

Halted Oblivion

written by

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1. INT. BLURRY, SCATTERED NIGHTMARES

JILL, a young female in her early 20's, climbs an endless staircase only to be stuck on the same floor. Sudden change of scene where she walks on a collapsing bridge and but can't move her legs. A WOMAN with a similar physique holding a reaper, appears behind her.

WOMAN

Face me.

Jill wakes up from the terrible dreams with a headache, as she holds her head up with one hand. But she hastily puts on her band tee and denim jacket with a pyramid printed on the back, grabs her bass guitar and goes out.

2. INT. STUDIO - DAY

Jill and her band are practicing for their upcoming gig at a local bar. The band is clearly not in a state to play as they either sing the wrong lyrics or go off-beat. Light coming from the window changes from sunlight to streetlights, but they still cannot get a solid run. Her close friend and guitarist HEATHER, who is about the same age, in an over-sized zebra patterned shirt, halts the practice.

HEATHER

(worried)

Hey everyone let's take stock.

JILL

We need more practice, keep rolling, the studio time ain't cheap.

HEATHER

(out loud)

No, I'm the one that needs a break.

HEATHER

(to Jill)

You look banged up, nightmares again?

JILL  
(annoyed)  
I am FINE, just keep going.

They proceed to get more practice on their song. But the band's performance, especially by Jill, is getting worse and worse, as she plays the wrong chords and in the wrong tune. Jill throws the bass to the floor.

JILL  
(madly)  
Are you kidding me? This is our first gig where we get paid and THIS is the quality you lot are playing?

Heather looks at Jill and shakes her head to show frustration about her insensitivity.

HEATHER  
Hey go easy on them, we are not Linkin Park.

Jill acts out, throwing a water bottle at their keyboardist, sweeping down the keyboard and breaking the drum sticks in half. Heather reaches out her arm to Jill trying to calm her down, but Jill lightly pushes her away and takes a few steps back.

JILL  
Don't touch me.

HEATHER  
Just calm down alright? Let's go grab a bite and come back to practice some more, okay?

Heather tries to reach out to Jill's shoulder. Again, she fails, so she changes her approach. She steps closer to Jill and rests her hand on the back of Jill's head and caresses it gently.

HEATHER  
Talk to me, what's wrong?

JILL

(sobs)

I am so tired... the dreams, they  
keep haunting me.

Jill starts to move closer to Heather, but suddenly realizes the others are staring at them and pushes Heather back abruptly, like pulling herself out of a fantasy. Only this time Jill pushes her so hard, she accidentally knocks her down on the floor.

JILL

(shocked and in tears)

I'm.... I'm so sorry.

She rushes through the door and leaves the studio.

### 3. INT. LIVING ROOM IN HOUSE - DAY

After Jill's breakdown at the studio, Heather reaches out to JILL's MOTHER and FATHER, in their late 40's.

HEATHER

Sorry to bother you guys, I am  
just worried about Jill. She's not  
herself lately, so I thought I'd  
talk to you directly.

JILL'S MOTHER

Oh, please don't be sorry,  
sweetheart. We've also noticed  
something wrong with Jill lately,  
and were just thinking of  
contacting you as well. After all,  
you two have been friends since  
you were little. We figured that  
she'd much rather share things  
with you than us.

HEATHER

Something is affecting her  
greatly, like... recurring  
nightmares, I think? I only know  
so much as well, we talked just a  
bit right before she had an  
incident at practice.

JILL'S MOTHER

Oh god, she didn't do anything extreme, did she?

HEATHER

She just acted out a bit, but I'm afraid that it'll only get worse. So, I wonder if getting her some professional help, maybe a psychiatrist, could help.

JILL'S FATHER

Thanks, dear, we'll keep that in mind. Do you think it's the pre-show stress getting to her? I told her to back out from the gig if she can't handle it, but she seems eager to prove something to us.

HEATHER

She's special, she just needs to clear her mind and see it herself. I should let you get on with your day. Hopefully she'll be in better shape the next time I see her.

Heather leaves Jill's house. Jill stumbles down from the second floor, looking in pain as she holds her head with her hand.

JILL

(weakly)

Who was it?

JILL'S MOTHER

It was Heather. We were just talking about you.

JILL'S FATHER

Sweetie, you're not doing great recently, and we heard from Heather that you're having bad dreams over and over again? Maybe we should get it sorted out by a psychiatrist.

JILL

Wait... what? A shrink?!

JILL'S MOTHER

Yes, we think that's what's best for you right now.

JILL

It's just the stress with the band, don't make a big deal out of it.

JILL'S FATHER

Then just walk away from it. We don't need you to do something big to impress us, we're already so proud of you! Ain't nothing wrong with having an ordinary life.

JILL

Stop with the lecturing. If going to the shrink means the nightmares will go away then, fine, I'll go.

#### 4. INT. CLINIC - AFTERNOON

PSYCHIATRIST

So, you have been having these bad dreams, but they are always blurry and incomplete, correct?

JILL

That's right.

PSYCHIATRIST

Dreams often reflect your mental health state. The bad situations that occur in dreams are likely representations of issues that are troubling you within your deep subconscious.

JILL

Look, doc. Can't you just tell me what these dreams are?

PSYCHIATRIST

Easy there. If you want a read, you need to go to the sketchy lady in the mall. What I am doing here is to help you identify what is affecting your mental health, so you can tackle it effectively. And only you can visit these dreams. I am going to prescribe you some medicine that will assist you to get to REM sleep and see if you can get a clear look at them. Then we can discuss them more

Jill takes the prescription hastily and leaves the psychiatrist's office.

5. INT. BLURRY NIGHTMARE

Jill is drowning in a body of water, choking painfully. The woman with the reaper appears again, gazing at her from the surface.

WOMAN

Keep on running, little piggy.

She wakes up in shock, hyperventilating.

6. INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Jill sits up in bed and gazes out the window at the grim sky. Her phone screen lights up. It is Heather calling her. She picks up the phone.

HEATHER

Just checking up on ya, how are the meds working? Are they helping in the slightest bit?

JILL

Haven't taken any yet--the shrink says they'll give me quite the trip and they won't stop my nightmares, just amplify them.

HEATHER

Well, your psychiatrist told you that you should confront these subconscious fears to actually make them go away. You should at least try it once, what's the harm in that?

Jill picks up the bottle of pills and starts reading the description out loud.

JILL

So, the harmful side-effects include loss of appetite, exhaustion, dizziness...

HEATHER

OKAY, GOT IT, STOP WHINING! I just want you to be able to get back to your old self and start kicking with us again, we're all missing our lead singer, you know? And we're so worried after seeing you break down during practice.

JILL

Hey... I just want to say I'm sorry for acting out last time. I wouldn't ever knowingly want to hurt you. I need to sort some things out first before seeing you again. I'll pop one after I hang up, alright? Miss the band as well, tell the gang to not worry about me, love you... all.

Jill hangs up. She stares down the bottle like she is about to go into battle. She pops a pill into her mouth and washes it down with her tea. She then turns up the jazz playing in the background and drifts off to sleep.

7. INT. CABIN, NIGHTMARE

Jill wakes up to find herself lying on the wooden floor of a cabin. Fog floods in from broken windows and cracks in the walls.



JILL  
(semi-consciously)  
Where am I....

She slowly regains her consciousness and keeps herself from panicking by taking in her surroundings. She scrambles around the cabin to find clues of her whereabouts, yet her efforts are fruitless.

JILL  
This is too real to be a dream,  
what ARE those pills?

Suddenly, there is a voice coming from the floor.

VOICE  
You won't find anything up there.  
You'll get answers here though, so  
why don't you come down and find  
out?

JILL  
(alerted)  
Who's there?

Jill is shocked when she hears the voice, but is also eager to search for its origin. She notices that there is a hatch on the floor, half-covered by an old rug. It takes her a tremendous amount of strength to lift it up. Then, all she can see are stairs that lead to a never-ending darkness.

JILL  
I am NOT going in there.

Meanwhile, a mysterious HOODED FIGURE appears outside of the cabin and calls to Jill.

HOODED FIGURE  
Come with me if you want a way  
out.

Longing to escape from her situation, Jill's body moves before she is even aware.

8. EXT. WOODS, NIGHTMARE

Jill follows the Hooded Figure and ventures out into the forest. The air reeks of dread and sorrow. Every tree in this forest is dead, skinny branches connecting to nowhere but the thick fog, with crows screeching from afar.

JILL

Who are you?

HOODED FIGURE

Who am I? I am the one that knows everything about you.

JILL

(surprised)

You what?

HOODED FIGURE

A healthy family, good friends, well-read, never have to worry about what you need and want. What a lucky life you have.

JILL

How do you... WHY do you know? WHO ARE YOU EXACTLY?

Jill catches up to the Hooded Figure and forcefully removes her hood, only to discover that it is herself. In shock, Jill falls to the ground and hastily crawls away from JILL #2.

JILL #2

How cute, isn't this what you take the pills for? To face your... fear? Look at your face, all scared and can't even stand up and run, how pitiful. Just give up already.

Jill turns around, adrenaline rushing through her veins as she starts gaining momentum. She runs into the woods in a desperate attempt to escape.

JILL #2  
(distant echo)  
I thought you were done running?  
Where is that bravery from when  
you popped open that pill bottle?  
Was it just another adrenaline  
rush because Heather told you to  
do it?

JILL  
(in tears)  
Stop it, you don't have a clue  
what you're talking about!

Jill keeps on running deeper into the woods, but Jill #2's taunting is relentless--it keeps on haunting her and slowly becomes an irritating headache.

JILL #2  
(distant echo)  
Speaking of which, are you ready  
to confess your true feelings? Too  
scared to reveal your true self?

JILL  
(in agony)  
Shut up, I've had enough!

She comes to a riverside. There are no signs of Jill #2, yet the echo keeps getting louder and louder.

JILL  
(in tears)  
Make it stop, please....

Jill falls on her knees in exhaustion and distress. Jill #2's footsteps are closing in on her and the mockery continues.

JILL #2  
How pathetic. Just let me take  
over you and it'll all be over.  
You were looking for a way out,  
weren't you? Embrace me and the  
pain will all go away.

Jill #2 extends her hand out, like offering Jill mercy. Jill is hesitant to either accept this "kindness" or to challenge her malfeasance. Yet, she chooses to run away from it yet again, jumping into the river as a last resort.

9. INT. RIVER, NIGHTMARE - CONTINUOUS

As Jill submerges, the silhouette of Jill #2 fades. She finally gets the silence and peace she longed for. She lets herself enjoy the depth and quiet for a moment. But just as Jill prepares to emerge from the water, a hand grabs her by the ankle. She looks down and sees the face of Jill #2, viciously staring at her like she could gaze into her soul. Jill struggles.

JILL  
(muffled)  
HELP, HELP! Let go of me!

JILL #2  
Either surrender or face me, there  
is no escape.

Jill struggles hopelessly, her breath already running out. In pain and desperation, she slowly drifts out of consciousness.

10. INT. CABIN, NIGHTMARE

Jill wakes up abruptly, the pain of breathlessness lingering. She weeps in distress but is also more determined to leave. She gets up from the floor.

JILL  
(panting)  
I've got to get outta here.

VOICE  
You won't find what you need out  
there.

Jill passes by the hatch on her way out. She hesitates and stops briefly. But then she shakes her head and keeps walking out.

11. EXT. WOODS, NIGHTMARE

Jill keeps on venturing into the woods. There are no signs of Jill #2. She sees an old-timey, creepy poster on the ground that reads "Feeling lost? Just follow what we did best and earn an honest living! Or marry rich to live the American dream!"

JILL

Huh, maybe there is some truth to it.

Jill comes to a crossroad that wasn't here before. It leads her on a path to a wooden bridge above the river. All of a sudden, Jill #2's voice from afar echoes with the taunts.

JILL #2

(echoes)

All you do is run--haven't you realized that it doesn't work?

JILL #2

(echoes)

Keep on running then. It doesn't matter that you won't escape this realm, you will still run from every problem you have out there anyways.

Jill turns around and sees the silhouette of Jill #2 in the thick fog. Jill stumbles and starts running.

12. EXT. WOODEN BRIDGE, NIGHTMARE - CONTINUOUS

Jill seems to have shaken off Jill #2's pursuit, yet her taunts continue from afar.

JILL #2

(echoes)

No matter how hard you run, it will be no use if you keep heading the wrong way.

JILL #2

(echoes)

You will never outrun me. I am always close by.

The fog ahead clears out a little. She can vaguely make out what appears to be her dad's car and a very familiar silhouette, which is Jill's mother, on the other side of the bridge.

JILL  
Mum? MUM! Get me outta here!

JILL #2  
(echoes)  
Found mummy, have you? Right, all  
you do is rely on your parents.

The taunting becomes an insufferable headache to Jill again. She leans on the rail to collect herself.

JILL  
(furious)  
JUST STOP, GODDAMN IT, I'VE HAD  
ENOUGH OF YOUR SH\*T.

Jill #2 appears out of thin air.

JILL #2  
Then face me, or take a dip to  
chill out first.

Surprised by her ambush, Jill falls over into the river.

### 13. INT. RIVER, NIGHTMARE - CONTINUOUS

Jill struggles in the horrid water again, only this time, right when she is about to emerge, the surface of the water won't break, trapping her in. The mockery of Jill #2 is so loud that Jill can hear it clearly even as she is battling for breath under the water.

JILL #2  
(mocking)  
Pathetic--it's getting boring  
watching you drown. Just let me  
take over already. I'll see you  
again in a short while.

Jill sinks further into the depth, and she sees the cold gaze of Jill #2 as she sinks.

-- FADES OUT

BEGIN NIGHTMARE LOOP MONTAGE:

... Jill wakes up again in the cabin again, looking desperate.

... she is on the bridge again, but it collapses and she falls into the river again.

... she wakes up in the cabin yet again.

... she ignores the hatch again.

... Jill gets tangled in poison ivy reaching out from the river, which pulls her in, and the pain puts her in shock.

... she wakes up in the cabin again.

... Jill gets cornered by Jill #2 at the edge of a cliff, and a murder of crows descend on her. She falls off the cliff and into the river.

... she wakes up in the cabin again.

... she walks in different directions in the woods, but all paths lead back to the river, and she gets pulled in and drowns again.

END MONTAGE

14. INT. CABIN, NIGHTMARE

Jill is losing her mind as the loop goes on. This time when she wakes up in the cabin, she angrily picks up a time-worn axe and smashes everything in sight.

JILL

(mad)

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME, LET ME  
JUST GO!

Jill finally decides to go down through the hatch, but now, the hinge on the hatch has become rusted and is giving Jill an even more difficult time opening it. She becomes frustrated and irritated.

JILL

(mad)

WHAT IS IT NOW?! You wanted me to  
go in and now you pull this on me?  
I AM COMING TO GET YOU!

She picks the ax back up, recklessly taking swings at the hatch. Her hands bloodied with the hard swings she takes, she finally clears a way to go in, barging down carelessly into the abyss.

15. INT. ABYSS, NIGHTMARE - CONTINUOUS

Jill marches down these stairs that seemingly lead to nowhere. Jill grows more impatient.

JILL

(shouts)

NOW WHAT? WHAT ANSWERS CAN I FIND  
HERE? COME OUT AND FACE ME!

Each step she takes is more careless than the last. She falls with a misstep. Suddenly, someone offers her a hand to help her up. Jill takes it. But she is in shock once she sees who is helping her up.

JILL #2

Walk much? Have you calmed down  
yet?

JILL

Get off of me, stay the hell out  
of my way! I thought you said it  
got boring watching me drown.

JILL #2

Relax, we're not out there  
anymore, I'm not here for what I  
was going to do before.



JILL

What ARE you gonna do now then?

JILL #2

Ask questions that you need to answer.

JILL

(disgruntled)

Stop playing games with me! I just want to leave this nightmare.

JILL #2

You took the first step by opening that hatch, now is the actual challenge. Admit it, lying won't work here. Start by what you actually want to do with your future.

JILL

(unwillingly)

That's the thing, I don't know what the future holds for me. I don't particularly shine in something like everyone else. If I don't have something that I am SO good at, what will I become when I'm on my own? When dad and mum aren't putting cash in my account?

JILL #2

Keep digging.

JILL

At least I make some use of myself somewhere, like in the band. I'm not justifying my action to boss people around and act out like some big shot. It's actually the opposite. I'm fine with being nobody, but I should *AT LEAST* help those that are around me to *NOT* become nobodies.

JILL #2

But with a special *someone*,  
there's more to it than that.  
Don't keep lying to yourself.

JILL

With Heather, I see her passion,  
she can become someone great in  
the future. Just face it, the band  
is not good enough and is only  
holding her back. If this keeps  
going on, I'll have no reason to  
keep her around.

JILL #2

And why do you want to keep her  
around.

JILL

I'm.... confused with our  
relationship. We've been doing  
everything together since we were  
5. This last year, when things  
started to weigh me down, she kept  
a closer tab on me. And a few  
weeks back when we were talking by  
the sea, we sat closer and closer  
together. We looked into each  
other's eyes so deeply and our  
faces got so close together. There  
was something so urgent, yet I  
pulled back.

JILL #2

Why can't you be honest with her?

JILL

What if I lose her by telling her  
that? When I'm not even sure yet?  
I can't. There is just too much at  
stake.

JILL #2

And you don't think by not being honest with her and distancing yourself further and further away from her, you're gonna lose her anyways?

JILL

That's... true but at least I don't have to decide or know exactly when she's going to leave my side.

JILL #2

That's how fragile you think the bond is between the two of you? You've fallen deeper than I thought.

Jill stops and hangs her head after the devastating blow dealt by Jill #2.

JILL

(in tears)

You're right. Looking back at the things we've been through together, I should know damn well that we'll stick together no matter what. I should have been honest with her at the very beginning. Maybe I have really underestimated our bond, I don't deserve her. Take over me, do what I couldn't.

JILL #2

You now know what to do when you get out.

The rusty axe in her hand turns into a shiny reaper.

JILL

Thank you for... everything. Don't take it wrong but... I hope I don't need to see you soon again.

Jill takes a swing at Jill #2, but she turns into a puff of smoke and fades away. The stairs lead to a brighter space, and the light that Jill sees is getting warmer and more embracing. She slowly drifts into unconsciousness.

16. INT. BEDROOM -- EVENING

Jill opens her eyes, and she is welcomed by a barrage of notification sounds from her mobile. She looks at the screen, which says "20:19". She was out for nearly 6 hours.

JILL

Jeez... I'm just going to accept the fact that I probably won't sleep again tonight.

She goes to the contacts in her phone, looking up Heather's number. No longer hesitating, Jill calls her.

HEATHER

WHY AREN'T YOU REPLYING, I WAS SO WORRIED.

JILL

Chill. I finally decided to try the medication, but it knocked me out for nearly 6 hours. I told you about harmful side-effects.

JILL

(slightly stuttering)

Listen... since you are partly responsible for my insomnia that's definitely going to happen tonight, you free to hang out by the bay? You need to hear the dream I just had and something else that I need to tell you.

HEATHER

(excited)

Of course! It's been so long since  
I last saw you, for crying out  
loud.

JILL

(relieved)

See you at 10 then!

17. EXT. BAY SIDE -- EVENING

Jill meets up with Heather. They have brought some drinks  
and snacks and sit down by the beach.

JILL

The dream I just had when I was  
blacked out was insane. There was  
a doppelganger of myself that kept  
chasing me and haunting me while I  
was running in a forest.

HEATHER

That should scare the crap out of  
someone who doesn't watch horror  
movies.

JILL

It did. And I kept drowning in a  
river. Each time after I drowned,  
I went right back to where I  
started. The shrink was right,  
these dreams represent my deepest  
fears. I can't keep running away  
from them anymore. There is  
something I need to tell you,  
which is why I asked you out.

HEATHER

I'll be here for you through thick  
and thin. Tell me what is  
troubling you.

Jill reaches out and holds Heather's hand.

JILL

I know you will. The reason I've been acting so weird around you before is because I am so confused about... us. That other night we got together, it was so wonderful but confusing to me. But now I know that I should not hide myself, I need to be honest with you. I don't want to lose you but I was so scared to tell you that. I know I'm asking for a lot here, but I need to know your answer.

A smile appears on Heather's face.

CREDITS

18. INT. DARK CAVE, NIGHTMARE

Jill wakes up in a dark cave. Far in front of her is a source of light. A shadow in the shape of a person appears. Jill can faintly make out a hooded figure from the shadow. Just as she is about to panic, the figure takes off the hood and a familiar voice starts talking to her.

HEATHER

So, what are we facing this time?

Jill receives an affirming look from Heather.

JILL

(confident)

We'll find out, together.

FADE OUT