come in here, its a fucking pharmacy!

Mahmoud has walked towards the back. A woman comes in looking for service.



LADY CUSTOMER  
Hello? Excuse me?

MAHMOUD  
One sec, be right there.

CHARLIE  
That guy's not clean.

LADY CUSTOMER  
That's super racist.

CHARLIE  
(realizing he's been  
misunderstood)  
No! No not like that--

Mahmoud comes back towards the counter.

MAHMOUD  
Hey! Hey leave the customers ALONE,  
alright? Nothing- no scripts for you!

CHARLIE  
Dude, you can't withhold my meds!

MAHMOUD  
No, I mean you have no refills.

CHARLIE  
What? I'm sure the doctor called them  
in.

MAHMOUD  
Zero. Give him a call, and tell him  
to call me. Don't worry, we'll text  
you eight thousand times when it's ready.

CHARLIE  
Ok. Dammit!

MAHMOUD  
Hi miss. What do you need?

LADY CUSTOMER  
(clearly directed at  
Charlie)  
Uh, a little personal space, maybe?

CHARLIE

Yeah I get it, lady, don't worry.  
(walking away)  
I'll be back, Mahmoud! Wash your hands!  
With soap!

Back on the street Charlie calls Sadler's number.

CHARLIE  
Dr Sadler, its Charlie. We have a  
situation here. I was just at the  
pharmacy and they don't have a refill  
for the meds. I think we both know that  
that's, um, problematic. I'm coming  
over.

CUT TO:

INT ENTRYWAY TO DR SADLER'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Charlie is pounding on the door. A door down the hall unlocks  
and opens, NEIGHBOR sticks her head out.

CHARLIE  
Dr Sadler?! Dr Sadler are you in there?  
Uh, sorry to interrupt but we have a  
problem. Problem! Dr Sadler?!

NEIGHBOR  
Can you keep it down, please, we're  
in session over here.

CHARLIE  
Oh. Yes. Sorry. Can I see?

NEIGHBOR  
What? No. Definitely not.

CHARLIE  
I mean, have you seen Dr Sadler?

NEIGHBOR  
Who?

CHARLIE  
Dr Sadler. Gerry. Gerard.

NEIGHBOR  
Sorry I don't think I know him. Is he  
new?

CHARLIE

No. No not at all. He's been here for years. I've been coming here for 3 years, and he was here way before that.

NEIGHBOR

Are you sure you're in the right building? This is 214 East--

CHARLIE

214 east 18th Yes I'm in the right building! Are you gaslighting me? Aren't you a therapist, too?! Who does that? What is wrong with you?!

NEIGHBOR

Uh I think you need to leave.

CHARLIE

No shit, lady.

NEIGHBOR

You can't take that.

CHARLIE

What?

NEIGHBOR

The mail. That's someone's mail. You can't take it.

CHARLIE

Well I'm clearly disturbed, and right now I'm taking this pile of mail, because DR SADLER might want his fucking mail when I find him. No thanks to you. Hack.

NEIGHBOR

What did you call me?

CHARLIE

Do you even have a session in there? Let me see, I want to see.

NEIGHBOR

That's it I'm calling the cops. Get help.

A door slams and locks.

CHARLIE

I'm trying sister. I'm trying.

We hear the elevator ding, and doors open. He steps in, and presses the lobby button manically. The doors close. There's elevator music.

And it keeps going.

For a strangely long time.

CHARLIE

Jesus on a pita what is going--

The emergency phone rings. He opens the weird little metal box door and pulls out the receiver.

CHARLIE

Uh Hello?

VOICE

Hi.

CHARLIE

Can I help you?

VOICE

Ha. You are crazy. You mean, can I help you?

CHARLIE

That's what I said. No need to be a dick.

VOICE

No! I mean you're stuck in an elevator that's going down, below the lobby, below the basement, and it's still going, right?

CHARLIE

Yep. Still going down.

VOICE

So I'd think you'd be asking *me* for help, not the other way around.

CHARLIE

Ok. Sure. Can you help me?

VOICE

You're going to need to help yourself,  
Charlie.

CHARLIE

So that's a no, huh. That's what I was  
thinking. Glad we're on the same page.

VOICE

Acute Dementia from Hypo Occular  
Cyclothymia. That's what Sadler said  
you have, right?

CHARLIE

How'd you know that.

VOICE

Its not real.

CHARLIE

What? Its very real, man. Its fucking  
debilitating...

VOICE

He told you all his patients have it,  
and its extremely rare and causes  
hallucinations, right? Its not real.  
But this is.

The doors ding and open.

CHARLIE

Hello?

You can hear by the echo on his voice that he's in a vast tunnel  
deep below the city.

CHARLIE

Uh hello? Is anyone down here?

VOICE

(still on the phone)  
Do you see the tunnels, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Yep.

VOICE

(now echoing from far down  
the tunnel)

This is where you'll find Sadler,  
Charlie. This is where you'll find the  
truth.

CHARLIE

Ok this definitely isn't real.

The elevator buzzes. He's been holding the doors open too long.

VOICE

Are you coming? Are you coming to find  
the answers?

CHARLIE

Nope. Not today. Can't do it. Lobby  
please.

His finger is pounding on the elevator button, the doors close  
and open, almost instantly back in the lobby. People get on the  
elevator.

CHARLIE

This is the lobby right?

ELEVATOR PERSON

(annoyed)

What? Uh yeah. This is the lobby.

CHARLIE

Great. Awesome. So good. Thanks. Nice  
one.

Charlie's phone rings as he's walking back out to the street.  
It's SUSAN (30's, white, gruff and down to business) At this point  
he's mumbling to himself a bit about how fucked up the scene  
in the elevator was, then he pops into "talking with my boss"  
mode.

CHARLIE

Susan! Hi! So great to hear from you.

SUSAN

Hi Charlie. Look, no bullshit here,  
I'm a little concerned about the Toto  
1200 project.

CHARLIE

No need to be concerned. I'm on it.

SUSAN

You were supposed to have the manual back to me yesterday. The Toto people are on my ass, Charlie.

CHARLIE

If you had a Toto 1200 you could get them off of there no problem. It has over 14 settings...

SUSAN

Do I need to get someone else on this?

CHARLIE

You'll have it in the morning, the complete manual for the Toto Platinum 1200 series, perfected. I promise.

SUSAN

Ok. Ok. But no more fucking around like this. I can't do the stress, Charlie, totally not worth it. Its a fucking toilet manual.

CHARLIE

Got it. We're straight. I'm going to make you proud.

SUSAN

Oh shut up. Just do it.

CHARLIE

Ok bye--

Susan's hung up. Charlie calls Sadler. His voicemail picks up-- its a woman's voice, but Dr Sadler has inserted his name in his own voice.

VOICE MAIL

You've reached "Dr Gerry Sadler."  
Please left a message after the tone.

CHARLIE

Ok, Sadler. So its 4 PM on Friday, I'm outside your office. I just went to check on you, and nobody seems to know who you are or that you ever had an office here, so that's not good. Pretty sure its real, but it doesn't sound right, so I'm pretty fucking confused.

I'll probably have to check again. Oh and I went to the basement of your office building and it seems there's a giant network of old tunnels with scary voices calling my name, so, just FYI. Plus, I have your mail. Cool. Ok. Bye.

INT CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Charlie's alarm goes off, NPR calmly tells us about tragedy after hideous tragedy. We hear him yawn, get out of bed, walk to the bathroom and pee.

NPR

Live from Washington DC, this is NPR morning headlines. A typhoon that parked outside the Indonesian city of Jakarta dumped an unprecedented amount of rain. A local orphanage was caught in the center of the micro-storm, drowning an as yet unknown amount of school children. Strangely, not a single drop of rain was reported on the hills above the city, where the city's wealthiest residents live in luxurious walled compounds. In Eastern Europe, a bizarre multiple wedding took place. Three heads of state publicly married the presidents of massive non-governmental relief networks, pretty much ensuring that corruption and money laundering will continue for decades to come. Taylor Swift played at the reception after party. Pretty neat.

NPR

(the radio starts talking to Charlie)

Anything from Dr Sadler yet?

CHARLIE

What?

NPR

Did you hear anything from Sadler?

CHARLIE



Nope. Nothing.

NPR

You should probably check the mail.

CHARLIE

Huh. Good idea.

Charlie goes to the front door, grabs his keys.

NPR

No. For fuck's sake, Charlie. HIS mail, Sadler's mail, you grabbed it yesterday.

CHARLIE

Go easy on me, Mr NPR guy. I haven't even had coffee yet.

NPR

You know what time we have to get up to do the morning news? Like 2 AM.

CHARLIE

(very genuinely concerned)

Oh no! That's awful. I could NOT do that, man.

NPR

Its rough. Its rough. So, what's in the mail?

Charlie rustles with some letters.

CHARLIE

Its all junk.

NPR

Like what? Tell me.

CHARLIE

Uh, we have Modern Psychiatry. Looks pretty dry. A bill from a cleaning service, AAA Industrial Custodial, Inc. A couple of credit card offers, and a menu from a Chinese restaurant.

NPR

Well, I hope you like Chinese food, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I don't, actually. I like Japanese food.  
I like Thai food. Actually I pretty  
much like any asian food that's not  
Chinese-- wait. Why are you asking?

NPR

(going back to the news)

Scientists report that the result of  
their recent climate summit is that  
they're giving up. According to the  
spokesperson, the scientific  
community agrees that they just want  
to spend time with their families in  
the few years that remain while the  
planet is still capable of supporting  
human life...

Charlie turns off the radio with a THWACK.

CHARLIE

I really don't like Chinese food. Shit.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NOON

The door has bells that jingle as Charlie walks into the restaurant.  
The waitress, YULING, hollers aggressively from across the room.

YULING

For one?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Just me.

YULING

Anywhere.

Charlie sits down. There are maybe 3 other tables. Lame K Pop  
is playing in the background. Or maybe its traditional Chinese  
music. Charlie unwraps some chopsticks from the table and starts  
lightly drumming with them.

YULING

So. What can I get you?

CHARLIE

Hmm I'm not really sure. What's good.

YULING

Do you like lobster?

CHARLIE

I love lobster. I have a lot of really fond memories of eating lobster, actually. But I wasn't really in the mood- its a kind of lot for lunch, you know?

YULING

We don't have any. But good to know.

His drumming is getting louder.

YULING

Pork? Beef? Chicken?

CHARLIE

Chicken sounds good.

YULING

Stop that. Noodle or rice?

CHARLIE

(in time with his drumming)  
Noo-dle. Noo-noo-noo-DLE!

YULING

If you don't stop that I'm going to waterboard you. Got it?

CHARLIE

Sure, yeah. Sorry. I was actually wondering, do you know a guy named Dr Sadler? I think he comes here.

YULING

No! No, definitely not. Lots of people come here. No Gerry Sadler.

Apparently Yuling winked at him.

CHARLIE

You're lying. You just said Gerry Sadler. I never said his first name. Why are you doing that with your face?

YULING

(whispering)

I'mwinking at you! Be quiet, for fuck's sake.

(regular voice)  
I'll get this order in. Tea?

CHARLIE

Sure?

She walks away. Charlie takes out his phoen and starts recording.

CHARLIE

OkDrSadler, I'minachineserestaurant around the corner from your office, and things are getting really strange. Not like hallucination strange- I'm not seeing any deer or otters or anything...

YULING

Here you go. Pork noodle.

CHARLIE

I think I said chicken?

YULING

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

I was recording a note--

YULING

(suddenly serious)

Turn it off, and keep your voice down. People are listening. I can tell about DrSadler. Butfirstyouhavetocomplete the Three Trials.

CHARLIE

Wait, what? You know Sadler?

YULING

Yes, we know him. But, listen I can't tell you anything, not yet. Its too dangerous.

CHARLIE

Um, you're freaking me out a little bit.

YULING

Three Trials. I can't tell you *what* they are, I can only tell you *where* they are. The Arena. The Old Factory. The Inventor's Basement.

He's pulling out a moleskin and a pen.

CHARLIE

Wait I have to write this down.

(slowly, while writing)

The Arena. The Old Factory. The Inventor's Basement.

(back to her)

Are you real?

YULING

I am real.

CHARLIE

And this is legit?

YULING

Yes. Way legit. But its very dangerous.

CHARLIE

Danger is my middle name.

YULING

You're middle name is Francis.

She starts to walk away.

CHARLIE

Wait!

YULING

(an angry whisper)

I can't say any more!

CHARLIE

No but I wanted the chicken.

YULING

Seriously?

CHARLIE

No, I don't care. But how did you know my middle name?

YULING

Its on your credit card. Here's your copy. This one, sign this one. Now leave. And don't come back until you've completed the trials.

CHARLIE

I still think this is a hallucination. I have a problem where sometimes I see things--

Yuling slaps him across the face.

CHARLIE

Ow!

YULING

Real enough?

CHARLIE

You didn't have to hit me that hard. I think you enjoyed that. Totally unnecessary.

YULING

Now leave.

CHARLIE

Wait, what's your name?

YULING

Its not important.

CHARLIE

Oh, its on the receipt. "Your Server: Yuling." Got it. Leaving now! Thank you. Thanks a lot. Bye.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CHINESE RESTAURANT - DAY

Charlie dials his phone.

CHARLIE

Hey. Its me.

AMBER

Who?

CHARLIE

Its Charlie, Amber. I know you have caller ID.

AMBER  
You can't trust that shit.

CHARLIE  
I just heard something crazy.

AMBER  
Why am I not surprised.

CHARLIE  
Yeah yeah but this was real. She hit me.

AMBER  
Charlie, what the fuck man? You're not groping girls on the subway now, right? Times have changed man. Me Too.

CHARLIE  
What? No! No, come on, dude. Listen this is serious. Do these mean anything to you? The Arena. The Old Factory. The Inventor's Basement.

AMBER  
What are you talking about?

CHARLIE  
I'm asking if those words mean anything to you. Just go with it dude, I need your help here.

AMBER  
Ok, ok. No, those words don't mean anything to me. I don't think Ive ever heard those phrases.

CHARLIE  
Listen to me, ok? Sadler's missing, and something isn't right... I can't be sure if I'm losing it or if something really messed up is going on. What happens when all of us run out of meds? We need to stick together on this.

AMBER

We're not a cop show, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I know that. But we're friends, in a fucked up situation. And I need my friend.

There's a vicious banging sound.

AMBER

Oh god Charlie!

CHARLIE

Amber? What?!

Bang bang bang!

AMBER

They're every where!!

CHARLIE

Amber? Amber stop it! Stop banging the phone.

AMBER

Charlie! They're on my face! The spiders! THE SPIDERS!!! AHHHHHHH!

More banging and the line goes dead.