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Inception

By Christopher Nolan

FADE IN:

DAWN. CRASHING SURF.

The waves TOSS a BEARDED MAN onto wet sand. He lies there. A CHILD'S SHOUT makes him LIFT his head to see: a LITTLE BLONDE BOY crouching, back towards us, watching the tide eat a SANDCASTLE. A LITTLE BLONDE GIRL joins the boy. The Bearded Man tries to call them, but they RUN OFF, FACES UNSEEN. He COLLAPSES.

The barrel of a rifle ROLLS the Bearded Man onto his back. A JAPANESE SECURITY GUARD looks down at him, then calls up the beach to a colleague leaning against a JEEP. Behind them is a cliff, and on top of that, a JAPANESE CASTLE.

INT. ELEGANT DINING ROOM, JAPANESE CASTLE - LATER

The Security Guard waits as an ATTENDANT speaks to an ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN sitting at the dining table, back to us.

ATTENDANT:

(in Japanese)

He was delirious. But he asked for you by name. And...

(to the Security Guard)

Show him.

SECURITY GUARD:

(in Japanese)

He was carrying nothing but this...

He puts a HANDGUN on the table. The Elderly Man keeps eating.

SECURITY GUARD:

...and this.

The Security Guard places a SMALL PEWTER CONE alongside the gun. The Elderly Man STOPS eating. Picks up the cone.

ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN

(in Japanese)

Bring him here. And some food.

INT. SAME - MOMENTS LATER

The Elderly Man watches the Bearded Man WOLF down his food.

He SLIDES the handgun down the table towards him.

ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN

(in English)

Are you here to kill me?

The Bearded Man glances up at him, then back to his food.

The Elderly Japanese Man picks up the cone between thumb and

forefinger.

ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN

I know what this is.

He SPINS it onto a table- it CIRCLES gracefully across the polished ebony... a SPINNING TOP.

ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN

I've seen one before. Many, many years ago...

The Elderly Japanese Man STARES at the top mesmerized.

ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN

It belonged to a man I met in a half-remembered dream...

MOVE IN on the GRACEFULLY SPINNING TOP...

ELDERLY JAPANESE MAN

A man possessed of some radical notions...

The Elderly Japanese Man STARES, remembering...

COBB (V.O.)

What's the most resilient parasite?

CUT TO:

INT. SAME ELEGANT DINING ROOM - NIGHT (YEARS EARLIER)

The speaker, COBB, is 35, handsome, tailored. A young Japanese man, SAITO, eats as he listens.

COBB:

A bacteria? A virus?

Cobb gestures at their feast with his wine glass

An intestinal worm?

Saito's fork pauses, mid-air. Cobb GRINS. A third man is at the table- ARTHUR. He jumps in to save the pitch

What Mr. Cobb is trying to say

An idea.

Saito looks at Cobb, curious.

2.

COBB:

Resilient, highly contagious. Once an idea's taken hold in the brain it's almost impossible to eradicate. A person can cover it up, ignore it- but it stays there.

SAITO:

But surely-to forget...?

COBB:

Information, yes. But an idea?
Fully formed, understood? That
sticks...

(taps forehead)

In there, somewhere.

SAITO:

For someone like you to steal?

ARTHUR:

Yes. In the dream state, conscious
defenses are lowered and your
thoughts become vulnerable to
theft. It's called extraction.

COBB:

But, Mr. Saito, we can train your
subconscious to defend itself from
even the most skilled extractor.

SAITO:

How can you do that?

COBB:

Because I am the most skilled
extractor. I know how to search
your mind and find your secrets. I
know the tricks, and I can teach
them to your subconscious so that
even when you're asleep, your guard
is never down.

Cobb leans forwards. Holding Saito's gaze.

COBB:

But if I'm going to help you, you
have to be completely open to me.
I'll need to know my way around
your thoughts better than your
wife, your analyst, anyone.

(gestures around)

If this is a dream and you've got a

safe full of secrets, I need to know what's in that safe. For this to work, you have to let me in.

3.

Saito gives this a flicker of a smile. Rises. A BODYGUARD opens double doors which give onto a LAVISH PARTY.

SAITO:

Gentlemen. Enjoy your evening as I consider your proposal.

They watch Saito leave. Arthur turns to Cobb, worriedARTHUR He knows.

Cobb motions silence. A TREMOR starts, they steady their glasses, Cobb glances at his watch- THE SECOND HAND IS FROZEN.

ARTHUR:

What's going on up there?

And weCUT

TO:

FILTHY BATHROOM - DAY (FEELS LIKE DIFFERENT TIME)

Cobb, ASLEEP, SITTING IN A CHAIR AT THE END OF A STEAMING BATH. The chair is up on a cabinet- the bottom of the legs level with the rim of the tub.

A sweating man (40's) watches over Cobb. This is NASH. A distant EXPLOSION rumbles through the room. Nash moves to the window, parts the curtains. Outside: a CHAOTIC DEVELOPING-WORLD CITY- the street filled with RIOTERS- SMASHING, BURNING.

Nash checks Cobb's left wrist: above his watch, tape holds TWO THIN YELLOW TUBES in place. Nash looks at Cobb's watchTHE SECOND HAND CRAWLS UNNATURALLY SLOWLY.

Nash follows the tubes to a SILVER BRIEFCASE at Arthur's

feet:

briefcase to Arthur's wrist.

Nash follows another set of tubes from the briefcase to where they pass under the door to the bedroom. Through the crack of the door, Nash sees SAITO ASLEEP on the bed, tubes running to his wrist. BOOM- a closer EXPLOSION, and weCUT

TO:

INT. BULLET TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY (FEELS LIKE DIFFERENT TIME)

Nash, ASLEEP. Head ROCKING AGAINST THE WINDOW as the train

BUMPS OVER A ROUGH PIECE OF TRACK.

4.

A Japanese Man, TODASHI (18) watches Nash nervously. He checks Nash's wrist: TWO YELLOW TUBES CONNECT NASH WITH THREE OTHER SLEEPING MEN IN THE COMPARTMENT: COBB, ARTHUR, SAITO.

Todashi checks his watch: THE SECOND HAND TICKS IN REAL TIME.

Another TRAIN PASSES in the opposite direction with a MIGHTY

JERKS WITH THE MOVEMENT OF THE TRAIN, and weCUT

TO:

INT. FILTHY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Another EXPLOSION- Nash CHECKS the sleeping Cobb and weCUT

TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP TERRACES, JAPANESE CASTLE - NIGHT

A LOW TREMOR RUMBLES THROUGH THE CASTLE. Cobb and Arthur steady themselves against the wooden rail. Several TILES and pieces of MASONRY fall. Below them a BLACK SEA churns. Other GUESTS wander the massive terraces.

ARTHUR:

Saito knows. He's playing with us.

COBB:

I can get it here. The

looked right at it when I mentioned secrets.

Arthur nods. Then spots someone over Cobb's shoulder.

ARTHUR:

What's she doing here, Cobb?

Cobb turns to see a beautiful woman, elegantly dressed, staring out at the sea. This is MAL. Cobb watches her.

COBB:

You just get to your room. I'll take care of the rest.

ARTHUR:

See that you do. We're here to work.

Arthur brushes past Mal, shaking his head. She nears Cobb.

Looks out at the DROP. The WIND WHIPS HER HAIRMAL