

Maiden Voyage

By

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'Maiden Voyage' by Lola Morgan

INT. DINGY BATHROOM

A cramped single bathroom with a mirror cracked in a spiderweb formation. Cate brushes her teeth, then spits in the sink.

EXT. GAS STATION

A parked car blares sixties girl band music. SADIE fills the open tank with gas. Cate comes out of the bathroom and walks toward her sister. When she reaches the vehicle, she opens the passenger's door, where Ramona is seated. Cate takes a stack of cash from the glove compartment.

CATE
(counting \$\$)
Do you want anything?

She nods toward the gas station.

SADIE
Cigarettes.

CATE
Oh.

Cate goes inside.

Sadie's POV: as she takes a look around the station. An OLDER GUY comes out of the bathroom door and lights up a smoke. He's got a slight beer gut, which he rubs gently. He turns his face in the general direction of us. It seems for a moment that he's smiling. Then out of the bathroom door behind him comes GRACE, a girl with messy hair and ratty clothes. The guy puts his arm on Grace's shoulder.

Sadie gets a curious look.

POV: Grace turns and hugs him sort of awkwardly. Seems like they're saying goodbye. Then the guy walks off and climbs into a pick-up truck.

A car door slams. Cate is back in the truck. Through the open window, Ramona says;

RAMONA
Let's go!! You can smoke in the car.

(CONTINUED)

Sadie turns and looks at Ramona. Then back at Grace, who's looking around, like she's lost.

CUT TO:

Title credits over black.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY

POV: moving at the speed of a steady vehicle. The New York City skyline grows smaller and more distant. Like lances skyscrapers pierce through an invasion of black smog. A soft and bitchy female voice delivers the following monologue;

GRACE (V.O.)

The way animals run away and take cover before a hurricane. They just have a sense -- something's not right... Why do I feel so much like "down" is the safer direction lately?? Like I'd rather go far into darkness than light.

INT. HOUSE IN QUEENS

C.U. on Grace: timid yet intense, with sad moony eyes.

She sits with her legs up, her chin on her knees, her face lit by a sick greenish hue from a desktop computer in front of her. Sound: sex noises from a set of computer speakers.

From another room, her dad summons her;

DAD

Grace?? Can you help me with something??

Grace clicks. The sex noises stop.

She stands up, with folded arms, and sighs.

INT. BATHROOM

Her dad on the floor, holding a wrench to the back of a toilet bowl.

DAD

Leaky pipe. I need you to hold this while I screw it back on.

(CONTINUED)

Grace crouches down and holds a screw in place. Her dad grunts while he wields the wrench. He says;

DAD

(ctd)

I think we should be happy when we work on the plumbing, cause people in other parts of the world don't have toilets, and have to relieve themselves outdoors... There we go.

He sits up.

DAD

(ctd)

Grace, honey?? I noticed some vomit caked on the lid of the toilet... are you still sick?

GRACE

Always.

DAD

Oh... shit.

He raises a hand on Grace's forehead. She recoils.

Still he sets a hand on her forehead.

More like a caress.

DAD

(ctd)

You don't feel feverish. It must just be your mental illness again.

GRACE

Probably.

DAD

The antidepressants aren't working?

GRACE

No.

DAD

Maybe if you got out in public more often... You'd see, the world doesn't revolve around you and your depression.

GRACE

I know.

DAD

(frowns)

Will you please let me call Dr. Felix and setup an appointment? I know you don't want to go in. But maybe he can help.

After a long pause, Grace says;

GRACE

OK.

EXT. CITY STREET

POV: Glances from male passerbys that are either too harsh or too friendly.

Ramona and Sadie walk down a busy block.

Ramona's eyes are up; Sadie stares at her cell phone.

RAMONA

For me the question has never been 'can women have sex like men.' By now that's been proven. The question is 'why would they want to?' Isn't it more fun to stay aloof and play hard to get.

SADIE

You think?

RAMONA

Yes.

SADIE

Maybe it's a power thing.

RAMONA

What?

SADIE

I think sex addicts are often more addicted to power than to sex.

RAMONA

What about 'love' addicts. Is there a difference.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

I mean, I met my new boyfriend on
Tinder. So maybe a sex addict can
converted to a love addict
overnight.

RAMONA

Another boyfriend, huh.

SADIE

His name's Karl. He's a bit older.
Depressed.

RAMONA

Just your type.

SADIE

I think you'd like him. You should
meet us for dinner tonight... or
just wine.

RAMONA

Maybe a side of spinach.

They stop at a newsstand.

Ramona picks up a magazine. Her face is on the front.

RAMONA

(ctd)

I really don't like the photo they
picked. I look too healthy -- it's
not becoming.

SADIE

The last time I profiled an artist
for a fashion magazine, they
Photoshopped the pictures to make
her about twenty pounds less
healthy.

RAMONA

Normally they do that for me, but I
guess this publication doesn't have
the fucking self-respect...

SADIE

Image matters. But that doesn't
mean you should live a lie, Ramona.

RAMONA

What?

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

I'm just saying, it's good when you look good both in magazines *and* in real-life -- which you do.

RAMONA

Thanks?

They keep walking down the block. Sadie draws a cigarette from a pack, freshly bought, and lights it.

SADIE

... Next week I'm going to visit my sister at school in Ohio.

RAMONA

Oh, fun!

SADIE

Not really, she's got problems with pills. You give her a full canister of Adderall, she'll burn through it in days. My family tried putting her in rehab. But in rehab she had another addiction.

RAMONA

What was that.

SADIE

In rehab she just got addicted to dick.

RAMONA

Dick?

SADIE

Dick. Didn't matter what kind of dick. Every kind. All dicks created equal. The story I heard is that she fucked every guy in the rehab center. The janitor. The patients. The male doctor who checks her urine to make sure she hasn't been taking pills. She'll fuck every guy. Whether he's got a big dick or small dick or mid-sized--

RAMONA

--OK Sadie, I got it. Your sister likes dick.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE
She sure does.

INT. CATE'S DORM ROOM

Cate lies in bed with one hand under the covers. A tense smile, or a grimace, hard to tell. She rolls over in bed.

INT. HEALTH OFFICE WAITING ROOM

Cate appears quite nervous. She gets eye contact with other girls who seem less healthy, more insecure.

INT. DOC'S OFFICE

A DOCTOR in a white lab coat gives Cate a check-up.

DOCTOR
Your vitals are fine. You don't have a fever. Is there anything specific you came to discuss?

CATE
Basically I had kind of a promiscuous summer and now I'm scared I have an STD. But I've been too nervous to come in until now.

DOCTOR
Any symptoms?

CATE
(shakes head)
No. Well. Yeah. Just in general I feel sick. Like something's just off...

The doctor tilts his/her head.

INT. COLUMBIA CLASSROOM

Leda stands over a glass tank full of lab rats in a white coat, surrounded by other students.

In the glass tank: A white mouse puts its hands against the edge of the clear glass tank and stares outside.

Another STUDENT lifts the white mouse out of the tank with a gloved hand; places a needle between its mousy shoulders; injects it with medicine.

Leda watches, frowns.

EXT. COLUMBIA CAMPUS

Leda walks alongside a student from the lab.

LEDA

There was a weekend, you know, a few months ago, when everything just got weird. It felt like I reached some sort of checkpoint in my mental development, and I was superhuman. And I wanted to share what I was feeling with other people -- but then when I went out in public, it seemed like everyone else was immune to what I was feeling. But I personally felt like I was living in the future -- and I could tell that circumstances in America were about to get worse. I could just tell. You know? So that's why I stopped going to classes. It was like, what's the point.

The student doesn't know.

STUDENT

Have you explained this to your professors?

LEDA

No. I'm afraid they'll think I'm nuts.

STUDENT

Well ... Have you thought about going to disability services? They might be able to give you a diagnosis, and you can get some free excused absences.

Leda lets out a slow sigh.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Ramona, Sadie, and her boyfriend KARL all have dinner.

(CONTINUED)

KARL

So you're a model.

RAMONA

You sound surprised.

KARL

Not at all. I'm impressed... Is it like in the movies? The photoshoots... the fans...

Ramona says the following in a glib, off-the-record manner.

RAMONA

Tell you what. It always comes at a cost to the model. Always. They lose a little something with each shoot. Of course I've received plenty -- notoriety, money, respect. But what you lose runs quite deep. It's not visible...

(pause)

How can you explain being looked at to someone who does all the looking? I've tried to be patient with them. I've tried. But do they know what it's like to wake up for years, and look in the mirror and feel this violent need ... How can any straight man know that kind of need to stay pretty, it runs so fucking deep. That need to control what you see in the mirror. That desire. It's agony... It hurts where you can't see...

(grimaces, then looks up)

But maybe I'm wrong about that part. That's what I have. What the others don't have quite as much as me. That agony. That look in my eyes, of someone who's fought so hard for beauty her whole entire life... and actually won it.

KARL and Sadie listen quietly, sipping drinks.

After a long pause, Ramona continues;

RAMONA

(ctd)

There is a certain element of appearance that you can't understand till you've felt it. It

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA (cont'd)
has to do with power. And I'm not talking about money. I'm not talking about juice cleanses or Equinox memberships or all those expensive things that make humans seem like demi-gods and goddesses. I'm talking about the materiality of the gaze. If you're used to people looking down on you, it's going to manifest, physically. But... if you're used to being worshipped. Well, that shapes you differently.

SADIE
When did beauty turn so... superhuman. Whatever happened to the beautiful Sapphic nude portraits in museums??

RAMONA
You don't know what the Sapphic nude model went through. Poor thing probably had to sit in the cold park for forty eight hours with all her clothes off.

KARL
But now she's immortal, right? And at least those paintings are actually respectful.

RAMONA
Are they?

A beat.

KARL
... You can't have a masterpiece without a muse. And it's not the same as being worshipped. Not by the masses. More like, being looked at by someone who really cares about you. What about real love?

A vulnerable spark runs through Ramona's eyes. Then her expression hardens.

RAMONA
I wish I could answer that question
But I'm not sure whether 'real love' is ever sustainable.

(CONTINUED)

A disillusioned look from Sadie.

RAMONA

(ctd)

Listen. I'm not going to pretend I've put myself through hell for friends and family and fans have been sweet and gentle to me... They've helped, duh, I couldn't do it without them. But really I've made it this fucking far thanks to people who were cruel to me. I owe it to all the enemies who have ever insulted me, savagely, particularly those who have insulted my appearance... because it motivates me to keep my weight down... Now, I don't think that it's realistic to think in the next decade, I'm going to be able to filter what kinds of forces attack me. And that's fine, because if I wanted to be in a safe space for the rest of my life, I'd just stay at home all day and be an Instagram model. But I want to be a household name in dark parts of America where a dad would beat his son if he saw him pasting Vogue spreads of *me* on his wall instead of models from Playboy... that's right, it's the savages who have pushed me this far, because they want me dead. But the harder they try to kill me, the more immortal I'll become. They've already pushed me past my human potential. They're the ones who made me!!! And now that I'm the great "Ramona Desmond," I bother them in the backs of their minds. Constantly.

Karl waits a moment and says;

KARL

But the wrong kind of power can really mess you up. It can warp you the wrong way.

RAMONA

What now.

(CONTINUED)

KARL

(hesitates)

There's this hot itchy feeling you get sometimes, if you're someone who's used to being fucked with, that's kind of like being high on hard drugs. It's a power trip thing. But you should beware of that feeling. It's dangerous.

RAMONA

Huh?

SADIE

Maybe it's a man thing.

KARL

... I just think it's probably better to be honored by people. Not worshipped.

RAMONA

Honored... hm. You rarely hear that word attached to descriptions of women, these days.

Sadie lifts an eyebrow.

Suddenly, the lights go out in the restaurant.

Murmurs from all the patrons.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

People walking down Broadway Ave.

Grace comes out the automatic doors of Duane Reade carrying a paper pill bag. She pulls out a canister and dumps some white pills in her hand, then prepares to eat some while walking to her car, as if they're candy.

She looks up at the cloudy sky, then back at people walking along the sidewalk with dumbfounded expressions.

A quiet blast.

The lights goes out on the street.

People stop walking and look around with dumbfounded expressions. Some adrenaline lever seems to have cranked up for Grace, but no one else.

Tick, tock, tick sounds of vehicles speeding past.

(CONTINUED)

Grace walks calmly to a trash can and throws out her pills.

Then she starts jogging up Broadway -- still totally calm, still in her street clothes -- and puts in a pair of ear buds as she runs.

[MUSIC: HE CRIED]

EXT. RESTAURANT

Sadie, Ramona, and Karl exit the restaurant.

On the street, people are freaking out.

The gang of three stays calm and sticks together.

INT. COLLEGE LOUNGE

Cate watches TV. Coverage of whatever's taking place in New York. [Insert news footage later.] Cate looks nervous.

INT. NICE APARTMENT

Ramona, Sadie, and Karl enter.

Sadie goes straight down the hallway into the other room, like she's about to have a panic attack or meltdown and wants privacy.

Karl turns to Ramona.

KARL

How long have you known my girlfriend.

RAMONA

How long have I known *Sadie*... hmmm... she interviewed me for a magazine when she was covering fashion week last year. And we've kept in touch ever since.

They turn back to the television.

RAMONA

This is bad, huh.

KARL

I'd say so.

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA
It's probably not safe here?

KARL
In New York.

RAMONA
Right...

Uncomfortable silence.

INT. HOUSE IN QUEENS

Grace's DAD in an apartment.

Grace holds a packed duffel bag.

She stands by the front door.

DAD
Are you going?

GRACE
To a friend's yeah.

DAD
What friend? You have none.

GRACE
(forcefully)
I'll make one.

DAD
Grace, is something wrong?

GRACE
I'm gonna say, yeah.

DAD
What?

She scoffs.

GRACE
(stuttering)
How can everyone be so apathetic?
You're all like, *uggghh* -- you
should fucking do something!

DAD
What can I do?

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

Anything... *please*...

DAD

Grace, I'm not that worried. This doomsday stuff has been going on since I was a kid. They had us hiding under our desks at school because they thought the world was gonna get blown up.

GRACE

And it almost did!

DAD

Come on, Kid. There's no use getting all bent out of shape.

GRACE

I'd rather get bent out of shape than have a stick up my ass, Dad.

DAD

What?

Grace goes to the door.

Her DAD, still seated on the couch, tilts his head.

DAD

Hold on, honey ... is it something I did?

GRACE

Here's the truth. Cause I think it's a good idea to start saying the truth so I can keep a clear head.

DAD

OK?

Grace inhales.

GRACE

I don't trust you. I'm scared to be near you all the time. I always feel like I'm hiding from you in this apartment. You pretend to be nice, but you've got all this dark energy that you send out around you. You're the reason I've been sick, I'm sure of it... You're not

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)
useful enough to humanity. I just
don't think I wanna sacrifice my
safety and sanity for you anymore.

DAD
I'm not useful to humanity?

He veils a snarl and stares right at her.

GRACE
(nervous, now)
It's just your energy Dad. I'm
scared. I still love you... But I'm
saving myself first, sorry.

She opens the door and says;

GRACE
(ctd)
Good luck.

Then she exits.

Her DAD sits in front of the TV, unmoving, expressionless. A
jolly jingle plays on commercial break.

INT. DARK BEDROOM

POV: opening a door handle and walking through a dark,
vapid, black space...

She knocks on a door: *knock, knock...*

SADIE'S VOICE
Come in.

She turns a door handle and enters brightly lit bathroom.
The sound of water dripping like a ticking time bomb.

Sadie in a bathtub full of soggy water. Unclear whether
she's dead or awake.

She's got a shaving razor in her hand.

SADIE
(shocked, covers self)
Jesus Christ Ramona -- I thought
you were my fucking boyfriend.

Ramona stands in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA
Sorry to disappoint ... What the fuck are you doing.

SADIE
(super mean)
What the fuck are yooouuu doing??
... You can't just come in here
while I'm taking a bath...

RAMONA
Please... Don't do that thing where
you warp reality and think
everyone's obsessed with you...
Believe me, I'm not in here cause I
wanna see you naked -- you look
awful, I'm fucking disturbed...

Sadie's face drops.

A somber pause.

Ramona sighs.

RAMONA
(ctd)
Listen, Sadie. I really think we
should jump ship.

SADIE
What does it look like I'm doing.

RAMONA
Shaving your legs... Right?

Sadie gives her a coy look.

RAMONA
(ctd)
What I mean is, I have a feeling it
might be wise to get out of town...
When are you leaving to visit your
sister? ... the dick addict.

SADIE
... I was supposed to go next
week... why...

RAMONA
Well, I think we should leave
tomorrow, just till the storm blows
through. You can bring your
boyfriend too. It'll be fun!!!

(CONTINUED)

Ramona grins.

Sadie lowers the shaving razor slowly, sighs.

INT. PENN STATION

A huge room stuffed with scared Americans. A long, long line for tickets. Grace stares at the sign of destinations, looking lost. A few steps to her right she sees Leda, in the same position, staring up at the sign.

POV: a glance around the bus at all the people in the station. Leda and the camera lens trade eye contact, briefly.

Leda looks away from him and around the station. People eating. Sleeping. Watching TV.

The girls side-by-side in a state of serious melancholy.

Grace takes a few steps toward Leda.

GRACE

Umm... how do I, uh...

(pauses)

Do you have any disabled siblings
or parents?

LEDA

No.

GRACE

Good, OK, I was gonna say -- you're
the only other person in this
station who doesn't look retarded.

Not the best joke, but still Leda smiles, gently.

LEDA

To be fair everyone in my family is
mentally ill. But that's probably
cause they're geniuses. Not
retarded.

GRACE

I'm glad you're not offended.

Leda shakes her head.

LEDA

Too many people have been
repressing un-PC comments for their
whole lives, so that by now they've

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEDA (cont'd)
festered into spiritual wounds and
ugly resentments. That's one reason
for, you know--

Near the list of destinations is a television playing the
news. Trump gives a speech. Leda's gaze guides Grace toward
the screen.

LEDA
(ctd)
He spouts off mean remarks that
less powerful people aren't allowed
to say. I almost feel bad for him.
The public eye is an unflattering
lens, for anyone. But you gotta
admit he's a compelling villain.

GRACE
A compelling villain... yeah... By
the way you talk I'd kinda guess
you were a writer. Are you?

LEDA
(like she's embarrassed)
No. I'm a research assistant to get
into med school. Which is ironic,
because all my own doctors think
I'm nuts.

GRACE
Are you sure?

LEDA
I'm nuts? Oh, definitely.

GRACE
I mean, are you sure you wanna be a
doctor.

LEDA
They make a great living. But I'm
not trying to be a doctor just for
money... I'll never be good enough
at medicine to like, cure cancer...

Leda looks upset.

LEDA
(ctd)
I wanted to be a writer once, but I
gave up in my mid-twenties, because
my life was too boring and I had
nothing to write about.

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

You should start back up.

LEDA

Why...

GRACE

Well. I don't know. Cause you have this thing in your eyes that I hardly ever see -- they feel kinda feel like black holes or something. And when someone's eyes feel like black holes to me, I think that means they're capable of going down in infinity. It also means you're not fake.

Leda looks alarmed/nervous; she doesn't know how to react.

GRACE

(ctd)

I mean if you can't cure cancer, at least you could try to make yourself immortal as a writer, instead. That's one reason it's OK news for us that Trump won. We're gonna have some great material, right?

LEDA

You're a writer, then.

GRACE

(shrugs)

I might have dropped out of college in order to focus exclusively on my writing career.

LEDA

Wow, so you're like the real deal.

GRACE

I haven't even been published.

LEDA

oh... You should put yourself out there.

GRACE

I don't think so. I can't just "put myself out" cause I'm the type of girl who's gonna get fucked.

She stares at Leda with pleading eyes.

(CONTINUED)

Leda turns away.

GRACE

(ctd)

The thing is, though... as long as you've got those funny black holes in your eyes... if you're not a writer, you might channel all that dark energy into something worse. Just to make yourself immortal... So you gotta be careful with your impulses, if you have that look in your eyes, you know?

Leda raises her chin slightly, like she's pissed now.

Grace turns away and takes a look around the station.

She nods at someone from afar, and says;

LEDA

He doesn't look retarded.

Leda looks where Grace was looking.

SID, a tall black man in his early forties with a chin strap and sideburns, stares in their direction.

Sid approaches.

SID

Where are you girls headed.

Leda responds with silence. She looks down.

Grace sighs through her nose.

Finally, she says;

GRACE

To be honest I don't even know. I was thinking Florida. That's always where I've always wanted to go to... retire.

SID

You're young to, retire.

GRACE

Yeah...

LEDA

Come to California! I mean, I think it's better there.

GRACE

Is that where you're going.

LEDA

(nods)

My whole family is from there. They asked me to leave town and come home.

GRACE

That's nice. It's warmer there...

LEDA

You're gonna have a better chance as a writer in Hollywood than you will in Miami.

GRACE

Maybe.

Sid folds his arms, shifts on his feet, suddenly ill-at-ease.

SID

Well. I've got my own car, and I'm going West to stay with my girlfriend. I'll take you all the way to California for sixty bucks a piece. You can skip the line.

The girls look at each other.

Sid looks at them with black eyes.

SID

What are your names?

LEDA

Leda.

GRACE

Grace.

SID

I'm Sid.

He smiles crookedly.

EXT. HIGHWAY

(CONTINUED)

Different breeds of trees on different busy streets.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Sadie, Karl, and Ramona on the road in heavy traffic.

Ramona talks into the speaker of her phone.

RAMONA
Siri, directions.

SIRI
I'm sorry, I don't understand.

RAMONA
Siri. Directions.

Siri doesn't respond.

RAMONA
(ctd)
Bitch.

She sets down her phone.

SADIE
Karl here majored in Computer
Science at Columbia, with a minor
in linguistics.

RAMONA
How fun.

KARL
Yep.

SADIE
Mhm, he's a tech entrepreneur. He
works on systems of computers and
phones that respond to the human
voice.

RAMONA
Like Siri?

Karl nods. After a somber pause, he says;

KARL
I'm starting to wish I just majored
in English Literature.

RAMONA

Why.

KARL

(sighs)

What we're seeing with a lot of artificial intelligence systems is that... it's very *hard* to create a humanist perspective in a machine.

RAMONA

You mean machines aren't moral?

KARL

Morality isn't something that you can program, exactly. What makes people evil isn't usually a desire to do ill unto others. What makes people evil is 'not thinking.' And it's the same with machines.

Sadie listens.

SADIE

So... never trust a machine that says, 'I love you.' Because it's invented by science alone, and is therefore evil.

RAMONA

Is science evil?

KARL

No, no! Not at all. It just has its limits. Computers can't be philosophers. Where it affects humans is that, I think when people rely too heavily on computers for communication, they start to think a bit like them.

SADIE

Love, like any social interaction on the internet, becomes an algorithm.

KARL

Well, the brain picks up on the algorithms. Either that, or love becomes a matter of statistics, according to clicks and favorites and likes.

Ramona stares at her phone again. She looks anxious.

(CONTINUED)

INT. DORM ROOM

A bunch of post-its on the wall: 'Write Today.'

'Why aren't you writing. bitch'

'Stop wasting time.'

Cate lies supine in bed, staring at the screen of a laptop in front of her. On the screen: The Sims.

A pop-up appears with a smiling ferret. An advertisement.

Cate closes the screen.

EXT. 7-11

A blue pick-up truck pulls in. Sid pulls out and starts putting gas in the tank.

INT. CAR

Grace and Leda in the backseat.

GRACE

Gas my ass. Whenever a guy pulls over at a fucking 7-11 you just know he's getting condoms!

LEDA

(smirks)

I hope not. That's not part of my plan.

GRACE

What's your plan.

LEDA

... to get a cheap ride.

Leda watches Sid out the window. He walks inside.

GRACE

I don't know why I agreed to this. (sighs) I think this dude reminds me of my Dad.

LEDA

How does he remind you of your Dad.

GRACE

My Dad's not black, no... It's just the way he looks at me. I always

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)
get the sense he's taking stock on
my appearance. Which I guess means
I'm safer. He's not gonna bother
me... you know?

Leda doesn't know. Her expression turns a bit judgmental, or
protective, or confused.

GRACE
(ctd)
Actually (folds arms)... that's
probably why I agreed to this.
Around this guy I can wear a tank
top and skirt. I can't do that
around my father.

LEDA
Do what.

GRACE
(nods)
Be more feminine or whatever. For
some reason when I'm in the same
house with him, I feel so fucking
insecure that I can't even move.

LEDA
That could just be you.

GRACE
I don't think so. I recently found
some weird-ass porn on his
computer. Ever since I've been more
scared of him. He's like,
mother-fucking, Tiberius...

LEDA
Oh.

GRACE
I don't understand. Does every
well-meaning man have to have a
fucked-up porn addiction??

LEDA
I'm not saying this makes it any
better, but I think when you have a
lot of power it warps your sexual
desires... So sick kinky sexual
stuff is the only thing that can
keep you satisfied.

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

Keep you satisfied. Satisfied, always at the expense of someone else... Does it have to be like that?

LEDA

What does your Mom think. Or does she know.

GRACE

(sighs)

My mother was literally a prostitute. She left my dad when I was young, because he didn't make enough money as a taxi driver.

For a moment Leda thinks about how to respond.

LEDA

... You're probably an empath and pick up on his own insecurity.

GRACE

An empath...

LEDA

It means you pick up on what other people are feeling, when you're around them a lot. That's why I went to school in New York -- not California. So I didn't have to feel what my family was going through.

GRACE

Maybe. I'm sensitive to all sorts of shit... Which makes it hard to be in public. Because most Americans walk around feeling like fuck-ups. In America you're either living the dream or you're a fuck-up.

LEDA

I guess I'm a fuck-up then.

GRACE

No. You're hitch-hiking across the country with an older man in a pick-up truck... That's the dream, right?

Sid climbs back in the car with a plastic bag from 7-11.

(CONTINUED)

SID
I got you these.

He hands the girls each sodas and candies.

Grace hands her candy to Leda, who eats some of it, apparently content.

INT. DOC'S OFFICE

A doctor pours pills into a canister.

DOCTOR
Often patients who receive the diagnosis find that their life actually improves, immeasurably -- whether due to a shift in values, or faith... Have you spoken to your family yet?

Cate says nothing.

DOCTOR
(ctd)
Are you all right?

Cate looks up.

CATE
No.

She's holding a few fresh pamphlets about HIV / AIDS, plus...

A couple of large blue pills.

The doctor watches her closely.

DOCTOR
It's going to be OK, Cate. I promise.

CATE
Why does everyone fucking say that. It actually couldn't get worse.

DOCTOR
... It'll get worse.

Cate looks at him like: 'what's wrong with you.'

The doctor sets a hand on her shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

(ctd)

You're not alone with this, Cate.

Cate refuses eye contact. She tosses back the blue pills and swallows.

EXT. OBERLIN CAMPUS

Cate drifts through campus doused in a cold sweat.

A campus club stands outside, playing Top 40's hits on a set of speaker, smiling, laughing, dancing around.

Cate looks at the smiling college kids, then goes to a secluded corner of campus and starts to throw up.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Top 40's on the stereo.

Karl at the wheel; Sadie in the passenger's seat; Ramona in the back.

Karl reacts to a song lyric with a pronounced eye roll.

KARL

You know if I walked around
bragging like [-name of rapper-]
about how much I love money and
pussy and drugs, I'd be
incarcerated for being a criminal
and creep. All the song lyrics I
hear by white guys these days tell
such a fucking sob story. Rappers
have all the fun. Why do we have to
be so self-deprecating, while black
men get to be so full of
themselves? Not all white men are
serial killers and rapists.

RAMONA

Oh you poor thing.

Karl's eyes in the rearview mirror, frustrated.

In the backseat, Ramona folds her arms.

Sadie sighs.

SADIE

Are you upset about the lyrics
because you're jealous of [-name of
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SADIE (cont'd)
rapper-]? Or because you're upset
on the behalf of the people he's
insulting?

Karl casts a sidelong glance at Sadie.

KARL
I think the lyrics are offensive.

RAMONA
At least they're blatantly
offensive.

KARL
What?

RAMONA
At least the lyrics don't pretend
to be nice. Either you spit out
your resentments in a way that's
clever and catchy -- or you wait
until you can't hold it in anymore
and vomit it up on an online
comment board...
(she smirks, derisively)
... Some artists figure out a way
to say the truth and still have
people listen. Unfortunately plenty
of listeners can't handle it,
anyway, cause they're totally
insecure and discontent, and god
knows what else. I think when poor
white dudes listen to rap music,
they might either feel inspired by
the lyrics to make their lives
better, or they get madder and
madder at themselves for being
losers compared to the artists. And
then they get mad at the artists
for making them feel inadequate...
Then you-know-who trumps along and
identifies with the poor white
dudes, and they lap it up like cake
frosting and elect him president...

KARL
Pop music is nicer. But, more fake.

SADIE
The same thing's happening in
journalism. Sugar coating the truth
to make people feel better about

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SADIE (cont'd)
themselves. The mass consumption of
lies.

RAMONA
That's probably why everyone's so
fat...

KARL
Obesity has nothing to do with what
kind of music you listen to, or
what kind of news you read. It has
to do with what people eat.

Rap music on the stereo.

KARL
(ctd)
How bout this. If I listen to a
musician brag about getting laid,
it doesn't make me feel me any
hornier than I normally am -- does
it, Sadie?

He pats Sadie's leg.

KARL
(ctd)
That's like saying horny men
deserve to be horny... when really
they can't help it. It's their
bodies.

Sadie's face.

In the backseat, Ramona directs her attention at ratty
pedestrians in the streets of small-town USA.

EXT. HIGHWAY

POV: above the road.

A chain of rapid cuts brings our sight to road-level to...

A black Range Rover, just crashed, a few dead bodies around
it. The engine up in flames. Silence.

INT. TRUCK

OVER BLACK:

SID'S VOICE

How long have you girls been friends.

LEDA'S VOICE

I'm not sure.

SID'S VOICE

What?

LEDA'S VOICE

A while.

Now we see Leda and Sid in the front of the car.

Grace lies in the backseat, sleeping.

SID

She looks a bit like a girl I knew at Harvard.

LEDA

Oh. Wow.

SID

Oh, I didn't go there. In Cambridge, I went to culinary school at Le Corden Bleu. I used to cater events for finals clubs. That's how I met Jane.

LEDA

So you were her caterer? And she was a student.

SID

Uh huh... Those Harvard boys'd be so drunk at parties they'd be tossing out cash tips like confetti... I don't normally fuck with rich white men. They act like taking an anthro class in fuckin, Ethnic Studies makes them my friend... The feeling I get around white men with guilt issues is like a migraine in my gut... Now normally I don't fuck with rich white girls neither but for Jane I guess it was different. She was

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SID (cont'd)
giving me eyes all night, then we
end up fucking. It was an accident
I guess. I thought just a fuck in
the bathroom and that would be the
end of it. But that's the thing
about good pussy. Once you had
yourself some really, really good
motherfuckin pussy... that shit's
addictive. There's no going back.
You ever had trouble getting rid of
a guy you fucked?

Leda doesn't answer.

SID
(ctd)
Yeah, you have. But that guy's dick
was just going through withdrawal.
Cause he's hooked on good pussy.
And I imagine it's the same with
good dick, right?

Leda turns back to Grace in the backseat. Her eyes are open.
Leda looks quite anxious, now. Grace says;

GRACE
You think we get addicted to dicks?

SID
Hey...

GRACE
I don't think it's the same, unless
you're talking about penis envy. I
used to suffer from that. I thought
having a dick would give me a
competitive advantage, you know? An
innate ego that most women lack.
But then some guy who was trying to
cheer me up at the bar asked me, if
I could have *anything* in the world
-- what it would be? And I thought
about it a little bit. It certainly
was *not* to be born a boy. And it
wasn't love either, ulch. Love is
so fucked up. Respect is higher
than love on the list of what I
want in my life. But it's not at
the top of the list.

She waits for dramatic effect.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA
(deadpan)
What's at the top of the list.

Grace sighs heavily.

GRACE
For women? Sex appeal is power...
I'd do, like, anything for more of
that.

Sid listens.

SID
You want sex appeal? First thing
you gotta do is take off that
flannel vest. That ain't workin.

Grace looks self-conscious about her outfit.

INT. REST STOP BATHROOM

Ramona applies powder to her face in a mirror. Her eyes are thick and heavy with pain related to martyred beauty.

EXT. REST STOP

Ramona comes out into a large building lined with fast food shops. She looks around and spots Sadie sitting alone at a table, while Karl stands in line at a Burger King. Ramona sits down across from her.

Sadie looks tired. She's watching a television on the wall in the station. Ramona looks up at it too. [NEWS UPDATE]

Karl sits down with a Happy Meal. He places an action figure between Ramona and Sadie: a female superhero from an upcoming Marvel movie.

KARL
Got you this.

SADIE
How thoughtful.

Ramona picks it up and turns it over in her hands.

RAMONA
(absentmindedly)
I've never had any desire to be a
superhero. Well maybe when I was
like twelve but... I'd rather be
delicate than strong, you know? I
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA (cont'd)
want to be submissive in public and
feel people's attraction fill me
up. I want to act like a vapid,
narcissistic cunt and still be
loved...

She turns to Sadie and says, softly;

RAMONA
(ctd)
Seduction, Sadie... The trick so
many girls have forgotten is not to
live fast, but to *slow down*...

Her lips part into a smile.

Karl listens with raised eyebrows.

SADIE
Take baths and dance in the dark.

RAMONA
Huh.

SADIE
That's my secret to staying so
sane.

Karl pats Sadie's back.

KARL
Is that what you do when you're
alone.

SADIE
When else would I do it?

KARL
To be honest I can't imagine you
dancing in public.

SADIE
Can you imagine me dancing in
private?

Sadie turns to Karl.

He takes a bite of fries.

Ramona turns away, with a subdued eye roll; she's getting
tired of being the 3rd wheel.

INT. MCDONALD'S - NIGHT

(CONTINUED)

Views of people in line for fast food. Sid, Grace, and Leda get settled in a booth.

SID

Ain't such a good life we got here. Take a look around. Only thing that makes America prettier in people's heads compared to other countries is better image control. We know how to keep the shit out of sight. Cause everyone's got their own plumbing, right? Their own television too. Their own freedom. But too much freedom ain't right. You take your freedom for granted, you're just gonna waste it sitting in front of the television, eating fast food.

He gets up to go order food.

Leda and Grace at the table. Grace has a severely anxious look on her face. She says;

GRACE

I'd rather be lazy than enslaved. A million times, I'd choose freedom over enslavement.

LEDA

Enslavement? ...

GRACE

I'm not talking about being enslaved to another person. I think I'm talking about submitting to my fate... Since I'm white and underprivileged, I honestly feel an obligation to suffer publicly.

LEDA

Really.

GRACE

(nods)

I don't know if that's been drilled in my head by society, or if it's actually more marketable to surrender totally and let myself get abused and shit. Most people would rather see me fail. White men, black men, older women, every color... Maybe it's just karma from the past several centuries.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA

Some of what you're saying sounds like a reason I'd give to be white.

GRACE

But you know what I'm talking about. Don't you?

Eye contact.

LEDA

What ever happened to being a great writer.

GRACE

I'll do my best. But he said it, the world operates on image, these days. Nobody's gonna listen unless I attach a seriously memorable image to my name. Even if it's jarring or shocking. Beautiful, I wish.

Leda reacts.

GRACE

(ctd)

But I'll tell you what. If I follow through and fulfill my purpose as a white girl who sacrifices body and possibly mind to be some sort of sacrificial totem -- then you *have* to go on and survive and be great. If I'm right to say that America wants to see me crash and burn, then I'm also right to say that America wants and needs to see you survive and flourish and succeed gloriously.

LEDA

Do I have a choice.

GRACE

You don't have a choice, no. you have to be stronger ... I mean, I guess you have a choice whether or not you abuse me, ha.

Leda glances around the restaurant, anxiously.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA
I don't understand...

GRACE
What.

LEDA
Like when I'm writing sometimes I eat a lot of junk food... And I don't look like any of these people. I know I'm not skinny but why am I not obese? Based on calorie counts I should be really obese but, I'm not.

GRACE
Doctors are gonna tell you things. But maybe you're just luckier than other people.

LEDA
Maybe.

GRACE
Creativity is kinda magical, anyway.

Sid comes back to the table, this time accompanied by a SHADY MAN.

SID
... Hey, you girls wait in the car. I'll be out there in a sec.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Leda and Grace look out the car window.

LEDA
What's he doing.

GRACE
I can't see.

Sid talks to the SHADY MAN plus a team of stragglers in the parking lot, behind a set of dumpsters.

Then he comes back toward the car and climbs in.

GRACE
Everything okay?

(CONTINUED)

SID
Got some take-out.

Grace looks over his shoulder as Sid pockets a small clear baggie containing three crack rocks.

She turns to Leda; has her headphones in.

Sid starts the engine.

INT. CATE'S DORM

On a desk: passport, wallet, blue pills.

On the floor: huge black trash bags, overflowing with books. Torn-up posters. Athletic clothes. A broken television.

Cate lies in bed in a bathrobe, with greasy hair, playing The Sims on her laptop.

Someone knocks on her door.

She gets up and opens the door to SADIE.

CATE
Sadie? Is that you?

She seems incredulous.

SADIE
Who were you expecting.

A heavy beat.

CATE
(ctd)
Hug me so I know you're not fake.

SADIE
It's really me.

CATE
I'm not sure I believe you.

SADIE
Why do you keep insisting that I'm fake?

CATE
Cause, I've been playing The Sims for three days. And I'm pretty sure I care more about the well-being of my Sims than myself and most other humans.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

Really?

Cate sighs, then smiles, softly.

CATE

I think I can tell you're human cause of the nice feelings I get around you. They're more nuanced, I can feel it in my cells. These feelings are more unique than what I feel toward my Sims. I don't think I'd feel this happy and relieved to see you, if you were just made-up in my head...

SADIE

If you're human, then I'm human, even if there are only a few of us left alive among animals.

The girls hug. Sadie looks around, over Cate's shoulder.

SADIE

(ctd)

That said, what the fuck is this mess. It looks like Hiroshima blew up in your dorm room.

They pull out of the hug. Sadie paces around the room.

CATE

I didn't know you were coming this soon or I would have made a bit more of an effort to clean.

With her foot, Cate tucks the AIDS/HIV pamphlets so they're safely hidden underneath other items of trash.

SADIE

I'm sorry I didn't call, I lost service on my cell phone when the power went out in the city.

CATE

Yeah, I saw on the news.

SADIE

I should mention. I didn't come here by myself.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

You didn't bring a new guy along,
did you?

Sadie doesn't say anything.

CATE

(ctd)

Ulch.

SADIE

I couldn't just leave him New
York!! People were breaking into
stores. It didn't feel safe there.

CATE

What is he 12?

SADIE

No he's 43. And I don't see why
it's an issue. I'll spend all my
time with you, while I'm in town.
Karl will be fine staying in a
motel with Ramona.

CATE

Ramona? Who's that.

SADIE

She's just another friend. She'll
be fine by herself. It's not an
issue.

CATE

It's an issue because I'm not
staying here. So I hope there's
room in your car.

SADIE

What?

CATE

I hate it here!! Life's too short
to go to, fucking, Oberlin...

SADIE

I know, college sucks. But you
can't stay with me in New York. I'm
a working girl. I can't take care
of you.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

Then just, drive me to Mom and Dad's house in Utah.

SADIE

... Cate, I really think you should graduate. It's not the age to be a drop-out.

CATE

It's not the age to be anything!! There's no future in college. There might not be any future at all, if they nuke us.

Sadie frowns.

SADIE

I spose it's not a good idea to run straight back to New York.

CATE

No, you're right about that, that's definitely not a good plan.

SADIE

... you really wanna go to Utah??

CATE

I don't care if Mom and Dad are total nutjobs -- I just can't stay here in college. I'm dying here.

Sadie pauses a moment to think.

EXT. OBERLIN CAMPUS

Karl sees a sign on campus that says: 'FUCK THE PATRIARCHY.'
His facial expression wilts.

KARL

I don't know if it's a man's world anymore. Everyone's saying so but there's so much pressure for me to be great, with all this cisgender white male privilege, that I honestly think I'd rather just be a woman. It seems so much easier. Not as much pressure to... be powerful.

RAMONA

All the things that you'd think are fun about being a woman require a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA (cont'd)

lot more strength than it seems on the surface. Like being a great businessman or athlete... it's the type of thing that takes years of practice, believe it or not. It takes training to walk gracefully in heels. To understand the best clothes for your figure and colors for your complexion. To find make-up and face lotion that's perfect for you, cause it never makes you break out. Then, to let men do the work for you, because you're pretty enough. And of course, it takes a while before you really develop an immunity to hunger... It's not even an eating disorder. It's my job. It's just what it takes. And I suppose it's like that for men too. Learning to be masculine. Acting hardcore, hiding all your feelings.

KARL

At least there's more room these days to be fluid with gender... I guess. Though I'm pretty sure most of this pushback to make America great again is borne of fear that "the man" isn't what he once was. But the reason for that is just that women have become more masculine, to pick up the slack left by loser men.

He says this with self-contempt.

RAMONA

Well, I don't know about that...

Cate strides out of the dorms, followed by Sadie. They stand in front of Ramona and Karl.

SADIE

Hey guys, here's my sister.

CATE

(glibly)

Hey.

Ramona and Karl wave.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

Cate proposed that we drive further West. What do you think?

KARL

I don't see any reason to rush back to New York.

Ramona and Karl exchange a glance. Ramona shrugs.

Cate does an up-and-down, assessing Karl.

He gives her a surly look.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Sid's car in a parking space.

EXT. MOTEL DECK - NIGHT

Leda, Sid, Grace walk down to their rooms.

SID

Now they said the rooms are for one or two people. So I got two rooms. I'm guessing you two don't mind sharing one.

He hands Grace a key. She takes it.

SID

(ctd)

Knock 5 times if you need me, like this.

He does a rhythmic knock on his door. Then he turns his own key, and goes in.

SID

(ctd)

Goodnight....

He smiles. His door shuts.

The girls enter their room next door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

On television: Tony Robbins infomercial.

Grace sits on the floor at the foot of the bed, and watches.

Leda lies with her legs out on top of the mattress.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA

This obsession with manufacturing happiness or having a good life. I don't understand that. I don't think everyone is entitled to a good life.

GRACE

Do you believe in karma, then.

LEDA

Well. I used to think that reality was all in my head. When I shut my eyes, it turned off. Like it might as well have been a video game. And most of the game was understanding human character. Then you could get what you need from people, to make life better for yourself.

GRACE

... You're manipulative.

LEDA

Yeah, but then I started having dreams that made me think... I should stop manipulating people. So, lately it feels like a different game.

A beat.

GRACE

I get so tired of playing though. It's always been a big mystery why I don't just end it... I'm doing so bad.

LEDA

Real-life isn't a video game. If you're playing to win it you've got the wrong idea. And, you can't just end it. Once you die that's it. You don't get another chance.

GRACE

Another chance to what? I'm pretty much powerless... And I'm not interested in selling my soul to someone else to get more power... It's always a scam...

She gestures at the television.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA

Maybe you don't have to *sell* your soul... When you're doing something for someone else cause you want to... that's different. It takes love from two people to make an angel.

Grace looks up at Leda.

LEDA

(ctd)

That's what my parents always said. I thought it was corny too, but it kind of makes sense. All I'm saying is -- If you wanna die so bad, Grace, you might as well die fighting for someone or something.

GRACE

I don't know if I was born with more intense feelings than ... how it seems most people feel, when I look around in public. I don't think so. I don't know.

LEDA

It seems to me like, in order to lead a normal functional life, you can't really think too much about your feelings. And you can't love someone quite as passionately... as I'd hope for...

GRACE

Maybe you can still love people passionately. You just can't wear your heart on your sleeve in public. If you do, you'll get eaten alive.

LEDA

Yeah, maybe.

GRACE

But I feel like if I were having this conversation with someone else, they might pretend they don't know what I'm talking about.

LEDA

Or maybe we're actually a little more sensitive to stuff than they are.

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

I don't know. There's no way to test sensitivity.

LEDA

Nope.

Grace lies down on the floor.

LEDA

(ctd)

Are you gonna sleep on the floor?

GRACE

I'd kinda rather, yeah.

LEDA

Well, you don't have to...

GRACE

I know.

Leda flicks channels on the television. [news flash.]

OVER BLACK:

Cate to herself.

CATE

The real question is why I don't just kill myself, now that I'm dying. That's the real question. I wouldn't have to keep dealing with all this pain and stuff. But I think it's cause I feel obligated to give a great performance. To go down fighting. That's always the better show.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cate takes a couple blue pills.

With a wan face, she turns around and goes back into the main area of the motel room.

INT. NICE MOTEL ROOM

Cate comes out of the bathroom.

Ramona and Sadie sit on the edge of separate beds.

Sadie stands and gets ready to leave. Cate takes her place on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

Are you sure you're ok. You don't need toothpaste or anything.

CATE

I'm sure.

SADIE

Okay, well. Goodnight.

CATE

Wait.

She stands up and hugs Sadie again.

SADIE

Don't worry -- I'll see you in like eight hours.

CATE

I know.

She pulls out of the hug. Then sits down on her bed.

Sadie leaves. The door shuts.

Cate turns to Ramona.

CATE

(ctd)

I hope it's OK that I'm here.

RAMONA

What? Of course. I'm glad to have assisted with your rescue.

CATE

Yeah, thanks.

A beat.

CATE

(ctd)

Did you go to college?

RAMONA

I did.

CATE

Did you like it.

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA
Not really...

Cate smirks.

RAMONA
(ctd)
You must know what it's like to
feel like an outsider.

CATE
I guess. But you're like, the most
inside an insider can be. You're a
fashion model. You know how elitist
that world is?

RAMONA
I mean, technically, the more of an
insider I am... the further I get
from the rest of world. The
lonelier I feel.

Cate's brow furrows.

CATE
You must have so many famous
friends. People who are untouchable
to the rest of the world.

RAMONA
Yes... but it's hard to be
vulnerable with people who are
supposed to be seen as gods.

CATE
Oh.

RAMONA
I'm more envious of you than you
realize.

Cate looks up at Ramona, surprised.

CATE
Me?? (laughs) ... why.

RAMONA
You don't know the isolation...
that comes with being
untouchable... How many times have
you been touched. I bet you can't
even count on one hand.

(CONTINUED)

Cate looks down at her hands, then places her hands beneath her shoulders.

CATE

Too many times, I'm afraid...

She grimaces. Then looks up at Ramona with her arms folded.

CATE

(ctd)

It depends on what you mean by
'touched.' Doesn't it?

Sustained eye contact.

RAMONA

Is there a threshold you had in
mind?

CATE

A threshold?

RAMONA

to how much one can be touched?

Cate smiles.

CATE

I suppose there is.

She unfolds her arms. Looks down at her hands again, and starts kneading them anxiously.

CATE

(ctd)

To be honest, lately... I don't fantasize about sex. I guess I haven't been getting enough. The truth is I fantasize about killing men... after sex. When I'm all anxious and they're overcome by this smug, satisfied look. Cause they just got their rocks off. And I just got smashed. Ugh. It makes me so fucking mad, just thinking about it...

RAMONA

Believe me, girl. I know the feeling.

CATE

Okay, *girl*, I'm tired. I'm going to bed.

She says it sardonically, then rolls over in bed.

Ramona sits awake, with her arms over her knees, looking scared and vulnerable.

INT. SADIE AND KARL'S ROOM

Karl in a similar position, in bed, his feet in white socks.

SADIE

Thanks for agreeing to drive an extra few states. I appreciate that.

KARL

How much do you appreciate it.

SADIE

A lot...

KARL

How bout a thank you hug.

SADIE

OK? Just a minute, let me get ready for bed.

She changes in front of him. Karl watches.

KARL

I like your friends.

SADIE

One of them's my sister.

KARL

Sister and friend. Ramona's great.

SADIE

I knoww, she's beautiful.

KARL

She really is.

Sadie crosses over to the bed, and sits.

SADIE

I'm worried about Cate. She seems so different.

(CONTINUED)

KARL

Is she nicer... or meaner.. or...

SADIE

I don't know. Just different.

Karl places his hands on the sides of Sadie's face, then kisses her.

Sadie pulls out of the kiss. She's got a sort of confused/cross look.

KARL

What are you thinking.

SADIE

What do you like about me. More than the other girls.

Karl laughs like, 'what kind of question is that?'

He says;

KARL

You're lovely company. You're sweet. You're smart.

Karl caresses her.

KARL

(ctd)

So how bout that thank you hug. Hm?

He runs his hands under her shirt.

Sadie gets a depressed look, like 'this again...'

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Grace sleeping with her hands between her legs, like she's cold and wants to keep them warmed up.

She wakes up, sees the position of her hands, and looks around the room self-consciously. Leda's no longer in bed, though the covers on her bed are rustled. Grace sits up straight, rather suddenly. She climbs out of bed.

INT. MOTEL DECK - SUNRISE

Grace knocks on Sid's door, twice, loudly.

No response. Then she remembers...

Knocks five times.

(CONTINUED)

After a few more seconds, Sid opens the door.

SID
(grins, groggily)
You had me worried... For a second,
I thought you was the police.

Behind him, the room is dark and smoky.

He seems really out of it.

SID
Can I help you sweetie??

GRACE
Are you alone.

Sid hesitates.

SID
You got bare feet?? It's cold out
there!! I don't want you getting
sick or nothing.

He stands aside to let her in. Grace goes inside.

INT. SID'S ROOM

Grace looks around.

Drug paraphernalia, scattered on the counter by the sink.

GRACE
Leda's not here.

SID
No, why would she be.

GRACE
I don't know. She wasn't in our
room this morning.

SID
Did she take any money??

GRACE
She wouldn't do that.

SID
You'd better check.

Grace pulls her wallet out of her pocket.

C.U. on her counting cash.

(CONTINUED)

Sid's eyes.

GRACE
(putting wallet away)
She didn't take anything.

SID
I don't understand -- she left??
Why would she do that?? What did
you do??

GRACE
I don't know. But I think she
mighta been disgusted with me.

SID
You try something?

GRACE
What!? No...

SID
Well... for the record, I ain't
disgusted with you one bit.

He pats the motel bedspread.

SID
(ctd)
Come on. We'll get going in a
minute.

Grace doesn't move.

SID
(ctd)
You say you want sex appeal. A good
first step would be to chill out a
bit. And take off that mother
fuckin flannel, I don't swing with
grade school lesbians, okay?

Grace takes off her flannel. Then she turns and looks at
herself in the mirror.

<https://lolamorgandotcom1.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/screen-shot-2017>

She grimaces.

Then she looks down; sets her sights on a glass pipe.

GRACE
Can I try some??

SID
Huh??

GRACE
What's it like.

SID
Oh, that.

She walks to the counter under the mirror, and picks up a glass pipe, next to the sink.

SID
(ctd)
It gets rid of any bad feelings.
Kinda like an orgasm that lasts 15
minutes.

GRACE
I can only imagine.

SID
Well. You don't gotta imagine no
more.

He pats the side of the bed again. This time, Grace goes over and sits down next to him.

INT. GAS STATION

Leda checks out some breakfast items. She gets a particularly sinister glare from the obese white store clerk.

CLERK
That's all you took?

LEDA
All I'm buying, yes.

No response. Leda pays for 2 coffees and some other stuff.

INT. EMPTY MOTEL ROOM

Leda goes inside and finds Grace missing. She sets down her gas station items, then does a spot check; peeks in the bathroom. Leda turns on her heel and goes out the door again.

EXT. MOTEL DECK

(CONTINUED)

Leda stares over the deck and watches the sun rise, briefly.

Then she turns to the motel room, inhales, and knocks on the door. She folds her arms.

Grace comes to the door, in a bra, looking haggard and totally out of it. A smoky air around her.

Leda looks at her.

Grace tilts her head. She laughs slightly. More like a gasp.

Leda steps in the room.

Behind Grace, Sid lies in bed shirtless.

SID

What time is it. Is it time to
leave.

Leda turns to Grace.

Eye contact.

Leda says: 'Whatever just happened, I'm sorry.'

Grace doesn't react at all.

INT. CAR

A pair of hands shaped like two sets of guns.

CATE (V.O.)

When all other help is vain, where
else do you look but up. What else
do you hear but silence. Who else
do you turn to for help, but God...
but God isn't listening. He's a
guy. He only pretends to listen if
he likes you enough. So for someone
as far gone as me... that means I'm
fucked.

CUT TO:

Cate with her head against the window of the backseat of the car. She sits next to Sadie. Ramona and Karl in the front.

RAMONA'S VOICE

(from the front)

If there is a God and a heaven, I
don't wanna know about it in
advance. I want it to be a big
surprise.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

Well -- don't get your hopes up.

The mood sinks. Sadie casts Cate a worried glance.

Karl glances at Cate in the rearview.

KARL

I know you've been having a hard time lately, but life ain't all bad, Kiddo. Really it's not.

CATE

Listen Dude... let me explain to you something you're not gonna understand, since you haven't really felt this yourself. For me "beauty" isn't going to the fucking spa all day or calling up your friends to go shopping. It's never been *fun*, for me. And if I do feel beautiful -- I don't feel like I deserve the love I suddenly get from men, more than some other girl who doesn't have a shot in hell with the same guys. All right? For me *beauty* is all about survival. It's horrible sometimes. The stakes may not be life or death, but it certainly feels that way. At my age. In these times. So, fuck off -- will you? You don't know what it's like.

KARL

Oh come on. What did I do to deserve this.

CATE

It's not always something you did. Sometimes it's about what you obviously didn't do. Like bothered to think about how it must feel to be female.

KARL

Have you ever thought about how it tough it must be to *me*?? It's not all that easy!!!! You know middle aged white men are killing themselves more than anyone else!!!

(CONTINUED)

CATE

Probably because they're taught to expect things to be given to them in life. That's not how it works.

KARL

I'd be smarter just to start taking things. No one respects the everyman who's actually a good guy!!

CATE

Go ahead -- take things. You already took my sister's confidence away from her. You don't even take care of her, do you.

Karl scoffs.

SADIE

Cate -- stop it.

CATE

I'm just sayin.

KARL

... have you ever heard the term trigger happy.

CATE

Trigger happy?

KARL

You're quick to attack, over the tiniest issues. Trigger happy.

CATE

Did you learn that term on urban dictionary while you were googling your bed-wetting problem...

Now Karl's mad.

SADIE

Just shut the fuck up... Everyone. Please. I'm tired. I didn't sleep enough.

Cate smirks.

KARL

Next time you 2 can share a room. How does that sound.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

Yay!!

SADIE

Let's just make it to Utah.

Karl and Ramona share a sidelong glance.

EXT. WESTERN HIGHWAY - CLOUDY DAY

Outside a gas station, Sid smokes a cigarette and gets hard glares from bus riders.

SID

Look at this shit. This shit makes the Great Depression look glamorous. This shit ain't even human. Fucking, disgusting.

C.U. on Grace.

SID

(ctd)

You want anything?

GRACE

Can you get me some chewing gum.

SID

... Sure.

He disappears into the station.

Leda turns to Grace. She's glaring at Leda.

LEDA

Stop it.

GRACE

What.

LEDA

It hurts too much.

Grace looks clueless.

LEDA

(ctd)

Whatever you're feeling, I can feel it. Tell me what I can do to make it stop.

Grace shakes her head. Leda grabs her by the wrists.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA
It's gonna be OK!

GRACE
(shaking head)
No...

LEDA
What happened back there?

GRACE
I can't tell you.

LEDA
I know you smoked crack, it's not a
big deal to me. I'm not judging
you...

GRACE
... that's not it...

Grace looks up at Leda and swallows.

GRACE
(ctd)
Have you ever, like--

LEDA
What?

Grace shakes her head and stops herself.

LEDA
(ctd)
It's OK -- I knew Sid was gonna
make a move. It was obvious. It was
only a matter of time.

GRACE
No -- it's not that.

LEDA
What is then.

GRACE
(sighs heavily)
You know that thing that's supposed
to make sex worthwhile.

LEDA
Oh. Yeah?

GRACE

It's never been easy for me. Like, it's never happened. It's been the reason for my manic depression since high school.

LEDA

You think.

GRACE

Well now I know!! In the past I've always blamed my bad time on the guys -- like they weren't good enough. Or I just hadn't met the right one.

LEDA

So?

GRACE

Well since last night I'm cured -- I guess. (eyes widen) But that makes sex seem so much less sacred. I didn't even want to and I did. I feel so betrayed.

LEDA

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have left you.

GRACE

(really upset now)
Not betrayed by you. By my body.

She looks down at her body. Then back up at Leda.

GRACE

(ctd)
How could it do that to me.

LEDA

You're the one who fed your body crack. Why'd you do that.

GRACE

Why do you think.

A long pause.

LEDA

To lose weight?

Grace looks away.

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

I don't know.

She seems really upset.

Leda looks upset too.

LEDA

Stop being so hard on yourself,
please. It hurts me to see you
hurting.

GRACE

I hate being in places like this
because the only thing men notice
is that I'm not pretty.

LEDA

That must be so hard! Not being
noticed.

GRACE

(confused)

What.

LEDA

I mean, do people talk down to you.

GRACE

Yes, Leda, they do. They treat me
like something you'd wanna toss out
with the trash.

LEDA

Well... (raises a hand to her
chest). Yeah.

GRACE

The crack makes the pain go away.
For a while, at least.

LEDA

Do you have any left?

Grace nods.

She takes some out of her pocket and shows Leda.

Leda looks up at Grace. Behind her eyes, a tame intensity.

LEDA

I think...

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

What.

LEDA

I think he's holding us back.

GRACE

What?

LEDA

(slowly)

I think we should take the drugs
and run.

GRACE

Oh... with the car?

Leda glances back toward the car, then the gas station.

LEDA

No, leave the car. Let's go, just
us.

She and Grace start walking, quickly, toward an opening in a fence behind a set of dumpsters.

Once they make it there, they start booking it -- fast.

Sid comes out of the station holding a pack of gum, smiling a little. He looks around. His expression turns confused, and slightly hurt. He frowns.

EXT. FIELD ON SIDE OF HIGHWAY

A long stretch of land littered with cans and empty bottles. Leda and Grace run through overgrown grass.

GRACE

Fuck... (panting) I'm tired.

LEDA

Me too. I hate feeling this way.

They stop. Grace puts her hands on her knees to catch her breath.

GRACE

I used to be in better shape.

LEDA

Me too.

(CONTINUED)

AVA
Did you ever play sports.

LEDA
(nods)
Yeah. In college and high school.
Soccer.

GRACE
Oh. Cool.

She says it like it's surprising.

GRACE
(ctd)
Why'd you stop.

LEDA
Cause... with all women's sports...
it's like, why go that route, when
you can watch men's sports? They're
inherently more athletic.

GRACE
Huh. Kind of like how female humor
just isn't as funny.

She looks at Leda, grinning.

Leda rolls her eyes.

A beat.

LEDA
Whatever. I don't wanna be lean and
mean, anymore. I'd rather just
be... pretty.

GRACE
You are pretty.

A round of eye contact.

GRACE
(ctd)
You don't have to lie to me. I know
I look kinda jank lately.

LEDA
Kind of what?

GRACE

Jank. J-A-N-K. It's a word I made up. It means slightly unbalanced -- like something's just a tiny bit off. (she gestures at her face) To be fair, I've been around some bizarre environments, lately. At my dad's place. I think that's why so many Americans look jank lately.

LEDA

Why?

GRACE

Weird sexual energy. The porn industry. I think if we had healthier sex lives, we'd all look better. My issue is repression.

She looks up at Leda, almost desperately.

Leda steers clear of eye contact.

Through the weedy roadside field, they keep trudging.

LEDA

Do you want this?

She hands her a small box of cereal.

GRACE

... Yeah.

She takes it.

They nosh on snacks as they walk.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Roadside signs for restaurants line the sky like steeples.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Karl drives.

KARL

Do you girls want iHop or Culver's?

CATE

What's the difference.

(CONTINUED)

KARL

Uhh... one is more a regional thing
I think. Only in Iowa are you gonna
find a Culver's.

RAMONA

What a treat.

Karl turns to see her face.

KARL

Culver's it is.

POV: through windshield, we see a black man pulled over by a
stern white cop, shining a flashlight into his vehicle on
the side of the highway.

Reverse: Karl's face. He laughs.

Ramona lifts her chin, looks at him.

RAMONA

Why'd you laugh, Karl.

KARL

Cause. I don't know. It's sad. So
ridiculous.

RAMONA

Racism?

KARL

(after a long pause)
... yeah!

RAMONA

I could see you just got this glint
in your eye.

KARL

Seriously?

Ramona cranes her neck to the backseat, to look at Sadie.

RAMONA

Maybe your boyfriend is a white
supremacist.

The color drains from Sadie's face.

SADIE

That's awfully extreme, Ramona.

(CONTINUED)

KARL

(not happy)

I think wherever race is concerned, there's gonna be tons of deep feelings no one wants to own up to. Though I'd never do something intentionally cruel to anyone. I'm too smart to be a racist. We all are.

RAMONA

But the feelings are still there, you claim.

He turns to Ramona. The camera catches the glint in his eye, now directed at her.

KARL

Why you givin me such a hard time, buddy.

RAMONA

Just asked few questions.

KARL

Heh... is it cause your whole life is a diatribe against straight white guys? You have to convince yourself of reasons to hate them, or you might remember how good it felt.

Ramona takes a moment.

RAMONA

What.

KARL

Don't bother me, please. I'm hungry. I want a normal fucking meal. Not a salad.

He turns the steering wheel, takes an exit off the highway.

EXT. SIDE OF HIGHWAY - NIGHT

In a grassy marsh, Grace sticks her finger down her throat.

Track out: she's next to a rest stop. Leda comes out of a public bathroom. She sees Grace wiping her mouth with her sleeve.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA
... did you just throw up.

GRACE
Not much.

LEDA
Why would you do that.

GRACE
I think I'm sick.

LEDA
... I feel like you ruined the meal
we just shared. Like you renounced
my hospitality.

Grace grins, nervously.

GRACE
What? No! It's not like that.

LEDA
Why would you do that to yourself.

GRACE
Do what...

LEDA
I fed you cause, you're already so
thin.

GRACE
I don't know Leda. It runs so deep.

LEDA
What runs deep.

GRACE
This obsession. (does air quotes)
"Anorexia" or whatever it is. I
don't even care if I look good... I
just wanna be thinner than other
women. It's competitive.

LEDA
Please. I just want you to live.
You're weakening yourself.

Grace seems moved by Leda's concern.

LEDA

(ctd)

I'm protective of you... for the sake of your health. For the sake of our survival.

GRACE

Don't worry. I'll be OK.

LEDA

(shakes head)

I'm worried.

Grace stares into Leda's eyes; she really is worried.

Thunder strikes in the distance.

Leda shifts her eyes to the sky.

LEDA

Do we have enough money for a motel?

Grace opens her wallet.

GRACE

I'm not sure. I think we should save our money if possible, motels are so expensive.

LEDA

OK... Let's just keep walking, I guess.

Grace nods.

They walk.

RAMONA'S VOICE

There's a place where forgotten prophets roam, all by themselves. I think I'm trapped there. Can you tell.

INT. CULVER'S

Cate and Ramona and Sadie stare around, at people, eating.

CATE

No. I don't know what you're talking about.

RAMONA

It's a place a bit like purgatory... You don't know if you're headed to heaven or hell... The rest of your life feels like a trap. No one can tell you're imprisoned. Everyone's eyes become mirrors. No depth. Far worse than seeing too much pain in people, eye contact provides nothing but further isolation. You see hazy blackness. Like hot air...

SADIE

... Actually, you're not alone there.

RAMONA

No?

SADIE

I think we just live in a generation of idiots. But I'm not an idiot. Try this.

Sadie turns and puts her hands on Ramona's arms, then forces her to stare in her eyes.

Ramona smiles a bit wildly.

SADIE

(ctd)
It helps, huh.

Ramona nods.

Karl comes out of the men's room and plunks down at the table, puts his arm around Sadie.

Cate, keeping an eye on them.

EXT. HIGHWAYSIDE - NIGHT

Grace and Leda sit in a detached and abandoned train boxcar on the edge of the highway. Outside, it's pouring rain.

Nearby: a live train track.

Several hundred meters away, a highway. Vehicles whirring.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA
I feel so tired.

GRACE
I feel so hungry, but...

LEDA
What.

GRACE
I don't wanna eat.

She looks at Leda longingly. From her pocket, she pulls out her bag of crack. A glass pipe with it.

GRACE
(ctd)
I'm gonna have some. Just to take the edge off.

LEDA
... I won't stop you.

GRACE
Do you want any.

LEDA
(hesitates)
You only live once.

GRACE
As far as we know.

Grace lights the glass pipe, then holds it up like a champagne glass.

GRACE
(ctd)
Here's to you and me. I hope this love goes down in eternity.

Leda's eyes widen.

Grace takes a hit.

She hands Leda the pipe. Leda inhales.

Leda turns and looks at Grace.

Leda turns back. Stares straight ahead, at the distant highway.

Grace turns and stares at her own hands.

(CONTINUED)

With 1 hand, she moves to Leda's lap.

LEDA
I don't want... I'm not...

GRACE
... It's OK.

Leda starts to give in.

LEDA
Please don't.

GRACE
I wanna help.

LEDA
No...

Leda's face, clearly drugged up, like she doesn't know what's going on.

Grace looks demonic.

She bites her own bottom lip and digs in.

LEDA
(ctd)
... ow...

Leda gasps.

LEDA
Stop...

GRACE
... just, let me...

Long shot.

A train blazes past on the live tracks, concealing their tryst in the stranded boxcar from view.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Ramona puts on her headphones and dances around her own room by herself. She dances in the mirror and feels demons awaken in herself. She convulses, moves. Grooves unselfconsciously like a newly awakened madwoman, emptying a rifle magazine on all the men who have ever fucked her!!!! Woo. She's not sorry and she's not going to jail. She just wanna shake.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

Weird demeaning slap sex between Sadie and Karl. He pins her down and smiles when her eyes get wet. Karl seems febrile on Sadie's suffering. Sadie plays a mega victim in this movie, I'm sorry babe but let's not pretend we can change who we are this late in the game. Maybe if we have more money and space, we can get our shit straight. All this to say that the sex scenes in this movie aren't meant to be enjoyed [well... not if they're done correctly, they really won't be enjoyable but also not entirely grotesque]... not remotely funny, but that's the purpose behind it. It's not funny.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - SUNRISE

Cate on the motel deck, watching the sunrise.

Sadie opens the door of her room and comes out with Karl.

She's surprised to see her sister outside.

SADIE

What are you doing up so early.

CATE

I went running.

SADIE

Did you really?

CATE

No. Ramona wanted some privacy to shower and get dressed.

SADIE

Oh.

KARL

Do you want a cigarette?

Cate gives Karl a look that says: *you piece of shit.*

CATE

Shall we get breakfast?

KARL

I'm tired. I could stand to rest until check out.

(CONTINUED)

CATE
(to Sadie)
Let's have a girls-only morning,
hm? We can go get something and
bring it back.

SADIE
Why don't you check if Ramona wants
to come.

CATE
Sure.

Karl hands a cigarette to Sadie, and lights it, smirking
back at Cate the whole time.

KARL
Don't worry. You're next.

He lights a cigarette for Cate too, then hands it to her.

Cate's expression changes. She's no longer bitter. She
smiles psychotically and takes the cigarette between her
lips.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAYSIDE - MORNING

A sky created with innocent shades of pink and blue.

Cars lugging along, sputtering sound and gray exhaust.

Behind the road from afar we see Grace gasping through
tears, sweating profusely, sprinting through a weedy field
by herself.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXCAR - CONTINUOUS

Leda wakes up alone.

She folds her arms over herself, and stares around.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Karl, Sadie, Cate, Ramona driving.

Cate in the backseat, rambling. Something dark has shifted
in her.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

(a bit obnoxiously)

I feel like there's this thing that happens after you've *really* done drugs!!! Like everything in life is so boring, now... Even after rehab I feel like I never "got back" to myself. And you'd be surprised what I discovered. In rehab. About myself.

SADIE

Everything ok?

CATE

My clock is set! I hear it ticking at a tempo so much different from his and his and hers. (points to people out the window) I'm really serious this time.

SADIE

(choked up)

What are you talking about, Cate.

CATE

It's different now, yeah. Reality is different. My idea of a good life is a lot different too. I wish I would have thought ahead. I wish I could have a man who's there for me. A loyal guy. That I actually wanna have good sex with. I wish I could be the one who picks him up from the airport. Who sees him walking around in the same house after years of living together and still can't believe that it's him. Really there with me. Same with my friends. I look at them and can't believe they're really really there with me. That's all it would take to get me high. I wish I could have that.

SADIE

Who says you can't have that...

Cate turns and looks at her sister with one pure loving eye, the other a black hole. A stilted gaze.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

I guess I still can. Why not?

She breaks into a spooky half-grin.

Sadie starts crying. She knows something serious is going on with her sister.

EXT. LONG HIGHWAY

Now Grace looks haggard, pale, out of breath, near death. No cars for miles. She sees one in the distance. A pick-up truck. Grace stands in the middle of the road and waves both arms around. The car slowly approach, then pulls to a stop in front of her.

It's the OLDER GUY from the opening.

Grace stands in front of the car.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK

Grace sits in the passenger's seat.

The driver takes a long, hard look at her.

GRACE

Yes?

OLDER GUY

You could be a very pretty girl.
But you've got a mustache.

GRACE

Oh, do I? Thanks for letting me know. I'm afraid it's been a while, since I visited the salon.

The guy's cold expression warms up somehow.

GRACE

You know what I think the problem is. With girls like me who seem a bit boyish. With guys like you who look a bit... never mind... I think the problem is that you aren't fucking us well enough. So someone's gotta wear the pants... (runs hands along own legs) I look around at all the suffering girls in this country and think, the problem is, they just haven't had an orgasm. Probably none of them.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)
It's the truth. You can call us
ugly but, really, you're the
fucking problem.

Grace turns and takes a good look at him. His body.

GRACE
(ctd)
Fucking losers. All of you.

The driver seems to snarl.

His fingers grip the wheel. Knuckles turn white.

EXT. DRIVE-THRU

Cate peering at the menu sign.

CATE
For all the obsessing I do about
the correct diet... my body
probably wouldn't be all that
different if I just ate what I
wanted. Can I have a Big Mac?

SADIE
For breakfast? If you have the same
DNA as me, it helps at least to pay
attention to what you eat.

CATE
Fine, I'll pick something else.

A beat.

SADIE
And if you wanna lose weight that's
good, you know I'm the same way...
I just wish you'd stop going after
guys who treat you as a body,
nothing else.

Cate gives her a 'really' expression and says;

CATE
I think we have higher standards
for ourselves than most humans have
for themselves. I'm hyper aware of
myself, visually. And it's annoying
to compare myself to how I look at
my best.

SADIE

But I think you have this idea that guys will only like you and wanna spend time with you if you look a certain way... that shouldn't be how it is.

RAMONA

(kind of bitchy)

I mean, I think it's dumb to suggest that there aren't certain standards for objective beauty.

SADIE

That's not what I'm saying. She's so appealing and she doesn't even know it.

CATE

I don't want to be fucking appealing, I want to be pretty! Especially when I like someone -- I wanna look *good for him*. And so when I can't control that, I feel like a failure. Isn't that my responsibility as a woman? Ramona knows I'm right.

Ramona says nothing. She points to the speedometer.

RAMONA

We're out of gas.

SADIE

Oh, okay. We can stop and get some on our way back to the motel...

EXT. GAS STATION

Their car pulls in.

INT. CAR

Parked at a gas station. Ramona talks to Cate.

RAMONA

There was a time after high school in [small town], before college, when I didn't think I could do it anymore. I hated myself. Mostly my body but that was all anyone knew about me, back then. There's no way to gage talent or intelligence when

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA (cont'd)

you're walking around in public. I didn't think I was meant to be alive -- I mean, who's meant to be alive? But I certainly didn't want to be remembered as, weird. Some fringe freak who "made it work" for her somehow. So I took all my antidepressants at once. I don't think that's good for your intestines... I think they're still fucked up... But anyway. The doctors said I could have -- should have, died... And there was a while after that when I couldn't think clearly. My whole head was muddled like a cloud... And when I got my thoughts back, and I realized I was gonna be okay... the sky widened. I could see the world from a thousand feet above me. as though I'd been sinking in some black quicksand, now I broke the surface. I could breathe. And I could see -- There are so many things in life that are gorgeous that no one describes as gorgeous. I don't have to get specific because I think it's subjective. So I would have been fine with just, being alive. And (thinks for a second), seven years later, when I got all I wanted and more... I don't know what I'm trying to say, besides that I don't think it's over yet Cate.

Cate listens with a peculiar expression.

RAMONA

(ctd)

The American dream has evolved. If you manage to make it to the top, you really can have so, so much. But it's more inaccessible than ever. I used to think the best way to get there was by clawing my way up. And maybe that's still true. But I think identity... is a more valuable currency than power. Than money.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

How do I know my identity.

RAMONA

Ask yourself who you were as a kid. It's not a gender thing. The whole trick to growing up gracefully is... holding onto that. Of course your taste buds are gonna change. But aging doesn't have to mean slowly giving up.

CATE

You don't know what it's like to start on the bottom. You don't know how hard it is to eat well and dress well and moisturize your face, when you're just trying to pay the bills.

RAMONA

... Technology. You can do quite a lot, with it. You can create whoever you wanna be and hold fast to it. And you've got a spark. Something different. I don't say that to everyone. As long as you hang in there. I know, it's hard.

Cate doesn't seem satisfied. She yawns.

Ramona turns away. Through the passenger's window, she watches Sadie filling the gas tank.

CATE

(still yawning)

Oooh... I have really bad breath in the morning. I'm gonna go brush my teeth.

RAMONA

OK.

Cate climbs out of the car.

INT. BATHROOM

Grace getting banged by the OLDER GUY. She makes no sound but bites her lip. The guy bangs her so hard, the glass on the bathroom mirror cracks in a spiderweb formation.

INT. BACKSEAT OF CAR

(CONTINUED)

Ramona stares out the window as the following exchange takes place;

CATE
(to her sister)
Do you want anything.

SADIE
Cigarettes.

CATE
Oh.

Cate walks toward the gas station entrance.

EXT. BATHROOM

Grace hugs the older guy goodbye.

She looks a bit shaken.

Grace's POV: around the station.

RAMONA'S VOICE
(faintly)
Let's go!! You can smoke in the
car.

She spots Sadie. They get eye contact. If they had a conversation Grace would explain everything, in frenzy, but there's no need for that. Sadie knows somehow, Grace could stand to be saved by her specifically. If it were someone else Sadie wouldn't do it but this bitch is an exception!!

SADIE
(knocks gently on car window)
Just a sec...

She takes a few steps toward Grace.

Grace turns and looks behind her: some dumpsters, a fence. She seems to consider climbing it rather than face Sadie, right there, right then.

Sadie puts both hands in front of her, and moves them, as if to say: 'ssh ssh it's ok.'

Grace stays in place but she's still panicking.

INT. DREAM

Close-ups and jump cuts from the inside of a plane, about to crash into a city.

(CONTINUED)

TERRORIST

Go -- go!!

The plane picks up downward momentum. A man smiling.

INT. BACKSEAT OF CAR

Grace asleep. She wakes up, groggily. No one is talking. Sadie (backseat) and Ramona (passenger's seat) watch her, then turn away when they see she's awake. This time Cate is driving, with devil-may-care ease. She wears sunglasses.

CATE

(thinks Grace is asleep)
Maybe she's deaf. Or deaf-mute or whatever. That would explain everything.

GRACE

I'm not deaf.

Cate tenses up; so does her movement behind the wheel.

GRACE

(ctd)
And this is not me, what you see.
I'm sorry I'm like this. I'm not a mess usually. This is not who I am.
This is just what happened to me.

Ramona turns and looks at her.

RAMONA

Do you think you're not pretty.

GRACE

Is that a fucking joke.

RAMONA

It's a question.

Grace, burning, in her seat.

GRACE

Why did you pick me up? Are you trying to hurt me? Where are you even taking me? I'm not supposed to be here!! I have to find my friend!!

Her voice picks up in pitch and pace. She starts to cry.

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

(ctd)

I have to my find my friend!!
Stop!! Stop!!

Grace stands up in the backseat and starts fighting for the car door handle. Sadie seems afraid to touch her for some reason. She puts her hands up but does nothing. Her eyes are wide open.

RAMONA

What the -- fucking do something!!

She gets up from the front seat and grabs Grace by the haunches. Grace gets really violent.

GRACE

Get off of me!!!!

She pushes Ramona so hard she falls into Cate, driving.

EXT. ROAD

The car careens into another lane. A car honks loudly, then rear ends their vehicle. Cate manages to maneuver the wheel quickly so the car pulls out of the main drag of the highway, to the edge, where it slows down and stops.

INT. CAR

Back inside: at some point, it seems, Sadie snapped out of her trance and grabbed Grace by both her wrists.

Grace, stone faced, in Sadie's grip.

Everyone seems shocked. And suddenly grateful, to live.

EXT. EDGE OF HIGHWAY

A plane in the sky.

Leda stares up as she trudges alongside a train track by herself.

She hums a song to herself, in a weak warbling timbre that suggests she's been crying.

Leda stops and sets her backpack down and unzips it.

She digs around: finds a pack of Tic-Tacs, some wrappers of junk food, an empty water bottle, a used crack pipe.

She exhales loudly.

(CONTINUED)

Dumps the rest of the white Tic-Tacs into her hand.

Then Leda keeps walking, humming, savoring each Tic-Tac like they're the last thing she'll ever eat -- 'mmmm' she hums to herself when she finishes the last one, then stops humming. She marches forward in silence.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT

Ramona and Grace in the car. Sadie and Grace climb out.

SADIE

You're sure you remember where
you... abandoned your friend?

GRACE

It's not that far from here, yeah.
If I find her you can leave me with
her. And that'll be it... thanks
for your help.

SADIE

It's fine. We'll book another night
here, okay Ramona? I'm just gonna
skip telling Karl that we picked
up...

She glances at the new girl.

GRACE

... Grace.

SADIE

Grace. I'm Sadie. Nice to meet you.

GRACE

Thanks again, I'm sorry for...

SADIE

(moving on)
... I'll say that the car got hit
and wouldn't start, and Ramona went
to straighten it out.

RAMONA

That's part of the truth.

SADIE

In other words, a lie.

RAMONA

... I'll be back, A-sap. Try to
rest while I'm gone.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

Don't you abandon us, now. We need that fucking car.

GRACE

Don't worry! We won't.

Sadie ignores Grace and assesses Ramona's trust quickly, briefly, with a hard round of eye contact. Ramona smirks dutifully. [*optional wink*]

CATE

Have fun...

She taps the door by the driver's seat and gives Ramona a bitchy glance, like, *'good luck with that one.'*

Grace wishes she weren't such a bother and burden. She stares straight ahead, in a slick sickly sweat.

Long shot: Ramona turns on the engine and drives out of the parking lot, weaving around the tall motel sign [could be Econolodge, Super-8, Days Inn, something local. Preferably grungy and downbeat]. Cate and Sadie ascend a cement staircase to the upper deck of the motel.

INT. MOTEL

Karl watches the news by himself.

The girls come back with bags of food. Sadie hands Karl a McDonald's bag.

KARL

Great!! Thank you!!

Cate watches him shovel down two burgers. He's a tall skinny dude. He says;

KARL

(ctd)

Mmm....

CATE

You're so fucking lucky, that you can eat so much and not get fat.

KARL

(proud, now)

It's always been hard for me to gain weight. It takes some real fucking commitment. So it's confusing to me, how Americans have

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KARL (cont'd)
ended up like they have. Obesity.
It's kind of a mindfuck. They must
sit inside and eat, like, *all the
time*.

CATE
You don't know what it's like to be
them. You've always been thin. And
you've always been upper class.
It's hard *not* to get fat, when
you're stressed out all the time.

KARL
Americans should at least stop
acting like it's totally fine to be
obese. It's enabling.

SADIE
These are humans you're talking
about. They didn't ask to be born a
certain way.

CATE
Being low class is like living
under a yoke, with constant
exhaustion instead of clear
thoughts. Powerlessness. It makes
it impossible to plan ahead and
strategize a long, long term escape
from fatness.

KARL
It's simple though. It's basic
science! Go on a diet! Stop eating
corn products!

SADIE
It's not *that* simple, Karl. You've
just never been there.

CATE
You can't speak for other people,
because, you've never had to worry
about it!!! You on your scrawnyass
high horse...

KARL
... Cate, I didn't mean to hurt
your feelings...

CATE

It's not my feelings!! Or I don't know. Maybe it's my family. Everyone in my family -- both my parents -- have struggled with their weight. You can't tell the fucking difference between someone who's fat cause they eat too much, and someone who's genetically predisposed to look a certain way.

KARL

Your version of fat is probably what I think of as skinny. I'm talkin *fat*. And it's my tax dollars going toward these people's health problems, just so they can eat whatever the fuck they want. They can at least make an effort.

Sadie listens with a furrowed brow. She's upset by his attitude.

CATE

Your tax dollars are being wasted on humans who need help?

KARL

Noo. But I do think we should go ahead and take a hard line approach. Replace fast food ads with billboards that say, 'Stop eating so much!!!'

CATE

What if they can't help it.

KARL

Then try harder!

CATE

You're a few steps away from saying, 'all obese people should be killed.'

KARL

Oh come on. I didn't say anything about killing people, you said that.

CATE

It's naïve men like you who cause girls like me to hate themselves.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CATE (cont'd)

As if body shaming hasn't done
enough harm against women.

KARL

I'm not thinking about the perfect
beach body. I'm thinking about
basic human health. Being healthy
is what looks best.

SADIE

Karl.

KARL

Yes.

SADIE

Give it a rest.

Cate stirs around her food with a white plastic fork. She
looks sick and thin already. Now she's even more depressed.

Sadie looks concerned for her sister, and mad at Karl.

Karl doesn't like seeing her upset.

KARL

I'm sorry, girls. Neither of you
are fat. At all. I didn't mean
to... upset you...

Both girls stare at the ground.

On the motel room TV: an ad for a chain restaurant,
featuring footage of food -- as falsely dressed-up to look
yummy, as a high fashion model after hair & make-up &
Photoshop (etc).

INT. CAR

Ramona, driving; Grace, who by now really looks like a drug
addict.

GRACE

Maybe I failed at being female. I
failed at being pretty and graceful
and soft. This isn't the body I
want. I know I'm clumsy. I know I'm
messy and rough around the edges. I
know I'm unrefined. If the body is
the soul, then yeah. (gestures at
self) That makes sense for what
I've been through. For how I grew

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)

up. I had to fend for myself. I didn't have the chance to be taken care of. I know I offend people like you, who sit in their ivory tower and occasionally peek into the sewers to see what's going on. I even failed at being bulimic. It didn't make me look how I wanted. But if there's one thing I can be good at, god help me -- it's being a drug addict. It's the only thing that seems to give me an edge, looks-wise. Beauty is power. I need something that allows me to starve myself. Otherwise I'm repulsive. Not a standout.

RAMONA

Hey, babe. I think you have body dysmorphia.

GRACE

I don't know about that.

RAMONA

I do. I know all about it. Isn't it the worst?

Grace looks up wearily.

RAMONA

(ctd)

I mean I don't know if I have it. How can you know how other people see you? you can only see yourself. But I do know that the best way to deal with feeling like a vestigial outgrowth of God's body of humans is to feel the devil in you, and let your dark side come out in how you dress and behave, and go out and terrorize the world with your visual presence -- and fuck how they handle you. Those are the days I actually end up looking the meanest. Meaning, the best ... People are gonna tell you to be more confident. And that's fine. Sometimes that works. But it's not confidence, that cures delusions of inadequacy. It's self-disgust. You fix what you have

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA (cont'd)
a choice to change, or you kill
yourself. The internal violence is
what's gonna make you greater than
any of those slightly more feminine
women you seem to resent so much.
Not just 'pretty' ... 'gorgeous.'

Grace listens.

GRACE
Self-disgust? *Really?*

RAMONA
(taken aback)
What?

GRACE
I think you're hotter than like,
all other high fashion models right
now.

Ramona raises her eyebrows.

GRACE
(ctd)
Would it be the worst thing. To
just be my normal weight for a
while -- which is probably fat by
modern standards -- instead of
doing all the drugs. To take care
of myself and listen to what my
body wants, instead of assuming
it's wrong.

RAMONA
I'd be careful with the drugs. I
think there's a future for you. For
us.

She takes an exit off the highway.

GRACE
(a bit manic)
I'll whip myself into great fucking
shape when I have to. Duh!! But I
will never judge men or women by
weight. I'll judge them by
fuckability. And truth be fuckin
told, being really underweight
takes away from that -- just like
being overweight, no offense to
anyone. Being a junkie definitely
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)
does. It's horrible. To think I'd
never have sex again. Ugh. The
truth is, there are surprisingly few
people I actually wanna fuck.

Ramona at the wheel, with a straight face.

EXT. HIGHWAY

A sunrise that seems to sing choral harmonies, over a long
sprawling highway. A train track runs along the edge of the
road.

EXT. PARKED CAR

With windows covered by the sky's colorful reflection.

INT. CAR

Grace rubs the back of Ramona's neck with her hand. She
climbs from backseat into the driver's seat and says;

GRACE
I can drive.

Ramona nods. She stays in the backseat, tired and shy. She's
not in the mood to monologue this time. From the rear
window, she watches the sun rise.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Cate with her hands over her eyes, in bed.

CATE
I can't look at myself. At
anything. Don't make me... Get me
my sunglasses.

Sadie hands her sunglasses.

Cate puts them on.

She turns over on top of the bed, and throws up.

SADIE
Something's wrong with you!! You're
not telling me what's actually
wrong.

CATE
Do you want to know the truth.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

... Yes.

CATE

Here's the truth. It's also a prediction. I'm going to fuck your boyfriend, Sadie. And after that you're not gonna want to fuck him at all.

Sadie tilts her head.

SADIE

What?

CATE

I have AIDS Sadie.

She smiles.

Sadie stays calm.

SADIE

Should I believe you?

CATE

You can choose to believe me or not. But I'm going to fuck Karl. And it's not gonna be long, till I fuck him.

SADIE

Don't... do that...

CATE

I'm just stating facts, here.

SADIE

They're not facts -- you have choices.

CATE

You have a choice to believe me, or not. I have AIDS and I'm going to fuck Karl. And I don't want you to catch the AIDS -- so don't fuck him anymore.

Sadie's eyes are really wrenched open now.

SADIE

Cate...

Cate. Quiet. Proud.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

(ctd)

You have choices ... you can get help.

Cate looks more vulnerable now.

SADIE

(ctd)

You don't have to fall any farther. You can turn around. You can start going up now ... It's not over. You exist. Don't worry about anyone else. For me, you still exist so much.

Cate hunches over. Quietly, she says;

CATE

... he's such an asshole, Sadie.

SADIE

He doesn't try to be. He just doesn't know. Please, don't.

Cate doesn't know what to say. She seems weak, like something dark is being sucked out of her.

EXT. MOTEL POOL

Karl goes swimming in his boxers. He gets out of the water and stretches, warming up his long limbs in the sun. His movement is graceful, fluid, smooth -- not quite ladylike! He's really got a slight figure. It might explain his heavy pride.

EXT. TRAIN TRACK

Grace follows the train track all the way to a station in [fictional city]. It's a place for poor people, mostly marginalized people; everyone, obese and so so unhappy. Their health is permanently damaged. Their bodies reflect it. They're under too much stress.

INT. CAR

Grace parks the car in a train station lot filled with loiterers. She turns back to Ramona.

GRACE

Why don't you wait in the car.

(CONTINUED)

Ramona's POV: Grace goes out of the car, moving with more confidence and bravado than she's ever shown, for the sake of her survival, and converses with the people of [fictional city]. Even in her messiest state, to them, Grace seems to bridge the gap from bottom class to elite. She's trying to track down Leda. So she makes gestures to suggest: 'height,' 'face.' The people shake their heads.

One woman lifts up a finger, seems to say: 'come with me.'

Grace turns toward the car, acting blasé, and gestures to Ramona: 'stay put.'

Ramona looks more concerned.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Grace's POV: as the Homeless Woman stands before her, speaking in a voice huskier than brillo.

HOMELESS WOMAN

The last woman says I ain't buying you a burger 'less you sit here and eat in front of me. She says she thought I was gonna use the money to buy drugs. And I says no way. Take your money. I gave her back a twenty. I ain't eatin my burger in front of you. I hungry but I ain't eating in front of you, bitch.

GRACE

Did you say that??

HOMELESS WOMAN

... Yeah!! Exactly what I said!!

GRACE

Good.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Now really what I need is diapers for my son. I ain't got any diapers, I been wrapping him with old T-shirts. It don't work so good. I need food and I need diapers and a place to live.

GRACE

Well. I can help you with the first two things. But only if you really know where my friend is.

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS WOMAN

Yeah!! Yeah!! I think I seen her!!

GRACE

Really?

HOMELESS WOMAN

... Yeah!!!

GRACE

I guess we'll find out.

The Homeless Woman takes her onto a bus.

INT. CAR

From the car, Ramona watches Grace get on the bus. 'What is she doing?' she thinks to herself.

INT. BUS

In this ramshackle city, the bus drives along streets reeking of crime, addiction, and misery. Fast Food chains lined with weak and chronically hungry folk, caught by the plague of these times. Rank with shame. Still surviving.

HOMELESS WOMAN

How long since you last saw her.

GRACE

Like, a few days. I don't know.

HOMELESS WOMAN

(quietly)

Yeah. She said she wanna do drugs.

GRACE

Leda?

HOMELESS WOMAN

They all go to the same place.

Grace looks confused.

HOMELESS WOMAN

(ctd)

I'll show you. And I got you. Got me feeling birds in my chest, a sec... Don't worry.

GRACE

I'm not worried.

It's almost convincing.

(CONTINUED)

INT. CAR - MUCH LATER

The sky a different shade.

Ramona notices the Homeless Woman who accompanied Grace with a bag of groceries, plus diapers with a handle taped on. She climbs off a bus -- alone. The bus pulls away.

Ramona frowns.

She starts the car and follows the same bus line, going the opposite direction. Turns on the headlights of the car.

EXT. POOR NEIGHBORHOOD

Grace at the end of a remote a side street. She stands on the outside of an abandoned lot with a rusty chain-link fence and watches Leda, from afar.

Leda is surrounded by sick older men with waxy skin and snappish smiles. In the center: several picnic tables with people on top, lying face up, clearly fucked up on crack and K2 and crystal.

Grace spots a tall man in a Cougars jersey. He seems to be in charge. The man smiles broadly with his arms folded and paces around the lot. He stops next to Leda and puts a hand on her shoulder. She's the only female of all twelve or so people in the lot.

Leda has a different aura about her. She seems oddly elated. But she's not high on crack.

Grace observes Leda's broad smile, how thrilled she seems, and appears confused.

A car honks its horn behind her. Grace ducks behind a dumpster. The car slows and comes to a stop. After about ten seconds, it revs its engine and drives forward.

Grace stands up. And Leda spots her.

Grace knows Leda spots her because they get eye contact.

And Leda, with lip upturned, turns away and pretends she doesn't see her. She rubs the back of the man in the Cougar's jersey.

Leda gets all weary in the arms and legs. Really feels worthless. In her face we see a realization sink in so deep she feels ill. What are her choices now.

She looks both ways, crosses the street, and enters the lot.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. LOT

The TALL MAN in the Cougar's jersey steps out.

TALL MAN
Can I help you.

GRACE
(quietly to Leda)
Leda. Are you gonna be a trapper
now. What the fuck.

TALL MAN
Do you know this girl?

Leda shakes her head.

LEDA
Never seen her.

The man looks Grace up and down.

GRACE
No, that's my friend.

TALL MAN
Your friend? If I talk to a black
chick on a bus does that make her
my friend? You got her confused.
Too much K2.

Grace shakes her head, no.

GRACE
I'm sure it's you.

Leda with that expression she often wears, of getting caught
redhanded in the act of something crude.

INT. CAR

Ramona drives around side streets, looking around. Then she
spots Grace, standing with an air of defeat already, in
front of Leda and the Tall Man in the center of the lot.

She stops the car. Turns off the engine. Watches.

EXT. LOT

Grace's energy shifts. She lifts her head and seems to
growl; so much that her upper lip actually quivers.

(CONTINUED)

TALL MAN
You got a problem?

GRACE
Yes.

TALL MAN
With black people?

GRACE
With your vanity. It has nothing to
do with race.

Stoned victims in the lot goggle at Grace. She's the only
white girl here.

TALL MAN
Man, you better get lost. Go!!
Scram!!!

Grace takes a few steps toward Leda, with her arms out.

GRACE
She comes with me.

TALL MAN
Crazy bitch--

The Tall Man steps between them and grabs Grace.

Grace knees him in the groin so hard, he collapses to the
ground.

Grace charges toward Leda.

GRACE
Come on!

A bizarre embrace; violent and passionate.

LEDA
What the fuck is wrong with you!!

GRACE
I found a place for us now! It's
gonna be fine!!

LEDA
No!!

They claw at eachother.

Leda spurns Grace, pushing her away with whatever measly
strength remains in her.

(CONTINUED)

Grace won't let go.

A loud CRACK of a gun being fired.

INT. CAR

Ramona jumps in her seat. She sees Grace fall to the ground, crying out.

EXT. LOT

Leda's POV: as she registers that the Tall Man just shot her friend. He stands with his gun out, as if about to shoot Grace again. Leda snaps out of her violent trance and gets to the ground by Grace, shielding her.

Grace wails in real raw agony.

An engine being REVVED loudly from afar.

Leda turns.

The car containing Ramona plows clear through the chain link fence into the lot. She pulls up by Grace and Leda and opens the door.

RAMONA

Get in!!!!

Leda, shocked.

RAMONA

(ctd)

In the backseat!!! Now!!!

The Tall Man, in a panic himself, has his gun cocked and pointed at the car. He shoots one of the headlights. A few of the junkies are screaming, suddenly hysterical. Most watch stupidly, with mouths agape, unperturbed.

Leda takes a leap of faith. She drags Grace by the arms into the backseat of the car.

Slams the door.

Ramona performs a theatrical U-turn, knocking over a trash bin, then leaves over the collapsed fence where she entered the lot.

A few more gunshots from the Tall Man miss the car.

INT. CAR

(CONTINUED)

Grace in the backseat, not screaming but totally silent, covered in blood.

Leda panicking, dabbing a bullet wound just in Grace's left hip with a sweatshirt.

LEDA

It won't stop bleeding. I don't have any bandages.

Ramona glances back, then forward out the windshield.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Ramona switches lanes, screeching, weaving through other vehicles in a profound hurry.

INT. BACKSEAT

Leda tries to prevent Grace from bleeding out.

LEDA

I don't believe in miracles. I don't know how this happened. But if there's one thing I believe in right now -- it's you, Grace. You can do it buddy!! You're gonna live!! You can make it!! I know you can!!

Grace seems quite weak. She's bled a lot and was weak to begin with. Leda has Grace's blood all over her.

LEDA

(ctd)

Oh, no... no... I'm sorry... I'm really fucking sorry... I wasn't gonna do more drugs. I asked to go to the dope man cause I thought that's where you were most likely to go, if we ended up in the same city. Then I got caught up in it. Something came over me. I don't now--

GRACE

--it's OK.

LEDA

No, it's not...

GRACE
You'll be OK.

Leda's expression shifts, from hopeful to helpless.

GRACE
(nods once)
You will.

LEDA
(crying)
Grace? ... no, no, sshhh... it's
gonna be okay... no...

Grace leans her head back and stares through a sun roof with a pale suffering face, gaze draining fast.

Shot from above: Leda tries desperately to stop the bleeding. She ties the sweatshirt in a tight knot around Grace's bleeding side. Ramona at the wheel, driving full speed. Expression tbd [up to the actress]. Her view through the windshield. The highway. The sky.

INT. DREAM

Sunshine.

Grace, a healthy weight and complexion, with soft hair, in a white linen shorts tucked into a white linen shirt, sleeveless. One might say, she's dressed like a boy. She walks, cautiously, through green grass. In the distance: a flower field. An overgrown assortment of many shades of red, yellow, purple, white, pink and blue. They seem to change color with each step Grace takes toward them.

A lion comes toward her. A big lion with a carefully groomed mane of gold fur.

Grace looks frightened when she sees the lion. The lion approaches her slowly. Ava stays still.

The lion licks the back of her neck. Grace relaxes.

And she yawns. A big primal yawn that lasts several seconds.

Grace hugs the lion around the neck. He keeps licking her.

Then she climbs onto his back. He crosses into the flower field. Grace puts her hand down and grazes the petals with her fingers. They disintegrate into smaller multicolored bits of light, which then turn black and blow away like ash.

(CONTINUED)

Grace rests her head in the mane of the lion -- whose golden fur is oddly amorphous, pixelated, electric -- and prepares to rest. Grace's POV: of the mane around her eyes, orange static, the color one sees when they close their and look at the sun. The warmth finally dissolves into black static, and burns out completely.

INT. SILENCE

Pitch black.

A trunk pops open, revealing a harsh blue sky, almost neon.

Low angle of Ramona peering down into the trunk of a car with cold plaintive eyes.

High angle of Grace, not alive, assembled to appear as comfortable as possible given the circumstances of her passing.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT

Sadie comes down the stairs of the upper deck of the motel, holding a folded white bedsheet.

She hands it to Leda.

Leda takes the sheet to the trunk. She uses it to mop up any blood left on Grace, then wraps her in it, like a blanket.

Leda and Sadie back away from the trunk.

Ramona takes one last look at Grace, and covers her face with the sheet. Gently, but with enough force to give off a feel of finality, Ramona closes the trunk.

*... a *clunk* ... near-perfect volume, please ...*

On the upper deck, Karl comes out of the room, shutting the door behind him.

Cate leans over the edge, watches from on high.

Her POV: of the girls in the parking lot.

Ramona wears a leather jacket, dark hair with bangs. She puts sunglasses on, folds her arms, stares up. Ramona joins Sadie and Leda in a 3-person flock. They stand together in the parking lot and send their gazes to the motel's upper deck.

They're ready to drive.

INT. CAR

(CONTINUED)

The road widens and tightens ahead of us like an audio line.

Karl drives. Ramona in the passenger's seat. Cate, Sadie, Leda in the back. Cate leans against the window, with a little gap between her and Sadie, as if quarantined from the rest of the car.

The rest of the movie seems darker but more lurid, somehow, like the black strips on the top and bottom of the widescreen contain as much of the truth as the pigments burning between them. Time doesn't pass from left to light like text in a book. No, the screen emits the story from back to front. All the way behind the screen, one would guess, the real truth is contained in a firm ball of matter, creating a shared desire among viewers to get closer to our story by rubbing against it, close enough to finally hit a spot and explode light particles all over the crowd.

Mountain ranges shaded bright orange. Cate watches through opaque sunglasses. A radio in the car broadcasts the news in America right now: 'bla bla bla.' Oh, god. So sad!

Well boo. At least Lola Morgan is happy cause she doesn't have to act anymore. That shit hurts. Now she can direct full throttle. Hence the sexy shift in style. All the preceding scenes are partly commandeered by the AD who is going to be [XI]. Maybe we can say co-director. Depends. So, friends, if you wanna be involved with this movie and happen to be another self-loathing atheist -- from now on, don't stay alive and well (& somewhere in the same heat range of every single photo I've ever seen of ü) out of vanity, or for some broader cause, but for the possibility that this movie *will* happen and we'll someday own a silver bullet trailer where we can sip cool beverages [i like Coke Zero] and talk hard about how to make this film a fuckin wonderbomb.

EXT. REST STOP

Signs indicate their arrival in the Beehive State.

Everyone gets out of the car and stretches. Except for Ramona. She won't move.

Cate looks at her. With sympathy, her soul seems to wilt.

CATE

Ramona? Are you sure you don't
wanna get out? It's another few
hours till we get to Salt Lake...

Ramona stares dead ahead.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

(ctd)

Okay. Just let us know... if you
need anything...

Ramona nods a bit, but isn't quite 'with it.' Her bangs are greasy so they hang down in strands; her whole face is sweaty; she has not applied make-up since yesterday.

Meanwhile: Cate suddenly seems okay. She moves quicker and appears a bit healthier than she did at the motel, the other day.

Ramona's gaze, we now see, is fixed upon a license plate. A license plate on a parked car several feet in front of their vehicle, in the rest stop lot. The license plate contains only three letters: 'FUG.' Plus numbers: '7007.' Ramona stares intently, as if the two zeroes are eyes leering back at her.

A whistling sound, shrill.

CUT TO:

INT. LADIES ROOM

Leda washes her face in a public bathroom sink. The faucet makes noise.

Sadie uses the sink next to her. Leda looks like she's been upset.

SADIE

You alright?

LEDA

Yeah, I'll be fine... on my own...
just bring me to Salt Lake and I
can get a ride or flight to the
coast.

SADIE

Don't be ridiculous.

LEDA

What?

SADIE

That's how America got so messed up
in the first place. This glorified
notion of 'being fine by yourself.'
It's unnatural, you need people
around. Good people... people whose

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SADIE (cont'd)
chemistry balances you out... We
aren't robots. We're mammals.

Leda wrings her hands. She's on the edge of some collapse
but Sadie's wisdom helps.

SADIE
(ctd)
I think people used to wanna be
together. Not just to post about
being together on Instagram. Not
just to have sex once. It would be
nice to actually spend time with
someone and understand the person.

Leda looks good and hard at Sadie. A sexy moment. Maybe.

SADIE
(ctd)
Anyway. I think we're getting too
old to live life for the moment.
Better off building trust and
relationships. Isn't loyalty a
better currency than anything else?
Purer than money. More reliable.
Sometimes that can be hard to
remember...

Leda nods, somberly. Her eyes brim with hope. This dialogue
has brought up new discoveries for them both.

EXT. CAR

Ramona gets out of the car and treks several steps toward
the main drag of the highway.

CATE
Where are you going!! ... Ramona!!

She's moving fast. Starts running. Sprinting.

Cate starts chasing her.

A long shot of both of them running. As far as speed they're
a tight match. But Cate is probably more athletic.

Will Ramona try and cross the highway? Will she make it?

We never find out cause Cate catches up with her.

And grabs her. Ramona trips and falls. So does Cate. They
both roll several feet.

(CONTINUED)

In rage and self-defense, Ramona actually punches Cate.

CATE

Ow!!!!

RAMONA

You tackled me!!!!

CATE

You were gonna throw yourself into traffic!!!

RAMONA

Who knows if I was!!! I just wanted to see how it felt!!

Cate makes a face; shakes her head slowly, judgmentally, shaming Ramona.

CATE

What the fuck is wrong with you...

RAMONA

I'll tell you what's wrong -- I'm sick of this shit!!! I'm sick of being hungry all the time!!! I'm sick of seeing other women and wishing I were them!!! I'm sick of all of it!!! I'd rather be, fucking... dead!!! *Urgh!!!!*

She picks up a rock and casts it toward the highway. It doesn't make it but leaves a violent wound in the sand. Her tantrum comes off more or less pathetic. Meaning: not that pathetic at all.

Cate dabs a bloody lip and looks at Ramona, veiling disdain with toughness.

CATE

(coldly)

You think you have it worse than all of us. Tough shit. You're the envy of every wannabe bitch. You're the dream, Ramona... look at yourself. You actually fucking did it.

Ramona, covered in dirt and bloody scuffs, gets to her feet. Without trying she holds a tame power stance. She looks one way at the highway. Looks the other way.

In the distance: Karl and the others watch by the car.

(CONTINUED)

Cate stands up, too. Dusts herself off.

CATE

(ctd)

I mean... *I'm* not hungry all the time. But *I'm* also not a model.

Ramona's eyes breath sympathy.

Cate doesn't dwell on intimate eye contact. Not her style!! They start trekking back toward the car.

CATE

(ctd)

... You know you don't have to do that forever. Maybe you wanna live on a ranch with a family and kids.

Ramona laughs, emptying relief, embarrassment.

RAMONA

Maybe...

CATE

The dream doesn't have to be hotness. There are cool things about life that you haven't even discovered yet.

RAMONA

Ditto.

CATE

Hmm.

CUT TO:

EXT. CATE AND SADIE'S PARENTS HOUSE

A white house with a big American flag in the front yard. Smallish, probably about two bedrooms. They aren't rich.

In the driveway out front, a white van with a Cremation Service tag on it pulls away from the gang's vehicle. It's parked in front of a garage with two doors.

Sadie and Leda watch it go, then step inside for dinner.

INT. DINING ROOM

Sadie and Cate's mom KAREN, a plump woman, says grace around a table.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

... We thank thee for our daughters
safe return and survival. We give
blessing to their friend who was
lost in the crash and ask
forgiveness for her sins...

Sadie and Cate pass a glance: *'what's she saying...'*

KAREN

(ctd)

... We thank thee for the food that
has been provided. And we ask thee
to bless it that it may nourish and
strengthen us. In the name of thy
son Jesus Christ, Amen.

RAMONA

(murmurs)

Amen.

From the others: more *'amens.'*

KAREN

(snaps out of it)

Now!! I didn't know we'd have so
many guests, so I had to throw
something together.

KARL

You've always been such a good
chef. It looks terrific.

KAREN

Oh!!

She's sitting by Karl; she puts a hand on his shoulder.

KAREN

I don't know about that!!

CATE

...thanks Mom. It looks good.

LEDA

Yeah.

A few more grumbles of genuine gratitude.

They pass around plates of roast pork and fresh rolls and
roasted vegetables and more. It does look pretty good. The
plates go around the table. They all dig in.

When they come to Ramona, she doesn't take much.

(CONTINUED)

Cate and Sadie's dad BILL, a shy guy, watches Ramona from the side of the table. Ramona keeps him in her peripheral vision; doesn't look at him.

Stares at her plate. A close-up of her face, miserable.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CAR

Parked by a train track. Grace is alive again. They're in the backseat, not naked yet or anything but maybe getting started.

GRACE

You look so sad. Don't be sad.

RAMONA

I'm not.

GRACE

What are you feeling.

RAMONA

I don't know.

Grace takes both her hands.

GRACE

It's way harder than loving someone else.

RAMONA

huh?

GRACE

Letting yourself be loved is way harder. And I'm not saying you don't have to earn it. But if anyone's earned it, you have.

Ramona listens.

GRACE

(ctd)

I think that's what soul mates are supposed to do. I don't think many people talk about soul mates but I believe in them. We have to be loyal to each other and help get over our problems, so we can be loved and become the most beautiful humans that ever lived. At least in my

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)
eyes. You are. You're a sacred
person. We are Adam and Eve. We are
each both of them.

Grace kisses one of her her hands, then the other.

GRACE
(ctd)
Self-consciousness is hell. That's
it. That's what happened when Eve
binged on the apple. That bitch.
It's a harder challenge than ever,
for girls, right now... That's why
you're a prophetess.

Ramona keeps listening.

GRACE
(ctd)
Let yourself be loved publicly. Not
used. Loved. Taken care of. Show
the power of what happens. You've
already shown it. You are not a
scapegoat. You are not here just
for men to look at. For anyone to
look at. You are here for yourself,
and whoever else you let in.
Because you chose this. This is all
there is... this...

Grace takes off her own shirt so she's bare chested but not
in a like 'baring it all' way -- more intimate. Like skin is
a vessel for closeness. We don't even see Grace's breasts
cause the frame stops above the chest.

GRACE
(ctd)
I'll do my best to be there. It's
too late for me to leave you ever.
And it's your turn to be loved. Let
me love you. It's the best feeling
ever if you can trust enough to
submit. From now on receive it,
Ramona. Receive it.

She rests her chin on the top of her head, and hugs her.

EXT. CAR

A meandering sequence along the train tracks, into
[fictional city]; through fast food shops; and the
townspeople, aggressive toward one another, displeased with

(CONTINUED)

themselves. A big woman looks in the mirror in a Burger King restroom. She exits and sees a man staring at her, disgusted. She discovers the TALL MAN sitting in a booth, waiting. She goes and sits in the booth with him, and makes a deal, shakes hands ... Out of the Burger King, we follow the TALL MAN back to the lot where Grace was shot, where a line of junkies has gathered. These people are desperate, bred into fools, with no chance at redemption. Together they cry. They're so tired. So hard to help.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. DINING ROOM

Ramona looks up from her sparsely populated plate.

RAMONA

It's genocide. how can no one see
that it's genocide. It's happening
and no one's saying anything -- and
it killed her.

KAREN

(kindly)
What's that?

Ramona stands up.

RAMONA

You're all bystanders. You, Karl,
are a bystander. You're a vain
fucking bystander.

KARL

What does that make you??

RAMONA

... A revolutionary!!

BILL

Hold on. What's genocide.

Ramona turns and looks at Bill, who's definitely obese, and maybe not the smartest as a result of what he eats. She doesn't say anything.

SADIE

Ramona?

Ramona sits down again, slowly.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

(ctd)

Even if you're right, it's not gonna fix itself overnight.

She doesn't want to a scene to be made at her parents' house.

CATE

Calm down...

Ramona nods dutifully. She eats a green bean from her plate.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Two twin beds, side-by-side. Ramona sits on one. Cate and Leda sit on the other.

LEDA

Fast Food Genocide. I agree it's bad. But my question is whether the people are worth saving. You suggest that eating Fast Food gnaws away at their intelligence. What if it's too late for them to be rescued.

RAMONA

I hear you. But these are humans. All of them.

LEDA

Under pressure, people are terrible. I happen to think there are far fewer good, good people, than there are cowards who would harm others, in the event that...

CATE

... our nation keeps getting attacked by terrorists.

Ramona listens.

LEDA

You know how men get. They're gross pigs. It's terrifying, just to be out alone in public... Even if genocide is happening, the way I challenge you is this. How much are you really willing to forgive.

Ramona thinks, 'hmmm...'

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA

I think I have choices who I protect, sure. But I'm a woman of the people. I refuse to ever assume I know the backstory of any individual person. Right? ... Love thy neighbor as thyself...

CATE

... no matter how fat or manorexic.

LEDA

And don't be harder on them, than they already are on themselves.

RAMONA

We are all humans with feelings. Not superheroes. Not goddesses. Humans. Not anything more or less.

(turns to camera)

There is help on the way. No matter who you are. What body you are in. There is a cure being set in motion. Don't give up on your resurrection.

She's talking to the audience.

INT. BATHROOM

Cate, looking deeply ashamed of herself, sheds a tear while she administers her medicine. She sits on the closed toilet.

EXT. HOUSE

Cate exits the front door. She's the last out.

LEDA

You look cute.

CATE

... thanks.

She does have on a cute hiking outfit.

Ramona, Leda, Sadie, Karl all prepare to trek up a mountain.

EXT. HIKING PATH

Cate lags behind with Sadie.

(CONTINUED)

CATE
Have you told anyone yet.

SADIE
Haven't said a thing.

They look ahead of them. The others are out of earshot, several paces ahead.

SADIE
(ctd)
We should probably find you a doctor here in town.

Cate turns to Sadie with bloodshot wide eyes.

CATE
Don't leave me here with *them*!!

SADIE
Cate, that's always been the plan.

CATE
(nods)
No. I love them. But it doesn't take a genius to see -- they're a burden on the earth. They're fucking idiots!! If you leave me with them I guarantee I'll find a way to overdose on AIDS meds. Or I guess I could just stop taking them... that would be easier...

SADIE
... Cate.

It strikes Sadie now how serious this actually is.

SADIE
(ctd)
How do you feel, actually.

CATE
I feel like I'm decaying. I can feel it in my body. I'm slowly slowly dying. And I've always suspected, from all the pills I was taking, that I'd end up senile by my thirties... so my brain is gonna decay... anyway...

SADIE

You don't know that.

CATE

Don't you kind of know things? When you're really in touch with universal energy? I'm decaying like our planet.

They walk in silence.

CATE

(ctd)

What if we made a compromise. And kept this between us. And you figured out a way to let me go, before I'm humiliated in front of everyone.

Sadie's eyes widen. She breaths deeply.

INT. SADIE'S SPIRIT

A mountainside made up of withering trees. And trash all around them. One of the trees is burning. We travel underground. Insects underground, molting. Deeper. To the core of the earth. Burning.

EXT. HIKING PATH

Back to Sadie and Cate.

SADIE

Decay can be beautiful, too... you know...

CATE

Exactly. It has to happen. It's not the end of the world. Not quite. But it's the end of some things.

A long beat. The sound of feet crunching in the dirt.

CATE

(ctd)

Maybe it's meant to be this way. If there weren't a firebomb cooking under my ass, I wouldn't have started really living like this.

SADIE

You started living on this road trip.

(CONTINUED)

CATE

Kind of, yes. Can't you tell I'm different.

Sadie looks at her sister.

Her face, lined with worry.

EXT. FURTHER UP THE PATH

Ramona and Leda talk. Ahead of them, Karl hikes alone, out of earshot.

LEDA

I've always thought I was especially sensitive to the environment. To the weather. My moods. Super fucking sensitive. My body too. Women's bodies. They express the sentiments of Mother Earth.

RAMONA

So... hm... what does that mean... thin has always been in, right?? Like, what woman doesn't want to be thinner?

LEDA

Probably all women, but I'm not sure it used to feel so forced. Being svelte and balanced. It was... femininity running its natural course.

RAMONA

What I'm thinking is, anorexia in fashion might be a visual way of body shaming. A misguided cure for the epidemic of obesity.

LEDA

But you've seen that obesity isn't something people can control. So it's cruel.

RAMONA

Maybe it's just a metaphor. Artistry. do you think the starvation fad in fashion is a reflection of what's happened to our planet? Dying.

(CONTINUED)

LEDA

I mean, there's been pushback. Both for the rights of our planet, and for the right of women. It's kind of changing, isn't it.

RAMONA

Maybe. but it's also true that anorexia has always been a thing. it's visual. It's not about justice. It's about art.

LEDA

Art *should* be about justice.

RAMONA

Does justice leave room for competition and victory? All is fair in love and war. It's about intense beauty. It's not supposed to be... natural.

LEDA

But maybe we could start to reverse the ill fate of our planet. With healthier imagery.

RAMONA

God knows we can try. At the very least, we can expose the truth behind what's going on behind the scenes.

LEDA

Truth and beauty and justice together is earthshaking. And there are so many lies in the images we're being fed forcefully.

RAMONA

I guess I'd say this. You can't have it all at once. And ambitious humans shouldn't have to feel like they'd rather die, than let their bodies occasionally behave like a real human girl... Or boy.

LEDA

Humans like Grace. Poor thing.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA

Everything's gotten so much more extreme... Is that the American dream now? To sacrifice everything human for the sake of...

LEDA

What.

RAMONA

Vanity.

LEDA

That's the thing though. I think a beautiful nature affects a person externally. Real love is redemptive. So is real sacrifice. Vanity comes back around, in a bad way, in the long run. And actual victimhood is ugly. You saw it in [fictional city -- dystopia]. The body is the soul, Ramona. That's not to suggest that purity is a practical goal for our world.

RAMONA

Not right now. Purity isn't in style. It can't be.

LEDA

No "pure" woman I know can combat the kind of aggression that's happening against most of us. So much fucking aggression against women... for what?

RAMONA

For not being what men want.

LEDA

... what they used to want.

RAMONA

Which was?

LEDA

I don't know. A pure innocent angel. Someone who forgives them for everything, instead of fighting back and calling them out on their shit. Or maybe men just want someone who's beautiful on the day they met, who they can get rid of, as soon as they start getting mad.

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA

Women can get progressively hotter with age. I've seen it happen. And anger is gorgeous. Isn't it?

LEDA

At moments yes. And it leads to great lovemaking. But it's not sustainable for a whole lifetime. We could preach the importance of moderation, to secure sustainable sources of beauty in the long run. Love. Sex. Families, eventually. Commitment in spite of mistakes. Not all this constant aggression. You rape a girl once cause she's pretty, then let her wither and burn to pieces while you get fat and rich and old. It's lazy to discard the muse, instead of helping her heal... It goes both ways of course.

RAMONA

Hm?

LEDA

Women can be lazy when it comes to helping repair their confused, abandoned, broken men.

RAMONA

Laziness! Such an issue in America.

LEDA

Tell me about it.

RAMONA

Yeah... We could really help a lot of women.

LEDA

Women who feel raped. Men who feel pathetic.

RAMONA

Maybe they deserve to feel pathetic.

LEDA

But they don't always understand why they feel so pathetic. And they combat those feelings with more

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEDA (cont'd)

aggression. The only way we can do that is by showing the transformations as they actually take place. Like you have. With patience. Self-forgiveness. Forgiveness of others for treating you bad. You could save a lot of people Ramona. you already have. And there are millions more to come.

RAMONA

(eyes wide)

I hope. but how.

LEDA

It's not about being trans. It's about becoming gorgeous. It's about combating male aggression with intense femininity and showing what the fuck happens. If you can tame your inner rage, and love other men in spite of their mistakes, your love will be contagious. It's the opposite of purity. It's regenerative ruthlessness. Your beauty will be proof of how powerful anger can be. You're here to punish straight white men by loving them anyway. Even when they treat you like shit, you'll be their matron saint. I'm not saying turn the other cheek. I'm saying -- channel it and seduce them. No one knows better what men want to see. There's nothing more powerful than you sticking in their memory when they're fucking some basic bitch. [Note: 'basic bitch' = far different from a *fine whore*!!!] Think of how they would begin to question their vanity. Am I making sense? You're going to be one of the hottest cunts that ever lived, Ramona Desmond. Trust me on this.

Ramona stares up at the clouds.

Her soul feels like a phoenix soaring. A cultural comet; almost ungodly; a means a to a much-needed end of violence, visual and sexual.

(CONTINUED)

An eerie 'hallelujah' vibe in the sky. Travel through gray clouds...

EXT. SOMEWHERE ELSE

... Ashes fall over a city, attacked.

An image of Donald Trump, blown to bits.

This scene subject to history.

EXT. TOP OF MOUNTAIN - DAY

The girls (Ramona, Lucianne, Cate, Sadie) gather around big tall Karl like explorers staking an American flag after a battle, momentarily proud of what they've managed.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRORIST HIDEOUT - DAY

Somewhere tropical, brawny men wearing bandannas -- with stark faces, soulless round the eyes and lips -- pack RPG missiles and AK-47s in racks, contained in the trunks of big green jeeps. Toss canvas sheets over them; the jeeps almost resemble covered wagons.

The brawny men slap the backs of the jeeps, vroom...

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

POV: A jeep cruising through the jungle. Animals, scared, run out of its way.

Blue hues, green and faded. Similar to the effect created when one records a digital video recording of footage already contained on an electronic screen.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

A boy, around three, by a rusty water pump. He drinks water with his hands. His ripcage threatens to tear through his dark brown skin. His stomach juts out slightly, malnourished. He gets up. Stands. Stretches.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD OUT WEST - DAY

Americans again.

Our gang back on the road. Karl driving. Sadie in the passenger's.

(CONTINUED)

Rest in the back. Lucianne looks at her hands. The lighter skin on the soft inner part of her hands. What is she thinking about?

A bumper sticker on a pick-up truck in front of them:

'I will defend your Right to Bear Arms! God help those that doubt me! Luke 23:34'

CUT TO:

INT. HELL

POV: facing a firing squad. Their guns go off.

Cross fade into: vicious squeals, loud.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE

A bunch of fat pigs get shoved into a mass killing device.

CUT TO:

Gasps: *uh, uh.*

INT. CAR

Close-up on Karl's face, gritting his teeth.

In the front seat of the car, which is still packed with the same people, Sadie reaches an arm out and gives her boy a handjob.

Her face staring straight ahead, entirely indifferent to all this.

Cate, Ramona, Lucianne in the backseat, hunched over, dead themselves. Staring out the windows. Not paying attention, at all.

Manfingers come off the steering wheel.

Karl cries out, *yess.*

CUT TO:

EXT. VOLCANO

Smoke above Mount Saint Helens.

INT. FEAR

A tear runs down the cheek of a new character: LILY. She lets her head hang, *oh grief.* Heaves in. Heaves out.

(CONTINUED)

INT. A GAS STATION

Lily, an obese young woman, works behind the counter at a gas station. We don't know where.

SID, from earlier in the movie, steps up to the counter and tosses down a few bags of junk food.

SID

Can I have a pack of *Kools*...
pleeeeeease???

He flashes his teeth, smiling so derisively that Lily actually winces.

She goes and picks out the pack of cigarettes. Comes back. Places them down.

Sid tosses cash on the counter.

Lily picks it up.

Counts it. Cashes it in the register.

Sid, tapping his fingers on the counter, *I'm waiting*...

His eyes, mutilating her.

INT. A DINGY HOUSE

On a plaid futon, Lily falls back. Sits down with a laptop.

LILY (V.O.)

Elemental shame in her cells.
Revulsion. Shame for being human,
not subhuman. Shame for being safe.
Shame that could not be explained.
Shame for existing. For being born.
Her faith in God developed only
after she'd seen enough
unexplainable evil to feel strongly
that Satan did exist. This darkness
was not curable by any old
therapist. She was not sure if
constant fear was better than
nihilism. Certainly more dramatic.
Anger felt best, but it was often
misdirected at the weak, and was
unsafe to express when she was
particularly powerless.

INT. SILVER BULLET TRAILER

(CONTINUED)

Lola Morgan watching footage of herself (playing Grace) earlier in 'Maiden Voyage.' A revolted look on her face. Shaking her head, *no no fuckin no.*

[XI] in the room. Chin up. Watching Lola Morgan.

Lola Morgan's eyes, *oww.*

She shuts them.

BLACKOUT TO:

CATE (V.O.)
Get the fuck out of me.
Aaah--(gasps in)

INT. BATHROOM MIRROR

Cate with her arms on a sink, sweating, staring at herself with black black black eyes.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

Cate having a tantrum, screaming through gritted teeth.

CATE
(almost squealing)
Rrrrrggghhhhhhh!!!!

Sadie tries to hold her. Cate tries to evade her, crawling on the floor.

CATE
(ctd)
Get off of me!!! Just let me goo!
let me goo!!

Sadie does let go, steps back with her hands literally up.

Cate crawls to a corner, sits, and stares back at her sister. Dark, dark solemn stare. Not gonna let herself be saved. Not this character, not this film.

CATE
(ctd)
juust, let it be, Sadie.. please.

Sadie hears this, and knows.

Cate knows she knows.

And like that, grace falls between them. Sadie's face, harrowed but no longer so badly hurt by Cate. She understands. Cate's breathing slows.

INT. SHOWER

Karl scrubs his hair with shampoo. His armpits with soap.
Hot shower, feels good.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS

Leda introduces Ramona to her family.

LEDA

This is Ramona Desmond, who's gonna be a good friend of ours.

Ramona, respectfully reaches out a hand.

Leda's mother, CHRISTINE.

CHRISTINE

Hiii!!! So happy to have you!!!

RAMONA

happy to be here.

CHRISTINE

(smiling)

Christine is a mad-impressive mom. Not a gram of phat, beautiful. Ramona's POV: as she studies Christine closely, while she throws together a meal, and something within her, is triggered.

Ramona's face.

CATE (V.O.)

Dear Ramona. People are going to try and tell you what it means to be feminine. To be a woman. What's fucked up about it and what you can never understand. But I'm writing to you now to remind you that, you are more of woman through and through than anyone who would have the balls to ever say that shit.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

CATE [not Cleo] at a desk, writing.

(CONTINUED)

CATE (V.O.)

(ctd)

I want you to always remember what I told you, about the dream that you became. If you can do it, any girl can. And any boy, it would seem. You are the Obama of womanhood. You're the first to bridge the gap. And with great strength, comes great vulnerability. Do not forget that. What I'm saying is -- though it might not be obvious, you're also stronger than most men. Strength comes in many forms. Please, for me... Do the best you can to be patient with them. But if they ever lay a hand on you, send them to the cemetery.

CATE sets down a pen.

She leans back in her chair. A long pause of her resting.

Puts her feet on the desk. She folds her hands together. Out loud, she says;

CATE

(ctd)

What's next?

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER BULLET TRAILER

Lola Morgan and [XI] again.

LOLA

[XI], look at me. *bitch..*

[XI] avoiding eye contact.

LOLA

(ctd)

You're the softest woman in the world. At least in the world as I see it. You're the softest. But you know what I say about contradictions.

[XI]

What.

(CONTINUED)

LOLA
If you're the most of one thing,
you're also the opposite.

[XI]
... Hard?

LOLA
Sharp, I would have said.

[XI]
Isn't the opposite of sharp not
soft, but *dull*.

LOLA
(raises eyebrows)

[XI]
I'm not *that*. So I don't contradict
myself, after all..

LOLA
OK This is why I brought it up. I
think that it's gonna be easy to
see.. stupidity as the enemy, in
these times. Look at me.

[XI] looks at her.

LOLA
(ctd)
You can't keep doing that, if
you're gonna be a leader to
Americans. It'll come back to haunt
you. Believe me.

[XI], thinking.

LOLA
(ctd)
I'm asking you to be generous with
your intelligence. I've had periods
of my life when I think a lot
about... sharps. And I think if the
world is a vessel ripe for the
pricking, I'm the little hole at
the end of a needle that's doing
the sucking. I'm the hole... O.
Loola. And what's your name. Say
it. The last name.

[XI]
[says last name]

LOLA
You're the *pin prick*. That's you
babe.

[XI] tries to make sense of all this.

LOLA
(ctd)
I'm not gonna say much else,
besides that I think you have a
choice how you use your sharpness.
you can graze the skin, or
titillate that skin... or just stab
it. But once you've gone in...

[XI]
('hmmm?' expression)

LOLA
I'm the one who swallows the hit.

[XI] confused.

LOLA
(ctd)
Just, time it carefully. Be prudent
with your pricks, [XI]. Make it a
benevolent stabbing. A cure,
perhaps... As opposed to harmful.
Sticking it in to cause pain. Every
time you stick it in, I'm the one
who swallows it. Over time, the
needle will end up dulling... and
if I swallow too much blood, I'll
get swole.

[XI] tilts head.

[XI]
get swole?

LOLA
(nods)

[XI]
I'm gonna need you to explain that
a tiny bit more.

LOLA

I think what's always gotten in the way of us being friends, is me worrying that you are just gonna notice my fat.

[XI]

(face, processing this)

LOLA

And I think the reason fat bothers you is not cause it's ugly, but cause -- it's vulnerable.

[XI]

(silent)

LOLA

I think we're not scared of being fat. Or ugly. I think we're scared of being vulnerable. So if I can just say how I feel in front of you -- you don't have to point it out to me. And vice versa. It's OK to get swole sometimes. And to go ahead and love each other, while we're still swole.

Lola's fear of vulnerability goes away and [XI] gets nicer.

[XI]

We can help each other. It'll get better.

Lola nods; in her eyes, hope.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BLACK SPACE

A baby pig. Healthy, and cute.

INT. LEDA'S BEDROOM

Ramona talking to her friend Leda. Two twin beds with canvasy white spreads, each girl on one of them.

RAMONA

There was a while when I first started the mones that I felt certain I was on the verge of some

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMONA (cont'd)

big release. I'd made it this far, God bless, I was almost there. Actually that's the feeling that's been there, for this whole process of slow painful change. *uffh..* The thing is, it never goes away. It's always -- 'once I do this, then I'll feel complete.' And I'm starting to wonder whether it's a delusion. The delusion that I can fix myself. I never feel fixed. How can I get fixed, Leda... *Help.*

LEDA

I've always thought it's like the 'the secret.' What keeps me going at least. I don't know if it's a delusion, that I'll be one of the greatest female directors of all time [after Lola Morgan?] -- but it feels so real. And it keeps me alive. I bet you know what I mean. Whatever goal kept you alive five years ago might have been a delusion. But it worked. And it got you this far. And now you're here. I think that's what humans do. We keep breaking ourselves and fixing ourselves and selling our souls, then regretting it and buying our souls back again -- trying desperately to get better and better until the day we die. Well, I should speak for myself. That's what you and I do. Not all humans. You and I might feel like Gods sometimes, but so do they... we're all just humans... I don't believe in God. But if there is a God, he's not doin us too many favors. It's up to us, to trust ourselves and keep our dreams alive and chase them. Maybe we're hardwired to have certain dreams, maybe not. We can convince ourselves they're stupid delusions. Trump does what I'm describing. He dreams biggg. So what? We can either point fingers and call him a deluded madman, underqualified to be the POTUS. Or we can assume that Donald Trump was meant to be president at this time

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEDA (cont'd)
in history, and go with it ...
(shakes head) But no matter what
the fuck happens next, you and I
are here now. We're alive. And the
only choices we have are to take
stock of all we've got going for
us, then either keep fighting or...
just give up. It can feel like a
lonely war. The wars we're always
waging with ourselves. But I want
you to know -- whatever happens,
I've at least got your back Ramona.
I doubt it's gonna get any easier,
but there's a chance it might get
less lonely... ha. That's actually
one of my dreams. To *make* it less
lonely for girls like us. I
certainly hope it's not a delusion.
I'll do my best.

She concludes on a note of bitter respite.

Ramona hears all this, breaths in, and becomes aware of a
phat fecund reality -- vast and terrifying, everywhere she
looks, almost too much, *aggh* -- which all tastes just a tiny
bit better than bleary, boring, blankness.

INT. LEDA'S HOUSE, DEN

Nailpolish remover being applied to a cotton ball.

Sadie removes naipolish from her sister Cate's hands and
toes. Cate is remote. Staring ahead at nothing.

Karl on a couch behind them, one leg over the other, wearing
casual glasses frames in place of contacts. Assemble this
shot so the hierarchy is embedded in how these 3 are placed.

Karl stares ahead too, not at nothing. He's paying
attention, to something else in the room. Something bright
and electric casts light on his glasses frames.

On a television in the same room:

Donald Trump gives a speech to America. Says something
racist, even though he's probably not trying to be racist.
He's just a fool.

EXT. PUBLIC BEACH IN CALIFORNIA - EVENING

(CONTINUED)

Cate in a swimsuit, let's ask her to tryta be thin enough that some of her defining girl bones [cheeks, collar] sort of show, but not anorexic. Her hands turned up, she lifts some chunks of sand and lets them fall through her hands. The waves comes up around her.

Sadie comes and sits down beside her sister.

CATE

Tell me that it all hasn't just been a wash.

SADIE

Is that how you feel.

CATE

I feel... as though I've thought about it for this whole fuckin road trip. And I have no reason to really go on.

SADIE

It's you and the rest of our generation. Haven't you listened to Lana del Rey.

Cate waits a minute, thinking.

CATE

I don't think I agree with that, now that I'm actually dying. Lust for Life. I think that's naïve.

SADIE

... how so.

CATE

I think if you're hanging on the edge all the time, of course lust is gonna be what keeps you going. I think that lusting all the time is a distraction from deeper sources of unrest. Spiritual disturbances... You know, what I would give for just the promise of a stable loving husband and family and future. A life with foundation. That's the real reason to live.

She turns to Sadie.

CATE

(ctd)

Why don't you leave Karl and take care of me. We still don't have to tell anyone I have AIDS. Or we can -- but it might make people act weird toward me. What do you think Sadie. Sounds like a plan?

Sadie's not sure about this.

SADIE

I also want a husband, though.

CATE

(turns away again)

I understand.

SADIE

No, Cate. Hold on. Let's talk.

CATE

What's there to say...

She gets up. And walks back toward the parking lot.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER BULLET TRAILER

Cate walks in.

LOLA

You can take a seat in the back.
I'm still working on this clip.

Cate sits down in the back with [XI], wearing black-rimmed glasses, using a Macbook.

CATE

Did I make the cut.

[XI] shuts the laptop and takes off her glasses.

[XI]

Heaven coming up.

She reaches to a drawer by where they're sitting and procures a tube of white powder.

On top of the laptop, she forms a few lines.

Cate, peer pressured but also like, 'wtf.'

(CONTINUED)

[XI] leans in to do a line. Cate too.....

LOLA
(gestures to them)
Come watch.

Cleo and [XI] come over and stare at the editing equipment
Lola's got in front of her.

BACK TO SCENE:

EXT. LEDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A scream from CHRISTINE.

INT. GARAGE

The back of Karl's vehicle, turned on with the exhaust tube
stuffed up.

Leda's face next to her mom's as she sees it through an open
door leading into the garage.

Karl comes in over her shoulder. And he too, looks shocked;
devastated in fact.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Sadie poor thing getting dressed. Buttoning up a cashmere
sweater. Her swimsuit hung up on a chair.

She's just standing there. Maybe she already knows.

Her face. Staring, kind of downward.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER

Cate watching Sadie on a screen in the trailer, heaving so
deeply to hold back her crying that a big storm might occur.

CATE
... I can't go back.

LOLA
(sad too)
It's too late to change it, no.

(CONTINUED)

CATE
 how could you do that to her.

Unclear who she's saying this to.

She's getting mad though. [XI] too, they're both on coke.
 Not mad at Lola but just mad about people.

[XI]
 (intense)
 where's the apocalypse. the climax.
 the big blowout.

LOLA
 ... I dono.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK SPACE

A bright blue ball of fire brimming with other colors of the rainbow. A comet? A desktop screensaver? Huh?

INT. CA HOUSE - NIGHT

Ramona holding Sadie's hand as she very softly cries.

Ramona's face: 'oh what a life.'

Christine comes in and sets the family CAT on the couch. A black cat, with white spots.

It snuggles with Sadie. She cries harder.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD

The silver bullet trailer parked outside of a studio.

INT. PITCH MEETING

In a conference room.

PRODUCER
 And that's it? she dies?

LOLA
 that's not 'it.' but she dies,
 yeah.

PRODUCER
 hmmm...

(CONTINUED)

LOLA

I think the point is more what
doesn't happen.

PRODUCER

None of it actually happened.

LOLA

No. (glances at camera, shady..)
but what if it ever did.

[XI] and Cate in the room with her.

Producer checking them out.

They look good!

LOLA

... so?

PRODUCER

I don't know. You tell me. What's
next??

Lola shrugs.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY

A small service. Sadie's parents. Karl. Ramo. Leda. And some
strangers. Extended family. About 40-50 people.

Sadie speaking.

SADIE

She wanted to be a great writer. A
lot of us are trying to be great
writers, but it's a different game
for women. More of a performance.
And I really think Cate woulda been
great... cause she had a superior
sense of how to access drama all
over the place in reality. I guess
she felt this would be the most
dramatically effective time to
leave us. She certainly left a few
hearts, broken. Oh... I guess I'll
use this as an opportunity to urge
you all to draw a line, cause life
ain't a one-woman show. And it
shouldn't be about who brings down
the house, should it? I think that

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SADIE (cont'd)
happens inevitably for those who
commit themselves to preaching
truth as an alternative form of
beauty. Not to preaching... beauty
alone. Selfies and stuff. I don't
think that the power of good karma
and Love becomes clear until after
the fall, sometimes -- when it's
too late to recast your movie, so
to speak. I think that's a 21st
century delusion -- that ego alone
can provide sustenance for
greatness. What seems Great now is
the courage to get up and live, day
in and day out, without too much
painful drama attached -- *if* you
can avoid that. And sometimes you
can't. What goes around comes
around. I think Cate would agree
with that.

Karl in the small crowd, with a younger, more boyish
expression than we've ever seen him armed with.

When Sadie's done with her odd little speech, she goes and
stands with him. He puts an arm around her and squeezes her
hand.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFIN

A shot of dead Cate, chillin in peace.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY

A long winding road beneath a stormy sky.

EXT. NEW YORK

Around Fall-time, Ramona does an outdoor photoshoot in the
city.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT

Sadie wakes up. Climbs out of bed. It's been a fair few
months, since we saw her last. And she's pregnant.

She walks into the kitchen.

Karl made her breakfast.

(CONTINUED)

SADIE

(sitting down)

I been thinkin a lot Karl. About what I been through. If I could have one wish, what would it be. I used to think fame and glory. But I don't think so... so what do I want more?

KARL

i don't know, sweetie.

SADIE

Beauty. But not just "beauty," ... control over what's seen as beautiful. Because I can't control it -- some things are just, prettier than other things. And that seems so unfair. How much truth is there embedded in beauty. How come ugly things are hated, even though they're sometimes more truthful.

KARL

hmm....

SADIE

I think creativity is such a mystery. But it's the worst thing ever, being able to procure beauty from reality. Am I responsible for doing that, for people who seem to just consume whatever is handed to them? or am I responsible for *becoming* what they want to consume??? not, ugly. It's so hard to find good stuff to consume. And it's so hard to be the muse and the master of my own story, at the same time...

KARL

You don't have to be both.

SADIE

... I think I can do one or the other but not both at once. you know? It's so hard to control everything, when it comes to what goes in my eyes. And what goes into my body. I don't think they're entirely unrelated -- visual

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SADIE (cont'd)
consumption affects your appetite.
So I want to stay protected, in
private, as long as I have this
baby in me.

KARL
Stay at home, then.

SADIE
(nods)
Will I be safer, being a
stay-at-home? Is that my choice,
versus being a career woman? Out in
the real world... I wonder if it's
gotten worse. There's no way to
tell, if things have gotten uglier.
I just know it's affected me
horribly, I'm so sensitive. I'm
sorry... I also hear that one of
the effects of prescription drugs
is that they tend to stifle
creativity. My theory is -- that's
how we ended up in this cultural
trough.

KARL
How?

SADIE
Cause of drugs, people *actually*
lost their good taste. Their
artistry. They became like
automotons. Like robots. Like
zombies. Thank god, right here and
now, I feel protected by your
energy. For so many years, going in
public made me strongly consider
dying.

KARL
Don't die on me.

He gives her a kiss.

SADIE
I've heard it said that pain makes
beauty. But if no one's in pain,
cause they're on drugs -- then how
can they see all the beauty, where
it's hiding right now. Will all my
pain come around -- and amount to
something beautiful later? Like a
great work of art?

(CONTINUED)

KARL

A beautiful child.

SADIE

(nods)

that's what I was thinking too. If pain makes beauty. Maybe all the pain I've seen women go through, in my family, among friends, and Cate's death... maybe all that pain can come around again. With this baby... if I can handle the pain beautifully... not, melodramatically... or meekly... I don't know Karr. what do you think.

KARL

Mother's don't get enough credit. it's actually been considered kind of shameful, in many American communities. Why isn't motherhood discussed as an act of creativity. That's literally what it is.

Sadie looks at Karl up and down. Her POV: on his face. His attractive body. That must be why she picked him. For the baby.

SADIE

hopefully i get some credit.

KARL

you will from me (squeezes arm.)

SADIE

(ignoring him)

... I'm not sure I've been able to make my mother proud. Not in all the ways she wants to see. But I want my baby to be proud of me. Enough to make me proud in return. I'm just confused about what's actually worth being proud of... for women, I mean...

Sadie starts eating an egg, from her plate. Comfortably.

EXT. BEACH IN CALIFORNIA

Leda's swagger on a hundred thousand trillion, tanning in a black bikini.

On her phone: Ramona's latest photoshoot on Instagram.

Leda smiling.

EXT. GAS STATION

Lily again. Smoking a cigarette outside the gas station, with ear buds in.

The eerie sound of reverb in her ears, recklessly loud.

She flicks her cigarette and goes inside the station. A *pinging* sound as she opens the door.

INT. GAS STATION

The new Lola Morgan [looking better than her former character, Grace] waits at the counter, in sunglasses.

Ping! as the door opens.

Lily walks in. Goes behind the counter.

LILY
Can I help you?

LOLA
(bitchy)
If I give you [tbd],000 dollars for another chance in this life, will you appear in my movie the way you look now.

Lola takes a wad of cash from her purse and aims it at Lily.

LOLA
(ctd)
You bet this is a hold-up. My precious piggie.

Lola's eyes.

A sympathetic smile.

END CREDITS [Music: Get it Together - Drake]