

THE SWELLS

Written by

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1

EXT. LAKE GERARD, NEW JERSEY - EARLY MORNING

1

A quiet lake extending as far as the eye can see, surrounded by thick woods.

Low hanging mist creeps along the glassy surface of the water.

A WAR CRY ECHOES in the distance. It sounds distinctly animal, yet there's something eerily human about it.

As if activated by the cry -- a SWELL SURGES to the surface of the water. Quickly begins to travel across the lake.

We rush to follow its charging path--

2

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - MORNING

2

A small, square house stands on stilts along the edge of a steep surface of rocks. The lake beside it.

It looks like the sort of place a few hippies haphazardly built and then forgot. Cracks in the foundation, a slope to the entire structure. Moss growing all around it... Surrounded by trees. Easily lost.

Two FIGURES walk alongside the house. One of them speaks:

DON
Gimme a hand with this, will ya?

LOLA
No, actually I was planning to just sit here and watch.

PRELAP: A creaky door OPENS. Feet POUND ACROSS strained wooden floorboards.

3

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - BASEMENT LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

3

Light streams through the slats of the home's wooden deck. It flickers -- interrupted by the heavy FOOTSTEPS of our characters overhead.

DON (O.S.)
Ew. "TMI."

LOLA (O.S.)
That ship sailed, Pop, kids don't say "TMI" nowadays.

The front door opens overhead. SLAMS SHUT.

4 INT. LAKE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

4

An open area layout that somehow feels like a small, dark cave. The air doesn't move around much in here.

We catch a glimpse of our characters as they pick up something heavy, and head back out onto the deck in tandem.

Our gaze is fixed, we can't manage to follow them as we push in further, towards a juncture of doors in the hallway--

DON

These pieces of shit haven't fallen apart yet?

LOLA

Nope.

5 INT. LAKE HOUSE - NEXT

5

Our view reversed. We continue to move back towards those two doorways...

Through the front windows we can finally see the two clearly as they set up furniture and continue their banter:

DON

You girls hate change, or what?

DON (50s) white, handsome face swollen from years of substance abuse. He's got the mean look of a guy who'd fight you just for making a face at him.

LOLA

(deliberately ignoring him)

How was L.A.?

LOLA (early 30s) a mane of wild red hair made even more striking by her bright red lipstick, has the same meanness in her eyes as Don, but much softer features.

DON

Great, man.

(laughs to himself)

Did I tell you what Coop did?

LOLA

Not yet.

DON

We're at the Dan Tana's, you 'member that place?

DON (CONT'D)
So we're sitting, smoking cigars,
having a few laughs, you know the
usual.

LOLA
Uhuh.

They're setting up furniture on the deck for the season: a table, chairs, loungers, faded shade umbrella...

DON
All of a sudden the fucker turns
and says to me, "How much you wanna
bet I can't get someone in this
restaurant to think I'm Tom
Cruise?"

LOLA
Tom Cruise?

DON
That's what I said. 'No fucking way
anyone's gonna see you as Tom
Cruise, Coop. Maybe Howard Dean if
you're lucky.'

LOLA
Uhuh. So then what happened?

DON
That sonofabitch convinced some
little old Thai lady that he's
motherfucking Tom Cruise!

LOLA
Nice. Real nice.

DON
What? It wasn't me! It was Cooper!

LOLA
Yeah and then?

DON
Well I got to be Mel Gibson.

LOLA
Mel Gibson? Actually, that's
appropriate.

DON
(as *Braveheart*)
"...But they cannot take our
freedom!"

LOLA
(as Mel Gibson)
...to hit our wives!

DON
Yeah! Well. No.

Lola cackles. She enters the house. Don follows her.

DON (CONT'D)
Come on be nice to your old man!

LOLA
Maybe I would be if I didn't know
you so well.

DON
Ouch! Low blow.

LOLA
Oh yeah we're keeping things
strictly class here, Don.

6 INT. LAKE HOUSE - BASEMENT - NEXT

6

It's dark. A crack of light from an old wooden door.
FOOTSTEPS approach outside.

DON (O.S.)
So what happened with that fool you
were dating? Whatshisface weird guy
or somethin'.

The stiff wooden door is FORCED OPEN. Lola at the helm. Don
beside her.

Don bats at the dust flying around his face.

DON (CONT'D)
Wow, it's a fucking mess down here.

LOLA
Don't be such a wuss.

7 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

7

We can see his point: the basement is filled to the low
ceiling with a giant mound of dirt. Forgotten objects shoved
all around it, covered in cobwebs.

LOLA
Well after you, Braveheart.

8 INT. LAKE HOUSE - BASEMENT - NEXT

8

Lola and Don crouch and crawl as they make their way around the dirt.

They maneuver past a newer pile of clutter: a walker, a bed pan, paraphernalia of a terminal illness lived out in the home.

DON

Don't you wanna get rid of that shit already?

Lola brushes past him, pointed.

LOLA

You're such a fucking asshole.

DON

Meow. So sensitive...

They find what they were looking for: a big, rusted Plexiglas and metal rowboat.

Don and Lola each take one end--

A FLICKER of light as they bend and lift -- a gruesome, mauled carcass FLASHES before our eyes--

Lola SCREAMS. Drops her end of the boat. Dust flies into the air.

A large, brown SPIDER ambles away from the boat, shaken.

Don laughs, beside himself.

DON (CONT'D)

That tiny lil' thing?!

LOLA

Fuck you. Get your own boat.

She moves to exit the dark, cramped basement.

DON

Hey! Where you going? You can't just leave an old man to move his own boat!

Don waits for Lola to entertain his joke.

The light on his face disappears, then returns as she passes through the doorway.

DON (CONT'D)
 (feigning desperation)
 Loooooolaaaaaaaa!!!!

CUT TO:

9 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - SHORELINE - DAY

9

A steep, stone stairwell leads to a small dirt landing that drops into the lake.

Don and Lola carefully carry the rowboat down the stairs, Lola taking them backwards.

Don moves slightly faster than Lola, plays his control of the boat against her. She's agitated.

Her steps are uncertain. It seems like she could fall at any moment.

LOLA
 Stop!

Lola digs her heel into the stair and puts the brakes on Don.

DON
 Calm down.

LOLA
 And then what, break my neck?

DON
 You're not falling on my watch.
 Trust me. Your dad knows what he's doing.

LOLA
 That's almost the dumbest shit
 you've said today.

DON
 Okay just *chill out*, will ya?

They finally get to the bottom of the stairs.

They carry the boat over to the edge of the dirt. Rest it on the ground.

Lola exhales a sigh of relief. Don pats her on the back.

DON (CONT'D)
 Congratulations, you've made it
 down the stairs.

Lola shoves his hand off, brushing past him. She heads back up the steps -- STOMPING, her feet threatening violence.

DON (CONT'D)
When did you get to be such a sourpuss?
(pointed)
You're turning into your mother,
for christssakes.

LOLA
Nice, Don. Real nice.

DON
Come on. I was just kidding.

LOLA
Can't imagine why all your wives left you, you big sweetheart.

Don's smile snaps into a violent glare.

DON
Hey, Lo?

Lola reaches the top step. She turns around to face Don - still standing at the dirt patch below.

DON (CONT'D)
Don't you ever fucking talk to me like that again, you hear me?

Lola stares down at him, straight-faced. She says nothing.

DON (CONT'D)
(threatening)
You hear me?

LOLA
Yeah, I hear you.

Lola walks away.

10 INT. BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

10

It's tiny -- fixtures decorated in cheap pink plastic.

A TALK RADIO PROGRAM filters in from outside the room.

RADIO HOST (O.S.)
The question isn't whether or not this witness is a plant from the democrats. Of course she is.

RADIO HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 But *why?* What's a night of high
 school partying got to do with the
 supreme court?

Lola stands in front of the medicine cabinet, her face
 absurdly close to the dingy mirror.

She inspects and extracts each pore on her face.

As she continues, she turns on the FAUCET -- washes away the
 offending matter.

11 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

11

The chipped blade of an axe comes down on a piece of wood,
 SPLITTING it. The pieces go flying.

Don wrenches the axe out of the block. He has a look to him
 that's scheming, violent. Now that we're alone with him, we
 don't feel safe.

The TALK RADIO PROGRAM continues, a dusty boombox on the
 porch its source.

Don places another chunk of wood.

Heaves, swings.

THWACK -- the severed lumber goes flying.

Don inhales. Wipes his brow. Clearly out of shape but
 ignoring it, his shirt soaked with sweat.

Don takes out a pack of cigarettes. Lights one. Puffs --
 Exhales -- *that's the ticket.*

He sets another piece of wood on the chopping block.

12 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - EVENING

12

Each CHOP of the axe PULSES--

ECHOES over the stillness of the lake...

Its reverberations push a flock of birds out of the trees and
 into the air.

The sound seems to get LOUDER...

SHARPER with each swing--

CUT TO:

13

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

13

A roaring fire CRACKLES and SPITS in a hand-laid brick fire pit.

Lola sits beside the fire, legs propped up, beer in hand. She stares at the flames licking the freshly cut firewood -- entranced.

On the other side of the fire sits Don, relatively in the same position, but a domineering presence. His eye on the steaks he has grilling over the fire.

DON

It's all about the heat. Coals have to be just right to get you that sear. Flames are no good. But tonight I'm showing you the ancient way. Straight up burial.

LOLA

I can cook a pretty mean steak.

DON

Yeah but there's only one right way.

LOLA

Uhuh.

DON

My dad always used to like 'em well done. That's how we all knew he had the gut of an ox.

LOLA

Pop, I've been meaning to ask you something.

DON

Oh boy, here we go.

LOLA

No I just -- can't remember... If you could fill in the gaps for me.

DON

You know, Lo, the past is in the past. If you live there you'll always be miserable.

Lola goes through a number of reactions before settling on:

LOLA

What makes you think I'm miserable?

DON

I dunno.

Don drinks his beer.

LOLA

I'm not nearly as miserable as you.

Lola drinks her beer.

Don narrows his eyes. Nods to himself. He's having an internal conversation about what a real bitch Lola's turned out to be.

Lola watches Don as he does this. She smiles -- *he's pathetic.*

LOLA (CONT'D)

Do you remember Uncle Mike?

DON

(mocking)

Uncle Mike?

LOLA

He wasn't an uncle, he was your friend.

DON

Mike Hartigan, from New York?

LOLA

No, a different Mike.

DON

Can't say that I do.

LOLA

And his wife's name was Trishell and he was tall and skinny and blonde, with a mustache. And they had a kid, a baby boy.

DON

Nah. No. No.

LOLA

And they used to baby-sit me.

DON

Really? When?

LOLA

You and mom used to party with them all the time and sometimes they'd baby-sit me and there were times I'd spend the night there and I remember crying in the back room of his father's house and they were old and they had all these glass cases full of fancy plates and shit...

DON

What are you going on about, kid?

LOLA

Why was I there?

DON

This is your story.

LOLA

They baby-sat me.

DON

Nobody baby-sat you, Lo. You're making that up.

LOLA

Why would I make that up?

DON

Because you're inventing things. Inventing from your little imagination all these scenarios that never happened, so you can feel good about yourself because you had a "fucked up life." But I'm telling you, you had it good.

LOLA

He was your best friend. I called him Uncle Mike. He baby-sat me.

DON

Drop it.

Lola inhales--

DON (CONT'D)

I said. Drop it.

A low SAWING sound begins to enter the scene -- it seems to be coming from the fire. Lola is suddenly calm. She smiles, almost as if she'd just won.

LOLA
 (quiet, to herself)
 Pathetic.

She drinks her beer. The SAWING SOUND gaining momentum.

DON
 What did you say?

LOLA
 I didn't say anything.

DON
 (threatening)
 What the fuck did you just say?

Lola leans forward. The reflection of the fire dances wildly in her eyes.

LOLA
 (meeting his threat)
 I didn't say anything to you, Old Man, so stop inventing things.

Lola takes a moment to make sure her point came across.

She leans back into her chair. Gestures to the fire. The SAWING sound now deafening, though no one seems to notice.

LOLA (CONT'D)
 Watch your steaks.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. THE LAKE - DAWN

14

Lola is alone.

She takes her time, calm and expert, in driving the rowboat across the smooth surface of the water -- it ripples and swells behind her, the lake moves with her.

She HUMS a sweet, UPLIFTING TUNE.

Around her a row of trees. A gradually brightening sky.

She checks over her shoulder to judge her direction -- if we're paying attention, we can catch glimpses of blood on her clothing. Her knees are caked with mud. A BRIGHT ORANGE gallon bucket rests unassuming at her feet.

Lola adjusts her angle toward the lake house, presently a small grey square amongst the green trees on the distant horizon.

Lola turns to us, smiling to herself.

At moments her HUM breaks into soft SINGING of a certain refrain or a piece of the chorus -- too soft to make out the words, she never rises above the delicate precision of her oars SLICING into the WATER.

Lola continues to ROW...

And HUM...

And SING...

The sky brightens further -- is that blood splatter on her skin?

15 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - SHORELINE - NEXT

15

Lola glides out of the boat and into the shallow water.

She climbs onto the dirt shore.

Lola pulls the boat up, out of the water and onto land.

She sets her bucket to the side. Disengages the oars. PLANTS them into the ground one at a time. It's violent. Like the driving of STAKES.

The sound of high-pressure water HITTING aluminum surface. Lola washes out the boat.

She holds onto the bow, dips it gingerly--

Water DUMPS itself out, filters down into the lake... The water ripples in reaction, lapping it up.

16 INT. BATHROOM - NEXT

16

Lola stands in front of the sink, water RUNNING. Still SINGING her song.

LOLA
(singing)
Now I feel the hope/ the faith to
go another day/ the rain cannot
wash away...

She washes the blood off her arms. Off her neck.

She SCRUBS the blood and whatever else off her hiking boots. HUMMING all along.

She disrobes. Places each item of clothing into a large bucket of liquid set inside the tub.

Blood lifts off the clothing and disintegrates. The clothes turn pale, then yellow.

17 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DECK - MORNING

17

Lola nestles into a lounge chair on the wooden deck -- one of the items set up by her and Don the day before.

She pulls out a pack of cigarettes -- *Don's* pack of cigarettes -- lights one.

Lola reclines as she inhales the smoke. Savors it like a return to an old friend after many years apart.

Lola smokes...

She looks up at the trees...

A light breeze causes the leaves to RUSTLE and SHIMMER in the sunlight. The branches sway.

For a moment all of nature seems to be swaying in this lounging, sensual way. A small current in the LAKE, right along with it. All in unison with Lola...

Lola smokes... Lost in a moment of divine peace. And we right along with her--

A cellphone RINGS, shrill, from inside the house.

Lola tries to stay in her moment.

It RINGS again.

She gets up.

18 INT. LAKE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

18

Lola enters and immediately disappears into the dark cavern of the home's interior.

The phone GRATES ON -- but there is nothing save for deep...

Dark, empty, space...

CUT TO:

19

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

19

CRACKLING fire -- flames lick over dry branches thrown on top of firewood.

LOLA (O.S.)

Yep.

Lola stands, cell phone at her ear. She watches the progress of the flames.

ART (O.S.)

(over phone)

...it turns out there's a bus every hour so I hopped on the next one. I hope it's okay if I'm early...

LOLA

Haha. No worries...

The BRIGHT ORANGE BUCKET -- we almost forgot about it. Lola reaches in, pulls out something dark, COAGULATED, slimy.

Throws it onto the fire. It SPITS and HISSES under the flames. Black and sick looking -- it's DON'S HEART.

Lola stares, intense, as the lifeless organ roasts in the flames.

ART (O.S.)

(over phone)

I think I'll be there in an hour.

She pours LIGHTER FLUID. The fire BLAZES and engulfs it.

ART (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(over phone)

Should I take a cab or--

LOLA

No. I'll pick you up.

ART (O.S.)

(over phone)

Perfect. I'll see you soon.

DOOTDOOT -- the call ends.

Lola looks out at the lake. She smiles, disconnected.

LOLA

Perfect.

PRELAP: The sound of TIRES rolling over dirt road.

20

INT. LOLA'S CAR - AFTERNOON

20

A mess of tassels, mementos, and tags swings from the rear view mirror. Lola makes a turn, drives toward a bus stop standing solitary along the wooded road--

Through the car windows we can see its lone occupant come into view: ART (30s) tall, dark, and handsome with a boyish charm that's getting less convincing as he ages. He grins and waves shyly as the car approaches.

21

EXT. ISOLATED BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

21

Lola's car pulls to a stop. The window ROLLS DOWN.

LOLA
You lost, young man?

Art laughs. Takes off his backpack. Reaches for the passenger side door, tries -- it's locked.

ART
Hey.

Lola waves her finger at him.

LOLA
Ah, ah, aaah... You didn't say
please.

He stands up straight, makes a face that could convince anyone. He's one of those 'fall in love with me instantly' kinda fuckboys and now we can definitely see it.

ART
Please.

CLICK. The doors UNLOCK--

22

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LOLA'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

22

Lola sits in the corner. Light pours into the room at a steep angle -- it slices her in half with deep shadow.

Lola's gaze bores a hole into a point just beyond us...

She does not blink.

Lola slowly leans back...

Her chair CREAKS -- her face is lost to the shadow.

23

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

23

Lola cooks dinner. There's a frying pan SIMMERING over the heat, threatening. The quarters are close, cramped, especially since Art insists on being there, confronting the inevitable with Lola--

ART

So what's new?

LOLA

With me? Not much.

(beat)

Just started getting the best sleep
of my life.

ART

Really. What changed?

He sips his wine. Studies the movements of her body closely--

LOLA

You know how people talk about a
weight being lifted? I feel like
I'm finally full of weight. Like
I'm whole.

Lola turns away from him. Pushes items around in the pan.

ART

That makes sense to me...

Art approaches her. Gets close. She stiffens.

LOLA

No. Not this time.

ART

Come on...

He sidles up behind her. Softly kisses the nape of her neck.
Once, twice.

Lola closes her eyes, bites her lip. This is apparently a
weak spot, and he knows it.

LOLA

Fuck it.

She turns around, furious, meets his mouth with hers.

They tear clothes off as though tearing each other apart.
It's frantic, desperate.

Lola's hands shake as she unbuttons Art's jeans and pushes them down--

Art pushes Lola against the counter. Lifts her up -- right next to the sizzling pan--

Her legs around his waist. They thrust in unison -- a furious fuck.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Yes-- Yes--

ART
You like that? You miss me, baby?

Lola shoves her hand over his mouth. Digs her fingers into his cheek as she WAILS--

24 INT. LAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

24

Lola's in the bathroom, washing up. The door open just a crack-- we can see her moving around within the space.

A low SAWING noise creeps into the room, as if coming from the water, the sink...

Art sits reclined on the sofa. Red marks on his face from lipstick? Scratches? It's hard to know. He looks satisfied and unsettled at the same time...

Art places his hand over his heart. Taps his fingers. Twists his chest hair, thinking... He calls out:

ART
Lola?
LOLA (O.S.)
Hmm?

ART
Why'd you invite me here?

Lola pushes open the bathroom door. The SAWING sound now louder, faster. Lola stands, looking down at him, at us.

LOLA
Why do you think?

She advances toward him-- blocking out our view of the two of them completely--

25 INT. LAKE HOUSE - MIDNIGHT 25

The house is quiet. Still. Tidy.

No sign that anyone was cooking in the kitchen, or doing anything anywhere at all.

No evidence of Art ever having existed.

We catch a glimpse of flame licking upwards from outside...

We creep forward to the window...

Outside is Lola, she feeds a growing fire.

26 INT. LOLA'S ROOM - DAWN 26

Lola sits by a small table in her room. Removes a DAY PLANNER from a drawer.

She flips it open--

We can see her upcoming month is BOOKED. Names and ideas scrawled in for almost every weekend.

Lola crosses out the previous day. The name '**Art**' written inside the small square.

She adds something to today's entry, and tomorrow's:

Michelle. She circles the days, slow and deliberate.

Lola smiles to herself.

27 EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY 27

A black TESLA PULLS UP to the house, parks.

Lola appears on the side deck, phone at her ear. She smiles, waves.

The car's driver side door opens. MICHELLE (early 30s) exits the vehicle.

MICHELLE

Hey!

Michelle has a certain similarity to Lola, but she's just a bit younger, thinner, prettier. Her whole look is minimal but immaculate. She's perfectly put together.

The two women hug - it's genuine, with the awkwardness of rarity. Lola's flannel looks frumpy next to Michelle's ensemble. Her RED LIP tacky next to Michelle's NEUTRAL PINK.

LOLA

It's so good to see you.

MICHELLE

Aw, you too.

They break their embrace. Smile at one another. A bit of an awkward laugh.

Lola gestures toward the car.

LOLA

Wow! Is that a spaceship?

MICHELLE

No just Chase's idea of a birthday present... Every well-off liberal with a conscience has one!

LOLA

Okay... Got it.

Michelle pops the trunk, feeling silly. Lola helps Michelle unload her bags.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Right this way!

Lola leads Michelle up the wooden steps of the deck, onto the landing, and around the corner...

Michelle stops in her tracks, GASPS-- *The LAKE*. She's seized by its image.

Lola looks back at her. She's pleased.

Michelle snaps out of her awe.

MICHELLE

Sorry, just. Wow.

LOLA

I know, right? We can eat out here.

Lola disappears into the house.

28

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

28

Lola through the small medicine cabinet mirror -- it's oddly dim for the middle of the day.

A toilet FLUSHES. Faucet RUNNING. Lola washes her hands.

She makes eye contact with herself in the mirror. Her expression impossible to decipher.

29

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DECK - EVENING

29

Michelle sits at the wooden table, hands in her lap. She looks around her, uncertain, excited.

Lola comes through the screen door, two plates of food in her hands. The door CREAKS -- SLAMS SHUT behind her.

LOLA

Sorry. That fucking door.

Lola puts the plates on the table. Turns on her heels to go back for more items inside the house.

MICHELLE

Here, let me help you.

LOLA

No, no, I'm just getting wine.
Please!

The door swings wildly, SLAMS SHUT behind her. Michelle winces at the repeated auditory assault.

Lola reappears with a bottle of white and two large wine glasses.

She pauses at the last moment and slows the door's swing with her foot. Smiles. A gentler SLAM this time.

Wine is poured. Both women seated.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Cheers.

MICHELLE

Cheers.

They clink glasses. Polite smiles. Awkward eye contact as they take their first sip of wine - Lola's gaze intense.

The LAKE lies just beyond them, heavy and watchful.

LOLA

'Bon appetit.'

MICHELLE

Yum. Thank you.

LOLA

Well, don't thank me yet.

Michelle carves into her-- *steak?* Whatever it is, it looks an awful lot like the charred remains of a human heart. She tries a bite...

MICHELLE

It's good!

LOLA

Oh good.

MICHELLE

...It's like... Gamey. But in a

good way.

(fumbling)

I was starving!

LOLA

I bet. Long drive?

MICHELLE

Um. Not too long.

They eat. Small talk between bites of food.

LOLA

Thanks for accepting my invitation,
by the way. I wasn't sure you'd
come.

MICHELLE

Yeah, me neither actually.

(awkward chuckle)

LOLA

So why did you? Come.

MICHELLE

Um, I really needed a break. From
the city. And I miss us, Lo.

A beat. Lola takes a moment to appreciate making Michelle squirm.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
So tell me what you've been up to!
Your instagrams look so glamorous
all the time.

LOLA
Really? Which ones?

MICHELLE
Um, well there was that one at the
gallery with your paintings and
your friends all looked so
interesting and chic.

A FLASH of Lola's instagram posts: banal with bad lighting.
We read 'interesting and chic' as 'Bushwick trust fund
hipster.'

LOLA
Oh yeah, that gallery is like, a
sad room in a random alleyway.

MICHELLE
How funny.

LOLA
"Starving Artists!"

MICHELLE
Well you seem to be doing okay up
here at least.

LOLA
I'm just lucky I get to have this
place every year.

MICHELLE
Is this where you do all your
paintings?

LOLA
No. Are you still painting?

MICHELLE
...Not really since college.

A beat -- was that a twinge of recognition from Lola?

LOLA
And work, how's the company?

MICHELLE
Great! I just got promoted
actually.

LOLA

Congratulations! What are you doing now?

MICHELLE

Um, pretty much the same thing, I just got to move one desk forward and I get new business cards.

LOLA

And a raise?

Michelle nods, uncertain.

MICHELLE

I think so... I didn't ask actually.

The motion-detecting porch light CLICKS OFF -- darkness. Lola waves her arms around in a funny dance.

The light CLICKS BACK ON -- illuminating Lola's face.

LOLA

You just have to--

MICHELLE

Yeah. I see that.

LOLA

Well cheers to career advancement, and to not having to worry about how much you get paid.

Lola raises her glass. Michelle chuckles, uncomfortable -- CLINK.

MICHELLE

Cheers...

Wine glasses are emptied. Filled again.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Are you seeing anyone?

LOLA

(chuckles, bitterly?)

No. I mean I was, but not anymore. He wasn't that interesting.

MICHELLE

You'll find someone new in no time.

LOLA

I don't actually want to find
someone new.

MICHELLE

(trying to be encouraging)

Oh, hmm!

LOLA

You know that feeling like, you've
already had all your great love
affairs? Like there's nothing else
out there that could possibly top
what you've had?

Michelle's face falls. She looks nervous.

MICHELLE

Uh, well...

The porch light CLICKS OFF again -- leaving her in darkness.

LOLA

Oh, of course I don't mean Chase,
oh no, that's not what I meant. For
me. For you of course, Chase is
that. Right?

MICHELLE

Yes. Yeah.

LOLA

Good. I thought for a second, and
then was like, oh no!

MICHELLE

Me too, I guess!

They share a laugh -- Michelle relieved, Lola pointed.

Lola raises her glass.

LOLA

To not being in our twenties
anymore.

MICHELLE

To old friends.

CLINK-- They drink their wine in darkness.

30

INT. LAKE HOUSE - SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

30

The lights CLICK on -- clinical and bright fluorescents.

LOLA

And here's your room! I know it's
not the Four Seasons--

MICHELLE

No! It's cute.

The room is small, bleak. Two twin beds against either wall. Wood paneling that was painted over with a dull mint many, many years ago.

Michelle stands between the two beds, uncertain. They're both stripped, a clean set of linens set at the foot of each.

LOLA

You can take whichever one you
like. And just set your bag on the
other one. No worries.

Lola moves away from the doorway and into the threshold across.

LOLA (CONT'D)

My room's just across...

Lola flicks the light ON in her room.

Michelle approaches the doorway--

Lola returns. She directs Michelle's attention back to the spare room.

LOLA (CONT'D)

My mother used to sleep in here.

MICHELLE

Oh. That's so sweet.

(beat)

I'm sorry for your loss, by the
way...

LOLA

Thanks...

Lola smiles, polite, starts stuffing pillows into cases for Michelle.

MICHELLE

No, no, no. I can do that!

Michelle pushes Lola out of the room. Lola playfully resists.

LOLA
Just let me kill you with my
kindness!

MICHELLE
No thank you!

31 INT. SPARE ROOM - NEXT

31

Michelle WHIPS her top sheet open with a flourish.

The thin fabric floats downward, obstructing her face--
Michelle SCREAMS.

LOLA (O.S.)
What is it?

Lola races in.

Michelle laughs at herself, uneasy.

MICHELLE
Oh my god. It's just. A huge
spider.

Lola lifts the sheet -- a large, brown spider similar to the
one we saw in the basement lays on its back, legs curled,
dry.

LOLA
Must have suffocated to death, poor
thing.

Lola picks up the dead spider with her bare hands.

Michelle shudders, shimmies out of the way as Lola carries
the corpse out of the room.

MICHELLE
Ew. Ew.

32 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

32

A satisfied, eerie smile crosses Lola's face.

LOLA
I'm so sorry. I don't know how he
could have gotten in there.

The spider drops into the toilet bowl. FLUSHES. Lola watches the water complete its burial.

MICHELLE (O.S.)
No I'm sorry, for scaring the shit out of you because of a little dead spider. I'm just so freaked out by them...

LOLA
Aren't you glad he wasn't alive?

Michelle appears in the bathroom doorway.

MICHELLE
Um, yeah.

33 INT. LOLA'S ROOM - NEXT

33

Lola sets pajamas out on the singular queen bed.

She peers through the open door on Michelle's side -- where Michelle stands in front of her open suitcase, half dressed.

Lola watches, unnoticed.

Michelle disrobes. Rifles through her things.

Lola slowly starts to undress as well.

Michelle puts on a nightgown. Then a robe.

Lola looks away.

34 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

34

Lola sits on the edge of the tub, uses her fingers to untangle her mass of curly, unruly hair.

Michelle stands at the sink, goes through the process of multiple washings of her face.

Lola observes the curves of Michelle's body beneath her nightgown...

She eyes Michelle's beauty products, neatly set out on the tiny counter top...

The motion of her fingers massaging her skin...

Michelle takes out an expensive face cream, applies it to her face.

She finally notices Lola's gaze. Lola doesn't look away. Michelle does.

MICHELLE
Want some? Try it, it's amazing.

She holds out her pot of face cream. *Michelle's hands* -- her cuticles are chewed to bits. Rings of scabs from making them bleed. Lola stares at them.

LOLA
Really?

Michelle's eye twitches in recognition--

MICHELLE
I've got gobs of it. It's fucking magic for your pores.

Finally, Lola takes the pot of face cream from Michelle. She delicately unscrews the top. Smells it. Takes some cream with her fingers, admires the consistency.

Lola looks at her own fingers. The tips calloused from years of chewing and peeling. Bloody scabs around the cuticles...

Lola applies the cream to her face, slow.

LOLA
Sure feels like fucking magic.

Michelle smiles at her in the mirror.

Lola puts the container of cream on the counter next to Michelle -- *PLINK*.

35 INT. KITCHEN - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

35

Lights out. Faint glow of moonlight. The room is quiet and deserted, as it should be.

Then-- a thick brown sludge BUBBLES up, SPLURTS out of the drain in the kitchen sink.

At first a sputter-- GLUG.

Then more -- faster than one might have thought possible--

GWAMGWAMGWAMB...

36

EXT. THE LAKE - THE LAST MOMENT OF DUSK

36

Dark water. Purple, blazing sky.

The imprint of something LARGE, INVISIBLE, moves towards us in the water.

It seems to be propelled forward, effortless, not swimming. As if some kind of ENERGY were gaining momentum to attack us in the water.

As the thing creeps FORWARD it seems to multiply and GROW IN SIZE. With it, the same scratching -- SAWING -- a signal.

LOLA (V.O.)

There was this sound. Like a scratching. Something trying to claw its way out...

PRELAP: A KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK against the wooden door--

37

INT. LAKE HOUSE - MORNING

37

Lola stumbles out of her room, autopilot, into the bathroom.

Michelle enters the kitchen. Goes for the coffee maker--

She does a double take -- terrified.

The sink is OVERFLOWING. Brown sludge OÖZES onto the floor.

MICHELLE

Ohmygod!

The sludge creeps further into the room...

The SMELL hits her next -- foul, rancid.

Michelle gags. Covers her mouth. Backs out of the room as Lola emerges from the bathroom--

LOLA

What's wrong?

MICHELLE

The kitchen--!

The smell hits Lola. She pinches her nose.

LOLA

Ohmygod...!

PRELAP: the BRRRIIING of a dial-tone on speaker phone.

38

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DECK - MORNING

38

Lola and Michelle recline in lawn chairs, coffee cups in hand.

Lola's cell phone RINGS on speaker. The line picks UP--

PHONE GUY (O.S.)
John's Plumbing.

LOLA
Um hi, yeah.

Lola gets up and takes the call inside.

Michelle leans forward and fiddles with the tuner on Lola's 90s boombox-- shifting through different frequencies of RADIO STATIC.

LOLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hi, yes, great...

39

INT. LAKE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

39

Lola lowers her voice to make sure it doesn't travel.

LOLA
Silly me, I must have dialed the wrong number.

The line CLICKS-- he hung up.

Lola smiles. She stares at the DARK SLUDGE taking over the kitchen, a faint SAWING sound sputtering from it. Addresses it directly--

LOLA (CONT'D)
(louder, into the phone)
Mhm, yeah. Great. Thank you. Thank you so much.

40

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DECK - NEXT

40

Michelle TURNS the knob--

RADIO HOST (O.S.)
This is 970AM The Truth. New York and New Jersey's only source for conservative talk radio--

Michelle TURNS it again-- STATIC.

LOLA

That's the only station you'll get
up here.

Lola returns. She reaches over, turns the radio OFF.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Some friendly neighborhood Trumper
must have a signal booster or
something...

Sits, kicks her legs up.

MICHELLE

Any luck?

LOLA

Fucking *Monday*.

MICHELLE

Oh jeez. Seriously?

LOLA

Only guy in town and he's "on
vacation."

MICHELLE

Fuck.

LOLA

At least it's a nice day.

Michelle turns her face up to the glow of the sun.

MICHELLE

I brought sunscreen...

41

EXT. THE LAKE - DAY

41

Lola and Michelle PUSH the row boat into the water.

Lola hops in. There's a big to-do over helping Michelle get
into the boat as well...

Lola rows them out into the open water...

The lake is darker, choppier than we've seen it before.

They get further and further away from the house...

Lola keeps her eyes on Michelle.

Michelle looks out over the landscape-- A thick row of trees towers over them from around the lake.

Michelle shivers a bit -- as though the air has a sudden chill to it.

LOLA

Okay, so you want to make sure to lean forward when you're aiming the oars to slice back into the water.

She demonstrates.

LOLA (CONT'D)

That way when you *puuulllll* back, you have as much leverage as possible.

MICHELLE

Oh, I don't know how to row.

LOLA

I'm teaching you how to row.

MICHELLE

(laughs, nervous)

Um, okay. Why not?

LOLA

Atta' girl.

Lola continues to row in a demonstrative fashion.

LOLA (CONT'D)

You always want to row facing away from the bow, using your core to pull--gives you the greatest amount of control over the boat.

MICHELLE

How do you steer then?

Lola looks over her shoulder--

LOLA

Say we're going over there.

Turns and points behind Michelle.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Then I'm going to pick that point, opposite, and make it my focus.

Lola starts to row with razor-like focus -- it feels as though she's staring directly at Michelle.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Now I can see if I'm veering off course. I can hit the brakes--
(demonstrates)
Steer right-- Or left-- You see?

MICHELLE
Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

LOLA
Making sure to bury the blade.
First the blade catches the water.
Then you bury it. Too deep and you
lose the oar. Too high and it's
like a nick, barely any blood.

Michelle is getting confused.

MICHELLE
Um--

LOLA
Watch out.

Lola brings the oars in.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Come on, we're gonna switch. You
try it. Ready?

MICHELLE
Oh. Wait.

LOLA
Quick so the keel stays even!

Lola moves toward Michelle.

Michelle isn't sure what to do. She lifts off the seat.

MICHELLE
How--

LOLA
Quick quick!

Lola throws Michelle to the bow, taking her place. Michelle is a little stunned.

MICHELLE
(grabbing her butt)
Ow...

The boat is now drifting -- floating at the mercy of the lake's changing directions.

Michelle takes the oars, uneasy. Into the water.

LOLA
Slice!

Michelle rows. Does her best to imitate Lola's form. She looks over her shoulder, trying to navigate.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Bury the blade! Dig! Yeah. Now you get it.

MICHELLE
It's like a rowing machine.

LOLA
Yes. A rowing machine is like a rowboat.

The oar slips. Michelle scrambles to get it.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Drive!

Michelle CHOPS the water. Deep EXHALE. She puts all her effort into it.

MICHELLE
Grrraahhhh--

The paddles SLICE into the water--

LOLA
Drive!

CUT TO:

42 EXT. THE LAKE - A FLOATING DOCK - AFTERNOON 42

Frantic, inelegant swimming-- Many arms and legs CRASHING against the surface of the water.

Michelle reaches the platform first -- Lola a few strokes behind her.

MICHELLE

I win!

LOLA

As usual...

Lola stops swimming, she floats the rest of the way. Pissed.

Michelle climbs onto the platform. Lies on her back.

MICHELLE

Whew. That felt so good.

LOLA

Yeah--

Lola pulls herself up.

43

EXT. THE LAKE - A FLOATING DOCK - LATE AFTERNOON

43

Lola and Michelle lie in opposing directions, eyes closed.

The afternoon sun slowly bakes the water off of their bodies.

The trees around the lake seem to grow taller, the landscape nearly claustrophobic, save for the sky's reflection on the dark water.

Lola squints one eye open. Shields from the sun with her arm.

She looks over at Michelle. At her seemingly perfect body -- her perfect bathing suit... Michelle is the sort of slender that makes other women run harder at the gym--

Michelle SIGHS. Lola looks away.

MICHELLE

God I just love being cleansed by the sun. Don't you?

Lola closes her eyes.

PRELAP: A symphony of CRICKETS and other BUZZES and CHIRPS.

44

EXT. THE LAKE - A FLOATING DOCK - DUSK

44

Sun faded. The sky turns to hues both beautiful and frightening.

Lola sits, propped up on one arm. Her hair has dried, frizzy. Her face is pleasant, dreamy. She stares at Michelle, who lies next to her, asleep.

It takes us a moment to realize they must have fallen asleep...

Lola disrupts the silence of the moment:

LOLA
Meesh. Meesh!

Michelle starts awake. She looks at Lola, stunned.

Lola strokes her arm, she smiles at Michelle.

MICHELLE
Hey...
(looks around)
Wow. How long have we been out
here?

Lola looks around, unfazed.

She closes her eyes and listens to the BUZZING all around them...

A LOW, at first indistinguishable, SOUND rises up, then gains a disturbing volume. SAWING.

Lola smiles -- she recognizes it. Then:

LOLA
Do you remember the night of our
graduation party?

The SAWING and BUZZING and CHIRPING cacophony of nature seems to get even louder.

MICHELLE
Um, yeah. Why?

Lola stands -- blocking what's left of the sun.

LOLA
I've just always wondered if you
and Chase were together that night.

MICHELLE
(defensive)
Chase and I didn't get together
until the summertime.

LOLA
(pointed)
I recall.

LOLA (CONT'D)

But I couldn't find him that night, I couldn't find him at all and then when he finally appeared he was so angry with me. Like all of a sudden he could read my mind and knew all these things that I'd only told to you.

MICHELLE

That's--

(reconsiders)

I mean you two weren't a good match, that didn't have anything to do with me.

LOLA

He knew about the crush I had on the girl in our theory class. He was upset because I'd never shared with him how angry it made me when he said he didn't know if he could deal with dating someone with a "fucked up family." Remember?

MICHELLE

Family has always been really important to him...

LOLA

He wouldn't stop accusing me of bad mouthing him behind his back.

Michelle stands.

MICHELLE

Actually, I've been wanting to bring this up.

Lola glares at Michelle, this isn't what she expected to hear -- she's not making any sense.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I was asleep and you caught me off guard... Let's start over.

LOLA

Start over how?

Michelle starts pacing over what little real estate she has on the dock.

MICHELLE

(practiced)

Lola, I've been meaning to bring this up for years. It's kind of why I wanted to come up here. I owe you a huge apology. Regardless of how things turned out in the end, I betrayed your trust as a friend.

And--

Michelle stops pacing. She's lost her memorized speech--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I haven't ever stopped feeling guilty about it. I was young and stupid and fucked up. You didn't deserve to be treated that way by someone you trusted. I'm so sorry. Is there any way you can forgive me? Can we start over as friends? I promise I'll never do to you what I did then.

Lola sits back down like she's had the wind knocked out of her.

Michelle crouches beside her, chews at her cuticle, anxious.

Lola catches a glimpse of Michelle's arm from this new angle -- on the underside: scars. Hidden evidence from years of cutting.

Lola looks down at her own limbs. She has almost identically the same--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

You were bad mouthing him, anybody could have told him that. But I told him. I thought that I was doing the right thing at the time, but fuck what I thought. It was wrong to do that to you. You were my friend.

Lola stares at Michelle, tears in her eyes, totally disarmed. She looks at her own hands, goodness knows what she was planning to do with them--

LOLA

Okay. I forgive you.

She's sealed her fate -- Lola blinks TEARS, surrendering. Michelle grabs her in an embrace.

The CHIRPING and BUZZING increases frequency and speed until it reaches a loud and high pitched SHRILL--

Michelle looks up.

MICHELLE
Where's the boat..?

CUT TO:

45 EXT. WOODS - NEXT

45

FILTERED: The woods distorted. The light is blue, pale -- as though it exists far away from time as we know it.

We whirl past Michelle and Lola - soaking wet hair - as they walk through the thick trees.

They hold hands. It's sweet, almost childlike.

LOLA
This way.

The two continue to walk. Leaves CRUNCHING beneath their feet.

Lola leads them up the crest of a hill.

She stops at the top of the incline to survey the scene before her. Michelle approaches from behind.

Michelle puts her arms around Lola, nuzzles her face into her neck. Kisses her shoulder.

MICHELLE
Are you sure? I think the house is
the other way.

LOLA
(creepy)
Don't you trust me?

MICHELLE
It's not about trust. It's about
not getting lost in the woods.

LOLA
(mocking)
You sure about that?

Michelle shakes her head, fighting her unease. She backs away, heads back down the way they came.

MICHELLE
I'm going back.

LOLA
(taunting)
Back where?

MICHELLE
Stop it!

Michelle picks up speed. Her gait disrupts dead leaves and branches-- cascading DETRITUS.

LOLA
(back to normal)
Ohmygod don't move!

Michelle freezes.

MICHELLE
What is it? What is it?!

Lola ambles over to Michelle: there's a black, slimy LEECH on Michelle's back.

LOLA
Holy shit you got a big one--

Michelle FLAILS her arms, twisting around--

MICHELLE
What is it?!

LOLA
Stay still!

Lola puts her hands on Michelle.

LOLA (CONT'D)
They're just blood cleaners...

MICHELLE
(whimpering)
Get it out get it out!

Lola expertly extracts the leech.

She holds it up for Michelle to see.

LOLA
See?

Michelle near tears, she's horrified.

Lola grins. Then-- EATS IT.

MICHELLE
OH MY go--

Michelle GAGS.

Lola smiles. Her mouth bloody. She LAUGHS.

Michelle wretches -- DOUBLES OVER, then VOMITS black SLUDGE. An otherworldly sound comes with it. She gasps for air.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Help! Help!

LOLA
(laughing)
Awwww...

A SINGLE SNAP of a branch-- From somewhere deep within the woods. Their heads both whip in the direction of the sound--

PRELAP: A KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK against the wooden door--

46

INT. LAKE HOUSE - EVENING

46

Lola OPENS the front door-- A NOSY NEIGHBOR, TED (50s) stands on the porch, gnats swarm around his head.

TED
Heya, Lo. ...Your dad around?

LOLA
Heya, Ted. No, he's not.
(opens the door to show
Michelle)
Just us two girls this weekend.

TED
Ah. I saw him pass by a few days ago. Then thought-- no how-- haven't seen ol' Don in years.

LOLA
Yeah, he was up here. Went back home, though.

Michelle joins Lola at the door.

TED

Oh, right. Well, just wanted to stop by to tell you all to stay safe. Ranger found a body out in the woods early this morn'--

Michelle GASPS. Lola covers her mouth.

TED (CONT'D)

Looks like he was mauled by a... Some kinda creature, I don't know.

LOLA

What do you mean?

TED

Well everybody's saying it's got to be a bear, but I've seen those remains an', don't look like the work of a bear to me.

He thinks about it, grave.

MICHELLE

(to Lola) Didn't you see a bear out here the other night?

TED (CONT'D)

They're too lil' for that...

LOLA

Where did they find the-- body?

(to Michelle)

God, we were just out there...

TED

South side of the lake.

Ted turns and points -- out and across to the other side of the lake. The same direction we saw Lola rowing from on her solo trip, after Don...

MICHELLE

What kind of other animals are out here??

TED

That does that..? I don't know.

He thinks about it some more.

TED (CONT'D)

Just be careful, girls. Keep indoors at night. At least for now til they figure out what we're dealing with here.

Ted backs away -- towards his car.

LOLA
Okay. We will.

Ted STARTS his car. Rolls down the window-- Shouts:

TED
...And stay outta the woods!

They watch him back out of the driveway...

MICHELLE
Jeez. Is he always that intense?

LOLA
No. Not at all really.

...and drive away from the property.

MICHELLE
Whatever he saw must've really
scared him...

Michelle's disposition darkens. She moves Lola aside --
pushes the door SHUT.

Lola stares at Michelle, frowning -- when did she start
acting like *that*?

47

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT

47

Lola TOSSES OPEN a large roll of clear, plastic sheeting.

Michelle pulls out a long strip of tape. Secures a length of
plastic to the ceiling where Lola holds it in place.

Lola rips off a hunk of tape with her teeth. Applies it, then
another, to reinforce the ceiling.

Lola pushes soaked towels forward, trying to back the sludge
away from the kitchen perimeter. Michelle tapes the plastic
down in its place.

MICHELLE
You really think this is gonna
work?

LOLA
(choking from the stench)
S'got to.

Lola carefully applies tape to seal the final seam between two lengths of plastic.

Their mission is complete -- the kitchen is sealed off completely, like some sort of biohazard quarantine. The clear plastic sheeting giving a vague sense of what's lying behind it.

Lola and Michelle admire their work. Then:

MICHELLE

So now, uh, dinner?

LOLA

Fuck.

Lola STORMS out of the room.

MICHELLE

I'm sorry, I was trying to be funny...

Lola SLAMS her bedroom door shut behind her. Michelle JUMPS, loud noises always seem to make her bolt out of her skin...

48

INT. LAKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATE EVENING

48

Through the windows we can see the sky outside -- it glows with a lighter blue, gradually darkening.

Lola and Michelle sit at the table. Candles lit between them. Red wine and delivery pizza -- it looks every bit as limp and lukewarm as you'd expect to get in back-woods New Jersey.

It's awkwardly quiet. Lola makes no attempt at conversation. No clinking of glasses.

Michelle seems unable to bear the tension between them--

MICHELLE

I'm sorry.

Lola looks up at Michelle, waiting for more.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I know this is your mother's house...

Lola averts her gaze.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I-- I've just been feeling pretty ripped out of myself today.

LOLA
...I know what you mean.

Michelle SLURPS her wine. She puts the glass down, embarrassed by the noise. Flashes an awkward half smile, leans back in her chair. The chair SQUEAKS. Michelle closes her eyes, exhales.

Lola forces a smile. Drinks some wine.

LOLA (CONT'D)
It's fine. I'm just feeling...
moody.

MICHELLE
(sarcastic)
Oh. PMS?

That gets a chuckle out of both of them. The amusement wanes--

LOLA
You know I don't really paint much
anymore, either. I haven't picked
up a brush in years. Or at least it
feels that way...

Lola holds up her glass.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Now you know my biggest secret.

Michelle complies, CLINKS her glass against Lola's.

MICHELLE
Cheers, I guess.
(fumbling)
I'm sorry. ...Thank you for sharing
that.

They drink. Michelle opens her mouth to say-- reconsiders. Then--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
I hate that fucking tesla. Now you
know mine.

Lola observes Michelle. Sees right through that.

LOLA
You've really got to stop
apologizing so much.

CUT TO:

49 INT. MICHELLE'S ROOM - A DREAM - NIGHT 49

Michelle in bed, asleep.

A low rumbling, SCRATCHING SOUND gains momentum outside the window. Michelle's eyes OPEN.

The sound travels past... She holds her breath.

Then, the SOUNDS SHIFT. It's coming from inside the house...

50 INT. LAKE HOUSE - NEXT 50

Michelle peers out of her doorway. The sound GROWS.

Her ears lead her towards the kitchen. She creeps closer. The sounds like the slow, deliberate SAWING OF BONES.

51 INT. KITCHEN - NEXT 51

Michelle approaches, quiet. A shadowy figure behind the plastic causes her to CATCH her breath.

The figure takes shape -- it's LOLA. She stands in front of the sink. Michelle moves closer to see--

Lola dips her hands in, plays with the oozing, brown SLUDGE.

Lola looks up at Michelle. She smiles, demented. Her eyes empty, like the glassy surface of the lake.

Michelle SCREAMS--

CUT TO:

52 INT. LAKE HOUSE - MORNING 52

Michelle enters, dressed for the day. Approaches the window, admiring the view...

Something catches her eye--

Outside: the shoreline -- the ROWBOAT is there.

Michelle looks over her shoulder, paranoid.

The sound of the SHOWER sputtering to life filters in from the bathroom. The room is empty.

Michelle shakes her head, disturbed -- did she dream everything?

53

INT. LOLA'S ROOM - NEXT

53

Michelle eases into the room, steps carefully, not to make a sound.

What's she looking for? She's not even sure.

The bedside table comes into focus. Michelle takes a step towards it--

A CREEAAAKKK from the closet--

Michelle frowns. She turns around, eyeing it.

CUT TO:

The closet door opens. Michelle gasps.

A big painting on the wall -- giant swirls of blue feed into a deep, black hole.

Michelle reaches out, hands shaking. The paint -- *It's still wet.*

54

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

54

Lola and Michelle sit across from one another. More red wine.

Michelle takes cautious sips, keeping her eyes on Lola. She's suspicious, but she's not even sure of *what*.

They're playing a trivia card game called "Vices." The black and gold box lies open beside them. Lola draws a card. An image of a devil sticking its tongue out on the back of it.

LOLA

(reading)

What did author Yukio Mishima call
"the ultimate form of
masturbation?"

MICHELLE

Um. Shit, I don't know. ...The
selfie?

LOLA

Okay, this game was made in the
80s...

MICHELLE

Just tell me.

Lola flips over the card. Reads:

LOLA
Ritual suicide, "Seppuku."

Michelle's eyes widen. She frowns.

MICHELLE
Okay...

Michelle draws a card.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Have you ever thought about killing
anyone?

Lola frowns.

LOLA
That's the question?

MICHELLE
No. Sorry. Just... a random
question.

Lola sips her wine, eyeing Michelle.

LOLA
I'm not sure I know what you mean.

MICHELLE
Last night, we were talking about
secrets. I guess it's just always
been this weird fantasy of mine...

LOLA
So you're biggest secret isn't that
you hate your liberal guilt
spaceship... it's that you're
harboring a murderous rage.

MICHELLE
No, I mean, it's not that big of a
deal. Just thinking about "if I did
it, how would I..." Etcetera,
etcetera.

Lola stares at Michelle, waiting for more. Michelle can't
take the heat. She looks down at her card. Reads:

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Um, okay: "With what object does a
demon force Linda Blair to
masturbate with in *The*
Exorcist...?"

LOLA
A crucifix.

Michelle checks the answer. Lola got it right.

MICHELLE
You played this game as a kid?

LOLA
Dad's favorite.

MICHELLE
(laughing)
That's fucked.
(embarrassed)
Sorry. I didn't mean--

LOLA
No I get it. My childhood was
hilarious. Next?

Michelle complies, draws another card. Reads:

MICHELLE
What author loved to beat dogs to
death on his nightly walks?! Oh my
god!

LOLA
So how would you do it?

MICHELLE
Huh?

LOLA
It's Guy de Maupassant. How would
you kill somebody? "Etcetera,
etcetera..."

MICHELLE
I've never thought of anything that
would satisfy me.

LOLA
Satisfy?

MICHELLE
Like the desire to hurt this one
person. Killing them isn't enough.

LOLA
Really. How so.

MICHELLE

You'd understand if-- It's just
this dumb thing I think about
sometimes to make me feel better.

LOLA

Killing someone, or how that
wouldn't be enough?

MICHELLE

Both, I don't know.

LOLA

I think you do know.

Michelle eyes Lola -- *what's she mean by that?*

LOLA (CONT'D)

So, is it some serial killer shit
or... Just one person in
particular?

MICHELLE

I don't know! It's-- Both. This guy
assaulted me once. I don't even
know why I brought it up.

LOLA

And now you want to kill all the
men?

MICHELLE

No!

LOLA

What did he do to you?

MICHELLE

I don't-- Really want to talk about
it.

LOLA

You think I don't have my fair
share of horror stories?

MICHELLE

It's not that...

LOLA

You think I won't get it.

Michelle pauses. Looks at Lola's chewed-up fingernails. Her scabby cuticles.

MICHELLE

We both do that.

Lola follows Michelle's gaze to her fingers. Michelle's picked a freshly bloody CUTICLE as we speak--

LOLA

I noticed.

MICHELLE

It's the worst, I can't stop no matter how hard I try. One time Chase even tried to make me wear oven mitts around the house so I couldn't do it anymore.

LOLA

Uhuh. Classic Chase... And then what happened?

MICHELLE

I just scratched at myself with the other fingernails anyway... Inside the mitts, you know.

Lola chuckles knowingly--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Chase really hates it. He says it's so unlike me.

LOLA

Is it? You're behaving unlike yourself?

MICHELLE

No, I guess-- It's just a different part. Probably one that would take over if I let it.

LOLA

Then you'd have frizzy hair in no time?

MICHELLE

Something like that, yeah.

There's a certain sadness to Michelle as she says that. She sips her wine, lost in a thought--

Lola looks over at the plastic quarantined kitchen -- the faint sound of bubbling sludge filters over from behind it...

LOLA

...My dad used to do this thing
when I was a kid where he'd put me
in dangerous situations and then
punish me if I fucked up-- Like, if
I let myself get hurt or if I got
scared. I was supposed to be
stronger than that.

MICHELLE

Stronger than what?

LOLA

Than being vulnerable. Weak.

MICHELLE

Chase isn't like that.

LOLA

(surprised she took it
there)

Are you sure?

MICHELLE

Yeah. I'm sure. He just wants me to
be my best self.

LOLA

Like your mom?

MICHELLE

What?

LOLA

Didn't you always used to say that--
Your mom, "she just wants me to be
my best self." But she just...
ignored who you were completely.

Michelle forces a half-smile. Sips her wine again. She looks wounded, hurt.

MICHELLE

Huh. You remembered that.

Lola gestures as if to say, 'of course I did.'

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

She did ignore who I was
completely... I was too emotional,
too damaged. She didn't want me to
be my best self... She wanted me to
be her 'perfect version' of myself.

Michelle takes a gulp of wine, then:

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
It was empty and hollow.
Meaningless, bullshit.

LOLA
Whew! Let it out, sister.

Michelle shakes her head. She can't.

LOLA (CONT'D)
And you're sure Chase isn't the
same way?

A flash of recognition in Michelle's eyes.

MICHELLE
What?

Michelle's stares at Lola, intense. Her face reddens. She looks like she might explode, or cry.

LOLA
Okay... 'Mea culpa.'

Lola beats her chest for emphasis.

55 EXT. THE LAKE - NIGHT

55

The water CHURNS, SWELLS.

Something below the surface, trying to break free.

56 INT. LAKE HOUSE - LOLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

56

A CRUNCHING BOOM. Lola's eyes fly open.

The noise reverberates into that same low, SAWING sound.

Lola sits up. She looks down at her abdomen. The SAWING grows louder. Lola looks up - it's not her - the sounds are coming from inside the house.

Lola goes to the door.

The SAWING BREATHS give way to SCRATCHING. Sharp nails. CLAWING to get in.

It's CLOSE -- it's coming from Michelle's room.

57

INT. MICHELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

57

The SCRATCHING continues, persistent...

The moon illuminates Michelle in a calm yet eerie light. Lola creeps closer.

It's coming from underneath Michelle's bed.

Lola crouches to look underneath--

Her ear guides her upward. The SCRATCHING and SAWING seems to be coming from *inside* Michelle.

A hand SLAPS against Lola's wrist. She GASPS-- all the air sucked out of her.

Michelle holds onto Lola -- her grip TIGHT. Painful.

MICHELLE

Don't be a fucker just do it.

Lola HEAVES for air that will not enter her lungs.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Fucking do it, you baby. Fuck you and give it to me. It's time. Fuck you, I'll never know!

Lola finally INHALES. SCREAMS. Hits at Michelle's arms, panicked. Michelle gets even closer, her skin blue veins and grey. She GROWLS:

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Fucking give it to me in my sleep.

Lola finally pries Michelle's fingers off her wrist. She flees.

58

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - SHORELINE - NIGHT

58

Lola in a panic--

She undresses quickly. Mutters a chant to herself. Wades in up to her ankles.

LOLA

My road is open. My way is clear.

Lola looks up toward the moon -- nothing. It doesn't seem to be anywhere in the sky.

LOLA (CONT'D)
*With the power of me, I set you
 free..*

Lola near hyperventilating. She dives into the water. Swims--

Arms and legs move through the murky water.

Lola multiplies. There's another body...

CUT TO:

Lola surfaces. Michelle beside her.

The moon, bright, lights up the lake.

The two women kiss, passionate. Lola loses herself in the duty of this intimate act.

Lola pulls away, holds Michelle's head. Her mouth open, she pushes her towards the water...

MICHELLE

Wait--

Michelle CHOKES, suffocating, drowning.

Lola leans over Michelle. She releases BLACK SLUDGE into Michelle's open mouth. Her vomiting sounds like a WAR CRY.

CUT TO:

59

INT. LAKE HOUSE - MICHELLE'S ROOM - DAWN

59

Michelle wakes up suddenly-- lifted by her sternum. She GASPS for air.

HEAVE--

HEAVE--

HEAVE--

Her arms flail. Wildly. She looks around the room.

There's nothing-- Nothing there.

Michelle starts to regain her senses.

She drops back into the bed. Slows her breath.

SMASHCUT TO:

60 EXT. A BUSY STREET - MANHATTAN - MORNING 60

The BLARING cacophony of a Midtown Manhattan street. A SWARM of yellow cabs speeds past. SIRENS in the background. CLANGING of coffee carts. The subway RUMBLES underground.

PEDESTRIANS bubble over from the sidewalk. They spill onto the street, shuffle their way across asphalt to avoid oncoming cars.

Michelle comes into view -- seemingly out of nowhere.

Her face devoid of any expression, she's wearing an uncharacteristic BRIGHT RED LIP.

Michelle breaks away from us. Crosses the street to join the throng of morning commuters.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. SIDEWALK - NEXT 61

Throngs in business attire rush past in both directions.

Michelle is a few steps ahead of us. There's something different about her -- she's hunched, her body full of tension.

We weave through the crowd trying to keep up with her -- our view often lost, interrupted by other people on the sidewalk.

Michelle crosses the street-- a taxi ZOOMS past.

Michelle continues her staccato march. We lose her.

CUT TO:

62 INT. MICHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY 62

A plush, cushy office belonging to a high-end design firm.

We creep through the empty entryway. Peer around the corner, into the open layout...

Michelle sits at a desk. She jabs at her keyboard, aggressive.

A CO-WORKER, JENNA (40s) passes by Michelle - heads for the desk several feet behind hers.

JENNA
Lots of email to catch up on!
Almost makes taking time off not
worth it.

Michelle doesn't bite.

TAP TAP TAP--

63 INT. MICHELLE'S DESK - NEXT

63

The workspace well put together and unmistakably hers.

--TAP.

MICHELLE
(aggressive)
Fucking rep for the Madison account
is so stupid and so condescending
at the same time. Like thank you,
Josh, I'm aware that it's Monday.
Try to spell it properly next time,
asshole.

JENNA
Whoa. Can I see?

Jenna appears behind Michelle. Peers at her computer screen.
She reads, grins.

JENNA (CONT'D)
Wow. He really is a dumb cunt.

Jenna looks at Michelle, notices something different--

JENNA (CONT'D)
Love that lip color.

MICHELLE
Thanks.

JENNA
Much more eye-catching than your
usual...

MICHELLE
You know you might want to refrain
from using the word cunt as an
insult, it's perpetuating the
bullshit notion that having, or
being, a vagina is weak.

JENNA
Oh. Yeah, totally.

Jenna returns to her desk. Michelle to her keyboard assault.

JENNA (CONT'D)
So did you have a nice trip?

TAP TAP TAP TAP-- Pause.

MICHELLE
Yes, I had a nice trip. Thank you
for asking.

64 INT. NAIL SALON - AFTERNOON

64

Michelle sits at a small desk -- a NAIL TECHNICIAN (50s) uses a sharp tool to scrape the dirt out from under her stubby, bitten nails.

The nail salon has a bright, clinical vibe. Large light panels decorate the wall behind the Nail Technician. Splotchy branch patterns splayed across them.

The Nail Technician takes out a file.

NAIL TECHNICIAN
You bite.

MICHELLE
A little.

Nail Technician clicks her tongue in frustration.

CCCRRRRHH-- CRRRHHH-- CRRRHHHH-- The nail file grates across the tops of Michelle's fingers. Michelle winces--

It SCRATCHES across Michelle's fingernails. The sound gets louder. It starts to sound like the SAWING we heard so many times at the lake...

Michelle stares at the wall, hypnotized by the scratching sound.

The branch pattern flickers, starts to MOVE across the wall to the beat of the now deafening CLAWING SOUND--

Just make it go away. Michelle squeezes her eyes SHUT--

CUT TO:

65

INT. EXERCISE STUDIO - EVENING

65

Michelle is one of four WOMEN spread out on the wood floor, in the midst of a pilates class.

At the front of the class, the teacher, MOLLY, leads the women through their routine. The women all seem to know it by heart, including Michelle - but her movements lack prowess. Her body seems stiff, awkward. Molly comes over, tries to guide her.

MOLLY

You doin' okay? I thought you had this in the bag.

MICHELLE

Fine, just--

Michelle gets frustrated, releases the pose.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I did a lot of rowing this weekend, I dunno.

MOLLY

Ohhh that'll do a number on your lats. Try this--

Molly demonstrates an adjustment for Michelle.

Michelle, flustered, struggles to execute it--

66

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

66

Water SPRAYS against tile. Michelle is in the shower. She washes her hair. Washes her face. Rinses. She can finally breathe.

From outside the steamy bathroom we can hear the faint sound of the apartment's front door OPENING and CLOSING.

CHASE (O.S.)

(from elsewhere in the apartment)

Babe?

Michelle doesn't respond. Doesn't even seem to register. She relishes in the water pressure.

CHASE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Babe...!

The bathroom door swings open. Michelle SCREAMS, startled.

CHASE (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Babe.

This is CHASE (30s), the sort of guy who looks equal parts prince charming and privileged buffoon -- or maybe just like he's been trying to fit in at the country club his entire life.

MICHELLE
You scared me.

CHASE
You didn't hear me?

Chase goes to the sink. Begins to wash his hands.

MICHELLE
No I-- Nevermind. Just wasn't
expecting...

Michelle watches him, annoyed. She thinks about how he could've done that in the hall bathroom, or even in the kitchen--

Chase turns off the sink faucet. Dries his hands.

CHASE
(gestures to Michelle in
the shower, not ready)
So. No going out for dinner
tonight, then?

He exits the bathroom. Takes off his tie, starts to undress--

MICHELLE
Could you close the door? It's
letting all the steam out.

Chase returns, SHUTS the bathroom door behind him.

CHASE
Better?

He continues to undress, steam gathering all around him.

He's approaching nudity. Chase grins, mischievous.

MICHELLE
Yes. Thank you.

Chase joins Michelle in the shower.

CHASE
I missed you.

Michelle puts on a smile. They kiss. Rushed, but not entirely dispassionate.

MICHELLE
Mmm. I missed you too.

Chase lathers up. Michelle tries to get herself back into enjoying the shower mode.

CHASE
So. How was hanging out with the drama queen?

MICHELLE
It was... Good.

CHASE
She didn't go all single white female on you?

MICHELLE
Clearly not.

CHASE
Did you have fun?

MICHELLE
Yeah. It was good.

CHASE
Wow. So much good. I don't know what to do with all this information.

Michelle turns to rinse her face.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Ooh!

His fingers zero in on what we can assume is a pimple on Michelle's back -- she immediately tries to shove him off.

MICHELLE
Stop!

CHASE
Come on, let me get it!

He focuses on finishing the pimple. She lets him.

67

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

67

Chase sits on the sofa, he's watching a reality singing competition show on the couple's massive-screen TV.

Michelle enters, glistening, in a bath robe, her hair damp. Its texture is suddenly frizzy, curly. Like--

She plops down next to Chase on the sofa. She's got some Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream (Strawberry Not So Shortcake.) Digs her spoon into the smooth surface of the fresh pint.

Chase glares at this ice cream spectacle.

CHASE

We are not having ice cream for dinner.

MICHELLE

I'm eating some ice cream.

She puts the spoonful into her mouth.

CHASE

(to himself)

Sick.

MICHELLE

What?

CHASE

No, I'm just thinking of all that dairy and sugar on an empty stomach...

He rubs his belly as though in pain.

CHASE (CONT'D)

(burps)

Guh.

Michelle stares at Chase, holds her spoon mid air. She looks halfway to stabbing him with it.

Michelle gets up, exits.

68

INT. HALLWAY - NEXT

68

Michelle passes a painting in the hallway, does a double take.

It's a landscape. Realistically rendered, classy frame.

She pauses, inspecting it: a wooded LAKE beneath mountains. A few clouds in the sky.

MICHELLE

Babe?

CHASE (O.S.)

Yeah?

MICHELLE

What happened to my painting?

CHASE (O.S.)

What painting?

MICHELLE

The painting that I painted. That used to be hanging right here in the hallway.

Chase enters.

CHASE

Oh, yeah. You like it? I met the artist at this opening...

MICHELLE

Where's my painting?

Chase continues into the kitchen.

CHASE (O.S.)

It's in the closet. I couldn't find a new spot for it. Those colors really clash, you know?

Michelle stares at the landscape. Chase's words echo in her ears, reach a shrill pitch.

She zeroes in on the lake...

The ice cream goes back in the freezer.

Michelle slams the door SHUT--

CUT TO:

70

INT. CHASE AND MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

70

The couple is mid-fuck. Squeezed together in a tight ball of bodies in motion.

Rapid moaning from her. Grunting from him.

They slow-- Intensify. Michelle wields her body to relocate Chase, gets on top of him.

She fucks Chase. Her body stiff and violent. It's hard to tell if she's normally like this in bed, or if she's suddenly changed...

The movements of her body stretch and strain. From this angle, her figure looks uncannily similar to Lola's--

CUT TO:

71

INT. CHASE AND MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

71

A silent, still view of the couple's impressively large bedroom. Manhattan skyline out the window. A massive king bed.

The couple lays, post-coital, spread out.

Michelle stares at the ceiling -- spaced out, still agitated. She SNAPS her fingers, aggressive, to a slow, imaginary beat,

SNAP--

The same beat as the nail file, as the saw--

SNAP-- SNAP--

We creep closer to Michelle. To her hand.

SNAP--

We move closer.

SNA-- Chase puts his hand over hers.

CHASE

Baby, shh.

Michelle rips her hand away, throws the covers off--

MICHELLE

Okay you want to have a confrontation? Let's have a confrontation.

Michelle gets out of bed.

CHASE

Huh?

MICHELLE

Just tell me. What's your fucking problem?

CHASE

My problem? I'm getting yelled at right now?

MICHELLE

That's fucking idiotic.

Michelle starts getting dressed--

CHASE

What? What is going on with you?

MICHELLE

You tell me.

CHASE

I'll tell you you're acting super weird. You don't ask me how my day was, how my weekend was--

MICHELLE

How was your day? How was your weekend?

CHASE

And yelling at me for no reason after just taking off without me for the weekend without--

MICHELLE

Ohhh I knew it.

CHASE

Knew what?

MICHELLE

You don't like it when I go off without you. Little Michelle might get some ideas of her own.

CHASE

That's not even--

Michelle opens her closet. Stares at the curated palette of clothing.

MICHELLE

Why the fuck do I dress like I'm in
a Chico's catalogue?

CHASE

--Chico's..?

She opens Chase's closet: the same palette on display.

MICHELLE

Because you dress like a fucking
Chico's catalogue!

CHASE

(trying to reason)

Michelle. Baby. Just talk to me.
Tell me. What the fuck is going on?

MICHELLE

You wanna erase me? I'll show you
who's getting erased.

She gets dressed--

CHASE

(incredulous)

Really?

MICHELLE

You ready?

She exits the room.

The front door to the apartment SLAMS shut as she exits.

72

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NEXT

72

Michelle stomps down the stairs as though trying to give the stiffness in her body release.

MICHELLE

Fuck fuck fuck fuuuuuck!!

She shoves a trash can onto its side. Kicks it.

Michelle takes a few deep breaths. Looks up at the MTA display:

4 MIN.

The trash can see-saws from Michelle's kick, its metal edge GRATING against the concrete platform.

The GRATING gives way to a familiar, urgent SAWING. On the subway tracks, rats respond to it. They scurry in a panic.

Michelle tries to crack her neck. In the background, a figure comes down the stairs.

SAWING-- SAWING--

A large brown SPIDER ambles over Michelle's foot. It looks like the one we saw at the lake house, revived and out of place.

Michelle doesn't flinch. Hovers, then lowers her foot onto it, slow. *CRRRUNCH--*

OLD MAN (O.S.)
Hey, honey. You okay?

Michelle takes a second to respond. She lifts her shoe, inspects the carnage.

MICHELLE
You should leave me alone.

He gets closer. His HEAVY, LABORED BREATHING mixes with the SAWING, gets LOUDER.

He reaches out a hand, touches her lower back--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Don't touch me!

She shoves--

CRUNCH.

Michelle takes a step towards the yellow line of the subway platform, peers over the edge--

The OLD MAN (70s) lays sprawled across the tracks. Knocked out, must've hit his head.

SUBWAY INTERCOM (O.S.)
There is a-- downtown-- express--
train-- Approaching the station.
Please stand away from the platform
edge.

The train is coming. The horn HONKS.

Michelle watches, calm. She peers down. Her hair flies wild, kicking up around her face.

A few MEN (20s-40s) in MTA construction gear rush past.

MTA WORKER
 THERE'S A GUY ON THE TRACKS! STOP
 THE TRAIN!

A maglite flashes signals to the conductor--
 The train RUMBLES closer, it slows, halts.
 Michelle glares in its direction. Her eyes low.
 The men pull the old man up, back onto the platform.

MTA WORKER (CONT'D)
 (radios)
 We're gonna need an ambulance here,
 gotta guy passed out on the track--

Michelle plasters on a smile, like a good girl.

MICHELLE
 Thank god you came.

She turns and walks away.

73 INT. BAR - LATER

73

Good-time MUSIC PLAYS. Michelle stands at the bar with TWO GUYS who are maybe younger than her-- if not in age, definitely in lifestyle.

The trio takes a round of shots.

GUY #1 is the level of drunk that reduces one to a conversational emcee. GUY #2 is loving the spotlight.

Michelle's hair is still curly -- frizzy from air drying. She's sporting the red lip. She looks disarmingly pretty, but in an almost unrecognizable way...

GUY #2
 What'd you say your name was again?

MICHELLE
 Lola. Cheers.

She holds up another shot glass. Downs it.

GUY #2
 (sing-song)
 'LalalalaLola--'

GUY #1
 Oh yeah what's that song--

MICHELLE

(to Guy #2, sarcastic)

Wow buddy, never heard that one
before... Can't imagine why you're
single.

(to Guy #1)

It's called 'Lola.'

GUY #1

Oooouch.

GUY #2

Who says I'm single?

MICHELLE

You act like you're single.

GUY #2

How do single people act?

MICHELLE

They let strange women buy them
several rounds of shots at a dive
bar on a Monday night.

GUY #1

Touché...

Guy #2 doesn't have anything to say to this. He just eyes
Michelle like he's met his embittered, intellectual match--

GUY #2

Well you seem like a real peach
yourself.

MICHELLE

You objectifying me?

She bursts out laughing at her own joke. The two guys follow
her lead.

GUY #2

No, I get it, you're trying to tell
me I'm being misogynistic or
something. And that's a double
standard.

GUY #1

That's not fair!

MICHELLE

How's that a double standard?

GUY #2

Here you are buying us drinks like
we're just pieces of meat and what
do you expect in return?

MICHELLE

Maybe my motives aren't pure. But
that's my business.

GUY #1

Yeah. Wait what?

GUY #2

Now wait a minute, let me explain--

GUY #1

Explain! Let the man explain

Michelle leans in closer to Guy #2.

MICHELLE

I'm pretty sure you can't tell me
what to do.

74

INT. BROOKLYN APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

74

Michelle enters, drunk, with Guy #2 from the bar.

Blind fooling around in the dark.

He pushes her against the wall. She slams him against
another. They're stumbling, drunk.

Michelle's phone lights up, but doesn't make any noise.

There's something violent about this drunken hookup that
makes us question whether she's giving him head or hurting
him in a very demented way--

CUT TO:

75

INT. THE LAKE HOUSE - A DREAM - NIGHT

75

Michelle lies awake in her twin bed. SCRATCHING and BREATHING
sounds surround her. Her own breath becomes rapid, panicked--

CRUNCH-- Michelle sits up, looks out the window -- it seems
like the sounds are coming from deep within the woods.

The SOUNDS GROW closer... And louder--

It's the SAWING.

They disappear. Michelle exhales. Wait--

The SAWING creeps up. SOFT. Barely audible but GROWING AGAIN.

It's coming from inside the house-- It's coming from inside her--

CUT TO:

76 INT. BROOKLYN APARTMENT - MORNING

76

Michelle wakes up -- plain white walls, an unfamiliar space.

She pulls the dark grey bedsheet around her naked body. The sheet is covered in -- blood stains? The fabric so dark, it's nearly impossible to tell.

Michelle stunned, making sure not to look at whatever's on the bed. She staggers out of the room.

77 INT. SUBWAY STATION - MORNING

77

Michelle mounts the packed escalator. She stands, waits.

Her hand grips the conveyor belt -- next to it, her reflection warps and wobbles over the shiny surface of the escalator siding.

Michelle peers down at her distorted reflection. Her bright RED LIP -- a foreign splotch that wiggles across the metal.

She rubs it off, quick, disturbed by her own image.

78 EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - MORNING

78

Michelle walks down the street with a to-go cup of coffee. Sunglasses. A nauseous grimace on her face.

Michelle stops walking. She sees something:

79 INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - NEXT

79

Michelle drags an old, dirty writing desk into the building from the curb. It's definitely a sight.

THE DOORMAN opens the entrance door for her, concerned.

DOORMAN

You need help--?

MICHELLE
No! I got it. I got it!

Michelle drags the desk across the lobby. It's like she's lugger a dead body. Or a rowboat. Her strength seems unreal for her frame, almost hulk-like.

80 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - ENTRYWAY - NEXT 80

Michelle shoves the desk through the front door. She's sweaty, accomplished.

MICHELLE
Great. Now...

81 INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT 81

Michelle's new desk looks out of place in the otherwise carefully decorated apartment. She didn't even move other items out of the way to make a proper home for her new find.

Michelle brings a chair over to the writing desk. She sits, puts her legs up on the desk. Relishes the moment.

Michelle checks her cellphone. So many missed calls.

The screen flashes -- she's getting another call now: **Jenna Office.** Michelle puts the phone to her ear.

MICHELLE
Hi, Jenna.
JENNA (O.S.)
(over phone)
Michelle. Where the fuck are you.

MICHELLE
I'm at home. In my new office.

JENNA (O.S.)
(over phone)
Michelle--

MICHELLE
Jenna. Fuck off.

Michelle ends the call.

She pauses. Unsettled.

82 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NEXT 82

Michelle hurries into the bathroom. Closes the door behind her.

Michelle wets a cotton ball with makeup remover, properly wipes the smudged RED lipstick off of her face.

86 Inspects herself in the mirror, she doesn't recognize herself. 86

83 INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - EARLY AFTERNOON 83

Michelle sits, nervous and small, in a squeaky chair in the corner of a dimly lit room.

In the opposite corner, in a nice leather chair, sits her THERAPIST (40s) already balding but still youthful in the face, he has a permanent mocking tone whether he means it or not.

There's an awkward pause. He waits for her to begin. Michelle makes an odd, but desperate shrug--

MICHELLE
I feel weird.

He pantomimes her gesture:

THERAPIST
"Weird?"

Long exhale from Michelle.

MICHELLE
Yeah. Really weird. Like-- There's something wrong. With me.

THERAPIST
What makes you think there's something wrong with you?

MICHELLE
I don't know, I--

THERAPIST
Why don't you try starting at the beginning. When did you first feel this way?

MICHELLE
I don't know where the beginning is...

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

(dawning)

I went to see an old friend this
weekend--

THERAPIST

Old friend?

MICHELLE

Yes, her name's Lola.

THERAPIST

You've never mentioned Lola before.

MICHELLE

Well it's been a long time.

THERAPIST

You didn't mention you were going
to see an old friend. I imagine if
it's been that long it would be
somewhat of an occasion.

MICHELLE

Well, I guess, yeah.

THERAPIST

But you didn't bring it up in our
last session, what do you think
that's about?

MICHELLE

In our last session we were talking
about my mother.

THERAPIST

I recall...

MICHELLE

So it didn't come to mind. My
mother and Lola have nothing to do
with each other.

THERAPIST

That's interesting.

MICHELLE

What?

THERAPIST

That you felt the need to say, "My
mother and Lola have nothing to do
with each other." Maybe it's
possible that they do?

MICHELLE

I was just trying to address your question--

THERAPIST

Does Lola make you feel invisible, like your mother does?

MICHELLE

No. If anything she makes me feel too seen...

THERAPIST

How so?

MICHELLE

(frustrated)

I don't know, like, she notices everything. Every weakness.

THERAPIST

Well there's a connection there. One zeroes in on your weaknesses, the other is terrified to acknowledge them. Isn't that, in its own way, noticing them?

Michelle shrugs. Shakes her head.

MICHELLE

You tell me... I'm just trying to figure out what's going on in my head.

THERAPIST

So Lola didn't come to mind or, did you, perhaps unconsciously, leave her out of the conversation?

MICHELLE

Sure, maybe I did. I don't know. It was "unconscious."

THERAPIST

Well I think that's something we need to explore.

MICHELLE

Okay.

THERAPIST

"Okay." So why didn't you want to talk about Lola?

MICHELLE

I didn't not want to talk about Lola! I'm trying to tell you that I went to see her this weekend and now everything feels off, like, I'm carrying her around with me, I, feel like I'm changing and I'm not in control of it--

THERAPIST

She must have had quite an impact on you.

MICHELLE

Yes, that's the thing. I can't-- I'm not-- I'm telling you there's something *wrong* with me.

A pause. He frowns.

THERAPIST

Can you elaborate?

MICHELLE

What?!

THERAPIST

Tell me your version of what's wrong with you.

Michele's mind races for a solution. Then something occurs to her:

MICHELLE

You think I'm making this up. That it's all in my head.

THERAPIST

(thrown off)

It's not my role to make judgements here.

Sawing--

Michelle narrows her eyes -- like Lola at the campfire to Don -- *pathetic*.

SAWING--

The Therapist frowns. He's never seen that expression from Michelle before--

SAWING--

CUT TO:

84 INT. SUBWAY CAR - AFTERNOON 84

The SAWING now rapid, overwhelmingly loud--

Michelle GASPS for air, opens her eyes. She's PANTING. Terrified.

Michelle looks at the other PASSENGERS, wild-eyed. They seem pretty disturbed as well, for what it's worth.

The subway car pulls into a station. Doors open. Michelle stumbles out of the car and onto the platform.

85 INT. 14TH STREET SUBWAY STATION TUNNEL - NEXT 85

Michelle jogs through the pedestrian tunnel. In a mild panic.

She stares at the PEOPLE she passes by.

Glimpses of MOTHERS and CHILDREN. PEOPLE, people, people. Homeless. Buskers. Students. SAWING. PEOPLE.

Michelle, overwhelmed. She has to get away from them.

86 INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - EVENING 86

Michelle stumbles down the hallway. Relief. She's made it.

Her walk to the apartment door is low and stumbling, stiff. Like an evolutionary regression.

Michelle BANGS and slams her keys at her apartment door. She can't seem to figure out how to work the key.

87 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 87

Michelle stumbles in. Finally. She SLAMS the door shut behind her. Twitches.

SAWING SAWING SAWING--

Michelle begins to SCREAM.

A tragic terror creeps up and overwhelms her. Now she fights something. Desperate.

A petrified possession -- this goes places we did not expect. Her overwhelming fear gives way to laughter. Michelle gasps a bit, giggles.

Her laugh rumbles into GUFFAW. Hysterical cackling. Her eyes watering.

Michelle finally gets all the laughter out. She lays back onto the carpet floor. A few remaining giggles escape. She SIGHS. Wipes her eyes, and stares at the ceiling--

Exhausted, finally surrendered. Michelle relaxes her head, her gaze shifts to:

88 INT. THE LAKE HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

88

Our view low, distorted -- Michelle's delirious POV from her living room floor.

The basement door swings OPEN.

Michelle, her normal self, stands in the doorway. Her breath cold and visible.

She enters the darkened basement.

She finds a lantern. Flicks it on. A warm, dim glow.

Michelle sits down on a mound of dirt -- where the boat once was -- she looks down at something we cannot see, but we can hear -- Grating, labored BREATHING. SHUDDERING.

MICHELLE

I want to tell you my story. I
think I owe you that much.

A hand -- Lola's hand -- reaches up into the frame. The skin has the gruesome look of flesh that's been set on fire and then left to rot.

A sweet, sickly GROAN from Lola--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

It was in college. At one of those parties, you know, that we went to mostly as freshman because we thought it was cool and we didn't know any better. They were always in somebody's dorm and had lots of booze and people wouldn't do anything, really, except stupid shit...

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

You never used to really go to
those parties, maybe you already
knew better.

Michelle lets out a bitter laugh. Sniffles. Resumes:

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

It was another one of those parties
and there was this guy who I
thought I knew really well. He was
supposed to be my friend and then
he pushed me down on one of those
creaky wood beds that only had a
plastic mat on it and he raped me.
I thought it didn't matter that
much you know, because I had been
with boys before but-- No one ever
tells you. How was I supposed to
see that coming? And I bled so
much. He just apologized for making
me bleed like that was all. I was
so drunk...

Lola's hand reaches up again. Takes Michelle's.

LOLA

Ah--

Michelle holds this hand. She smiles, loving.

MICHELLE

My mom never looked at me the same
after that happened. Nobody did.
Like their perfect little girl
didn't exist anymore. And I was
just some imposter...

(gathers herself)

My whole family was so afraid to
upset me they never said anything.
It's like she knew. That anger
would consume me and I'd never be
through with it.

Michelle leans in closer, reaches over -- seeming to gently
caress a bit of Lola's hair that we can just make out in the
frame...

It FLICKERS-- Wide: the full, gruesome horror of Lola's image
now visible. She sits beside Michelle, leans close to her as
if to tell her a secret--

The remnants of bodies, shoved behind the dirt pile, visible
in the background--

Close on Lola's disgusting lips, they graze Michelle's healthy ear:

LOLA
(whispering)
I have a present for you.

89 INT. LAKE HOUSE - NEXT

89

Looking out the front windows, we watch Michelle approach the front door with determination in her steps.

LOLA (V.O.)
My mother had an illness, they
always called it 'the swells.'

We seem to be inexplicably sucked backwards, though this time we know where we're going.

Our view REVERSED: A force pushes us toward Lola's bedroom...

LOLA (V.O.)
She'd bubble over, and we'd have to
hide away...

We catch a glimpse of Michelle heading into Lola's room, she re-appears with something -- a notebook, Lola's DAY PLANNER -- in her hands...

CUT TO:

90 EXT. THE LAKE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

90

Michelle's Tesla ROARS to life.

Headlights ON. The beams cut a slice through the trees. Obscuring the house in its darkness--

LOLA (V.O.)
Now that I'm older, I wonder if
that wasn't the real her that
finally managed to get out, all
along.

The car backs out of the driveway. It's pitch black.

91 INT. MICHELLE'S TESLA - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

91

Michelle, disheveled, behind the wheel. Dirt on her hands and all over her clothes from crawling around the basement.

She sniffs, rubs snot away from her face.

Michelle hits the turn signal, maneuvers the tesla towards **New York City**.

She smiles, intent.

92 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

92

The satisfying CLICK of a stereo amp being powered to life.

Michelle - once again wearing a BRIGHT RED LIP - turns up the volume on an aggressive METAL TRACK that sounds something like a volcano vomiting all the demon hell-bats up at once.

Michelle turns it up even MORE. A deafening volume -- the track distorted and throbbing. She begins to dance, wildly.

The volume of the track causes objects around the home to shake and pulse. Glass case doors RATTLE. A bomb could go off and nobody would hear.

Michelle dances around the room. Contorts and throws herself around. Trying to work all the stiffness out of her body.

The more furiously she dances, the more it seems to work.

93 INT. KITCHEN - NEXT

93

Michelle PANTING-- She stuffs spoonfuls of ice cream into her mouth. Ravenously hungry. Liberated.

MICHELLE

Mmm. Mmm.

Michelle loses the spoon. Bites into the chunk of ice cream, straight from the pint.

94 EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - MORNING

94

Michelle glides along the sidewalk, triumphant. Bags full of different containers of ice cream.

She hisses at a group of CHILDREN walking to school. Leers at a PANHANDLER.

A WOMAN cowers and shuffles her KIDS across the street. Two GUYS who would normally intimidate someone else, part and make way for Michelle - whose glare has intensified to the point of threatening to set a newsstand on fire.

95 EXT. CHINATOWN FISH MARKET - LATE MORNING 95

A storefront lined with algae-crusted aquariums filled to the brim with sea creatures. Chinese characters on the window.

Michelle peers at the tanks.

She bends down. Makes eye contact with a GIANT, spindly-legged CRAB -- the creature stares back at Michelle as if stunned while fighting for space in the crowded tank.

Michelle taps the glass.

96 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY 96

Michelle approaches the reservoir. A new plastic bag of large, spidery crabs accompanies the ice cream.

She scans the tree-lined water -- Manhattan's skyscrapers loom overhead. TOURISTS fumble with oars in tiny rowboats populating the greenish-brown water.

97 EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - NEXT 97

Michelle in a rowboat -- she pushes off from the vendor platform. Her grip on the oars is confident.

Michelle paddles, vigorous. She drives toward the center of the reservoir.

Michelle PROPELS onward, in a race against herself.

As she passes by, PEOPLE pause their leisurely rowing and stare.

She rows faster, and faster, with increasing effort. GRUNTS as her oars SLICE and DRIVE through the water.

The sound of her ROWING reaches a near cacophony as Michelle loses herself in a focused, adrenaline-rush state. Her eyes closed. She breathes in-- Out-- Controlled.

Michelle breathes in-- Out-- In-- She imagines herself on the lake. She smiles. Out--

98 EXT. THE LAKE - DAY 98

Michelle breathes in-- Her oars dip into the lake's calm, glassy water.

Everything is quiet, save for the lapping of the lake, the BUZZING of summer insects. The sounds of Manhattan nonexistent to us.

Michelle rows. Relishes the fresh, clean air. Pure bliss.

Michelle keeps rowing. She sings Lola's SONG to herself -- the song that Lola sang as she rowed home alone all those days ago.

99

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - CONTINUOUS

99

Michelle rows past thick brush and trees. Her rowing in time with something CRUNCHING under the PUMMELING of a heavy, blunt object. Slow, rhythmic. The same beat as Michelle's SNAPPING in the bedroom. As the SAWING creeping forward.

Michelle recognizes the rhythm. Looks up, toward the shore--

Through the thick brush, reeds, the branches of trees, is Lola -- she sits on her knees in the mud, using the entire force of her upper body to STRIKE something WET and CRUNCHY with a large, heavy rock.

FFFFTHWACK!!! Blood splatters. Lola HEAVES -- lifting the rock. It's caked with blood.

She brings the rock down again -- FTHWAGGKK!

We can catch a glimpse of what looks like could be a body - a shoulder, a tuft of hair, Don's flannel shirt.

Lola PANTS. Lifts again.

LOLA
Grrrrruaaah!!!

CRUNCH-- that sounded like the last one. Lola catches her breath.

Lola looks up, calm, makes eye contact with Michelle -- with us.

Michelle smiles. Drives the rowboat to shore.

CUT TO:

BZZZZZZ---

100 INT. A DINNER PARTY - EVENING

100

Michelle opens the door to a well-designed apartment milling with thirty-somethings in expensive-looking, minimalist clothing. They smell like fancy shampoo and carry vague accents from years of prep school, studies abroad, foreign nannies, and international travels.

Michelle hates them all. She just didn't realize it until this moment, standing in the foyer, sweaty and disheveled with her bags full of slowly dying crabs and dripping, melted ice cream.

DEE (30s) screams Goop more than Gwyneth, comes over to Michelle with a glass of wine ready, takes the bags from her.

DEE
(her appearance)
...Michelle..!
(the bags)
Oh, what are these..?

MICHELLE DEE (CONT'D)
Crabs. Crabs?

DEE (CONT'D)
(quickly)
Thank you!

She heads to the kitchen, Michelle trailing behind her.

101 INT. DEE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

101

Dee pauses to display the soaking bags to LESLEY (30s) a waif with a severe haircut:

LESLEY
Ohhh, that's what you had in mind
when you said, 'bring a dish'!

Dee frowns at the ice cream, liquid and leaking from the containers, as she pops it in the freezer. Lesley grimaces, stifling a laugh.

Chase swoops in, with red wine teeth.

CHASE
(to Michelle)
Honey why don't you go to the
bathroom and clean yourself up.

102 INT. DINING ROOM - NEXT

102

Everyone's getting settled at the table.

Michelle re-appears, red lipstick touched up but otherwise in the same condition. Chase doesn't hide his frown.

She takes a seat on the other side of the table, opposite Chase.

A few glances exchanged as seating is reconfigured around her.

NOAH (30s) wears a meticulously cultivated affability, enters with a plate of freshly steamed crabs.

NOAH

Great idea, Meesh.

Michelle winks at him.

DEE

Glad they cook up so quickly, Noah knew exactly what to do.

NOAH

(to Dee)

You'd be lost without me.

CHASE

(to Michelle)

You brought uncooked crab?

MICHELLE

They were alive.

CHASE

(to Dee & Noah)

I'm sorry about that. I don't know what we were thinking.

Michelle narrows her eyes.

GINNY (30s) a fashion-forward battle-axe, interjects:

GINNY

Michelle I love your outfit. What is that, norm core?

CHASE

I think it's called 'wearing house pants in public.'

MICHELLE
I woke up like this.

THEO (30s) gay but otherwise forgettable, picks it up:

THEO
Flawless.

Michelle and Theo clink glasses.

PAUL (30s) Chase's best friend and so handsome it says trouble, says something to Chase, inaudible to the group.

PAUL
...concerned about all of 'this.'

Michelle's demeanor darkens, she glares at Paul and Chase from across the table. Paul catches her eye. She doesn't look away. He frowns. Chase follows his gaze...

DEE
Okay everyone, a toast! To friends, to Friday nights, to living well.

ALL
Hear, hear.

DEE
Cheers, everyone.

Glasses clinking. Amidst the activity, Michelle stands, raises her glass. It gets awkward, quick.

CHASE
Michelle, sit down.

MICHELLE
If it's not a huge intrusion I'd like to make a toast as well.

She doesn't wait for feedback--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
I'd like to make a toast to all of you beautiful people. I know I'm not one of your kind originally, but you've all made me feel so welcomed. Genuinely--

Chase cuts her off, stands and clinks glasses with Michelle.

CHASE
Cheers everyone!

His friends comply. More "cheers" around the table.

Michelle doesn't take a drink. She sits, sets her glass down.

CUT TO:

103 INT. DEE AND NOAH'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

103

A game of loaded questions. Torn up papers in a bowl.
Everyone busy scribbling some sort of response.

NOAH

Okay who's picking?

DEE

Lesley.

GINNY

So I'll read...

CUT TO:

104 INT. DEE AND NOAH'S LIVING ROOM - NEXT

104

Everyone's had a few more drinks, they're nice and loosened up.

Lesley pulls papers from the bowl.

LESLEY

Okay. The thing I hate most about my body is, 'weird big toes.'

CHASE

Paul.

LESLEY

Wow, no hesitation.

(hands Paul the paper)

For you, Paul.

PAUL

Thank you.

NOAH

Paul and his famously fucked up toes.

LESLEY

Okay next one: 'my thighs.'

CHASE
 That's it? That could be any of
 you...four.
 (waves at the women)

LESLEY
 Okay. Setting aside...

Picks a new one, opens it, reads:

LESLEY (CONT'D)
 'The way I'm crawling inside of my
 skin. This isn't my body. It's not
 mine. It's a prison...'

GINNY
 Ookayy...

PAUL
Christ.

CHASE
 Wow. Uhm. Pass...

LESLEY
 (reads the next slip)
 'The cellulite on the back of my
 thighs.'

CHASE
 Michelle.

Ginny laughs, snide.

MICHELLE
 Didn't realize I have cellulite on
 the back of my thighs...

CHASE
 Nice try, honey, of course you do.

CUT TO:

ALL
 ONE, TWO, THREE--

SOME (wrong answer) EEEEEENNNNNHHH!!	PAUL AND THEO (right answer) DING DING DING!
--	--

CHASE
 Of course Paul had the fucked up
 toes...

105 INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT

105

Michelle reads from the bowl.

MICHELLE

'Who in the group would you call to help cover up a murder?'

THEO

Oh that's easy.

MICHELLE

Is it?

CHASE

Yeah.

Everyone's papers go in.

Paul reads--

MICHELLE

Just go through them all once without stopping, okay?

PAUL

Okay...

(picks up a slip)

'Paul.'

(another)

'Chase.'

(another)

'Chase.'

(another)

'Chase.'

(another)

'Definitely Chase.'

(another)

'Either Paul or Chase. Tied between.' And the last one is...

(opens the slip)

'Have you even met Chase??'

Lots of laughter and commentary around the room.

MICHELLE

Wow. Such variety.

CHASE

I'm honored, I think?

NOAH

Don't be, you scoundrel.

MICHELLE

Okay give the Paul one to Chase.
'Either Paul or Chase tied between'
is Ginny's. 'Definitely Chase' is
Dee's. 'Have you even met Chase?'
Lesley, 100%.

PAUL

Awww, Les.

Laughter.

MICHELLE

And then you know, the rest said
Chase so...

(she waves her hand at the
remaining few)

ALL

ONE, TWO, THREE-- DING DING DING
DING DING!!!

NOAH

Nice, Meesh.

GINNY

I'm curious. Who would you pick,
Michelle?

LESLEY

Oh yes. Who would Michelle pick?
Chase of course.

MICHELLE

Do I look like a fool?

CHASE

Ouch..

THEO

So who then?

MICHELLE

I'd pick myself.

PAUL

Don't trust any of us much, M?

CUT TO:

Dee reads the next question:

DEE

Gun to your head, you have to kill
 someone in the room. Who would you
 pick?

PAUL

Hoo-boy.

Paul claps his hands together, laughs with glee.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Okay, give it to me Michelle style.

DEE

You got it.

(picks a slip)

'Michelle, unfortunately.'

(next)

'Ginny.'

(next)

'Lesley, why not?'

(next)

'Chase.'

(next)

'Chase, he probably deserves it the
 most.'

(next)

'Michelle.' With a period.

(next)

'Paul because he's a bastard.'

(last one)

'Theo.'

CHASE

Wait, so who got out alive?

GINNY

Dee and Noah.

LESLEY

The power couple.

THEO

The rest of us are all so murder-
 able.

PAUL

'Michelle unfortunately' ...give
 that to Theo. 'Ginny' ...give that
 to Dee. 'Lesley, why not?'

Michelle. 'Chase,' hmmm... Ginny.

'Chase, he probably deserves it the
 most.' Let's say Lesley, I'm sure
 she'd know.

Glances exchanged around the table, a few eyebrows raise.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 'Michelle, period.' Uhh... Gonna
 give that one to Chase I think.

Paul's droning, the rest of the group, their banter, starts to fade away.

We push closer and closer in on Michelle. She holds a singular, fixed gaze that bores a hole across the table from her:

Chase. A spotlight shines upon him as he LAUGHS, in slow motion, wine-teeth bared, Lesley's hand upon his leg.

Michelle smiles. The SAWING seems to be fully within her now, it's in the way she breathes, her heartbeat. It might just be the tapered candles, but there's a fire reflected in her eyes.

106 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - LATER

106

Michelle twirls in, all smiles.

107 INT. BATHROOM - NEXT

107

Michelle opens her red lipstick, twists the stick all the way out of the tube.

She crushes it in her hands. Kneading it into a creamy mess.

Michelle smears the red across her cheeks, her forehead, her chin. Like an ancient warrior's battle paint.

Excited now -- she fumbles with her top, removes it. Smears the bright, bloody color across her chest.

Michelle makes a scary face in the mirror, hissing:

MICHELLE
 Rah!

She claps her hands, giddy.

108 INT. HALLWAY - NEXT

108

Michelle slinks from one room to the next, her hands sliding over the wall, leaving grubby red smudges in her wake.

She passes the landscape painting, pulling her dirty hands across it. The painting swings, falls.

Michelle looks down -- oops. The bright, full moon reflected on the surface of the lake catches her eye...

CUT TO:

109 INT. CLOSET - NEXT

109

Michelle flings open a storage closet -- clearly full of the relics of 'old Michelle.'

She digs through a container of drawers. Aha -- paint, brushes, *success*.

110 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

110

The room pitch black except for the Manhattan lights outside. We can't make out Michelle but we can hear her RASPY breathing. It gains momentum. It sounds just like the SAWING we heard at the dinner table.

A key UNLOCKS the front door. It OPENS. Chase turns on the LIGHT -- *Holy shit*.

A GIANT, SWIRLING BLACK HOLE painted across the living room wall. A shining, full moon at its center.

CHASE

What the fuck!

Below it, Michelle lays on the floor. Sweaty. A delirious look. Red warrior lipstick on her chest, her face. She rolls her eyes over to Chase. Starts to laugh.

MICHELLE

There's a scoundrel. "I'm sure she'd know."

CHASE

Where the-- What. Where the fuck have you been? You just leave in the middle of a dinner party? I--

Michelle's face falls. A look of sorrow in her eyes.

MICHELLE

(whispering)

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

CHASE

What the fuck did you do to our
apartment, Michelle? What is this?!

Michelle begins to sob. She covers her face, determined to
put on a real show.

MICHELLE

Baby, baby, baby...

CHASE

What's wrong with you?

Michelle gets up, goes over to Chase. Pulls him into an
embrace.

She sobs, her face buried in his shoulder. He grimaces at the
thought of how badly she's ruining his clothes...

MICHELLE

I'm not okay. I'm not okay.

CHASE

It's fine. You're okay.

Chase holds Michelle by the shoulders. Tough but loving.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Hey. You're gonna be fine.

Michelle shakes her head, 'no.'

MICHELLE

You don't understand--

CHASE

I understand. You had too much to
drink, am I right? And you've been
on a real bender these last few
days. Haven't you.

Michelle's lip quivers. He wipes tears off her face. Puts her
hair back in place.

CHASE (CONT'D)

It's fucking with your emotions and
making you feel like it's the end
of the world. I promise it's not,
okay?

MICHELLE

(whispering)

Okay. Okay...

CHASE
Now please, get yourself washed up.
I'll figure out what to do about...
(gestures at the carnage
of his living room)
This.

111 INT. KITCHEN - NEXT 111

Michelle's dirty hand pulls a butcher knife from the kitchen block.

112 INT. LIVING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS 112

Chase sighs, paces. He looks kinda like his world is falling apart. He sits, thinking pose.

He pulls out his phone -- **Michelle Mom** -- calls.

He waits. The line doesn't pick up. He hangs up.

113 INT. HALLWAY - NEXT 113

Michelle walks toward the living room. A creepy, tiptoe sort of walk, her head bent at an unnatural angle. Butcher knife at her side.

114 INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT 114

Chase gets up, antsy. He spots Michelle in the hallway.

She pauses, peers at him like an animal in the wild. The butcher knife concealed at her side.

CHASE
(at a loss)
...I love you.

MICHELLE
I love you, too.

Chase EXHALES, like he's got a lot more to say.

He turns, goes over to the stereo. Clicks it on-- DEAFENING HEAVY METAL BLASTS into his face, scaring the shit out of him.

CHASE
Ah!

Chase turns to recover -- it's Michelle. She STABS the butcher knife into his chest.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Gaaahh--

MICHELLE
(mocking)
AwwwWWWW! Poor baby!

Michelle stabs him. Again and again and again. The whole time she's singing that song:

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Now I feel the hope! The faith to
go another day..!

Chase barely has a chance to react. The music muffles any chance of hearing what could be a GURGLE here, a WHIMPER there--

It's over. Michelle stares at Chase's corpse. She licks the gore from the blunt edge of her butcher knife -- yum.

Then-- she bends over, propelled by instinct. Stabs into Chase's chest, begins prying at the ribs. Pulling them open -- blood flowing everywhere, it's impossible to see--

Michelle THRUSTS the blade in again. CRRAAAACK -- bingo.

She reaches in, pulls out her prize:

It's Chase's HEART. Mangled and nearly sliced in two.

She stares at it, dissatisfied. She lets the heart fall -- plop -- this isn't the release she was hoping for.

Fingers oozing with blood, Michelle CLICKS the stereo off. Only the sound of RINGING ears.

BRRRRING-- BRRRRING-- Chase is ringing.

Michelle drops the knife. CLANG. She fishes Chase's cellphone out of his -- pocket? Hard to tell.

An incoming call from **Michelle Mom**. She hits Accept -- brings the phone to her ear.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Mommy..!

CUT TO:

115 EXT. THE CRAPPY PART OF A SEASIDE TOWN - MORNING 115

Seagulls and gray sky. The ocean a roaring but distant feature.

Michelle walks along the deserted boardwalk, calm. She wears a new shade of even BRIGHTER RED lipstick -- it's nearly electric. Her hair is frizzy. She looks totally content.

Michelle HUMS a sweet, simple tune. The same one we heard Lola humming before. The same one she sang while she ended Chase--

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK--

116 EXT. MICHELLE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - NEXT 116

The door opens. Michelle smiles expectantly.

A WOMAN (late 50s) pulls Michelle into an embrace -- she's very obviously MICHELLE'S MOTHER in looks, demeanor, mannerisms...

MICHELLE'S MOTHER
Oh, my girl!

MICHELLE
(faking affection)
Hi, mommy.

Michelle's Mother can't seem to help it -- she pulls away from the embrace, gives her daughter a quick once-over, tries to smooth Michelle's hair.

Michelle smiles in a way that makes her Mother stop, suddenly self-conscious.

MICHELLE'S MOTHER
Sorry... Let's have some tea.

Michelle's Mother pulls her inside.

117 INT. MICHELLE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - NEXT 117

Michelle stands at the window. She looks out at the view--

Partially obstructed, but still, from here you can see the water.

A wave SWELLS up, rises, shatters back into itself. We can almost hear the break -- it gains volume...

It's the SAWING.

Michelle's eyes flash in recognition. Her cheeks burn red.

MICHELLE
(calling out)
Mommy--
Can I ask you something?

Michelle looks at us. An evil, demented smile.

In her eyes we can see the ocean -- the waves SWELL and CRASH, chaotic.

CUT TO:

BLACK.