

LONELY MONSTERS

by

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ABSTRACT

Lonely Monsters is a full-length feature screenplay that explores the ways in which a classic damsel narrative may be reconsidered. It offers ideas on how death and girlhood may find symmetry. The characters within Lonely Monsters deal with loss, identity of the self versus the world's ideas on self-identity, place, gender, and class. Utilizing the elements of a fairy tale, the narrative seeks to complicate the roles of gender in a cautionary tale.

Set in the fictional Florida town of Puerto Palmera, an economic divide between the Estates and the Glades makes for a ripe, troublesome environment for a foul modern-day aristocrat who masquerades as a grandiose and romantic prince. The story's protagonist, Fisher Franklin, loses two key relationships—as well as her sound mind—in the wake of the false prince's folly.

Utilizing her experiences as a child within the lavish lives of the Estates—at the desire of a wealthy and secretive benefactor with motives of her own—Fisher creates a persona who becomes entangled in a lustful and dangerous liaison with Wyatt Sharpe, the villainous playboy. By assuming this persona, Fisher recasts herself as the damsel, the monster, and the heroine.

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LONELY MONSTERS

Written by

Patricia Davis

FADE IN:

EXT. AQUARIUM - DAY/NIGHT

A lonely, majestic blacktip shark coasts through an endless stretch of blue. The presence of fresh chum antagonizes her.

Without warning, she CHOMPS down. A dark cloud grows into a weightless soup of blood.

A school of tropical fish move on concurrently, undisturbed.

FADE TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

A long, continuous stretch of room rich with Florentine architecture. Not unlike a foyer.

This is a crumbling palace. But its atrophy seems to be organic. The inviting sun spies through a great, shattered stain-glass oculus from above.

Rain, from a storm since passed, runs off the oculus' fractured edges and catches the champagne light.

Ivy-covered bookshelves abundant with listless volumes, and a scattered sorority of varying sculptures of religious iconography are dusted with fuzzy patches of bright, green moss.

The earth has begun to reclaim this fantastical place.

LUNA has wandered in from a place unknown. Hispanic, early 20s, with a small crescent-shaped scar hanging above her clavicle. She is also damp and disoriented by the grand room.

She comes to a young woman in a hospital gown, KELLY MING, who sits in the first chair in a very long row of chairs leading up to a single, massive green elevator door.

Behind Kelly is a giant, submarine aquarium moving with tropical fish and sea vegetation.

A gramophone softly SINGS to the tune of an operatic classic.

There are four other guests appraised from afar: An elderly man, with a long roman nose, dressed in American 1940's apparel. He stares longingly into a sad, simple portrait of modern-day Brooklyn neighborhood hanging from a wall.

A middle-aged couple waltz happily together.

A child with thick-rimmed glasses playing hop-scotch beside a stone Buddha.

Kelly Ming reads from a startling red book. Luna, still dripping wet, quietly approaches her.

LUNA

Hello? Hi.

Kelly looks up with a blank expression.

KELLY MING

Hi.

LUNA

Sorry. I was just wondering--

Kelly sighs. Her eyes drop back into her book.

KELLY MING

--You're in the right place.

LUNA

Oh, okay. So, do I just wait here or...

KELLY MING

Grab a book. And just wait.

LUNA

Oh, okay. From over there?

Luna points a finger to an infinite line of bookshelves. Kelly doesn't look up to confirm a direction. She just silently nods.

Luna approaches one of several massive bookshelves. All of the book spines are blue, except for one. Only one is a deep shade of emerald.

This is the book Luna picks.

She takes a seat, one over from Kelly. They exchange a quick, friendly glance.

Luna runs her fingers over the book's cover. She hesitates to open it.

NINA (O.S.)

Why are you wet?

Luna looks up. NINA, the child with thick-rimmed glasses, greets Luna with a toothy grin.

LUNA

Hello...

NINA

Can I read your book?

Nina holds a book of her own. It is a small, thin, palm-sized book of orange.

LUNA

Well, what's wrong with yours?

NINA

I already know what's in mine. I want to know what's in yours.

LUNA

You're here by yourself?

Nina nods with a bouncing, childlike impatience.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Where's your mother?

Nina adjusts her glasses.

NINA

She isn't here yet. What's in your book? Can you read me a story?

Luna looks to Kelly Ming, who shrugs as if to say, "might-as-well."

LUNA

I guess it's okay. Sure. Let's see...

Nina makes herself comfortable in the seat between Luna and Kelly Ming.

Luna consults a table of contents.

INSERT - THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ranging from 1-100 with a list of subtitles: "The Tale of Luna's First Kiss," "The Tale of How Luna Lied to Get Her First Job," and "The Tale of the Arrival of Sam."

LUNA (CONT'D)

Perhaps, near the end...

She flips through the majority of the pages to a tiny chunk near the end. "The Tale of the Prince and the Artist."

LUNA (CONT'D)

You don't scare easily, do you?

An uncertainty passes through Nina's eyes. Luna continues anyway.

LUNA (CONT'D)

There once was a place, a prince, and a girl...

EXT. PUERTO PALMERA, FLORIDA - NIGHT

An incandescent moon shines over the affluent and tidy beach town. The land thrives with old, stately mansions scattered amongst a wealthy tropical backdrop.

Just beyond these pastel palaces, the Atlantic Ocean awaits.

This pristine setting is just out of reach of...

EXT. THE GLADES - CONTINUOUS

Shabby and blemished stucco buildings pushed off of half-paved roads. Rows of sun-bleached stores with sooty windows concealed with yellowing vice ads. "TOBACCO!" "GATOR JERKY!" "FRESH CATCH!" "COLD BEER!"

EXT. THE GLADES - SWAMP MARKET PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The light from a neon mermaid-shaped lamp casts a kaleidoscope of electric color over the nearly-vacant parking lot.

There are only a few signs of life here. A fat cat straying near the automatic sliding doors of the Swamp Market.

An elderly woman in a beach chair braiding palm fronds into coin pouches.

A man rinsing out his small, beat-to-hell tug boat with a pay-to-use hose.

Two DRUNK PATRONS exit from the store with the DING DONG of a bell announcing their departure, their LAUGHTER spilling over from a conversation having taken place inside.

Drunk Patron 1 stops and examines the bottom of his shoe.

PATRON 1

Aw, shit. Hold on. I stepped in gum or something.

He looks for something to wipe his shoe on and decides on a weathered flyer taped to one of the market's doors. He rips the flyer, wipes his shoe, and tosses the torn piece of paper to the ground.

INSERT - THE TORN FLYER:

Bold letters read, "HAVE YOU SEEN ME?" A black and white photo of a young woman, torn from the nose up. The only distinctive feature left is a small, crescent moon-shaped scar above her clavicle.

In the distance, a lonesome dinky sedan sits under the glare of a street light.

INT. DINKY SEDAN- NIGHT

Music BLASTS from the stereo. PIA—a biracial girl in her late 20s with a maniacal grin and hair the color of a mermaid's tail--SINGS her heart out.

She is unaware of the shadow that approaches the car. It is...

COLETTE, who impatiently KNOCKS on the driver's side window. A beauty queen in her early 30s, also biracial, with large debutante hair and a cheerful grin.

Pia jumps from fright. Colette LAUGHS wickedly.

COLETTE
(muted by the closed window)
Hey "Etta James," mind popping the trunk?

Pia holds a hand to her heart.

PIA
Colette! Nearly made me pee myself...

Pia reaches in between the passenger and driver seats. She lifts a lever. The trunk's lid jumps, not fully opening.

EXT. SWAMP MARK PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Pia exits the sedan. She takes a canvas grocery bag from Colette, fully lifts the trunk's lid and tosses the bag inside carelessly.

PIA
Thought you got swallowed up by a boar. You took so damn long.

COLETTE
Hey, be careful. I've got apples in there. They'll bruise.

PIA
You get the good syrup? Not that agave crap or whatever it is that you people eat...

Colette unloads her armful of bags. A suppressed GRUNT comes from inside the trunk...

COLETTE
You people? ...Whatever. I got the same syrup Aunt Luce uses to make Johnnycakes.

Colette looks through the grocery bags sitting in the trunk O.S.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)
--Darn it. What am I forgetting?

PIA
Hold on. Wait, Colette--What's
this?

Packed with the groceries is a bound and gagged WYATT SHARPE. Early 30s, cruelly handsome even with the black eye and tape over mouth. He's a Kennedy by another name with a simple, intoxicating charm.

He struggles against his restraints, an array of girlish scarves.

Pia lifts a half-gallon of almond milk from a grocery bag.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)
(defensively)
What the hell is this?

COLETTE
Almond milk.

PIA
Where's the whole milk?

COLETTE
You're lactose intolerant, Pia.

Pia tosses the half-gallon back into the trunk, carelessly hitting Wyatt's chest. He GRUNTS again.

PIA
You can't eat Johnnycakes with
almond milk. You can't even call it
milk. It's almond water. Almonds
don't lactate.

COLETTE
Gee, sis. You're awfully mouthy for
someone who's having breakfast made
for them in the middle of the
night.

Colette lifts a canvas bag from the trunk. She searches through it. She gives up with a sigh and sets the bag down on Wyatt's face. He shakes it away. His face reddens with strain.

Colette gives one thoughtful stare into the trunk.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)
Shit...

Wyatt's pleading eyes stare back at her.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)
Butter. That's what it was. I
forgot the butter.

Pia groans.

PIA
Come on. I wanna get this over
already.

COLETTE
Fine. We'll get it on the way back.

Wyatt tries to lift his body, but he's unsuccessful. His
SCREAMS are stifled by his gag.

Pia blows him a kiss before lowering the lid.

PIA
Night, night, sweet Prince.

CUT TO:

INT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - DAY

SUPER: "BEFORE"

Walls painted indigo. Hand-picked thrift store furnishing.
A large stack of books piled in a corner. A T.V. stand, but
no T.V.

FISHER lifts her sleepy head from her pillow. An intrusive
sphere of light invades from the sliver of space left
uncovered by a dark bedsheet pinned to the window.

She's in her early 20s, biracial, with a baby-face that
gives the impression of sincere naiveté, made questionable
by a quiet grief hanging in her large, dark eyes.

She rolls onto her back. She stares at the ceiling. She lifts
herself up.

INT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A sunny, fogged pink bathroom that seems to have been frozen
in time within the 1970s.

Fisher sits on the shower floor, its corners dark from a
decade's worth of mildew. She opens her mouth and lets the
shower water collect.

MOMENTS LATER

Wrapped in a towel, Fisher clears the bathroom mirror of
steam. She looks into it for her reflection, but the mirror
is still murky from the humidity.

She opens a drawer. A prescription pill bottle lazily rolls in a mess of nail clippers, cotton swabs, and tiny bars of soap in the shape of various sea life.

Fisher picks up the bottle. She POPS its cap. She dumps two, chalky pills into the palm of her hand. She throws them into her mouth. She cups her hand under the running faucet to collect water.

She brings her hand to her mouth and sips the water down along with the pills.

Fisher looks back into the mirror. It's now clear. She leans in to inspect the grief in her face.

EXT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The motel is a stack of cement blocks painted over the color of rust. It is an eyesore sitting beside a towering iron gate leading to the extravagant estates sitting at a distance.

The yard is overwhelmed by overgrown tropical foliage and sparse bald spots of earth. It isn't precious, but it's honest.

Fisher has gathered a few envelopes from a dented, tin mailbox.

She is girlishly dressed--the uniform of naiveté--a clunky headband pushing back her long hair, a virginal white and floral blouse, and a knee-length skirt.

She walks up a crackling cement driveway and enters the motel through a chain-link fence.

INT. KITCHEN

A humble space of open-faced cabinets revealing a mass of mismatched china and the disorganized chaos of cookware.

At the kitchen sink, AUNT LUCIENNE, late 40s with a bohemian sensibility, scrapes away a dead fish's glittering scales.

Fisher examines the fronts and backs of the envelopes from the mail.

FISHER

Junk. More Junk.

She comes to an official-looking envelope.

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)

Oh, and a bill.

Aunt Lucienne snatches it from Fisher's hands.

AUNT LUCIENNE

I'll take that.

She promptly trashes the bill into the disposal.

Fisher picks out a glossy postcard with the backdrop of New Orleans from the mail clutter.

FISHER

(off the postcard)

"Greetings from Louisiana."

She turns it over. She reads it.

AUNT LUCIENNE

What was that, honey?

FISHER

Oh, nothing. Just Colette. She's in Louisiana.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Oh? I thought she was in Arizona with--oh, what was his name? Adam? Andrew?

FISHER

Antoine. The Indigenous Studies professor. Come on, she's moved on from that. Been about a month, so.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Oh. Well, you know your sister, Fisher. If she isn't being challenged, she's moving on.

Aunt Luce cuts the head away from the fish.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONTINUOUS)

You got any plans today? Might be nice to go down by the beach, maybe sit in a park...

FISHER

I'm cleaning 8A. Then I'm going to Miss Tulip's.

AUNT LUCIENNE

How's she doing, anyway? You know, I tell you every time you go over there to ask her to come to dinner and--

FISHER

She likes her privacy, Aunt Luce.

AUNT LUCIENNE
How much she paying you?

Fisher shoots Aunt Lucienne "the look."

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONTINUOUS)
Just make sure she does. You know,
some people say she's a little...

Aunt Lucienne taps her own head.

FISHER
Yeah, well. I know a couple of
people who say that about me, too.

AUNT LUCIENNE
Oh, Fisher. You know I didn't mean
anything by it...

FISHER
It's okay. Don't get bent out of
shape.

The impatient CHIRP of a telephone ringing sounds. Fisher
checks the caller ID box.

INSERT - CALLER ID BOX

JAMIE KINCAID (555) 555-0155

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)
It's on the private line.

AUNT LUCIENNE
Don't answer it?

Fisher caves in. She picks up.

FISHER
Hello?

INT. MORTUARY - CONTINUOUS

Pia snaps on a pair of medical gloves as she cradles a cell
phone between her ear and her shoulder. She's surrounded by
the clinical glow of an examination room.

PIA
Hey, Chick-a-Dee, what you up to?

INT. JUNONIA MOTEL - KITCHEN

Fisher sits on the bar stool near the telephone.

FISHER

Pia? Who's phone are you calling me from?

INT. MORTUARY - CONTINUOUS

The body of a young woman, JAMIE, in her late 20s, pretty, rests before Pia on a steel slab. Pia checks the toe tag.

PIA

(off the toe tag)
Ms. Jamie Kincaid.

INT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - KITCHEN

FISHER

You're calling me from a dead person's phone?

AUNT LUCIENNE

(in the background)
Ask her if she's seen my poncho.

Fisher looks over at her aunt sawing away at a fish.

FISHER

Aunt Luce wants to know if you have her poncho.

INT. MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Pia begins to air brush Jamie's face.

PIA

It's in my room. Somewhere--Anyway, I lost my phone at that rave last Saturday. I'm sure some prick took off with it. Thank God for remote swipe, right?

INT. JUNONIA MOTEL - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

PIA (V.O.)

Anyhoo, I need a favor...

FISHER

Come on.

PIA (V.O.)

I need some hot cocoa powder.

FISHER

It's like 98 degrees out. I'm not riding my bike all the way down there. You've got a car.

PIA (V.O.)
Fish, my baby sister, my sweet,
sweet--

FISHER
Forget it. I have to clean 8A and
then I gotta bring lunch to Miss
Tulip. I got things to do.

PIA (V.O.)
Come on, it's not like anyone is
checking-in anytime soon. You know
and I know that 8A was paying all
the bills in that place.

FISHER
Yeah, well. She checked out and on
the off-handed chance that someone
may check in, the room should be
clean.

PIA (V.O.)
Please, please, please, please.

Fisher holds the phone away from her ear.

PIA (V.O.)
I'm already on thin ice after that
little prank I pulled on Mr. Brown.
You'd think for someone who's
dedicated his life to dead people,
he wouldn't be so squeamish about
dead bodies. I mean, they're dead.
It's the living ones you have to
worry about.

Fisher sighs.

PIA (V.O.)
(quickly)
Okay. Love you. See you soon.

Pia hangs up. Fisher returns the phone to the receiver.

FISHER
I guess I'm running an errand. I'll
be back.

AUNT LUCIENNE
No rush, dear.

The telephone RINGS again.

FISHER
If that's Pia, tell her I already
left.

Aunt Lucienne walks to the phone. She answers with the entrails of a fish still glistening on her half-washed hands.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Hello? Oh, honey. How are you? We've been missing you. No, Fisher just stepped out.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Fisher pedals down a tree-lined avenue on her bicycle. She turns briskly into the SWAMP MARKET parking lot.

EXT. SWAMP MARKET PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

She hops off her bike, not bothering to lock it, tosses it. She enters the small block of concrete.

INT. SWAMP MARKET - CONTINUOUS

Inexpensive and speckled terrazzo floors peek out from the peeling linoleum. An extensive collection of ceramic alligators are spread throughout. Someone has made a sticky-mess of the make-your-own-icy station.

A round woman (her name tag names her "BETTY") sits behind a customer service counter. She pets an obese, white cat as she fixates on a Spanish telenovela coming through a small and ancient portable TV. She takes no notice of Fisher.

Further in the store, Fisher picks up stray items. A plastic container of cold salad, a jar of local honey, and slices of smoked salmon.

Fisher reads the back of a cracker box.

SAWYER (O.S.)

Watch your step.

SAWYER TEMPS, mid-20's. He's a shade of geekishly cute, with a thin-lipped smile and perpetual bed-head. He wears a name tag declaring "SAWYER" and ratty apron.

FISHER

Sorry?

SAWYER

The floor's wet.

Fisher looks down. Her shoes have made thin, dirty shapes on the floor.

FISHER

Oh, I'm sorry.

SAWYER

No problem. I can re-mop, I'd just rather you didn't slip and fall. And then sue.

FISHER

Well, thanks...

Fisher leans in to read Sawyer's name tag.

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)

Sawyer? Is that your real name? That's a weird name.

SAWYER

My dad thinks he's a descendent of Mark Twain. So. There's that. You're Fisher, right?

FISHER

(with a playful suspicion)
Yeah...

SAWYER

We should get together and start a bluegrass band. Sawyer and the Fish.

Fisher returns the cracker box to the shelf.

FISHER

The Fish and Sawyer sounds much Better. Personal opinion.

SAWYER

You don't remember me, do you?

FISHER

I'm sorry. I'm pretty bad with faces. And names. People in general, actually.

SAWYER

Third grade field trip to the aquarium. I tried to kiss you. You bit my lip.

FISHER

Oh, my God.

SAWYER

I still have a scar. See?

Sawyer shows her the bit of raised scar tissue on his lip.

FISHER

Sawyer. Sawyer Temps. How could I

FISHER (CONT'D)
forget about you? Where have you
been hiding?
(examining Sawyer's lip)
I got you pretty good.

SAWYER
Yeah, you did. But I deserved it.
I've--uh--I've been around. Little
of this, little of that. What about
you? Last time I saw you, you went
off to that private school...

FISHER
Oh, you know. The usual. Work.
Hey, where's Old Pete?

SAWYER
He retired. About a week ago. There
was a write up in the paper.

FISHER
I don't read the newspaper. Too
depressing.

SAWYER
Ah, well. I think that is one of
those "the glass is half-empty,
half-full" type of things.

FISHER
Did you just call me a pessimist?

SAWYER
Might've implied it.

FISHER
I'm just saying. It's early in the
morning. Sun is shining, waves are
coming in strong. You're sitting
down to breakfast. The most
important meal of the day. A big,
delicious bowl of sweetened and
chemically altered corn--

SAWYER
--Naturally.

FISHER
...Then you open your newspaper and
BAM! Your whole day is ruined
because someone backed over a kid,
shot their wife. And that someone,
somewhere, who tossed someone else
away like used goods, is eating
their cereal like nothing happened.

SAWYER

I'm more of a breakfast burrito
type of guy. So.

FISHER

Just an example.

A pensiveness comes over Fisher.

SAWYER

Hey, I'm real sorry about your
friend. I heard awhile back. I
wanted to give my condolences, but
I thought it'd be weird--

A moment passes.

FISHER

--Oh, no. Don't worry about it.
Thank you though. That's really--
uh, nice. That's nice of you. Um,
you got any hot cocoa?

SAWYER

It's like, 90 degrees out.

INT. MORTUARY - LATER

Pia and Fisher stand beside one another. They gaze at Jamie
O.S.

Pia holds a makeup sponge in one hand and an open yellow box
of cocoa powder in the other. She chews manically on a bright
piece of gum.

She leans in, gives a gentle pull against Jamie's eyebrows to
soothe the hairs. She steps back again.

She and Fisher tilt their heads to accommodate their view.
Jamie snug in her casket of silk and wood, looking warmly
deceased.

PIA

There. See? I told you. Cocoa
powder is finer. Perfect for
natural shadowing.

Pia trashes her gloves and makeup sponge.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

People need their loved ones to
look naturally dead as opposed to
actually dead.

Fisher is dismal.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

You don't have to look like someone shot your puppy.

FISHER

This is a morgue. It's pretty appropriate.

PIA

Maybe you should go out more. Date someone other than Tim Midberry.

FISHER

--can we not talk about my love life when we're in a room full of death? The symbolism is just kind of overwhelming.

PIA

Please. I'm alone with these people all day. They know all of my secrets. And some of yours.

Fisher bends down to get a closer look at Jamie.

FISHER

She looks...stiff.

PIA

It happens.

Pia approaches a binder. She jots down a few notes.

FISHER

She's really young. She have family?

Pia looks up for a moment. She wonders.

PIA

Yeah. The usual. Mom, Dad. A brother. The butcher at the corner deli. David? Danny? Darrell. That's it. Nice guy. Big knuckles.

Fisher steps closer to the casket. Pia looks up from her work quickly as if she's made a discovery.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

Hey, he's single.

Pia softens at the sight of Fisher sadly looking over Jamie's corpse.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

She had some kind of rare heart condition.

FISHER

What?

PIA

She died surrounded by family.

FISHER

Did she suffer?

PIA

(lying)

Nah, it was quick.

Fisher reaches out to smooth a few fine hairs on Jamie's head. She decides against it.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

So, you're headed to Miss Tulip's then?

FISHER

Yeah.

PIA

I don't know how you can stand it. All that money and she's living like a squatter. You know she was married to some mobster? Killed a ton of people for a pirate ship's worth of gold.

Pia thinks on it.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

Or was it a dictator? You know, from one of those places no one has ever heard of.

FISHER

That's such bullshit. Who said that?

PIA

Jake. From the Post Office. He said she keeps also gators in her swimming pool in the event any unwanted visitors drop by.

FISHER

Now that's not fair. She doesn't even know how it got in there.

EXT. WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Fisher stops before a pair of wrought-iron gates. She enters a code into a keypad before continuing.

A long, private drive runs all the way back to the property. Along the journey, a few Grecian sculptures point the way.

EXT. EMBURG ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

A Mediterranean palace on the water. It is wealthy with exotic fruit trees and a lush, green landscape.

Fisher approaches a pair of ornately decorated French doors. A door knocker in the shape of Medusa's head stares back at Fisher.

INSERT - MEDUSA'S HEAD DOOR KNOCKER

The sorrowful and frightening stare of a woman surrounded by snakes, coiling and uncoiling, on her head.

Fisher uses her key.

INT. EMBURG ESTATES - CONTINUOUS

It is a ten bedroom wonder reeking of an eerie opulence. A diminished relative to the Palace of Versailles. Some rooms are slathered with ornate furnishings, others are empty of furniture and only crowded by the pictures and portraits hanging on the walls.

In the foyer, a breath-taking oculus made of expertly stained Italian crystal casts colorful shadows against the marble floors.

FISHER

Miss Tulip?

The echo of a ghostly song playing from somewhere unknown answers.

THE READING ROOM

An expansive room painted a cozy shade of emerald and filled wall-to-wall with a variety of books.

Fisher pokes her head in.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Miss Tulip?

Above a cold fireplace is a provocative painting of a young brown-skinned woman, naked, standing like a flamingo beside a mango tree. A curious bird rests upon her shoulder.

The sound of a raspy purr is finally heard over a booming intercom:

TULIP (V.O.)
Who's come into my labyrinth?

Fisher jumps. She shouts back.

FISHER
I brought you lunch. Where are you?

TULIP (V.O.)
I can't hear a word you're saying.
I'm in the gardens visiting with my
birds of paradise.

EXT. EMBURG ESTATES - THE GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

A stone staircase leads the way to the infinite greenery eclipsed only by a restless ocean rocking a rotting dock.

The HISS of a gator comes from a sizable pool half-filled with rain water. Fisher approaches, looks in.

A large alligator idles in the sun.

FISHER
Hey, Noah.

She unwraps a glistening, gray fish from a brown paper wrapping. She tosses it into the pool, to Noah.

TULIP stands on a ladder before a large canvas set on an artist's easel. She's an artifact herself. She's in her late 70's. She is a Black woman with slight wrinkles of wisdom.

Her beauty has survived the stretch of time.

She wears a large mustard yellow head wrap. Her body is draped in a long, silky green kimono. Her hands are covered with fiery hues of red, orange, and yellow.

TULIP
Vermivora bachmanii.

Fisher shrugs.

FISHER
Am I supposed to know what that is?

TULIP
The birds. From the painting in the reading room. Have you ever seen anything like it?

Tulip studies her painting. She makes careful strokes with her paintbrush.

FISHER

Can't say that I have. No.

Fisher sets up their lunch of cold salad and smoked salmon on paper plates.

TULIP

Well, you're honest. Because they're extinct. The birds, that is. The artist, too, come to think of it.

She stops painting in a sudden, deep thought. It passes. She continues.

TULIP (CONT'D)

It's a Juan De Creete. You've heard of him.

FISHER

I actually haven't.

Tulip's concentration is broken again. A defeated sigh escapes her.

TULIP

God, it's exhausting talking to young people.

Tulip throws down her paintbrush without regard.

TULIP (CONT'D)

You have to explain everything to them. Tell me, do human parents raise children anymore? Or do they just connect all of you to a computer and walk away?

She climbs down from her latter. Fisher smiles to herself.

Tulip takes a seat at the iron table. Fisher neatly arranges the plastic silverware and paper napkins.

TULIP (CONT'D)

How lovely.

She lifts a spork up to examine it.

TULIP (CONT'D)

Nothing quite like a combination fork and spoon to make a meal special...

FISHER

I got a postcard from Colette today. She hasn't called in a while, but...

Fisher takes the seat next to Tulip. They begin to eat.

TULIP
And where is she this time?
Calcutta with Count Dracula?

FISHER
She's in New Orleans.

Tulip goes cold for a moment. She delicately wipes her mouth.

FISHER (CONT'D)
She's doing some kind of field
research for her non-profit stuff.
She's probably having her heart
broken as we speak.

Fisher wanders off into thought.

FISHER (CONT'D)
He probably drives a vintage
mustang. No, no. A tricked-out
hybrid...

Tulip gives up on the food. She leans back in her chair and
takes in the sound of the SINGING cicadas.

TULIP
You know, when I was a slip of a
girl, I went down to this lagoon
every summer. It was nothing
special. Just a little bit of water
and heat where the young folks like
to escape. And I always met
someone. And he was always special.

Fisher mashes her spork into the cold salad.

TULIP (CONT'D)
And I always came home a bit
harder. A bit more clever.

FISHER
You learned something...

TULIP
Not really, because I kept going
back.

Fisher stops eating.

TULIP (CONT'D)
Hell, I'd go there now if--

She softens.

TULIP (CONT'D)
Right, wrong. It's always worth the
risk.

Tulip feeds a cold sugar pea to a curious, stray cat.

TULIP (CONT'D)
I'm sure whatever she's doing,
she's having the time of her life.

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

SUPER: NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

An excessively large building. It is modern in its charm and made nearly translucent by many glass windows and doors.

An electric marquee proclaims: "NONPROFIT AWARENESS: ALLY AGAINST POVERTY."

INT. CONVENTION ROOM - NIGHT

Projected on an enormous canvas screen at the back of the room: "AGA WELCOMES GUEST SPEAKERS, MISS WORLDSTAR TITLEHOLDERS!"

There is an administrative air to the room. Fifty tables accompanied by two large industrial art chandeliers.

The guests are dressed in corporate attire. A sea of beige, white, and gray.

There is the occasional appearance of wandering young women in business suits wearing sparkling tiaras.

Colette, polished to perfection and wearing a tiara, sits dully at a table bustling with business CHIT-CHAT. She stares into a plate of petite and inedible-looking food.

She looks up, investigating passersby only to have her stare met by...

Wyatt Sharpe, coolly drinking from a cocktail glass from afar, surrounded by TALKING SUITS.

Colette and Wyatt exchange looks of weariness and a private, quiet laugh.

WYATT
(to a SUIT)
Definitely, definitely. We'll talk
later.

Wyatt excuses himself. He approaches Colette. She straightens up.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)

I know you. I've seen you before.

Colette grins. She coyly looks away and gestures to her image projected onto a screen over a podium.

INSERT- PROJECTION SCREEN IMAGE OF COLETTE

Beneath her smiling likeness are the words "Guest Speakers: Colette Franklin, Miss Puerto Palmera 2002..."

Wyatt LAUGHS.

COLETTE

Actually, we went to school together. A long time ago. St. Francis.

Wyatt steps back, as if he's unable to believe the coincidence.

WYATT

Wow. Strange place, familiar face. I can't believe it.

Colette pleasantly nods.

WYATT (CONT'D)

How could I forget? You're the brightest thing in this room.

A girlish GIGGLE escapes Colette.

WYATT (CONT'D)

You don't believe me? You are. And this room is packed with beauty queens. You should be flattered. Really.

COLETTE

I am, truly--I'm flattered. I had a huge crush on you. You know, way back when.

WYATT

Well, I'm glad we met now instead of then. I probably would've made a mess of things back then.

Wyatt slides into the empty seat beside Colette. He leans in.

WYATT (CONT'D)

So, let's refresh. How've you Been the last ten plus years?

EXT. JUNONIA MOTEL - NIGHT

The dying day hangs on with a dreary blue light. It looks like rain.

Fisher sits on the front porch. She reads from a lovingly-worn and dog-eared edition of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein underneath the porch light.

The porch steps creek under the weight of footsteps.

Before Fisher stands TIM MIDBERRY, a hearty-and-handsome young man with a fisherman's tan and the dust of drywall still fresh on his hands and arms.

TIM
Hey Fisher.

FISHER
(not looking up from her
book)
Tim.

TIM
I was just in the neighborhood.
Figured I'd come by. Say hello.

He pulls bundle of brown paper wrapped daisies from his back pocket. He holds them out for Fisher to take.

She doesn't budge.

FISHER
You brought me pollen?

TIM
You used to be into that sort of
thing.

FISHER
I used to be into a lot of things.

She casts a quick glance up at Tim.

TIM
Look, I know I messed up. Okay? I
only told a few people about you
cracking up. Just people I'm close
to, is all. I was just wondering if
we could talk. You know, sometime.

FISHER
Funny thing about gossip is it
never stays close.

TIM
You doin' better? You look like
you're doin' better.

FISHER
I'll let you know when sometime is.

Defeated, Tim sets the flowers on the porch floor.

TIM
Sometimes people just leave, Fish.
They just get on and go.

FISHER
You don't say?

TIM
I'm glad you're doing better...

Tim gives up. He walks off the porch and to his truck. Just
as he leaves, Pia arrives.

PIA
(girlishly)
Bye, Tim.

Fisher glares at Pia coming up the porch.

PIA (CONT'D)
What? I'm just being nice. I'm
nice.

FISHER
Since when?

PIA
Give the guy a break. He's a boy. A
big, stupid boy.

FISHER
Yeah, well, some people need to
learn something from their
mistakes.

Pia laughs. Fisher is reluctant to, until she finally does.

EXT. FAST FOOD DRIVE-THRU - NEW ORLEANS, LA - NIGHT

Fat moths collect around a poorly back-lit drive-thru menu.
The intercom speakers have rusted beyond repair, making a
home for a dormant nest of wasps.

Wyatt sticks his head out of an expensive, black luxury
vehicle. The light of the menu makes a shadow against his
face.

WYATT

Uh, yeah. Let me get a number two,
without cheese. And...

Wyatt ducks back inside. In the passenger seat, Colette looks out the window. Her face is covered by shadows.

Her hair, skin, and clothes are damp. She blankets herself with a towel.

WYATT (CONT'D)

How 'bout it?

She shakes her head.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Nothing? Take a look at the menu.

Wyatt leans back in his seat for his passenger to see the menu.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Oh, that's right. You don't eat meat.

(into the speaker)

Let me get a bun with just some cheese.

(to his Colette)

You want some fries?

(to speaker)

Can I get some fries, too? Two colas.

SPEAKER

Thirteen dollars and eighty seven cents.

Wyatt pulls forward. A young woman, CAROLINE, in an apron slides open the drive-through window. Wyatt hands her a credit card.

WYATT

Here you are, miss.

She takes it. Wyatt leans closer to the window.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Don't I know you from somewhere?
You look familiar. You go to State?

CAROLINE

No, I think I just have one of those faces.

WYATT

You have a sister? I swear. This is

WYATT (CONT'D)
going to drive me crazy. Blonde,
real pretty...

CAROLINE
I have a cousin. Madison?

WYATT
Madison!

CAROLINE
(surprised)
Yeah! You know her?

WYATT
We've crossed paths. Where's she
working now?

Colette CLEARS her throat. Caroline tries to crane her neck
to see further inside the car.

CAROLINE
At the hospital.

WYATT
Oh, good for her. University?

CAROLINE
That's the one.

WYATT
Huh. Gotta catch up with Madison.

CAROLINE
I'll be right back with your food.

She slides the window closed. Wyatt stares into the window,
monitoring Caroline and the group of workers. Mostly other
young women and a few young men. They chit chat and laugh
together MOS.

Wyatt turns on the car radio. A soulful blues song SINGS
through.

WYATT
Listen, I can't thank you enough
about being so cool about all of
this. You know--with these things,
they can get out of hand. But
you're smart. You're a good woman.
And I think this definitely worked
out in your favor. I'll take care
of you.

Wyatt reaches out to touch Colette. She turns her head to
face him.

The left side of her face is bruised and speckled with blood.

COLETTE

What did you give me?

WYATT

(ignoring her)

Might take a while to shake all of this off. Nothing a day or two at the spa won't cure. You know, I know a great place...

The drive-thru window slides open. Caroline holds out two absurdly large cups. Wyatt takes them both.

WYATT (CONT'D)

(to Colette)

I can give them a call. Or I can drop you off somewhere. I can drop you off anywhere you want.

Colette comes into Caroline's vision as she bends to sip from her straw. Caroline notices Colette's condition.

Wyatt notices Caroline noticing this.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a \$50 dollar bill. He holds his hand out for her to take the money.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Here's a little something extra for being so sweet...

Caroline reaches out to take the money. Wyatt grabs her hand.

WYATT (CONT'D)

...Caroline.

Wyatt shoves the bill into Caroline's palm. Caroline yanks her hand back.

WYATT (CONT'D)

You'll say hello to Madison for me?

CAROLINE

(stammering)

Uh, what--what did you say your name was again?

With a privileged certainty, Wyatt grins. He rolls up his window and pulls away.

INT. SEA SICK CAT BAR AND GRILLE - NIGHT

The melodic rhythm evocative of a Voodoo enchantment THUMPS on. A particular type of crowd gathers here. People beaten by the sun and holding onto their drinks with calloused hands.

IN THE KITCHEN

It's a snug, hot, grease trap. The back door is ajar, held open by a massive Creole man named BASIL wearing a hair net.

He sits on a pickle bucket and sneaks a few drags from a cigarette.

Fisher returns from outside.

FISHER

Thanks, Basil. Pretty sure that mystery produce bag had something radioactive in it.

He nods with endearment. Basil returns to his grill. Smoking burgers and crisping hash browns.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Got any plans for tonight?

Basil shrugs with a kind of indifference.

FISHER (CONT'D)

I know that feeling.

Fisher collects the wrinkled singles from the pocket of her waist apron. She carefully counts them.

INES (O.S.)

You savin' for a vacation cruise?

Fisher looks up. INES comes into view. A friendly, tired-looking Hispanic woman in her thirties. The tightness of her uniform gets her extra tips.

FISHER

Something like that.

They share the same tired smile.

INES

You've been working every Friday night for a while now. Don't you ever want to go out? Have a little fun? Catch the Friday night spirit?

FISHER

Yeah, well. When you're as broke as I am, fun is overrated.

INES

Broke folks know how to have the most fun, girl...

Pia jolts open the traffic doors. She's in her usual Friday night attire of something tight, black, and leather.

PIA

What kind of a loser comes in for an extra shift on a Friday night and doesn't blow all her tips on drinks at Juanita's after work?

FISHER

Guilty as charged.

INES

Pia, you don't work here. Flyin' through those doors like you own this place...

PIA

Hey, I might one day. Stranger things have happened...

INES

You are the strange thing.

PIA

(laughing)

Aw. You can come too, Ines.

INES

I've got Crystal watching my nephew and you know she charges overtime.

Pia beats the door as if to start a countdown.

PIA

Fish. Five minutes. Get your game face on...

Pia departs.

Fisher unties her waist apron. She folds her singles and stuffs them in her back pocket.

FISHER

How is he? Sam?

INES

He's good. Adjusting. Some days, it's like nothing happened.

(MORE)

INES (CONTINUOUS)

Other days, he doesn't want nothing but his mama and it breaks my heart every time to tell him she's gone.

FISHER

Well, you'll let me know if you

need anything. I mean, I'd be happy to watch him or whatever...

INES

Girl, you're always working.

Ines smiles.

FISHER

What about you? How're you?

INES

Death ain't nothing new to me, you know? But yesterday I heard this song on the radio that I hadn't heard in forever. You know that one that goes...

(singing)

"What becomes of the brokenhearted..."

FISHER

Oh, yeah!

FISHER AND INES

(singing)

"I know I got to find, some kind of piece of mind, baby..."

They LAUGH.

INES

Yeah. She loved that song since we were in diapers.

Basil straightens up at the grill. He listens to Ines and Fisher's conversation over the sound of SIZZLING meat.

INES (CONTINUOUS)

That song come on and she'd wiggle her little body around. We'd dance. Anyway. So I heard it on the radio the other day and I picked up the phone to call her. I got to three digits before I remembered she's been missing for over a year.

Ines wipes the sudden wetness away from her eyes. Fisher produces a balled up napkin from her back pocket. She offers it to Ines.

FISHER

No one wants to tip a woman who looks like she's melting...

Ines LAUGHS through her tears.

She accepts the balled up tissue.

INES
You're so damn goofy. God,
sometimes—you're too much like
her.

Basil goes back to cooking. He continues HUMS a familiar melody.

EXT. SEA SICK CAT DINER - CONTINUOUS

Pia waits for Fisher in the parking lot. Fisher approaches the dusty sedan. She gets in.

INT. DINGY SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Pia looks over at Fisher. She smiles at her.

FISHER
One drink.

Pia starts the car. She HOWLS.

EXT. JUANITA'S TEQUILA TAVERN - LATER

The hot glare of pink fluorescent lights sears into the night: TACOS! TEQUILA! TRIVIA!

It casts a rosy shadow over everything.

Fisher leans against a shabby concrete wall where the mango-colored paint has peeled off in chunks. She's still in her work uniform.

Pia drunkenly dances in a lazily inconsistent pattern. She pinches a joint between her fingers.

The girls LAUGH. Pia jumps into a puddle creating a mini-wave.

PIA
You've got too many rules...

FISHER
You don't have enough.

PIA
Clearly, but it's okay. The world
doesn't always play by the rules.
Why should you? Why should I?

Pia jumps into another iridescent, oily puddle.

FISHER

Yeah, well. Maybe you're right.
Maybe I don't have the same courage
you do.

PIA

Pretty sure it's genetic. Dig
deep...

Two YOUNG HIPSTERS in matchstick pants and flannel. The ONE
IN BLUE checks Pia out as they approach.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)

(to One in Blue)

You're not trying to sell religion
this late at night, are you?

Fisher peels herself off the wall to assess the young
hipsters.

The One in Blue employs a delirious smile. He hands off a
glossy flyer to Pia.

ONE IN BLUE

Well, I guess that all depends.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The roofless, cavernous space is only half-lit by the dying
bulbs of hastily strewn lights. A live band, costumed as
skeletons, play a ghostly rhythm. It echoes over a sea of
dense bodies, dancing and moving elbow-to-elbow.

Pia and Fisher stand together in the midst of the heated
mass.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- The Hipster in Blue enchants a small, posh pill box into
his hands. He opens it.

-- The fevered group seemingly moving all together. No one
looks at each other. They're just single entities thrashing
under the grim lighting.

-- Two, round and chalky pills stamped with a simple happy
face of black lines.

-- Pia dropping the pill on her tongue. She holds out the
other for Fisher to take. Fisher hesitates.

CLOSE ON: Pia with a delirious grin. The only still thing
amongst a chaotic and colorful background.

PIA

Have a little courage.

Fisher refuses the pills.

Pia shrugs and hands the pills back to the Hipster in Blue.

PIA (CONT'D)

Maybe next time.

LATER

Fisher walks around in search of Pia, who's gone missing. The party continues to go on around her despite Fisher's emotional absence.

Fisher spots a girl with dark-hair dancing under a hot pink light. This girl bears a striking resemblance to Luna. The girl moves on in the crowd. Fisher pursues.

FISHER'S P.O.V - The happenings move in a fast forward motion. Quick-moving men and women dancing madly in a series of synchronic movements, not unlike a waltz.

The PARTYGOERS LAUGH wildly as if in a cloud of a Dionysus-induced hysteria. The dress of the crowd suddenly becomes reminiscent of the French rococo-era. The MUSIC swells.

There's a sudden saturation of warm, pink light in the middle of the darkened crowd. Within this spotlight is Wyatt Sharpe. He waltzes with a girl who is unseen, but could be Fisher. Could be Luna.

Fisher blinks her eyes. She tries to refocus. Fisher collects her small purse at her side. Inside is a prescription bottle.

Fisher shakily opens it. The circular, chalky pills spill over. They scatter on the dance floor.

Fisher bends down to collect them. They are scattered in a sea of white pills staring up at her with blank, happy faces.

The sight becomes unbearably dizzying. Fisher passes out.

INT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Fisher's head bobs above a toilet. Her hair is tangled up into a hastily made bun. Pia sits on the edge of the bathtub as she affectionately pats her sister's back.

PIA

There, there. And all you had was beer?

Fisher snaps her head up. Her eyes sear into Pia.

PIA (CONT'D)

(backing off)

Okay, okay.

Fisher drops her head back into the toilet. She VOMITS.

Pia rubs her back while simultaneously checking her own cellphone.

PIA
Whoop. There it is.

INT. JUNONIA MOTEL - MORNING

FISHER'S BEDROOM

Morning light invades.

Fisher slowly lifts her head from a smothering pillow. Her hair is a web of chaos. She squints at the intrusive daylight. She GROANS.

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The same routine. Fisher sits on the floor of a mildewing shower.

She checks the mirror for her own reflection.

She pulls open the door to retrieve her prescription.

She POPS the bottle. She pours two pills into the palm of her hand.

She hesitates. She stares into her damp palm at the dissolving pills.

She looks into the mirror. Her reflection concealed by a thin veil of mist.

Fisher empties her pill bottle into the toilet. She FLUSHES.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

In THE KITCHEN, Pia sits before a bountiful setting of bagels, fruit, and fresh orange juice. She chews on a bagel while staring into her cellphone.

In a fuzzy juvenile robe, Fisher enters.

PIA
(without looking up)
Morning.

Fisher breezes past the smorgasbord of food.

FISHER

Morning.

She stops cold. She turns to the food.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Where'd this come from? All we had
last night was some leftover
popcorn and Delish-O cereal.

Colette comes in through the back porch. She carries in a newspaper. She lifts a pair of expensive-looking sunglasses from her eyes. Her complexion is sallow.

COLETTE

Good morning, Glory!

Fisher is still.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Well, don't make me feel awkward.
Say something.

FISHER

You look--

PIA

--a little bit like shit run over
twice?

COLETTE

Come on, I've only been home for a
few hours.

Colette walks to the table spread with goodies. She pulls out a few sugar doughnuts. She picks one up and holds it out for Fisher to take.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

You can't be that mad at me. Got
your favorite.

Fisher crosses her arms.

FISHER

I thought you were going to be in
New Orleans for another week.

COLETTE

Things ran a bit early, wouldn't
you know it?

FISHER

And you thought to rob a bodega on
your way home?

Fisher gestures to the excessive spread of food.

COLETTE

Now that I have some extra cash. I figured--

FISHER

You figured after--what--weeks, a month?--of not calling, you'd just show up and we'd all sit down to bagels?

COLETTE

I sent postcards.

Colette looks to Pia for help. Pia diverts her eyes down onto her plate.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

I thought I was being cute.

FISHER

Or were you busy playing debutante?

PIA

Fish. Come on.

COLETTE

No. It's okay. I should've called. Will you eat something now?

Colette holds out the doughnut, tempting Fisher to take it.

FISHER

I gotta get dressed. I have plans with Ines. You remember Ines, right?

COLETTE

(wounded)

Of course I do.

Unable to resist, Fisher reluctantly takes the doughnut before she leaves.

EXT. JUNONIA MOTEL - LATER

Dressed in modest beach attire, Fisher mounts her bicycle. She rolls past Colette's convertible covered by a blue tarp.

A decaying "Vacancy" sign dismally waves in the wind.

EXT. FRUIT STAND - CONTINUOUS

Rows of plastic crates housing bruised mangoes, bananas, and tomatoes sit under a scorching sun. The melting ice of a sweating cooler, filled with colas of every kind, Malta, and

paper boxes of coconut water, floods the sidewalk.

A MAN IN A BEACH CHAIR sits under an umbrella blanched by the sun. A festive salsa song SINGS from a tiny frequency radio.

The man is immersed in a local paper with a bold headline proclaiming: "LOCAL PRINCE MAKES A SPLASH WITH REOPENING OF REMODELED AQUARIUM."

Fisher approaches with two bananas and two coconut waters.

FISHER

Sir?

The man in a beach chair looks up. He sets his paper aside.

MAN IN BEACH CHAIR

Three bucks.

Fisher digs the money from a back pocket of her shorts. She hands the money over.

MAN IN BEACH CHAIR (CONT'D)

Where's your friend?

FISHER

Sorry?

MAN IN BEACH CHAIR

The girl you used to come here with. With the black hair.

A moment washes over Fisher. She regains herself and smiles politely.

FISHER

Have a good day.

The man scratches his head. He returns to his paper.

EXT. AQUARIUM - DAY

Fisher and Ines leisurely stroll through the tunnel of a large and encompassing aquarium. Watery shadows are cast over the aquarium's visitors.

SEROES OF SHOTS:

Some are the classic type of tourists dressed in exotic floral shirts and smeared white with sunscreen.

Some are locals collecting around a refreshment stand selling lemonade while holding the hands of impatient children pulling away in opposition.

There's a field trip of adolescents being closely watched by alert teachers.

People in modern-day aristocrat clothing gather in isolated clusters. Local news reporters swarm over them like moths to a flame.

Among these aristocrats is Wyatt Sharpe.

INES

I wish I had enough money to remodel an aquarium, let alone own one.

Fisher and Ines stand before a scene of endless blue. A STING RAY crawls along, careless to prying eyes.

FISHER

Remember when we used to come here and there was just that one ancient sea turtle swimming in circles, around and around...

Ines takes a sip from a large Styrofoam cup of lemonade.

INES

Yeah. That's going to be me in about five years. An ancient sea turtle swimming in circles...

FISHER

(playfully)
Whatever.

INES

I'm surprised Colette didn't come. All this money walking around. She's always pushing that nonprofit stuff. Perfect place for it today.

Ines inspects the presence of wealth.

FISHER

I'm not sure. She wasn't feeling well.

INES

That's too bad. This would kinda be like a class reunion for you guys...

FISHER

How so?

INES

All these St. Francis alums walking around.

FISHER

I'd be surprised if anyone

recognized me. Pia, maybe. Colette, probably. Not me.

INES

Wish I had a fairy godmother.

FISHER

Miss Tulip is hardly a fairy godmother.

INES

She paid for you and your sisters to go to the most expensive private school in Grove County. Probably Florida. Without knowing you.

FISHER

She's got her reasons, I guess.

Ines audits the sophisticated wardrobe of a few DEBUTANTES in the distance.

INES

Maybe I should've worn a shirt over this top. Feeling kind of naked with all these polo shirts everywhere...

FISHER

No one is paying attention to us.

INES

Good, because I took a dollar from the donation box.

FISHER

Ines!

INES

How'd you think I paid for this lemonade? I left my purse in the car and I didn't feel like walking all the way back. Philanthropy is philanthropy.

FISHER

You're a hardened criminal.

INES

Stick with me, kid. Hey, look--

Ines nods her head in the direction of Wyatt Sharpe standing in a crowd of people. Handsome and well-dressed with the polite smile of a politician.

INES (CONT'D)

(musingly)
Mr. Wyatt Sharpe. The Prince of
Puerto Palmera himself. I could pee
my pants. I actually could. This is
like a gallon of lemonade.

CUT TO: Wyatt shakes hands with a GRAYING MAN who wears the
look of someone important.

INES (CONT'D)
Go talk to him! He might remember
you. You both went to the same
school.

FISHER
He's from a different class--
Colette's class. And I think he
barely noticed her.

INES
Mm. I think he and your sister had
some kind of a *thang* back in the
day.

FISHER
(quickly)
What makes you say that?

INES
Luna told me. Remember she started
working at The Marina Club? She
told me Colette was there every
day, around the same time Captain
Jawbone over there was. Always in
tennis whites. Like she was looking
for an excuse to run into him.

FISHER
Col doesn't play tennis.

Ines shakes her cup to loosen the lemon slush.

INES
Exactly. I don't blame her though.
He's a nice-looking guy. Always
tipped Luna well. So she said.
Think she had a thing for him, too.

Wyatt poses for a photo with cherub-looking school children
against the backdrop of aquarium.

Fisher evaluates this display.

INES (CONT'D)
Kind of hard not to.

FISHER

You and Col have the worst taste in men. He might be alluring. In that classic, boring, perfect looks kind of way.

INES

His money is so old, it's had a bicentennial. Ah, well. Colette was cut out for that type of stuff though.

FISHER

What stuff?

INES

You know--the world of endless brunches and trips to the Cape.

FISHER

That stuff doesn't make life good. Just more shit you have to get up and brush your teeth for.

Ines takes a long slurp from her cup.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Okay.

Fisher forces the straw out of Ines's mouth.

FISHER (CONT'D)

I think that's done. You got all you could out of that.

Ines shakes the nearly empty cup.

INES

Okay, I'm going to find a bathroom. Here--

Ines hands Fisher her oversized cup.

INES (CONT'D)

I wonder if they redid the toilets, too?

FISHER

Aw, I hope not. I liked peeing into the mouth of a Great White.

Ines scampers off.

Fisher returns her attention back to the aquarium where a blacktip shark gracefully sails through a frantic school of fish.

Fisher looks at Ines' cup. She considers. Fisher looks around.

She takes in a noisy slurp as Wyatt approaches and stands at a respectable distance beside her.

WYATT

Ever wonder what's on the other side of these things?

Fisher side-eyes him. Wyatt doesn't make any gesture other than sticking his hands in his pockets. He makes no attempt to look at her straight on.

WYATT(CONT'D)

Blacktip. The shark. You see, the tips of its caudal fins are black. Hence the name.

FISHER

Ah.

From within the aquarium tank, Fisher and Wyatt stand side-by-side, magnified by a blue glow.

CLOSE ON: The blacktip shark zipping past and disappearing further into the aquarium's tank.

WYATT

Wonder if it's watching us the way we're watching it?

Finally, he turns to Fisher. Fisher takes a moment before she returns the gesture. She does.

FISHER

I think the little fish are trying not to be swallowed by the big fish.

He extends his hand for Fisher to shake.

WYATT

I'm Wyatt Sharpe.

She shakes his hand.

FISHER

I'm...

She hesitates. She conjures.

FISHER (CONT'D)

...Melody.
(with greater certainty)
Melody Meadows.

WYATT

You're William Meadows' daughter?

FISHER

Oh, no. No.

Wyatt anticipates something further. When the silence settles, he continues...

WYATT

Well, it's a pleasure, Melody. I have to tell you this isn't entirely random. I saw you from over there.

Wyatt gestures to a point beyond where they're standing. Fisher follows his gesture with her eyes.

WYATT (CONT'D)

And I kept thinking, I know you from somewhere. I had this incredible moment of deja vu. Racked my brain with it for about all of five minutes. Got nothing. So, I decided to come and talk to you. See if maybe you might know where we know each other from.

Wyatt's stare is unyielding. He looks squarely in her eyes, as if he's discovered something truly engrossing in them.

Fisher looks to his eyes, to his nose, to his lips, then back to his eyes.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Then I thought, God, she's going to think this is a come-on and she's going to walk out. So, maybe I shouldn't approach. But then, I'm definitely never going to know.

Wyatt breaks off eye contact to look into the aquarium.

WYATT (CONT'D)

And it's going to be one of those things I'd think about on a subway ride or when the weather is this particularly hot, or the next time I find myself in a tunnel under water.

FISHER

You seem like a very complicated person.

WYATT

Well, I'm not denying that. But you didn't run off. So. Worth the risk.

Wyatt waves to the departing graying man. He cheerfully, as

he passes.

WYATT (CONT'D)
(to the graying man)
Good seeing you, Senator.

Wyatt turns back to Fisher.

WYATT (CONT'D)
How'd you find yourself here?

FISHER
I'm a uh--I work--I'm...I'm an
artist. Student artist.

WYATT
That's fantastic. You study art.
Where at? What kind of art?

FISHER
At State. I study a little bit of
everything.
(like a thesaurus)
A mix. A concoction.

WYATT
I admire people who don't limit
themselves.

FISHER
Well, I'm limitless.

Fisher forces a bogus LAUGH.

WYATT
I can't help but feel like this is
just one of those things where the
universe puts someone in front of
you for a reason. And you just go
with it.

Fisher LAUGHS.

FISHER
I'm not entirely sure--

WYATT
Are you familiar with The Estates?

FISHER
I am.

WYATT
I just bought some property there
and I've got this terrible
problem...

FISHER

Someone sell you a cardboard
palace?

WYATT

(laughs)

No, thankfully not. I have all
these bare walls and no art. I'm
actually terrible at picking out
art. Or so I've been told.

FISHER

Sounds like you've got a real
crisis on your hands.

WYATT

It sounds silly and there are far
worse problems to have, but art
work feeds a room.

FISHER

Sure. True. Absolutely.

WYATT

A friend of mine at the Gallery is
having an art sale next weekend and
I'm having a business dinner the
following weekend. I'd love not to
make a fool of myself by having all
this blank space or God awful art
on my walls. Would you be available
next weekend?

INT. JUNONIA MOTEL - DAY

A damp mop head washes away an unsightly dirt spot. Fisher
controls the mop in the motel hallway beside the hallway
bathroom.

Fisher pauses. She presses an ear to the bathroom door.
Colette HEAVES.

Fisher KNOCKS.

FISHER

Collie?

She waits. There is no answer.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Hey, Col? It's me.

A sickening SPLATTER from behind the bathroom door sounds...

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)

Are you throwing up?

...it is followed by the metallic CLATTER of a toilet handle, rushing water of a flushing toilet, and then a running shower.

COLETTE (O.S.)

Yeah?

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colette, even as this messy version of herself in mismatched pajamas and day-old mascara, she is darling.

FISHER (O.S.)

You okay?

She sits on the lid of the toilet beside the empty running shower. Her face is wrinkled in an expression of concern and sorrow.

COLETTE

Fine--I'm fine.

FISHER (O.S.)

You know I can tell when you're actually showering, right?

Colette unrolls a few pieces of toilet paper. She wipes her mouth.

FISHER (O.S.) (CONTINUOUS)

I mean, I could only listen to you sing the Goo Goo Dolls so many times before I started to pick up on a routine...

Colette softly LAUGHS. Her laughter is short-lived. It's broken up by a sudden fit of tears. Colette covers her own mouth to mask her sorrowful gasping.

Colette settles down. Quickly, she wipes away the old mascara and tears.

HALLWAY

Colette opens the bathroom door. She wears a sunny smile, but the grief in her eyes betrays her.

COLETTE

You know, you don't know me as well as you think you do.

Fisher gestures to Colette's dryness.

FISHER

The proof is in the dry pudding.

A brightly colored Band-Aid printed with a dozen yellow smiling faces is stuck to Colette's inner arm.

FISHER (CONT'D)

What's that for?

Colette gently covers it.

FISHER (CONT'D)

(jokingly)

What? You need a tetanus shot before you came home?

COLETTE

It's a flu shot. Genius.

Barefoot, Colette walks over the freshly mopped floor to her room.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

You can leave the mop. I know how to clean up my own messes.

Fisher watches her go until she's no longer in sight.

INT. SEA SICK CAT BAR AND GRILLE - DAY

The usual crowd of people collect on the bar stools and on the plastic booth covers. Ines and Fisher move around each other with the fluidity of a synchronized dance.

Fisher carries a series of plates along her arm to a table of four, where a wholesome family with two young children, a Boy and a Girl, await.

FISHER

Okay, I have junior cheese burger with no pickles...

Fisher sets it front of the young boy.

Ines appears beside Fisher's table. She's a playful type of irritated.

INES

Wyatt Sharpe? Fine-ass, old-money, Wyatt Sharpe, gave you his card.

The Mother looks up, somewhat startled by Ines's intrusion.

FISHER

(to the family)

Big John Burger? That's for you.

Fisher passes it onto a weary-looking Father.

INES

And you waited two days to tell me?

FISHER

And a junior burger with extra pickles...

This plate goes to the Girl.

FISHER (CONT'D)

And a grouper salad with a side of fries.

The Mother accepts her plate with a shifty-eyed intolerance.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Can I get you guys anything else?
Ketchup?

MOTHER

(coolly; quickly)

I think we're good. Thanks.

Fisher makes her way to a recently vacated table. Ines, ignoring her own tables, follows her.

Fisher collects the remains of lunch into a small busing tub.

INES

I come back from the bathroom,
after waiting in the longest line
I've ever had to wait in just to
perform a routine bodily function,
and Wyatt Sharpe is shaking your
hand. I should've known better when
you told me he was just looking for
staff at the Aquarium!

Fisher stops for a moment. She looks to Ines with a quick and cold silence.

INES (CONT'D)

I was just putting your tips from
the bar in your purse and there it
was! You can't get mad at me. You
know if you don't collect your tips
quick enough Marva starts to
collect "interest..."

FISHER

You tell anyone?

INES

Shoot, girl. Everyone knows that
Marva's a thief.

FISHER

About Wyatt? The card?

Fisher moves the busing tub into THE KITCHEN where the CROONING of an old jazz record plays.

Basil jubilantly moves along to the inconstant rhythm of the music while flipping a row of greasy burgers.

Fisher unloads the busing tub.

INES

Who am I going to tell? And can I just say I'm shocked--shocked!--you didn't say a thing to me about it.

Fisher picks up a rag and a spray bottle from underneath a designated cleaning area.

FISHER

Because it's not a big deal. In fact, it was a fluke. He thought I was this Meadows girl.

She and Ines head back out the DINING/BAR AREA where a frustrated Woman by the Bar hones in on the pair.

WOMAN BY THE BAR

(to Ines)

Miss? Miss? Excuse me.

Ines holds up a finger to quell the woman.

INES

So what? Set the record straight over lunch. No, wait. Over a cruise to Barbados.

FISHER

(rushed whisper) Shh, people can hear you.

Fisher points to her own name tag.

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)

I'm a girl from the Glades and he's an Estate brat. We have nothing in common--

INES

Y'all could have something in common, if you know what I mean...

FISHER

People are trying to eat their food.

INES

So, what're you going to do? Just
let this opportunity pass you by?

Fisher checks in on a Lone Trucker sitting snugly in a booth.

FISHER

Can I get you all anything else?
Refill on your soda?

Fisher takes the empty cup from the trucker and behind the bar where she refills it with soda. Ines approaches the bar.

INES

So, you're going to call him?

FISHER

No.

Ines picks up two fruity drinks set out on the counter.

INES

Yeah, yeah. I'm expecting some
details later.

Ines moves off to deliver the drinks. Fisher smiles.

WOMAN BY THE BAR

I'm expecting some potato skins.
Sometime today.

INT. THE MOTEL JUNONIA - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM

Aunt Lucienne sits on the sofa. She's alone with a fat envelope pinched between her fingers. She holds it out in front of herself, as if a spider may jump out of it.

She slides a finger under the sealing flap of the envelope. She takes a breath. She opens it.

Inside are a series of court documents. Bold font indicating a foreclosure procedure, attorneys' names, and hearing dates in a clinical and formal font.

Aunt Lucienne shrinks with a gentle sadness.

The opening of a door CREAKS. Aunt Lucienne tucks the letter away into a magazine subscription.

FISHER

Hey.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Hey, how's your day?

Fisher shrugs.

FISHER

Where's everyone? I thought we were having dinner...

AUNT LUCIENNE

Pia had to stay late at work. Something came up. And Colette is having a drink with some friend of hers at the Marina.

Fisher takes a seat beside Aunt Lucienne.

FISHER

Oh. She say what friend?

AUNT LUCIENNE

She didn't. Probably a new friend. It's already been a few days, hasn't it? She's got the enchanting way about her.

FISHER

Don't need to tell me.

AUNT LUCIENNE

You hungry?

FISHER

I ate at work.

AUNT LUCIENNE

A woman can't live on fried pickles alone...

FISHER

That's what we serve them with a side of Cajun dipping sauce.

Aunt Lucienne leans back. She takes in the sight of Fisher for a moment. Dressed in a dirty work uniform with the weariness in her eye of someone much older than she is.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Got any plans? Any secret rendezvous?

FISHER

Why do my rendezvous have to be secret? Why can't my rendezvous be a caper of ecstasy for cocktail fodder?

AUNT LUCIENNE

(laughing)

Because you were born secretive.
Like clockwork, you'd come home
from school. March right to your
room and keep your face pressed in
a book until it was time to eat.
And everything was always fine.
School was fine. Grades were fine.
Friends were fine.

Aunt Lucienne pours herself another cup of tea.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONTINUOUS)

Meanwhile, Pia is talking my ear
off about who's kissing who at
school. And Colette is out chasing
a boy or a goal. Whichever.
Depending on the week. Although she
always bored of the boy before the
goal.

Aunt Lucienne reaches out. She lets the palm of her hand
brush Fisher's cheek. Her hand falls away.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONTINUOUS)

And then Luna, sweet black-haired
girl, would come over and you two
would disappear into whatever world
you guys built on that particular
night and all I could hear for
hours was just laughing and
laughing...

Fisher falls into a deep stare.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONTINUOUS)

You know, when your father passed--
it took a lot out of me, too.

FISHER

Well, he was your twin.

AUNT LUCIENNE

And you were always so careful not
to upset me. Not to stir. My quiet
little mouse. There was a time that
I was thankful for it, but--

FISHER

--Aunt Luce, I'm fine.

AUNT LUCIENNE

I don't want you to be fine. I want
you to be happy. There's just--
something always going on in there.
I wish you'd tell me what it is...

FISHER
(opposing, unsure)
I'm fine.

Aunt Lucienne stands. She gives Fisher a gentle kiss on the cheek before moving on into the kitchen, discreetly taking the fat envelope with her.

HALLWAY - LATER

A telephone cord runs through the hallway from a great distance leading into the...

BATHROOM

Fisher sits on the floor. Her back resting against a yellow tub. She stares. A vintage rotary telephone and Wyatt's wrinkled business card stare back.

She bites her nails. She picks up the phone and listens for a dial tone. She dials the number on the card. She hangs up.

FISHER (CONT'D)
(rehearsing)
Hi, is Wyatt Sharpe there?

She tries it through smiling.

FISHER (CONT'D)
Hi, Mr. Wyatt Sharpe, please.

The doorknob jiggles. Fisher uses her foot as a door jam.

FISHER (CONT'D)
Yeah?

PIA (O.S.)
You're not cracking up again, are you?

Fisher hides Wyatt's card under the fuzzy bath mat. She moves her foot. She stretches her arm forward and opens the door.

Pia closes the lid of the toilet and sits down.

PIA (CONTINUOUS)
Whatcha doin'?

FISHER
Just talking to Ines. Seeing what she's up to.

PIA
Mhm. Where's Col?

FISHER
She's having *drinks*.

PIA
You know, you can't be mad at her.

FISHER
I'm not.

Pia gives Fisher a look.

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)
Maybe I am a little.

PIA
Colette is Colette.

FISHER
(sarcastically)
Wow, such an excellent point.

PIA
I'm saying, it isn't easy for her either. She worked really hard to make it seem like she has no other emotions besides pleasant and...giggly. It was her way of surviving St. Francis. Palmera, in general. Now it's like, something she can't turn off.

FISHER
Yeah. I know.

PIA
After you're done. two for one taco night at Juanita's. I'm going to try to talk Aunt Luce into some

PIA (CONT'D)
flaming tequila shots and I need you to co-sign.

FISHER
Sounds good.

Pia looks at the phone. Pia stands to leave. And just as she moves past the bathroom door...

PIA
Oh, and Fisher?

FISHER
Hm?

Pia gestures to the stark white corner of Wyatt's business card peeking out from beneath the bath mat.

PIA
(mischievously)

You're a terrible liar.

Pia shuts the door behind her.

INT. GALLERY - DAY

An enormous space painted with an immaculate brightness of white.

The room is brilliantly lit by the day and half so by a large art installation seemingly made of thousands of light bulbs but truly just a single light bulb surrounded by tiny, smashed bits of mirror.

There's a large layout of work: sculptures of melting Grecian Gods, of monsters from someone else's mind, of architecture bent and twisted to look like human forms.

Portraits of people long since dead and from another time. Paintings of dreams and worries.

It's a smorgasbord of expression.

Fisher, in a sundress made for a Debutante, is a sharp contrast against the sophistication of the room. She admires a small exhibit of unsettling religious iconography.

Wyatt joins her at her side.

WYATT

I could've sent a driver--

FISHER

Oh, I don't mind. Hey, why doesn't any of the artwork have little name tags for the artists? How do you know who's work you're buying?

Wyatt examines the bust of a octopus.

WYATT

Oh, Lydia--my art friend--calls it "blind buying." It's her way of weeding out the true collectors from the people who might've taken an art history class in college once or something. I can't wait for you to meet her. I think you two would have a lot to talk about...

A distressed LAUGH leaves Fisher.

FISHER

So, you were saying--about your brother?

WYATT

Oh, yes. Adam works as a composer for the Philharmonic. He's quite good--the best. We don't get to spend time together. Father died last...

He thinks on it.

WYATT (CONT'D)

June, it was. And Adam quickly got married after that.

FISHER

You don't approve.

Wyatt looks at Fisher.

FISHER (CONT'D)

You do this thing with your eyes when you don't like something. Your eyes go up, kind of linger, and then back down. You did it when you were talking to that woman at the reception, when you saw that painting of decaying fruit...

WYATT

Observant little thing, aren't you?

They move on.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Guess you would need to be in order to be an artist.

FISHER

So, what happened?

WYATT

Oh, Augustine is a charming woman. She's just miserable. I can't stand misery. I like to be happy. Simply, madly, happy.

They come to a YOUNG MAN with a long, roman nose staring into a sad, sentimental painting of a Brooklyn neighborhood set in the 1940's. He squints as if to see something just beyond.

Fisher and Wyatt stand next to the man for a moment before moving on.

FISHER

Maybe she's depressed?

WYATT

No, just miserable. Sadness I

understand. Sadness comes from a place of authenticity. Misery is just a useless emotion. It's like a stale cousin of sadness who lays on your couch all day eating Funyons and doesn't want to draw the blinds.

FISHER

I'm impressed. You know what Funyons are.

WYATT

Then you'll be fascinated by my love for Chocolate-Choos. What about you? Any siblings?

FISHER

(quickly)

I'm an only child.

WYATT

You know, when I was a kid I wanted to be an only child. My brother left for some protégé camp for a month and I just couldn't stand it. It was too--

FISHER

Lonely?

WYATT

Right. Well, I got my wish now, it seems.

A lone painting hangs on the very back wall of the gallery. Just as Fisher and Wyatt approach, a voice calls out:

LYDIA LONGSONG (O.S.)

Wyatt Sharpe. Buying art without a buyer?

Wyatt acknowledges LYDIA LONGSONG, mid 30s, trendy and New York Gothic.

She and Wyatt share a friendly embrace.

WYATT

Melody Meadows, this is Lydia Longsong. She's the owner and an old friend.

LYDIA LONGSONG

Oh, how thoughtful. William's granddaughter?

WYATT

Actually, no.

FISHER

I get that all the time.

WYATT

Melody is helping me pick out some art.

LYDIA LONGSONG

How precious. I see you've found our Lady in Waiting... It's quite popular. Local artist.

They collect in front of the painting.

It depicts a nude young woman with brown skin balancing a bowl of mangoes on her head. A frolicsome smile escapes behind an emerald transparent scarf wrapped around her nose and mouth, betraying her severe, menacing eyes.

A lone, rare, and exotic bird sits on her shoulder.

WYATT

I can see why. Something about the eyes... What do you think, Melody?

FISHER

I think it's beautiful.

LYDIA LONGSONG

True romantics, the both of you. We think this was actually painted by this woman's lover. It was a trademark of the artist to emphasize the eyes of his favorite muses—

FISHER

(low)

--Vermivora Bachmanii.

LYDIA LONGSONG

Pardon?

FISHER

The painting. It's a Juan De Creete.

LYDIA LONGSONG

(caught off guard;
impressed)

Good eye.

Fisher looks to Wyatt. He's been lured.

GALLERY REGISTER - MOMENTS LATER

Fisher meanders in the background. She takes in the sight of all the magnificent art.

Lydia hands off a pink receipt to Wyatt. He folds it and

tucks it away inside his blazer pocket.

LYDIA LONGSONG (CONT'D)
Lady in Waiting will be delivered
by next Tuesday.

WYATT
Thank you, Lydia.

LYDIA LONGSONG
Oh, don't thank me. Thank your
chaton. She found it.

In the RECEPTION area, Fisher has found a stone water fountain in the shape of the Greek goddess Persephone. The water spout emerges from a pomegranate she holds tightly to her chest.

Fisher leans in and drinks from it. Finished, she turns.

Wyatt has been observing her.

WYATT
When can I see you again?

Fisher wipes her mouth dry.

INT. JUNONIA MOTEL - DAY

Fisher walks past Colette's open bedroom door.

COLETTE (O.S.)
Hey, Fish?

Fisher reverses. She leans into the open door way. Colette is half-dressed in another posh outfit. She struggles to clasp a pearl bracelet closed.

COLETTE (CONT'D)
Would you mind? I've got this event
in, like, ten minutes and I'm
probably going to be way late.

She lifts up her wrist and the bracelet. Fisher takes both.

COLETTE (CONT'D)
You look cute.

FISHER
Thank you.

COLETTE
You working today?

FISHER
Just a quick trip to Miss Tulip's
and then to Seasick's.

She wraps the bracelet around Colette's wrist.

COLETTE

I should probably go visit her, right? I mean, I haven't seen her since I was thirteen. Her house always smelt like peppermints and dirt.

Fisher concentrates on closing the clasp. It slips.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Where were you all day?

FISHER

Out.

Fisher closes the clasp.

COLETTE

Just out?

FISHER

Mhm.

Colette inspects the bracelet.

COLETTE

You know, if you ever want to tag along with me--I mean, I'd love you to come and maybe volunteer or--

FISHER

You don't have to pitch anything to me. I don't need to dedicate myself to charity because I ignored my family for the better part of a year--

COLETTE

--I'm sorry.

Colette tugs on her wrist and the bracelet. The bracelet pops off. A few pearls scattered to the floor.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Shit!

Colette bends down. Fisher does the same. They try to gather the loose pearls. Colette gives up.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

I don't know how else to say it. I'm sorry. I'm sorry Luna died, Fish. Okay? She died and it took a huge chunk out of you and you needed me and I handled it badly

because I didn't know how to handle it. But I'm trying to make up for it now. Okay? I'm trying.

A moment passes between them. Fisher holds out her handful of tiny, irridescent pearls.

FISHER

You're gonna be late.

They linger on the floor for another silent moment.

EXT. EMBURG ESTATES - DAY

Fisher walks up the long, winding drive-way. In the distance, someone on a long ladder cuts away at a monstrous overgrown hedge.

This someone is a sun-beaten Sawyer. Fisher stops to admire his work.

FISHER

Hey. Sawyer.

SAWYER

You remembered. I'm flattered.

FISHER

Haha. What're you doing here?

Sawyer gestures to the clippings spread around in messy piles.

FISHER (CONT'D)

I know, it's just--I've never actually seen who cuts the hedges.

SAWYER

My uncle usually does it. But he's getting old. Got a real bad back.

Sawyer wipes the profuse sweat away from his face with the bottom edge of his shirt.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Miss Tulip calls every once in awhile when the city starts sending her notices. Not real brain work, but it pays the bills. You come here a lot? Didn't peg you for an Estate girl. Especially not in that outfit.

Fisher looks down at herself, remembering her work attire.

FISHER

Well, you'd be right. I live at the Junonia. The motel by the beach.

SAWYER

And you bring Miss Tulip pastries?

FISHER

Yeah, well. She doesn't leave this place much and she's gotta eat. So, here I am.

SAWYER

How'd you get that gig?

FISHER

Some of her mail got mixed up with ours when I was real little. My aunt brought it to her and I guess-- I don't know--she didn't mind having me around. My aunt kept sending her casseroles and stuff...

SAWYER

(zestfully)

Well, you're a good woman, Fisher Franklin.

Fisher is slightly startled. She goes quiet.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Did I say something wrong?

FISHER

No. Not at all.

INT. EMBURG ESTATE - DAY

The sound of a sad, ghostly violin fills the colossal BALLROOM.

The space is a love-letter to the Gothic architecture of 18th century Baroque Italy. The ceilings sit impressively high and plated with gold-leaf and finely detailed stucco-work depicting Angelic battles.

Four large marble pillars carefully guard the presence of religious figures who stare on with lamenting eyes. A wealth of chandeliers hang from above.

The bowed archway over the entrance of the room gives it the appearance of a great, aureate stage.

Tulip, in a creamy vintage silk-chiffon slip splattered with smears of paint, furiously moves a wide brush across a canvas.

She's surrounded herself with an abundance of clippings from

her garden.

Fisher enters, occasionally glancing up at the ceiling to see the ferocious Angels staring down at her.

At a distance, Tulip shouts:

TULIP

What do you have for me today?

Fisher walks to fill the void between them.

FISHER

Just some guava pastries.

Reaching Tulip, Fisher sets the box on the only piece of furniture in the room. A parakeet green chaise lounge.

FISHER (CONT'D)

What's with all the painting all of a sudden?

Tulip is minimal, distracted.

FISHER (CONT'D)

You ever going to show me what you're working on?

TULIP

In due time, my dear.

FISHER

Can I ask you something?

TULIP

I never understood why anyone would ask to ask a question.

FISHER

Why did you pay for us to go to St. Francis? Me and my sisters.

Tulip stops painting.

TULIP

You know why I paint? It helps me to remember things.

Tulip resumes, her lips pressed into a busy pucker. Fisher sighs. She stands to leave.

FISHER

I guess I'll let you paint then.

TULIP

Oh, sit down and shush. Linger awhile.

Tulip steps back from the painting. She chews on the edge of her paintbrush.

TULIP (CONT'D)

When your aunt showed up at my door...you were hiding behind her like a frightened little guppy, just this trembling little thing, I thought..."she could be my grandchild," if I'd ever entertained that sort of thing.

FISHER

What thing?

TULIP

Marriage, children, death. The whole three acts.

Fisher opens the pastry box. She tears a corner off the papery pastry. She eats it.

TULIP (CONT'D)

You have to know how the world looks at you, so you know how to look at the world.

TULIP (CONT'D)

I wish someone had taught me that when I was a girl. I figured the sooner you learned that lesson, the better.

Tulip holds out her hand for a pastry. Fisher hands one off to her. Tulip smashes it until the guava-innards come pouring out.

She takes the delicate end of her pinky, dips it in the guava, and smears it onto the canvas.

TULIP (CONT'D)

I know what people say about me. They've said it for years. In one lifetime I've been a courtesan, a ghost. I've been royalty and a criminal. How else would a little ole Black woman like me inherit something so majestic? I must be something to someone important.

Fisher eats another piece of guava pastry.

TULIP (CONT'D)

I had the great misfortune of being born in a time that didn't welcome

much diversity. But I was sensitive to a sense of wonder and magic about the world. And I wanted nothing more than to capture it. But to the world, I wasn't fit for the job because what I saw in life-- the world didn't think was qualified.

Tulip slides her a brush over her canvas.

TULIP (CONT'D)

So I invented a man. A man who believed all this magic, all of this...

Tulip gestures to her surrounding palace.

TULIP (CONT'D)

...could belong to a girl who was born in a hot little house in the swamp. People were more comforted by my wealth this way. Am I proud of it? Depends on the day.

Tulip points a stern finger at Fisher.

TULIP (CONT'D)

People don't like having to question what has been indoctrinated into their lousy souls. Makes them look foolish.

She returns her attention to the painting.

A wave of recognition washes over Fisher.

FISHER

You're Juan De Creete.

Tulip smiles with a secret sentiment. And then a slow, devastating frown comes upon her.

TULIP

I built this palace by the sea for all the other lonely monsters like me. Beautiful bohemians the world elected to ignore...but time passes. People die. The illusion of change becomes harder to fight off. And here I am, still. Trapped in this beautiful prison.

FISHER

You could leave.

TULIP

Where would I go?

FISHER

Home?

Tulip looks up. Her eyes just brushing over the canvas.

TULIP

It's not enough to fight for something, little minnow. You have to survive.

EXT. EMBURG ESTATE - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Fisher watches Sawyer cut away at an unsightly hedge. She offers him a glass of lemonade.

SAWYER

What's this?

FISHER

A parting gift.

Sawyer takes the crystal glass. He appraises its ornate-ness before he takes a long, parched sip from it.

SAWYER

You heading out?

FISHER

Yeah. I gotta work.

Fisher looks around at the shrubs.

FISHER (CONT'D)

You did a great job on these.

SAWYER

It's in the blood.

FISHER

Well, I'll see you around.

INT. SEASICK CAT BAR AND GRILLE - MOMENTS LATER

IN THE KITCHEN, Fisher wipes clean a pair of ketchup smeared menus. Basil throws handfuls of freshly chopped vegetables into a steaming pot on the stove.

FISHER

Smells good, Basil.

Ines bursts through the kitchen's wooden double doors just as Fisher begins to re-fill a few shakers of salt.

INES

He's here.

FISHER

Who?

INES

Wyatt Sharpe! Girl, you did call him.

Fisher goes cold. The salt slips from her hand

INES

If this isn't a sign from God that you were meant to cross paths with this person--get out there!

FISHER

No. No times infinity. No.

INES

What's wrong with you?

FISHER

Look, I can't--I'm not doing it.

INES

Well, I'm not doing it. So, nah. What you gonna do now?

EXT. SEASICK CAT BAR AND GRILLE - CONTINUOUS

PATIO DINING ROOM

Wyatt and his posh-looking friends, GRANT and SPENCER, take in the sight of the tropical beach backdrop.

Someone approaches their table. They all look in the direction of this newcomer.

Wyatt's once relaxed face tenses up with a look of uncertainty. Grant and Spencer follow suit.

WYATT

Hi.

Silent Basil stands before the table, with a glint of brotherly irritation in his eye. A SEASICK girl's tee stretched over his massive body, and a hair net clinging to his bald head. He holds up a pen to an order pad.

INT. JUNONIA MOTEL - NIGHT

Colette, Pia and Aunt Lucienne have collected at the dinner table. No one has bothered to turn on another lamp despite an encroaching darkness.

The fat--now opened--official looking envelope sits in the lonely center of the table. The women collectively tradeoff between looking at each other, to the envelope, then to a cellphone or a wrist watch.

AUNT LUCIENNE
(with a forced cheeriness)
Perhaps it's for the best. Whole
place is falling apart...

Pia and Colette remain silent and still. The SOUND of an opening door's hinge SCREECHES.

FISHER (O.S.)
Hey, Col. I need to borrow a
dress...

Fisher walks in, joyously ignorant of what's taking place at the dining room table. She swings a couple of bags of leftovers from the Seasick Cat.

FISHER (CONT'D)
Hey. I brought all the indigestion
you could ever want.

She sets the food down. She's met with furrowed brows and gloomy eyes.

FISHER (CONT'D)
What's this? A séance?

COLETTE
(softly)
We need to talk.

EXT. JUNONIA MOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Fisher bursts through the swaying screen porch door. She's dressed in a cocktail outfit. It is contrary to earlier forms of Fisher. It is the outfit of a femme fatal. A subtle combination of seduction and sophistication.

Colette hurries after her.

COLETTE
None of us wanted this, Fisher.

FISHER
If you don't want to do anything
about it, I will. Believe me when I
say, I will fix this and you can
go.

COLETTE
Where're you going? Fisher!

Colette reaches out to grab Fisher's arm. She halts Fisher.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

You think you're the only person
this affects? I'm in this, too!
Everything you're feeling, I'm
feeling it, too. What's broken is
broken. And there are some things
you just can't fix. We can figure
something else out.

Fisher shoves away from Colette. She climbs into Pia's sedan
and speeds off.

EXT. THE MARINA CLUB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

It is swanky and romantic nouveau place on the water. A dozen
cozy tables for two sit beneath the warm and artificial light
of battery operated candles.

Fisher sits alone nursing a glass of red wine.

WYATT (O.S.)

And to think--

Wyatt comes into view. Dapper and polished. He takes a seat.

WYATT (CONT'D)

--I almost didn't approach you at
that aquarium. You look beautiful.

He bends down and gives her a holy kiss.

WYATT (CONT'D)

And early!

FISHER

Am I not usually?

WYATT

You're always a little late for our
dates. Keep me waiting for an extra
ten-twenty minutes. I gotta admit,
I was getting into it...

FISHER

You said, "date."

WYATT

Can't get anything past you.

A WAITER approaches. He hands off a few decorative and
embossed menus. He departs.

Fisher and Wyatt stare into their menus.

WYATT (CONT'D)
I'd like to have you over for
dinner.

Fisher looks up from her menu.

FISHER
Now? Aren't we eating dinner here?

WYATT
Yes. I meant some other time. At my
place. I finally got the Lady in
Waiting delivered. I want to see if
you approve of where I've placed
it. I think I did a good job. Only
hammered my thumb twice.

Her smile is weak.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
I was only joking.

FISHER
No, it's not that. That was
funny...

WYATT
Is something wrong? You're pensive.

Wyatt catches himself.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
More pensive than usual.

Fisher looks up. Her eyes are heavy with worry.

FISHER
It's just that---

From behind, someone approaches:

COLETTE (O.S.)
Well, hey there, stranger.

Fisher cranes her neck to see Colette, in a fine garment
seemingly made for her, standing poised. She smiles blindly
at Wyatt.

Wyatt sees Colette, gets to his feet.

WYATT
This is a treat.

COLETTE

It is, indeed.

As they embrace, Fisher and Colette exchange tense, angry glares.

Colette and Wyatt part. She and Fisher are all smiles again.

WYATT

Feels like just yesterday...
Melody, this is a friend of mine.
We went to school together at St.
Francis.

Fisher slowly raises her eyes to Colette.

COLETTE

Hey there.

Colette's stare is locked in a kind of pleasantness that's one shade away from mania.

FISHER

Hi. You.

Wyatt eyes Colette and Fisher.

WYATT

Have you both met before?

Colette breaks her stare.

COLETTE

Oh, yes. We're quite acquainted.

Fisher swallows. She reaches for a glass of water.

WYATT

Oh, yeah?

Colette lets the moment linger just long enough.

COLETTE

We have the same stylist.

WYATT

Small world. Melody's helping me
buy some art for my home.

COLETTE

How good of you, Melody.
(with a sweet cruelty)
Tell me, because I wasn't sure—do
you attend St. Francis now?

MELODY

I'm in college. I got to State.

COLETTE

My mistake.

WYATT

Are you feeling any better?

Wyatt affectionately touches Colette's wrist. She, swiftly and politely, shakes off Wyatt's touch.

WYATT (CONT'D)

The last time we met you were a bit under the weather.

Colette smiles through it.

COLETTE

Oh, I'll be alright. You know me, I'm a tough girl.

Wyatt casually smirks and nods. Fisher no longer makes eye contact.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Well, I'll leave you two to your dinner. I just wanted to come by. Have a quick chat.

Colette leans in close to Fisher. She places a gentle hand on her shoulder.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

We'll have to get together sometime, Melody.

Colette kisses the air beside Fisher's cheek. Her gentle hand mildly crushes Fisher's shoulder.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Soon.

Fisher's eyes bulge from the pain. She rebounds with a Waspy laugh.

FISHER

Sure. Yes, of course.

Colette moves through a trio of WAITERS and out of the restaurant.

EXT. THE MARINA CLUB - LATER

Fisher, alone, walks outside. She looks around. Colette emerges from the shadows. They exchange a look.

Fisher begins walking to a crowded parking lot. Colette follows her at a distance.

INT./EXT. PIA'S SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Colette drives. Fisher sits in the passenger's sides, arms folded and looking out the passenger window.

A cheerful, love ballad PLAYS on the radio.

They are both silent.

EXT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Colette and Fisher exit the sedan. Fisher rushes to get inside, but Colette gains on her. She shoves Fisher. Fisher teeters forward.

FISHER

What the hell is wrong with you?

Colette shoves Fisher again.

COLETTE

Are you out of your fucking mind?!

Pia leaves the porch. She comes between Colette and Fisher.

PIA

Whoa! Hey!

COLETTE

You really did lose your mind. You must have!

PIA

Below the belt, Col. Way below.

COLETTE

She's trying to get herself killed.

FISHER

I know what I'm doing.

COLETTE

Oh, yeah? Because it looked like you were having dinner with a murderer, wearing my dress, no less.

Fisher sighs.

PIA

Admittedly, you might've been being reckless with this, Fish. Okay? You know what he's capable of.

FISHER

I'm not a baby. He doesn't know anything, he doesn't suspect anything. I've got him.

A SLENDER WOMAN in a crop-top and cut-off jean shorts approaches the fray. She SNAPS her gum.

SLENDER WOMAN

Sorry. Y'all rent by the hour?

The girls turn their glances at this sight of a woman.

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(with a forced cheeriness)

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Hey, Col. I need to borrow a dress...

Fisher walks in joyously ignorant of what's taking place at the dining room table. She swings a couple of bags of leftovers from the Seasick Cat.

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Hey. I brought all the indigestion
you could ever want.

She sets the food down. She's met with furrowed brows and
gloomy eyes.

FISHER (CONT'D)

What's this? A séance?

COLETTE

(softly)

We need to talk.

FISHER

Should I sit down for this?

Fisher lowers herself into the chair.

AUNT LUCIENNE

I was notified--a few days ago--
that the bank isn't confident we
can make any more payments on the
motel. So, they've decided to take
it.

FISHER

I thought they were going to give
us time.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Someone else put a bid on the land
and--I'm sorry, honey. It's just--

A telephone RINGS. Aunt Lucienne silently excuses herself.

Fisher, Pia, and Colette wait a moment until Aunt Lucienne
is gone.

COLETTE

We need to talk about the thing.

FISHER

The thing?

Colette gives her a look.

Pia digs into the take-away boxes. She discovers double-
stuffed mozzarella sticks.

COLETTE

The thing.

PIA
(chewing)
We need to talk about killing Wyatt
Sharpe.

COLETTE
(in a rushed whisper)
Shh! Yes, we need to talk about
killing Wyatt Sharpe.

FISHER
He came to my job today.

Pia and Colette pause in motion. A moment passes.

COLETTE
Does he know?

FISHER
No, I think it was just a
coincidence. But Ines nearly blew
it.

PIA
Maybe we could tell her. You know,
what's going on.

FISHER
Sure. Let's make a nice spaghetti
dinner and explain to her how her
sister--my best friend--was killed
by Wyatt Sharpe--a man with endless
reach in this town, let alone the
state--and then tossed her into the
ocean like fucking chum.

PIA
(chewing)
Well, when you say it like that it
sounds ridiculous.

Aunt Lucienne re-enters.

AUNT LUCIENNE
In the middle of all this commotion--
-I have to give Ms. Ramos a ride to
bingo.

Aunt Lucienne collects her purse and keys.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONT'D)

I wish I could say no, but if I don't, she'll just try to drive herself and the last time that happened a storefront window paid the price.

(exasperated)

I'm sorry, girls.

FISHER

No, don't worry about it.

COLETTE

Yeah, go.

PIA

We'll be fine.

Aunt Lucienne makes her rounds, kissing the foreheads of Fisher, Pia, and then Colette.

AUNT LUCIENNE

My sweet, sweet girls. We'll be okay. As long as we've got each other.

She heads for the front door.

AUNT LUCIENNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Be good!

FISHER, COLETTE, AND PIA

Okay!

Colette gets right into it.

COLETTE

Look, I think you should cool it for awhile.

FISHER

He's going to figure it out if we back off.

COLETTE

When the monster invites you into his lair, it's usually not for tea. Or in Wyatt's case it is for tea, but the tea is laced with deadly hallucinogens.

PIA

You couldn't get anything off of him in Louisiana?

COLETTE

He's meticulous. The drugs are quick and they don't show up after 24 hours. He pays off the girls he uses as lab rats. Most of them are just drifters.

PIA

What about a PI--a private investigator?

COLETTE

It's gotta be someone we trust. Wyatt's got deep pockets...

Fisher slams her fist against the table.

FISHER

He killed Luna.

Colette and Pia soften.

FISHER (CONT'D)

I'm not backing off.

Fisher leaves the table. She starts to her room. Colette follows her.

FISHER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fisher trashes her room in search of a decent outfit. She is displeased with the array of girlish, child-like dresses sprawled all over the room.

Colette comes to the doorway of her room.

COLETTE

Remember the summer I won Miss Puerto Palmera? I felt like I was on top of the world. And you were convinced there were monsters in your closet. You remember?

Fisher parts a row of dangling dresses in her closet. She sighs and spins around to Colette.

FISHER

Can I borrow something?

COLETTE

You told me that you could hear something crunching at night. Like the snap of tiny bones. You were so sure of it.

FISHER

I'll take that as a yes.

Fisher leaves to Colette's room. Colette follows closely behind.

COLETTE'S BEDROOM

Fisher yanks open the closet doors that sit off the hinge. Colette's selection is much more extensive, more feminine and sophisticated. Fisher delves in.

COLETTE

Turns out it was just a possum that had been wandering in and out of your closet from some little hole in the motel walls. Aunt Luce had that friend come extract it. You know, the one who smelled like grilled cheese.

Fisher selects the femme fatale.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

And I felt terrible because I didn't believe you.

She undresses.

FISHER

You slept in my room for a week.

COLETTE

Reading you fairy tales from that book. One of the only things Mom left behind. There's a monster and a princess and a prince who always swoops in in just the nick of time. Crisis averted.

Fisher slips into it.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)

And I thought I was protecting you. That's exactly what you're doing to Ines.

Fisher goes still.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)
I found Wyatt in New Orleans. And I
talked to him. Not about Luna.
About other things. And for a brief
second I thought--What if Fish is
wrong?

Fisher turns around to face Colette. The dress hanging off
her body, unzipped. A single, hot tear runs down Colette's
face.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)
He invited me to a party and I
went. I told myself I was going to
talk to him about Luna, but I was
going for myself. Me at one of
Wyatt Sharpe's glittering fiascoes.

Colette bows her head.

FLASHBACK - WYATT'S GLITTERING FIASCO

Unconscious Colette is dumped into an old, cruddy bathtub
filled with water. She emerges. GASPING for air. She quickly
pulls a needle from her arm. She CRIES.

BACK TO SCENE.

FISHER
Did something happen?

COLETTE
He's dangerous, Fisher.

The sudden redness in Colette's eyes betray her. Fisher
becomes enraged. She marches out of the room. Colette
follows.

COLETTE (CONTINUOUS)
Please, please listen to me. You
can't do this--I can't let you do
this...

Fisher struggles to zip the back of her gown. She manages.

EXT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - NIGHT

Fisher bursts through the swaying screen porch door. She's
dressed in a cocktail outfit.

From a distance...

Wyatt's POV: Fisher and Colette fight in the drive-way.

COLETTE
(from a distance)
You think anyone of us wanted this,
Fisher?

Wyatt sits in a parked, tinted, luxury sedan just out of sight. He spies on the quarrel between Colette and Fisher. Having heard enough, he slowly rolls up his window.

END OF FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE.

EXT. THE JUNONIA MOTEL - NIGHT

Slender woman. Gum snapping. Crop top.

SLENDER WOMAN
So? Y'all do hourly or not?

FISHER
Um, no.

SLENDER WOMAN
Well, how much is it for a night in
this dump?

FISHER
We don't really--we're not open.
Anymore.

SLENDER WOMAN
There's a big red sign that says
"Vacancy."

PIA
It's broken.

SLENDER WOMAN
Don't look broken.

PIA
Funny. The electrician I know
saves his classier tube tops for
dinner occasions.

SLENDER WOMAN
I'll have you know that I'm a
certified interior decorator, okay?

PIA
Oh, do you have a card? We might need
help tacking curtains on the cardboard

box we'll all probably end up living in.

They fall silent. The woman awkwardly walks away.

COLETTE

(low)

Maybe we can find another way to deal with Wyatt. We can talk to someone. Maybe a private investigator.

FISHER

(lying)

Yeah.

Fisher walks into the house. Colette and Pia linger in the dust of the motel drive-way.

EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK - NIGHT

Fireworks ignite and dissolve over the bay. An orchestra of MUSIC and drunken LAUGHTER float across the water. Bodies--men and women--gallivant dressed in costumes.

CUT TO: A group of young women dressed as: an Egyptian princess, a black cat, a lumberjack, and a mermaid. They walk past...

CUT TO: ...two men engaged in a lover's quarrel. One is dressed as a chocolate chip cookie, the other is carton of milk.

CUT TO: Pia (dressed as the musician Prince) and Colette (dressed as a silent film star) hang-out in a crowd beside a dingy outdoor bar with mildewing tables and chairs.

Fisher hurries up to the scene. She wears no costume, just her work clothes. She carries a large pastry box. She's spotted by Colette and Pia.

COLETTE AND PIA

Hey!

FISHER

Hey! I'm not late. The cake wasn't ready and I had to wait an extra ten minutes for the guy to scrape off "Happy Birthday, Peter" and write "Happy Birthday, Pia" instead.

PIA

Aw, you do love me.

Fisher sets the cake upon a nearby, rickety table.

FISHER

Well, happy birthday!

Fisher reveals the cake. A long square of buttery and sugary goodness. Pia quickly runs her finger over the surface.

PIA

Oh, that's too good.

COLETTE

Where's your costume?

FISHER

Yeah, well. I figured I could just tell everyone I'm a character from a really obscure comic book.

Ines saunters in. She's a vision in a store bought fairy costume. Glitter dances in the corners of her eyes.

INES

About time! Where's your costume?

Fisher SIGHS.

A HUNKY BLOODY SURFER intrudes. He holds his hand out for Colette to take.

BLOODY SURFER

(to Colette)

Wanna dance?

Colette takes his hand. She throws a look of coltishness to the group before she departs with the Bloody Surfer.

INES

And another one bites the dust.

FISHER

You look so pretty. And fantastical.

Ines shakes her pearly, plastic wings at Fisher. She and Pia eat handfuls of cake.

INES

Seriously, why didn't you dress up?

PIA

I know, you always made my birthdays so much fun because you and Luna were so--

Pia catches herself.

FISHER

No, it's fine. Halloween's okay. I just wanted to bring your cake. Maybe grab a beer with a friend--

INES

Is this friend Sawyer Temps?

FISHER

Not that it's any of your business but--why is my aunt here?

Aunt Lucienne parts herself from the thumping crowd. She waves manically at Fisher as she approaches. She's Stevie Nicks.

Fisher and Aunt Lucienne greet each other with quick embrace.

AUNT LUCIENNE

(laboring to breath)

I've been out there all night. Where were you?

Surprised, Fisher turns to Pia.

Aunt Lucienne runs a maternal hand against the humidity-induced frizz of Fisher's hair.

PIA

I told her if she didn't come, I'd do something more irresponsible than usual.

AUNT LUCIENNE

Oh, honey. You didn't bring a costume.

FISHER

Think I'll get a ticket for it? Because I haven't paid the last one...

Pia grabs Ines's hand.

PIA

Come on, I wanna dance!

They abandon Fisher and Aunt Lucienne.

Worn out by the night, Aunt Lucienne takes a seat in a cracking plastic chair. A sigh escapes her, the combination of mental and physical exhaustion.

AUNT LUCIENNE
I think we all needed this.

Fisher takes the seat next to Aunt Lucienne.

FISHER
I'm sorry I couldn't fix it. I
thought we'd have more time.

Aunt Lucienne LAUGHS.

AUNT LUCIENNE
Honestly, I'm relieved.

FISHER
(surprised)
What?

AUNT LUCIENNE
I loved your father. But the motel--
it was his thing. Never mine.

FISHER
Why didn't you just walk away? I
mean, we could've made it work
somewhere else.

AUNT LUCIENNE
I guess I just wasn't ready.

Aunt Lucienne mildly slaps Fisher's knee.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONT'D)
Deep subject for shallow minds. You
should be having fun.

CUT TO: Pia, Colette, Ines, and Bloody Surfer dancing in an
circle. They LAUGH wickedly as they spin and steal sips from
their sloppy drink cups.

The warmth of a smile creeps over Fisher's face.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONT'D)
Oh! Your friend is here. He was
dressed as Cupid.

Aunt Lucienne stretches her neck inquest for Fisher's friend.

AUNT LUCIENNE (CONT'D)
He was wearing this creepy coat--
oh. There.

Aunt Lucienne points in a definite direction. Fisher's eyes
follows her gesture.

CUPID sits at distance, menacing, taking in the sight of the moving world before him. His costume is evocative of Venetian elegance. A velvet Venetian cape the color of midnight, trimmed with gold. Concealing his face, an emotionless cherub mask.

Fisher looks at Cupid with a quiet uncertainty. Fisher looks back to Aunt Lucienne, who's already taken her place back in the giant, dancing organism.

Fisher gleefully, but cautiously, encounters Cupid sitting in a bar booth.

FISHER

Hey, Sawyer.

She waves a hand in front of his face.

FISHER (CONT'D)

It's Fisher. I know you probably couldn't tell it was me under this very cool, very thoughtful costume I have on.

Fisher slides in next to him. She appraises his costume.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Pretty twisted. I thought you'd throw on a name tag and label yourself as some angst-y male protagonist from a Nick Hornby novel.

The MUSIC pounds on. Cupid slides a beer toward her. Fisher accepts it.

FISHER (CONT'D)

I know this sounds weird, but I actually did kind of remember you-- from the lip biting thing. I was embarrassed. I mean, you never brought it up and I felt weird bringing it up.

Fisher lets herself get more comfortable in the booth beside Cupid.

FISHER (CONT'D)

I kind of had this issue. It was just a thing that happened after my friend died.

(MORE)

FISHER (CONT'D)

I started--I had a hard time figuring out what was actually true and what was in my head. So, some of my memories--I don't know--I have to second guess.

Cupid is unresponsive. Fisher picks away at the wet beer label.

FISHER (CONT'D)

You probably think I'm crazy now, right?

Cupid shakes his head.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Hey, you okay?

Cupid slowly nods. Fisher takes a few quick sips of beer.

SAWYER (O.S.)

Hey.

Surprised, Fisher turns. Sawyer wears a HELLO MY NAME IS... tag with the name "ROB GORDON" sloppily written in black marker.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Am I interrupting?

Fisher calmly puts down the beer. She casually slides out of the booth.

FISHER

(to Cupid in a whisper)
I'm really sorry.

Fisher takes Sawyer's hand and scampers away from Cupid and the bar.

CUT TO: Fisher and Sawyer become indistinct as they surge through a mob of moving bodies. Cupid removes his mask. Beneath it, is Wyatt. He seethes.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Fisher and Sawyer stroll. They are casually passed by a DRUNKEN DOUGHNUT and a MUSING BLACK CAT.

SAWYER

Don't worry about it. Water under the bridge. Besides, it gave me a pretty dope story to tell people.

FISHER

Oh, yeah?

SAWYER

Yeah, I tell people I used to wrestle gators at Seasaw Joe's.

FISHER

Uh-huh. Pretty small bite for an alligator.

SAWYER

What you don't know is infant gator wrestling is an extremely competitive sport.

FISHER

(laughing)

Oh, I didn't realize.

SAWYER

Baby gators are strong. And aggressive. Especially the females.

Fisher nods her head in sarcastic agreement.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Deadliest of the species.

Sawyer glances at Fisher. She watches a display of fireworks.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Hey, listen. A friend of mine told me something the other day and I didn't want to hide it from--I just want to put it out there...

FISHER

What?

SAWYER

You dated Tim Midberry?

Fisher palms her face.

FISHER

Oh, God. That's going to haunt me forever isn't it?

Sawyer laughs.

SAWYER

Hey, that's okay. I've got some bad exes, too.

FISHER

Tim wasn't bad. Just chatty. Too chatty.

Fisher's face alights with the dying light of fire flowers. Her childlike tenderness has been washed away.

FISHER

I actually used to love Halloween.

Fisher takes a quick glance behind. The sudden crackle of colored fire in the sky settles on Cupid, standing motionless and frightening from afar.

SAWYER (O.S.)

You okay?

Fisher squeezes her eyes closed. She opens them again.

FISHER

Yeah. I think--I think I better go home.

SAWYER

Was it something I said?

FISHER

No, I-I just need to go home.

Fisher hurries ahead. Sawyer stays behind. He drops his head and rubs the back of his neck.

The opaqueness of the night is severed by short-lived sparks of color. This brief luminescence exposes the cloaked presence of an army of ominous storm clouds drifting in.

INT. MORTUARY - DAY

A pair of costly and ornamental coffins rest side-by-side in the showroom. A soft and wet CRUNCH comes from within.

CUT TO: Pia and Fisher lie inside the coffins. Pia MUNCHES on an apple in the pastel blue coffin. Fisher reads a lovingly-worn edition of Bret Easton Ellis' American Psycho in the mahogany number lined with purple velvet.

PIA

All I'm saying now is a good time to get started on our bucket lists. I, for one, think we should consider moving to the Mojave Desert to raise a cacti farm.

Fisher sets down her book.

FISHER

Cacti?

PIA

Low-maintenance.

Fisher raises her book to her face again.

PIA (CONT'D)

So, we gonna do it?

FISHER

(from behind the face of
Patrick Bateman)

I'm not moving to the desert.

PIA

No, I'm going to ask you what's on your mind and you're going to say "Nothing, I'm fine" because you think you have to swallow this whole universe alone. And you'll keep saying "I'm fine" until we're ninety-years-old because you think that eventually I'll get irritated and stop bothering you. But I'm your sister. And I'm going to be a pain in your ass for the rest of your life.

Fisher smiles.

PIA

Sooner or later, Wyatt's going to get sloppy and do something stupid. It's just a matter of time.

FISHER

I know.

MR. BROWN, a tiny man with a pencil-thin mustache dressed in a cheap brown suit, makes his presence known with a long, audible SIGH.

MR. BROWN

Pia Franklin, I thought I was very clear about *where* you may take your lunch breaks.

Pia sits up. She takes a final bite of her apple.

PIA

But the break room is so quiet. At least here it makes sense.

Fisher tries to conceal herself by shrinking further into the casket.

MR. BROWN
Out, Pia. Come on.

Pia reluctantly crawls out of the coffin.

MR. BROWN (CONTINUOUS)
Fisher. It's been nice visiting
with you...

FISHER (O.S.)
You, too, Mr. Brown...

Fisher crawls out of the coffin with the careful and considerate movement of a child who's been scolded. Then, she hurries to the exit.

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)
(To Pia; quickly)
See you at home.

EXT. MORTUARY - MOMENTS LATER

Fisher kicks up the stand on her bicycle. She tucks the paperback into her back pocket. Her phone CHIMES. She answers.

FISHER
Hello?

His voice comes through like a smooth, coarse wind:

WYATT (V.O.)
Melody?

EXT. THE SHARPE ESTATE - DUSK

An aerial shot of a peninsula burdened by a gorgeous, stone mansion. It has the appeal of a scaled-down Sultan's palace.

A luxury sedan sails down a long, unraveling pathway to the home.

CLOSE ON: Fisher, baby-faced, looks out into the cliff-side drive behind a tinted sedan window.

A pair of magnificent iron gates open up to an abundantly green and manicured courtyard.

Fisher is escorted from the car by a unseen DRIVER WITH WHITE GLOVES. She takes in the sun setting on the magnificent estate. She wears a white dress, suggestive of a child's doll. She cradles a bottle of champagne.

From above, there is a sudden departure from the window that leaves a curtain swaying...

INT. SHARPE ESTATES - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC reverberates throughout. Down into a lofty hallway filled with portraits of illustrious figures..

...And inside an empty parlor room with endless windows hosting the spying glow of a radiant and lonely moon.

On the wall, hangs the Juan De Creete portrait Wyatt had earlier purchased. Lady in Waiting.

EXT. SHARPE ESTATES - TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

The ocean hungrily crashes below. The MUSIC reaches Fisher and Wyatt. They sit at a long, regally dressed table.

WYATT

I'm thrilled you finally made it here. I was beginning to think that maybe I scared you away.

FISHER

Not at all. I just found that I needed some--reevaluating.

WYATT

Anything I could help with?

FISHER

Not right this moment.

WYATT

You are so full of secrets. Just once I'd like to crawl in there...

Wyatt gestures to Fisher's skull.

WYATT (CONT'D)

And walk around.

FISHER

You might not like what you see.

WYATT

Oh, I doubt that. Something tells me that we're two birds of a feather.

Two BUTLERS enter. They approach Fisher and Wyatt respectively and set forth two silver dome platters.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I requested this especially for tonight.

The food is announced with a swift lifting of the dome from the platter. Inside is a baked red snapper fish with clouded eyes fixed in a dead stare.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I hope you like grilled fish.

Fisher offers an uneasy smile. Wyatt returns it with an unshaken coolness.

A butler uncorks Fisher's champagne bottle with an unexpected POP. She jumps at the sound.

WYATT (CONT'D)

You're a bit tense tonight,
sweetheart. Are you feeling well?

The butler serves up two bubbling amber-filled flutes.

FISHER

Yes, I'm fine. Just caffeinated.

Fisher eyes her formal place setting.

WYATT (O.S.)

I'm not a big drinker, but I do
love champagne. I think it's the
sentiment of it that gets to me.

Fisher's eyes roaming over the expertly polished dinner knife. Her reflection stares back at her in the sharp, glistening utensil.

Fisher unfolds her linen napkin. She slides it onto her lap.

FISHER

Looks delicious.

Wyatt does the same.

WYATT

How about a toast?

Wyatt raises his glass. Fisher limply lifts her glass.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Hm, how about...To sentiment?

Fisher echoes:

FISHER

To sentiment.

Wyatt takes in a long sample. Fisher takes a terse sip.

They begin to eat. It is a careful orchestration of music and silver hitting porcelain.

Wyatt breaks the silence.

WYATT

How did I do with the Juan De Creete in the parlor? I wasn't sure if that was a good place for it...

FISHER

It's beautiful. Perfect, really.

Another silent moment passes between them.

WYATT

You know, I've got something to confess.

Fisher looks up from her meal. Wyatt continues to cut into his food.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I haven't been able to get my mind off of you. Ever since I saw you at the aquarium.

Wyatt takes in a miniscule bite of fish to savor.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I can't tell you how often a man in my position encounters beautiful women. Part of the lifestyle, I suppose. But it's rare to encounter a woman who's so...informal. And when I saw you...Well there was something behind those eyes. A kind of freedom I've seen before in someone else.

Fisher stops mid-chew.

WYATT (CONT'D)

You see, I knew I had met you before. I just couldn't for the life of me figure out where. There I am, in my parlor, staring this Juan De Creete painting, and it hits me. BOOM!

Wyatt SLAMS his fist on the table. The china CLATTERS. Fisher sharply inhales.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I remembered these girlish, daydreaming eyes...This black-haired girl with a moon shaped scar just above her clavicle. The most enchanting thing.

INT. AQUARIUM - QUICK FLASHBACK - DAY

Luna, with a raised moon-shaped scar, stands before an endlessly blue aquarium. She suddenly looks to Wyatt O.S. Her face is ablaze with the smile of a girl who's become suddenly and grievously stricken with infatuation.

WYATT (V.O.)

And I remember asking her if she was alone. And she mentioned her friend with an unusual name...

At a distance, Fisher watches on. Wyatt glances over only once to get a look at her before he returns his eyes back to Luna.

CLOSE ON: Luna mouths "FISHER" MOS...

WYATT (V.O.)

Fisher.

BACK TO SCENE.

Wyatt picks up his champagne glass and relaxes back into his chair.

WYATT

It's like something out of an opera, isn't it? A peasant girl cloaks herself as a prosperous artist to deceive a prince.

Wyatt takes the final sip from his champagne flute before casually tossing it onto the marble floors, causing the glass to SHATTER.

Fisher's body tenses. She is still.

WYATT (CONT'D)

My mother used to take me to the opera. Never my brother, although he's always been a lover of the Arts. And I never did catch on to it too well. But it was just something she and I did together until she died. Very slowly.

Wyatt falls into a deep stare for a moment. He snaps out of it.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Even then, as a kid, I hated the operas with tragic endings. But there's something about the sad endings that sticks to your ribs.

Wyatt plucks the opened champagne bottle from a sweating

bucket of ice. He brings it to his lips and drinks in a series of careless gulps.

WYATT (CONT'D)

My favorite was the one with the witches. Do you know which one I'm talking about? Why am I asking you-- you probably grew up watching some antiquated game show program.

Fisher side-eyes her now fish smeared knife. She inches her hand towards it.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I'll enlighten you. This poor peasant girl dies because love broke her pure little heart. And these witches--these nosy, fucking witches--come and raise her up with the intent of killing her lover...

Wyatt takes in another sip of champagne. Fisher shakily closes her eyes in a long, slow blink.

WYATT (CONT'D)

But she can't do it. She chickens out. God--What was the name of it?

Wyatt sits back and stares at Fisher with an intimidating silence. He SLAMS the champagne bottle down onto the table as he shouts:

WYATT (CONT'D)

La traviata! Yes. Yes.

He rubs his face, a sort of mania coming over him. He stares into Fisher as if she were solely meant for scrutinizing. A slow, sensual smile creeps across his face.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I know you're thinking of running. Maybe stabbing me with that knife. Do you like it, the silver? It belonged to an Italian Count. It was given to my family by a good, dear friend.

Wyatt lifts his own knife. He inspects it for defects.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Very well preserved. Truthfully, if you eluded me, you could probably make it as far as the courtyard. But you'll find that I've sent the driver away and it's just miles and miles of Sharpe territory.

He leaps from his chair and sends it sailing to the floor

with a vibrating THUD. He stabs the knife into the table.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Let's go for a walk!

He hurries to Fisher, snatching her up brutishly by her arm. Fisher looks to the butlers standing in the room. They are stone pillars to this fray.

Wyatt drags Fisher carelessly into an elevator. Fisher unsuccessfully tries to shove away.

FISHER

Let go--Let me go! Where are we going?

INT. SHARPE ESTATE - INDOOR POOL - MOMENTS LATER

An elevator chime DINGS. The doors peel open. Wyatt, bullying Fisher along, steps out. He stumbles forward a bit.

Before them is a glorious indoor pool. Its setting is tranquil and regal. A glassy watery surface stretching over yards.

WYATT

Do you think love changes the course of fate? Or is it just one of those things where you have a choice in who you love?

Wyatt roughly shakes an answer from Fisher.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)

Well?!

FISHER

I don't know--I don't know!

Wyatt pulls Fisher further into the room.

WYATT

I need you to know--listen to me--

Wyatt harshly pinches Fisher's cheeks in between his fingers.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)

I need you to know that it wasn't premeditated. You see, I go out every so often and look for my perfect little slice of fate. Life here can be so dull with all the clenched jaws and when money is involved sometimes love gets in the way, you see.

Wyatt releases Fisher to roll up his sleeves. He takes ahold of her quickly after he's finished.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
And sometimes things get out of
hand, but I can usually fix it.
Money is magical that way. It can
make Angels into Demons. Make
people disappear...reappear.

They come to the shallow end of the pool.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
But it happened so unexpectedly.

INT. SHARPE ESTATE - IN DOOR POOL - QUICK FLASHBACK

Luna, in a yellow dampened gown, convulses on the floor of
the pool room. She gasps for air. Her eyes looking toward the
doors of a massive green elevator.

Her eyes roll back. Her body quickly snaps up and down. Wyatt
shakes her. He screams MOS.

CUT TO:

Luna's dead eyes stare off into a bleak, slate sky hanging
over the ocean. An eternal gaze of sorrow. Seagulls CAW in
the distance. Her body stirs with the chaotic motion of a
rocking boat moving in an uneasy sea. A pair of gloved hands,
butler's gloves, roll Luna's lifeless body into the ocean.

BACK TO SCENE.

Wyatt squints to try and focus. He tries to shake off a
sudden haziness that's come over him before he continues:

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
You see, it was really just a
terrible accident. Unforeseeable.
And when I found out who you really
were I thought--foolishly, I
thought--maybe this is my true
slice of fate born out of a
tragedy. Maybe something deep down
inside of you sought me out because
you're just as lonely as I am...

Wyatt takes in a deep breath. He COUGHS.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
But I saw that you decided another
path...

Wyatt labors to swallow.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
I'm not ashamed to admit that my
feelings were hurt. In fact, I'm
still tender to it.

Fisher tries to shake away. Wyatt holds her tighter.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
But I'm resilient.

Wyatt palms his forehead. He shakes his head to shake something off.

Fisher moves in dangerously close to Wyatt's face.

FISHER
(lustfully)
I sought you out because I wanted
to look into your eyes as you bled
out on my cheap linoleum floor...

Wyatt regains himself. He backhands Fisher. Hard. She recoils. Her lip, now split, bleeds. Blood drips down the front of her white dress.

WYATT
I just needed you to know that it
wasn't premeditated. There's a
difference.

Wyatt takes another deep breath.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
Here, let me demonstrate.

Wyatt gives Fisher's lips a quick, hard kiss. Fisher's blood smeared across his lips, he grips the back of her neck and slings her forward into the pool.

Fisher swings her arms in panic. Wyatt holds her face down into the water.

Wyatt's POV: The sight of Fisher struggling begins to blur.

He blinks several times.

She finally falls still. Wyatt struggles to steady himself. He wobbles as he stands. He gradually makes his way to the elevator.

INT. SHARPE ESTATE - PARLOR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The moonlight intrudes. Wyatt stumbles in. He LAUGHS at himself. He walks past a handsome, leather captain's chair where a fresh pair of clothes are neatly pressed and folded.

Wyatt picks up a telephone from a marble stand. He dials. It rings. He waits for an answer.

WYATT

Hello? Yes, could you send for--

A forceful, feminine GRUNT of a throat clearing resonates. Alarmed, Wyatt's eyes search for the sound. The room is clear, with the exception of its dark corners.

TELEPHONE (V.O.)
(faintly)
Hello? Sir? Hello?

Colette emerges from the shadows of the west corner. She wears a sparkling dinner gown, a throwback to the 1920s. Her dark eyes glowing mad. Her mouth pulled back in a haunting smile.

COLETTE
Well, hey there, stranger.

The long RIP of masking tape sounds. Wyatt's eyes dart from Colette to the east corner where Pia emerges, in a ratty old band t-shirt and cut off jeans, ripping of a strip of masking tape from a roll.

PIA
Sorry, I didn't get the Black tie
only memo.

Wyatt shakily hangs up the phone.

The wet SLAP of footsteps float in.

Fisher, wet to the bone and a bloody mess, steps out of an eerie silhouette in the doorway into the parlor.

Wyatt collapses into himself, knocking over a whiskey tumbler of cut-crystal.

PIA (CONT'D)
(sing-songy)
Someone had too much to drink with
dinner.

He looks on, helpless and dumbfounded.

FISHER
What can I say?

Fisher comes to him. She bends down to meet his eyes.

FISHER (CONT'D)
I like to play with my food before
I eat.

The dark, menacing eyes of the Juan De Creete painting pierce into Wyatt. A joyful witness.

Fisher throws her arm back. Her fist collides with his face.

Wyatt's POV - Things go black.

The women collect over Wyatt's unconscious body.

COLETTE

We've got to move him.

A massive figure materializes behind Colette. It is the Driver with White Gloves--Basil.

BASIL

I'll be quick.

INT. EMBURG ESTATE - TULIP'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sunlight pours in from a great number of white curtains swaying in an indecisive wind.

Tulip sits at a vanity. She wears a dress made of a million pieces of sea glass and wire. A large traveling trunk sits beside her.

She scribbles on a piece of pink vellum paper.

INT. THE SEASICK CAT BAR AND GRILLE - NIGHT

IN THE KITCHEN

Fisher's face is brilliant with a deep, plum bruise and a symmetrically split lip. She drops a basket of fries into the hot oil.

The kitchen's back door is ajar. Basil smokes a cigarette and gently sways to the rhythm of the JAZZ MUSIC.

Ines pushes her way in through the doors. The CHATTER of a rumpus bar coming on strong and then growing faint with the dying swing of the doors.

INES

Crystal's going to cover your tables. So, you can cut out early.

FISHER

Thanks. I just have a couple of things I gotta get done. I hate leaving you guys hanging, especially on a Friday--

Ines gently grabs Fisher's shoulders as she rambles.

INES

Whatever it is, just go do it. Before you bore me to death.

Pia walks in through the same doors Ines entered.

PIA
(to Ines)
Ey, baby.

INES
You don't work here.

PIA
That's a hard thing to prove in a
place like this, isn't it?

Ines moves to leave. She points a playful, accusing finger at Pia.

INES
Stay out of trouble.

PIA
(punkishly)
Never!

Fisher stops Ines. She hugs her. Ines is taken back, but it's a welcomed hug. She pats Fisher's back.

FISHER
I love you.

INES
I love you.

Ines takes a good look at Fisher. She LAUGHS.

INES (CONTINUOUS)
Goofy-ass girl.

Ines exits.

PIA
(to Fisher)
You ready to go?

Fisher unties her waist apron and stuffs a wad of tips into her back pocket.

FISHER
Yeah. You mind if we make a stop at
Emburg after? I gotta take these
fries to Miss Tulip.

She lifts the oil saturated fries from the fryer and dumps them into a To-Go box.

PIA
Yeah, we gotta stop at the market,

too. Colette forgot the butter...

Fisher and Pia head out. They wave to a dancing and grilling Basil. He cheerfully waves back.

BASIL
(singing)
"What becomes of the broken
hearted..."

EXT. THE SEASICK CAT BAR AND GRILLE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The gravel glistens freshly wet from a storm. Pia's sedan rides off.

EXT. THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES - NIGHT

Pinpricks of starlight peak through the beautiful, mangled arms of cypress trees. A soft sheet of rain creates a transcendental fog.

Pia steadily captains an airboat. Colette sits beside her. An ensemble of crickets and cicadas SING into the night.

Fisher watches Wyatt, who is spread on the floor of the boat. Still bound and gagged. Fully conscious.

FISHER
Giselle.

Wyatt looks up, answering Fisher's statement.

FISHER (CONTINUOUS)
The opera you were talking about
before--with the poor dead girl,
and the witches. It's Giselle. Not
La traviata.

A sense of discovery spreads over Wyatt's eyes.

The airboat comes to a stop. Colette and Wyatt hustle to his feet. Pia rips the tape from Wyatt's mouth.

WYATT
What's going on? What're you doing?

Colette unties his hands.

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
You--You're letting me go?

COLETTE
No.

PIA
Not really.

FISHER
Symmetry is kind of important to
me. So, here we are.

The weather begins to kick up. The trees bend further as the
wind grows stronger. New rain begins to fall in fat, heavy
droplets.

WYATT
Wait--look. I know it doesn't mean
anything, but I'm sorry.
(MORE)

WYATT (CONTINUOUS)
I really did try to help her. I
really did try.

FISHER
Instead of calling the police so
her family could have a body to
bury and some peace of mind, you
threw her away.

WYATT
Don't destroy yourself, Fisher.
Please. You're a good girl. You all
are. We can work this out. This
isn't who you're supposed to be...

Fisher leans in with the closeness of intimacy.

FISHER
You know, I can't help but feel
like this is just one of those
things where the universe puts
someone in front of you. And you
just go with it.

Fisher ceremoniously kicks Wyatt into the swamp. He lands on
his back. He splashes around and comes up GASPING for air.

A pair of large yellow, reptile iris' surface. And then
another. And another.

Wyatt frantically looks around for safety. To his horror,
there is none.

Pia starts up the airboat. It RUMBLES with purpose.

Wyatt is left behind in a deep, wet darkness.

EXT. THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES - NIGHT

The back tires of Pia's car spin uselessly, trapped in a bank
of thick mud. Fisher and Colette try to roll the sedan
forward.

Pia accelerates.

PIA (O.S.)

Try again.

TULIP (V.O.)

"My Dear Little Minnow..."

EXT. EMBURG ESTATE - COURTYARD - SAME

The Estate is lit from every window. A great, bright champagne light pours from it. Welcoming and divine.

TULIP (V.O.)

"I only ask that you don't cry. You know how I hate overwrought emotions, even in my absence..."

With a bold, jewel-boned scarf wrapped around her head, Tulip walks to a luxury automobile that awaits her. In her hand, she carries boons from her garden. Fat mangoes and green, wax-y avocados. She is not somber, but sentimental. She's greeted by a KINDLY CHAUFFEUR.

TULIP (V.O.)

"I'm leaving you with a full heart...."

An ANIMAL HANDLER rushes by. He's followed by a humanely restrained gator, Noah.

TULIP

Careful with my darling now. We have a long way to go.

ANIMAL HANDLER

Yes, ma'am.

Noah crawls into an animal transportation vehicle.

The Kindly Chauffeur guides Tulip into the car. Tulip gets one last, good look at her massive heirloom. She smiles.

TULIP

See you later, Alligator.

The car moves forward. It is closely followed by the animal transportation vehicle.

EXT. THE GLADES - SAME

Colette and Fisher push their weight into the back of the car while Pia accelerates. The car jerks forward.

Now covered in a thick layer of mud and swamp, the trio pile into the car and ride off away from the storm.

EXT. EMBURG ESTATES - NIGHT

Pia's car pulls up to the courtyard. The estate is breathtakingly lit from the ground floor to the very top towers.

MISS TULIP (V.O.)

"...with a bit of wisdom--there's no practical use in remember what is real. Hold on to what is true. I also leave you a bit of earth. My palace by the sea..."

INT. EMBURG ESTATE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Inside waits a Grecian statue of Athena. The owl on her shoulder clutches a note written on pink vellum addressed to "My Dear Little Minnow."

Fisher opens the note.

MISS TULIP (V.O.)

"...and the last breath of Juan De Creete."

INT. EMBURG ESTATE - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fisher somberly shuffles inside. She leaves a track of soot behind her.

In the dead center of the ballroom, Tulip's art easel and canvas sit covered with a silk bed sheet.

Fisher approaches it and with a lackadaisical effort, she pulls the sheet from the canvas.

She is met by an exquisite painting bearing a most detailed resemblance to Luna.

Fisher chokingly LAUGHS through her tears.

INT./EXT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Luna closes the book. She looks up and is greeted with the bewildered stares of Nina and Kelly Ming.

LUNA

You asked for it.

The gramophone begins to PLAY a new song. A sentimental, upbeat tempo evocative of Jimmy Ruffin's "What Becomes of The Broken Hearted."

LUNA (CONT'D)

God, I love this song.

She knowingly HUMS its tune, swaying back and forth.

LUNA (CONT'D)

"But happiness is just an illusion
with sadness and confusion..."

Kelly Ming and Nina share a giggle.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Come on!

In an excited frenzy, Luna jumps up. She moves herself back and forth in an informal Cha-cha, intoxicated by the music.

Nina and Kelly get on their feet. Together, the trio dance against the backdrop of a large, alive aquarium.

Their LAUGHTER echoes throughout the giant, Angelic palace.

END.

But it ain't over yet...

INT. THE SWAMP MARKET - NIGHT

A block of butter lazily moves along a conveyer belt. Betty, the clerk girl, moves the butter through a laser sensor with a quick and routine BEEP.

Her face is contorted with confusion and uncertainty.

A pair of very muddy and wet girls, Colette and Pia, stand at the check-out counter.

They are unaware of the Betty's disorientation. Pia flips through a gossip rag and pets a once pristine--now muddy--obese, white cat.

Colette scans the last-minute row of candy at the register. She tosses a package of peppermint gum onto the belt.

COLETTE

This as well. Thank you.

Betty rings it up. BEEP. Colette reaches over to hand her a few damp bills. Despite the grime, she still operates with

the dignified posturing of a true lady.

COLETTE (CONT'D)
Don't you just love Fridays?

IN THE FREEZER SECTION

Sawyer cuts open a box of frozen burritos. He begins to stack them as he's approached.

FISHER (O.S.)
Hey.

A trail of muddy shoe prints collect behind Fisher. Sawyer, working past his initial surprise, greets her with a casual nod. He can't suppress an eager grin.

SAWYER
Hey.

Fisher smiles.

BEEP.

FADE OUT.

END.

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