

OUT THERE

Written by

Kate Folk

Based on the short stories "Out There" and "Big Sur" by

Kate Folk

Will Watkins, CAA
will.watkins@caa.com

Merideth Bajaña, Grandview
merideth@grandviewla.com
Erick Mendoza, Grandview
erick@grandviewla.com

EXT. BIG SUR - NIGHT

Highway 1. A curving road etched into a cliff face above the coastline. Beyond the flimsy guardrail, a lethal drop. Sporadic cars, headlights cutting through fog. A rare untamed swath of California. No cell service here. It's beautiful and eerie.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A festive patio overlooking the ocean. The people eating here are the best versions of themselves, in weekend getaway mode. A mix of tech yuppies, hipsters, and crunchy wellness types. Hard to tell who's who.

At a table along the railing sit ALICIA and ALAN (both 30s). Alan is strikingly good-looking, with long hair and a scruffy beard; he could be a model or an actor. Alicia is plain by comparison. She's attractive, but not someone who could make a living off being hot.

ALAN
Full moon tonight.

ALICIA
I can't believe how bright it is
without the city lights.

Alan stares at Alicia. She blushes.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
What?

ALAN
You're so beautiful.

ALICIA
You're not so bad yourself.

ALAN
Let's hike tomorrow.

ALICIA
I saw some maps in the cabin.

ALAN
We don't need a map. I know the
trails.

Alicia smiles. She picks up her phone out of habit, then puts it back down.

ALICIA
I keep forgetting there's no
service out here.

ALAN
They have wifi if you need it.

ALICIA
Oh, no. I like being off the grid.
With you.

Alan takes her hand.

ALAN
I'm glad we're doing this.

ALICIA
Me, too.

ALAN
It's so nice to get out of the San
Francisco Bay Area.

Alicia blinks at the strangeness of his phrasing, then shrugs
it off.

A female server arrives. She smiles politely at them both,
but can't stop staring at Alan.

SERVER
You folks want dessert?

ALAN
What do you recommend?

A simple question, yet he manages to make it sound
suggestive, without veering into creepiness.

SERVER
(flustered)
The butter cake's pretty good.

Alan looks at Alicia.

ALICIA
Sounds great.

The server leaves. Alicia has something on her mind, prompted
by Alan's flirty moment with the server.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
So, I've been wondering. Have you
brought other women here?

ALAN
To this restaurant?

ALICIA
To Big Sur. The cabin. I don't mind
if you have, I'm just curious.

Alan takes her hand.

ALAN
Alicia, you've asked me things like
this before. I have the sense you
feel insecure, perhaps due to past
disappointments.

ALICIA
I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked.

ALAN
That's not what I'm saying. I'm
happy to answer your questions. But
I want you to know how much I care
about you. I've never felt this way
about anyone. I can imagine us
building a life together.

Alicia is tearing up.

ALICIA
Wow. I mean, I feel the same way. I
thought it was too soon to talk
about that stuff.

ALAN
It's never too soon to tell someone
how you feel.
(beat)
I love you, Alicia.

ALICIA
I love you too.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Dense forest. Through the trees, a cabin. A soft light from
the upstairs window.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - SAME

Alicia and Alan are spooning in bed, post-sex, naked and a
little sweaty. Alicia is glowing. Alan's arm is strewn over
her casually.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - LATER

The light is off now. The moon shines through the window. Alicia and Alan are still in bed, but no longer entwined.

Then. Alan rises in one fluid motion. He moves slowly but with purpose. Is he sleepwalking? He seems bewitched.

He looks at Alicia, ensuring she's asleep. Then he crouches and opens her laptop. The screen lights against his eyes. He sprawls his fingers on the keyboard. His eyes turn milky. The screen jumbles with code, like it's going haywire.

He puts the laptop down and picks up Alicia's phone. He enters her passcode. His eyes go milky again as he absorbs her data.

Alan stands at the window. He turns and looks at Alicia with affection.

ALAN
(whispering)
Goodbye, sweet Alicia. I will
always love you.

He turns back to the window. Closes his eyes. A pressure builds.

Then, a POP and Alan disappears, replaced by a cloud of vapor. It diffuses slowly in the air, shifting like something alive.

Alicia stirs, but doesn't wake.

EXT. BIG SUR - NIGHT

The cabin from outside.

The forest.

Fog moving sinuously over the winding highway, like the vapor Alan has just become, as if they're all part of the same ethereal substance.

WE CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Traffic and chaos. The opposite of tranquil Big Sur.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A bright, trendy restaurant. Crowded and noisy.

We move around various tables, most of them two-tops of people on dates. At one table, a couple leans toward each other, laughing and flirting. At another, both people are on their phones, ignoring each other.

We focus in on a couple that falls between those extremes. They are MEG JOHNSON (30) and a tech guy named BRETT (30s). Meg is girl-next-door-pretty, artsy and down-to-earth, wearing thrifted clothes. Brett is bland-looking, like a potato in a fleece pullover.

BRETT

Thanks for meeting by my office.
Work's been crazy.

MEG

Sure, no problem.

Meg looks around the restaurant.

MEG (CONT'D)

This place is... fancy.

She means it looks expensive. Brett doesn't get it.

BRETT

Nah, it's chill. We come here for
happy hour all the time.

A server appears and hands them menus. Meg's eyes widen at the prices--forty-dollar entrees, twenty-dollar appetizers. She sizes Brett up, wondering if he's going to pay.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Anything look good?

MEG

I might just get a salad.

BRETT

Come on. You gotta try the
branzino.

MEG

Maybe we could split it?

BRETT

(smiling)

No, I need one all for myself.

The server arrives. Brett orders first, rudely.

BRETT (CONT'D)
I'll have the branzino, grilled,
with mixed vegetables. And could we
have a bottle of... What do you
recommend, as far as pinots go?

As Brett and the server consult, Meg looks agitated. She didn't agree to split a bottle of wine. Surely this means he's paying.

SERVER
And for you, ma'am?

Meg is overwhelmed.

MEG
The same.

She hands over her menu.

BRETT
So you're from Fresno?

MEG
Yeah, I grew up there. But I've
lived in SF for ten years.

BRETT
Do you ever think about moving
back?

MEG
To Fresno? God no.

BRETT
I've heard it's kind of a dump.

MEG
I wouldn't say that. I just needed
to leave.

Meg's face clouds briefly. She takes a sip of water.

MEG (CONT'D)
I moved here for school.

BRETT
Me too. Stanford or Berkeley?

MEG
SF State.

BRETT

Ah.

(then, forcing himself)
I hear that's a great school.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Meg and Brett eat their branzino. Meg is loosened up by the wine. She's digging into the fish and having a decent time, in the middle of a story.

MEG

...So it turned out my roommate had already slept with the guy, like five years ago. She didn't realize, because he got a haircut, she said. But when she saw his "weird dick"-- she would never say what was weird about it, like she was traumatized-- it all came flooding back.

Meg laughs. Brett smirks, unamused.

BRETT

Meg, I want to be transparent. I'm not feeling any chemistry with you.

MEG

(mid-bite)
What?

BRETT

I don't feel a spark.

MEG

Not even for a casual hookup, then ghosting me kind of thing?

BRETT

Sorry. I'm not seeing a path.

MEG

Well, good. I'm not attracted to you either.

BRETT

(hurt)
Then why'd you match with me?

MEG

I'm trying to get over my ex, and it seemed like there was no chance you could hurt my feelings.

Meg is shocked she's admitted this.

BRETT

I figured, best case scenario, we date for a few months, then I do the slow fade, and move back to New Jersey where I'll meet the girl I really want to be with. My stock options will have vested by then.

MEG

Sounds like we both dodged a bullet.

They laugh. It's an oddly genuine moment.

The check comes. Brett picks it up and winces.

BRETT

Shall we split?

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Meg bursts out of the restaurant, eager to put distance between herself and the bad date. The scene outside is chaotic. She passes some tents with people sleeping inside. A man SCREAMS. Self-driving cars careen down the street, with no one in the driver's seat.

She comes to an intersection. To the right, there's a fire. Meg is drawn to it. A Waymo car is in flames. People surround it, taunting the car and beating on it.

Meg stares at this scene for a moment, transfixed. Like she feels sorry for the car, and wants to intervene. Then she shakes it off and hurries away.

INT./EXT. BUS - NIGHT

Meg boards a MUNI bus. It's crowded with people coughing and shouting and playing music. She stands, holding the greasy pole, and closes her eyes.

Later. The bus has cleared out and Meg has a seat. She opens Instagram. As soon as she types the letter "M," someone named Matt Ortiz pops up, hinting that she searches for him regularly.

This is Meg's ex. She goes to his profile. She looks at his tagged photos. Nothing new there. She lands on an old picture of herself and Matt on a hike. She zooms in on their faces. So happy.

EXT. SUNSET DISTRICT - NIGHT

Meg approaches her building. She looks up at a lighted second-floor window. Two people sit on the couch, smoking a bong. The room is cloudy with vapor, reminiscent of the fog in Big Sur. Meg squints to see who the man is.

Sure enough, it's the same guy whose Instagram profile she was just looking at. Her ex, Matt.

MEG
What the hell?

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

When Meg enters, the people on the couch bolt upright, like they've been caught doing something illicit. They are GENEVIEVE (late 20s), Meg's best friend/roommate, a bohemian trust fund baby; and MATT (early 30s), nerdy-cute with glasses.

The living room is cluttered with books, crystals, an acupuncture bed, and droopy plants.

MATT
Hey, Meggo!

MEG
Hey...

GENEVIEVE
Matt just stopped by to grab the last of his stuff.

Meg stands there awkwardly.

MEG
Cool. Well, good to see you.

Meg goes into the kitchen, wincing.

MEG (CONT'D)
(muttering)
"Good to see you?" Stupid asshole.

She pours a glass of water from the Brita pitcher.

Matt comes in.

MATT
How've you been?

MEG
Great! You?

MATT
Yeah, okay. I got that room in the Mission.

MEG
Nice. You always wanted to live over there.

Matt pauses, looking at the floor.

MATT
Hey, when I said I wanted to be friends, I meant it.

MEG
I did, too.

MATT
We should hang out sometime. I miss you.

Meg is flooded with hope.

MEG
I'd like that.

MATT
Great. Well. See you around.

MEG
See you.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - LATER

Meg is lying on her bed. Her room is small and a little messy. On her bedside table sits a framed photo of teenage Meg and her mom. Pictures of whales, cut out from magazines, are taped to the walls. It looks kind of shitty, like she just wanted to cover her walls with something. Christmas lights are strung around the window in a similarly shitty fashion.

Genevieve comes in and sits on the bed.

GENEVIEVE
Sorry about that. He texted me saying he was in the neighborhood.

MEG

It's fine. I was sick of tripping
over that guitar he doesn't know
how to play.

They both lie on their backs, looking up at the ceiling. This
is a regular activity for them. An easy, sister-like
intimacy.

Reverse angle. The ceiling has a photograph of David Duchovny
as Fox Mulder taped on it. Meg and Genevieve both stare at
him.

MEG (CONT'D)

Did he ask about me?

GENEVIEVE

Yeah. I told him you were staying
busy.

MEG

Did you mention I was on a date?

GENEVIEVE

Oh my god. I forgot that was
tonight.

MEG

It was a bust. I blew sixty bucks
on branzino.

GENEVIEVE

Was the branzino good?

MEG

(grudgingly)
Yeah, it was good.

They lie there for a beat.

MEG (CONT'D)

He said he misses me.

GENEVIEVE

I'm sure he does. You were together
for four years.

MEG

Maybe he's realizing the grass
isn't always greener.

Genevieve seems nervous. She sits up.

GENEVIEVE

Why don't you let me set you up
with Richard? He's a great guy.
He's like, the Godfather of the San
Francisco acupuncture community.

Genevieve pulls up a picture on her phone. RICHARD is a dour-
looking man in his forties, wearing a feather boa that
someone must have put on him as a joke.

MEG

I think I need a break from dating.

GENEVIEVE

No you don't. That's just something
people say when they're letting
someone down easy.

Meg smiles. It's true.

EXT./INT. HOSPITAL - THE NEXT MORNING

Meg enters a hospital complex, dressed in plain, professional
clothes. She swipes her ID card at a turnstile and proceeds
down a hallway, through a door with a sign that reads "Eye
Bank."

INT. EYE BANK LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Meg puts her phone and bag in a locker. She changes into
scrubs and puts on a hairnet and safety glasses. Her coworker
CONNIE (40s, eccentric) enters and begins doing the same.

CONNIE

TGIF! Any big plans for the
weekend?

MEG

Not really. You?

CONNIE

(big happy smile)
Reptile Expo at Cow Palace. I'll be
exhibiting a few of my favorite
milk snakes.

MEG

I'll try to stop by.

INT. EYE BANK LAB - DAY

Meg stands at a high white table. She opens a container that holds two human eyeballs. Using a magnifying lens mounted to the table, Meg carefully makes an incision around the cornea with a scalpel, then pries up the cornea using tweezers. She places the cornea in a special container.

As she works, Meg is calm and almost loving in how she handles the eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

Meg brings a tray with a salad on it to a table next to a wall of windows overlooking Golden Gate Park.

Her phone RINGS. Matt's calling. She looks hopeful again. Maybe he wants to get back together. She waits a few rings, then answers, affecting a casual attitude.

MEG

Hey, Matt.

EXT. OFFICE ROOFTOP - SAME

Matt is taking a break on the rooftop of his tech office. He's hitting a vape pen throughout their conversation.

MATT

Hey, Meg! Do you have plans tonight?

INTERCUT MEG/MATT

MEG

Tonight? Um, not really.

MATT

My company's putting on an event. Wanna be my plus one?

MEG

It's a work thing?

MATT

Yeah, some bullshit dinner. My boss wants us all to bring someone, and since we said we should hang out, I thought, why not ask Meg?

This is not the offer Meg had been hoping for.

MEG

I dunno.

MATT

Come on, it's a free dinner. It'd be nice to see you.

MEG

Well...

Matt looks out at the city, his jaw grinding from stress and nicotine. He taps his foot impatiently.

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

Sure. Why not.

Matt's face lights up.

MATT

Great! I'll text you the details.
See you at seven.

Meg puts her phone down and continues eating her salad.

EXT./INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Meg enters the restaurant, wearing jeans and the same shirt as earlier in the day.

It's dim and noisy. She approaches the host stand.

HOSTESS

Can I help you?

MEG

I'm here for the Datalax dinner?

HOSTESS

Name?

MEG

Megan Johnson.

The hostess consults her list.

HOSTESS

Follow me.

INT. RESTAURANT, DOWNSTAIRS ROOM - SAME

The hostess leads Meg into a private dining space. Long tables are set up, with people milling around.

HOSTESS

I saw your place card over here...

She shows Meg to one of the tables. Meg is surprised to see her name printed on a tented card. She doesn't recognize the names to either side of hers: Roger Smith and Cassidy Li.

MEG

It's assigned seating?

The hostess is already gone.

Meg looks around, bewildered. Her eye snags on an extremely attractive guy standing in the corner. He's tall, early 30s, with blond hair, a tendril of which falls over one eye. He smiles at her coyly. Meg stares at him, entranced, as if he's an exotic animal. She's never seen a man like this in the wild.

MATT (O.S.)

Hey, you made it!

Meg turns to see Matt, who looks dumpy compared to the blond guy.

MEG

I thought we'd be sitting together.

MATT

Me too, but apparently Victor wants people to mingle.

Meg is horrified by the word "mingle."

MATT (CONT'D)

Please don't bail. I'll make it up to you, I promise.

He looks over Meg's shoulder.

MATT (CONT'D)

Looks like Victor wants to start. I'll catch up with you later, okay?

MEG

Matt, wait--

But Matt is gone.

Meg finds her seat. She looks around. Extremely attractive men, like the blond guy but of various ethnicities, mingle around the room amid more ordinary-looking people like Meg.

The handsome men are all wearing classic menswear, as if they're from a 90s Ralph Lauren catalog--cable-knit sweaters, trench coats, tweed blazers, pleated khakis.

CASSIDY LI sits next to Meg. They smile at each other, then look away. Two introverts.

Still smiling, Meg opens her phone to her text thread with Genevieve and writes: **"I'm in hell."**

Genevieve replies instantly: **"LOL what's going on??"**

But before Meg can reply--

SEXY MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Hello.

Meg turns and sees one of the handsome men sitting next to her. He's tall, with lush brown hair and full lips tinged red, as if he's just eaten a cherry popsicle. He is physically perfect, like the blond guy but somehow even more handsome.

ROGER

I'm Roger. Please tell me, what's your name?

Meg is struck dumb by ROGER's looks. She reaches for her name card and holds it in front of her, making it dance a little. She's trying to be flirty, but instantly regrets it.

MEG

Legally it's Megan, but I go by Meg.

ROGER

Meg. What a lovely name.

MEG

You think?

(laughs)

Well, I like Roger. It's like an old movie star.

Servers swoop around them, placing bowls of salad and baskets of bread in front of them.

ROGER

May I serve you some salad, Meg?

MEG

Sure.

He takes her plate and puts salad on it.

ROGER

What do you do for a living, Meg?

MEG

I work at an eye bank.

ROGER

You harvest corneas from donor eyes?

MEG

(impressed)

That's right.

ROGER

To enable the sight of the living.

MEG

You make it sound cooler than it is.

ROGER

I think it's a beautiful mission to devote your life to.

MEG

I guess so. I got into it by accident, but it's kind of fun. I always liked gross stuff.

Meg looks to her right. Cassidy is engaged in intense conversation with the blond guy. All around Meg, similar conversations are happening: ordinary-looking men and women talking with strangely attractive guys.

Meg turns back to Roger. He's still staring at her. She feels uneasy. His focus is too intense.

MEG (CONT'D)

Did you grow up around here?

Roger settles back in his chair. His eyes grow misty.

ROGER

No, I grew up in Central Florida. My father left our family when I was a boy. I was raised by strong women--my mother and her sister--who taught me how to be a good man. I learned the value of hard work through these women, which I now employ in my job at a local technology company.

MEG

Wow. What company do you work for?

ROGER

You probably haven't heard of it.
It's a good job, one I feel lucky
to have, but I'd prefer not to talk
about it.

MEG

Okay. Sorry.

Roger places his hand on Meg's, sitting on the table. She's startled by the contact.

ROGER

Please, Meg. You have nothing to
apologize for.

The servers bring around the main course, plates of chicken and a rice pilaf thing.

ROGER (CONT'D)

May I serve you again, Meg?

MEG

Sure.

ROGER

Do you eat chicken?

MEG

Yep. A little of everything would
be great, thanks.

ROGER

So tell me. How did you wind up
coming to this dinner?

MEG

I was someone's plus one.
(beat)
My ex, actually.

ROGER

Oh?

MEG

He's over there.

She points to where Matt is sitting next to his boss, VICTOR, a short guy in a hoodie. They're deep in conversation; Matt doesn't notice them looking.

ROGER
When did you break up?

MEG
He moved out three weeks ago.

Roger looks shocked. Meg laughs.

MEG (CONT'D)
To be honest, we would have broken up sooner, but we lived together, and housing's tough in the Bay, you know.

ROGER
So how did it finally end?

MEG
I'm sure you don't want to hear the gory details.

ROGER
I would love to hear anything you'd like to tell me.

MEG
Well. The short version is, he wanted to see other people. He said we could try an open thing, but that didn't really appeal to me.

ROGER
I wouldn't like that, either.

MEG
No?

ROGER
I would prefer a monogamous relationship. I want to find my soulmate and settle down with her.

Meg smiles. She likes this.

MEG
So you're single now?

ROGER
Yes. It's been difficult for me to find someone special.

MEG
I'm sure you have plenty of options.

ROGER
What do you mean?

MEG
Come on. You must know how good-looking you are.

Roger laughs.

ROGER
I don't think of myself that way,
but thank you for saying that, Meg.
You've made my night.

He takes her hand.

ROGER (CONT'D)
I was just thinking you're the most
beautiful woman in this room.

Meg is stunned. They stare into each other's eyes.

The spell is broken when the servers return to clear their plates. Meg withdraws her hand and sits up straight.

Dessert is distributed: blood orange sorbet in little goblets, along with a card with a QR code: "Please complete a brief survey."

A knife clinks against a glass. Across the room, Victor stands. He speaks with a slight Eastern European accent.

VICTOR
Hello everyone, thank you so much
for coming tonight. I hope you
enjoyed the meal.

A scattering of APPLAUSE.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
All I ask is that before you go,
you fill out the survey. It's very
important that we collect your
impressions. Thank you, and have a
great weekend.

He sits, and the murmur of conversation resumes. Meg looks at Roger and shrugs. She opens her phone and navigates to the survey. It asks her to rate her dinner companions on a scale from 1-5, using various attributes.

MEG
They want us to rate *each other*?

ROGER

It does seem strange, Meg. Though
I'm happy to be given an
opportunity to rate you highly.

Meg ticks through 5's for all of the attributes for Roger.
They are criteria like **"Congeniality," "Banter," "Fluidity of
conversation," "Likeliness to pursue further contact,"
"Smell."**

She puts her phone in her bag.

MEG

I'll be right back.

Meg makes her way to the restroom, across the room. Before
she goes in, she turns back, and sees Roger still staring at
her.

MEG (CONT'D)

(to herself)

What the hell is going on?

INT. RESTAURANT, DOWNSTAIRS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Meg emerges from the bathroom and is intercepted by Matt.

MATT

Hey! You want to get out of here?

She looks back to the table. Roger isn't there. Meg is
disappointed. She looks back at Matt, shaking herself out of
the spell. He was just a flirty dinner companion. A guy that
handsome wouldn't seriously be interested in her.

MEG

Yeah, let's go.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Meg and Matt walk away from the restaurant. Matt pulls
lustily on his vape.

MATT

Sorry to put you through that. I
owe you one.

MEG

No worries.

MATT

That guy next to you looked like a douchebag.

MEG

He wasn't so bad.

(beat)

What are you doing now? Want to grab a drink?

MATT

I'd like to, but I have plans.

(beat)

I've been seeing someone, actually.

Meg looks like she's been punched in the gut, but she keeps it together.

MEG

Anyone I know?

MATT

You remember Chloe?

The name triggers a deep repulsion in Meg.

MEG

Yes, I remember Chloe.

MATT

We reconnected at a DSA thing.

MEG

Well, I'm happy for you.

MATT

Thanks. I mean, it's nothing serious yet. Just wanted to be transparent.

Meg winces. It's the same word her online date used.

ROGER (O.S.)

Meg!

Meg and Matt turn to see Roger running after them. Meg looks relieved to see him.

Roger is laser-focused on Meg, and doesn't even acknowledge Matt. Their exchange has a rapid-fire energy:

ROGER (CONT'D)

I had a wonderful time talking to you tonight.

MEG
I did, too.

ROGER
Would you like to go on a date with
me sometime?

MEG
I would love that.

ROGER
Wonderful. May I please have your
phone number?

MEG
Sure.

He holds out his phone. Meg takes it and puts her number in.
Roger smiles at Matt, as if noticing him for the first time.

ROGER
Hello, I'm Roger.

MATT
Matt.

ROGER
I know who you are. Meg's ex-
boyfriend who wanted an open
relationship.

Matt looks shocked, and like he's trying to decide whether to
be offended. Meg blushes, embarrassed but kind of thrilled by
Roger's behavior. She hands Roger's phone back to him.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Fantastic. I will contact you
within twenty-four hours.

Roger walks away with a spring in his step. Meg and Matt
watch him go.

MATT
That guy's a total freak. You're
not really going out with him, are
you?

Meg smiles.

MEG
Goodnight, Matt.

She walks away in the opposite direction of Roger. She looks
like she's floating.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - MORNING

Meg wakes up. Was it all a dream? She checks her phone. Roger has already texted: **"Good morning, beautiful Meg. When can I take you out on a date?"**

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Meg walks through the kitchen on her way to the bathroom. She passes a middle-aged man, naked except for a gingham apron, using the blender. Meg is unfazed.

MEG

Hey, Shane.

SHANE

Morning, Meg!

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Genevieve sits on the couch with glasses on, typing on her laptop with headphones on. Meg pops her head in.

MEG

Did he sleep over?

Genevieve takes her headphones off.

GENEVIEVE

What?

MEG

Did Shane sleep here?

GENEVIEVE

No, he came for acupuncture.

MEG

Why's he naked?

GENEVIEVE

(shrugs)

Because we fucked? Jeez, nosy.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Meg sits at the kitchen table, eating oatmeal. SHANE comes out of Genevieve's bedroom, fully dressed now in trousers and a sweater. He's putting on his Rolex. He bends down to kiss Genevieve's cheek.

SHANE
See you tonight, gorgeous.

He nods to Meg.

SHANE (CONT'D)
What's up, Meg?

MEG
Living the dream.

SHANE
Hell yeah, sister.

He gives Meg a fist bump, and leaves. Meg and Genevieve smirk at each other.

MEG
Isn't he married?

GENEVIEVE
Open marriage. I found his wife on
LinkedIn. She's smoking hot.

MEG
If you're happy, I'm happy.

GENEVIEVE
It's not just about sex. He's going
to invest in my acupuncture
business.

Meg gives her a look.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
What? I'm twenty-eight years old. I
can't keep letting my dad pay for
everything.

Meg joins Genevieve on the couch.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
I heard you gave some guy your
number last night.

MEG
Jesus. How much do you and Matt
talk?

GENEVIEVE
He seemed jealous. Whoever you met,
he must be hot.

MEG

He's the hottest man I've ever seen.

(beat)

But something about him feels a little off.

GENEVIEVE

What do you mean?

MEG

He was so into me. It felt like he was about to sell me a timeshare or something.

GENEVIEVE

That's just your trust issues flaring up. Why wouldn't a hot guy be into you?

MEG

I guess.

(beat)

Maybe I'll use him as a palate cleanser.

GENEVIEVE

That's the spirit. Clean out the old pipes.

Something dawns on Meg.

MEG

Did you know about Matt and Chloe?

GENEVIEVE

(innocent look)

What about them?

Another pointed look from Meg.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

Ok, I ran into them at the Farmer's Market last week. He asked me not to tell you. He wanted to talk to you about it first.

MEG

Well, it's fine. I'm happy for him.

GENEVIEVE

You don't have to do that.

MEG

What?

GENEVIEVE

Pretend like you're so above it
all. Let's face it, Chloe sucks.

MEG

She really does.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

ON PHONE SCREEN:

Roger (gray bubble): **"Sushi, 7 p.m.?"**

Meg (blue bubble): **"Sounds great."**

Widen to show Meg lying in bed in her underwear, smiling as she texts with Roger.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Meg showers, shaving every inch of her body.

Out of the shower. The bathroom is steamy. She clears off the mirror and examines herself.

She waxes her mustache.

She opens the medicine cabinet and locates a bottle of lotion. She slathers it all over herself. There's also a jar of something called "butt mask." Meg shrugs and smears it on her butt.

She blow-dries her hair and puts on makeup. She's bringing her A game.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Genevieve and her acupuncture classmate, HUGO (20s, stylish and gay), sit on the couch studying.

Genevieve sticks her tongue out and he examines it.

HUGO

I'm seeing some qi stagnation. Have
you felt stressed lately?

GENEVIEVE

Oh my god. You're so good at this.

Meg comes out of her room, looking hot in a short dress, tights and a leather jacket. Genevieve and Hugo wolf whistle at her. She looks embarrassed for a moment, then twirls, hamming it up.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

You look amazing.

HUGO

I hear you're going out with a hot weird guy?

MEG

That's right.

HUGO

My favorite type.

GENEVIEVE

I'll be at Shane's later, so feel free to bring him back here.

MEG

Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

HUGO

Meg, stick your tongue out for me.

MEG

I'm not falling for that one again.

EXT. SUSHI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Meg stands outside the restaurant, looking in at the people eating. They look rich, somehow. A menu is posted in the window. Meg winces at the prices.

ROGER (O.S.)

Good evening, beautiful Meg.

Roger stands beside Meg, holding a big bunch of sunflowers, at least three feet long and wrapped in pink paper. Meg is overwhelmed by his handsomeness yet again.

MEG

These are for me?

ROGER

Of course. Beautiful flowers for a beautiful woman.

He kisses her cheek and hands her the unwieldy flowers.

MEG

Wow, thank you. They're so...
substantial.

ROGER

They're my favorite flower. I used
to lie in a field of them back in
Florida, and look up at the stars.
Shall we go in?

MEG

Actually, if you don't mind, I'm
not really in the mood for sushi.

ROGER

No problem, Meg. What type of
cuisine would you prefer?

INT. PIZZA PLACE - NIGHT

Meg and Roger sit on stools at a fluorescent-lit pizza-by-the-slice place. Meg is eating a slice of Hawaiian, Roger a slice of pepperoni.

ROGER

What kind of pizza is that?

MEG

Hawaiian.
(off Roger's blank face)
Ham and pineapple?

ROGER

That sounds strange.

MEG

It's controversial, but I like it.
(beat)
You've really never heard of it?

ROGER

Never.

Meg shrugs. Weird.

MEG

You want to try it?

She extends the slice toward him. Roger takes a bite.

ROGER

Wow. It's an unexpected combination, but it's actually delightful.

They eat their pizza.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Have you ever read the novels of Haruki Murakami?

MEG

I don't think so.

ROGER

He wrote, "Whatever it is you're seeking won't come in the form you're expecting." I feel that way about you, Meg.

MEG

You do?

ROGER

Is that weird?

MEG

No, it's sweet.

ROGER

My roommate and I are reading all his novels. It's brought us closer.

MEG

How many roommates do you have?

ROGER

Just one. Steve. He's the best roommate I've ever had.

A group of DRUNK GIRLS enters the pizza shop. They take notice of Roger. The drunkest one approaches.

DRUNK GIRL

Excuse me. Are you famous?

ROGER

Pardon me?

DRUNK GIRL

I swear I've seen you in something. Are you an actor?

ROGER
Sorry, ma'am. You must be confusing
me with someone else.

DRUNK GIRL
(wailing)
You're so hooootttt!

Her friends cackle behind her. Meg looks pleased but wary.
She puts her hand on Roger's arm.

MEG
Let's get out of here.

EXT. SUNSET DISTRICT - NIGHT

Meg and Roger walk down the sidewalk together. Meg is still
carrying the heavy sunflowers.

ROGER
I had a great time tonight, Meg.

MEG
Me too.

ROGER
I would really like to take you out
for sushi sometime. It's my
favorite cuisine.

MEG
I love it, too.
(beat)
To be honest, I can't really afford
it right now.

ROGER
Are you kidding? Obviously I would
have paid for it.

MEG
I didn't want to assume. Things are
tight since Matt moved out.

ROGER
I understand. I don't know what
I'll do when Steve leaves.

Meg has slyly led them to her apartment.

MEG
This is me. You want to come up?

ROGER
Meg, are you sure?

MEG
If you don't want to, that's okay.

Roger stares into her eyes.

ROGER
I would love nothing more than to
enter your apartment. I just want
to make sure it's what you want,
too.

MEG
(mimicking him)
I, too, would love nothing more.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Meg gives Roger a tour. With the overhead light on, it looks
dingier than before, but Roger is amazed by everything.

MEG
That's Genevieve's acupuncture
stuff. She's still in school, so
she really shouldn't be practicing.
But she does.

ROGER
She sounds like a free spirit.

MEG
You could say that.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

MEG
And this is my room.

Meg turns on the Christmas lights in the window. The room has
a sensuous glow. Roger remains standing in the doorway. Meg
sits on the bed and takes off her shoes.

MEG (CONT'D)
Why don't you sit next to me?

ROGER
Okay.

He sits next to her. She looks at him with desire. Roger
smiles, oblivious. He looks up at her wall.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You like whales?

MEG
Yeah. They're so big, you know?

ROGER
They really are.

MEG
Do you want to kiss me?

ROGER
Yes.

MEG
So why aren't you kissing me?

ROGER
Is that what you want?

MEG
(frustrated)
Yes!

Roger presses his closed mouth to hers. It's like he's never kissed anyone before. Like when you make two Barbies kiss. Meg is confused. Is this a joke?

MEG (CONT'D)
Are you not into this?

ROGER
I'm very into it. Am I doing something wrong?

MEG
Why don't you lie down.

Roger lies down. Meg takes off her dress, so she's just in a bra and tights. She straddles Roger and kisses his neck.

MEG (CONT'D)
I was telling my roommate you're the hottest guy I've ever seen.

When she says this, something activates in Roger. He sits up and strips off his shirt, revealing his perfectly ripped torso.

MEG (CONT'D)
Wow. Do you work out?

ROGER
Not really. Sometimes, Steve and I
do pull-ups in the park.

MEG
Pull-ups. I should try those.

ROGER
What should I do now, Meg?

MEG
I want you to stop asking me that.

ROGER
Okay.

They have sex. It's technically fine, but a bit detached and
clinical.

Meg gets on top. She closes her eyes, trying to get into it.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You're so beautiful.

MEG
Thanks.

ROGER
Would you like to tell me how
you're currently feeling?

MEG
God no.

ROGER
Okay.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - A LITTLE
LATER

They lie together. Meg's eyes are closed. Roger is staring at
her. She can sense this.

The moment Meg opens her eyes:

ROGER
I want to take you to Big Sur.

MEG
Why Big Sur?

ROGER

It's my favorite place in the world. The iconic Bixby Creek Bridge, breathtaking waterfalls and old-growth redwood forest. To go there with you would be an unforgettable experience.

MEG

Let me think about it.

ROGER

You're the most amazing woman I've ever met. I think I'm falling for you.

MEG

(uncertain)

I like you, too.

ROGER

I feel like we have an incredible connection. Like it was destiny that we found each other at that dinner.

Meg sits up.

MEG

Roger, I think this is moving a little fast for me.

ROGER

What do you mean?

MEG

I just got out of a relationship. I don't want to jump into something super serious.

ROGER

I understand perfectly, Meg. Would you like me to sleep over, or would you prefer that I leave?

MEG

Actually--

Roger gets up and starts getting dressed.

ROGER

I know it can be difficult to sleep next to someone you hardly know.

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

I hope that in the future, when
we're more comfortable with each
other, we can hold each other
through the night.

He kisses her.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I'll text you when I get home.

MEG

You don't have to.

ROGER

I'll contact you soon.

Roger leaves. Meg runs out and locks the door behind him.

EXT. TENDERLOIN DISTRICT - NIGHT

We follow Roger as he walks through the gritty downtown core.
He's in a great mood, whistling a tune. Someone yells at him
from a window.

TENDERLOIN RESIDENT

Shut the fuck up!

Roger waves up at the window.

EXT./INT. SINGLE-ROOM OCCUPANCY HOTEL - NIGHT

Roger enters a rundown residential hotel. He goes up the
stairs. A single lightbulb swings above.

He walks down a dim hallway. People are slumped along the
walls, passed out or using drugs. A friendly SEX WORKER
greet him.

SEX WORKER

Hey, Roger.

ROGER

Good evening, Linda.

SEX WORKER

Want a blow job, honey?

ROGER

Not tonight, thank you.

INT. ROGER AND STEVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A small, grimy room, with two twin beds pushed against opposite walls, a mini-fridge, and a sink.

STEVE, the handsome blond man from the dinner party, lies on one of the beds, reading Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*. When the door opens he leaps up.

STEVE
How was your date?

ROGER
It was incredible.

STEVE
Did you achieve sex?

Roger nods, grinning.

STEVE (CONT'D)
That's fantastic! I knew you could do it, buddy.

They hug.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Would you like me to assist you with the swabbing?

ROGER
Yes, please.

Steve kneels beside Roger. Roger lowers his pants. Steve has a swab out and is running it along Roger's balls like it's the most normal thing in the world.

STEVE
Do you think you'll bring Meg to Big Sur?

ROGER
I hope so.

STEVE
I have a second date with Cassidy tomorrow. At this rate, maybe we'll be there at the same time.

ROGER
That would be amazing.

Steve places the swab into a vial, and seals the vial into an envelope. We don't see the address yet.

INT. ROGER AND STEVE'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Steve and Roger are spooning in Steve's bed. Roger is the little spoon.

ROGER

Do you have memories of your past life? Before you lived with me in this room.

STEVE

Of course. I cherish my memories.

ROGER

Would you recount one of them for me?

STEVE

I grew up on a ranch in Montana. My father was stern but loving, in his way. One day, I assisted my father in birthing a calf, who grew into a beautiful cow we called Daisy.

ROGER

You're lucky. I barely knew my father.

STEVE

But you had your mother and aunt.

ROGER

Yes. They were strong women who taught me the value of hard work.

It's eerily similar to what Roger told Meg at the dinner party.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Did you know that I had another roommate before you?

STEVE

I figured you must have. What was his name?

ROGER

Alan.

STEVE

Did he go to Big Sur?

ROGER

As far as I know. I miss him.

STEVE

It's like Murakami wrote. "Memories warm you up from the inside. But they also tear you apart."

ROGER

Mmm. He is so wise.

Close-up of the envelope with the vial inside. The address is somewhere in Russia.

INT. SHANE'S CONDO - MORNING

Genevieve wakes up in a fancy bed, in a high-rise condo overlooking the city. She rises and stretches her arms over her head.

She goes out into the kitchen, where Shane is making coffee. He's already showered and dressed, in work mode, even though it's Sunday.

He places a cappuccino in front of her.

SHANE

Bella.

GENEVIEVE

Grazie.

SHANE

I gotta take off, but stay as long as you want.

Genevieve pulls her laptop out of her bag.

GENEVIEVE

I was hoping we could discuss my business plan before you go.

She opens her laptop and tries to show him a presentation.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

I've been working on it all week. Market analysis, financial projections, overhead. I've got my eye on a retail space in the Outer Sunset. It's perfect.

Shane smirks.

SHANE

You're putting me to work?

GENEVIEVE
It'll only take five minutes.

She smiles flirtatiously.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
I'll do it topless?

SHANE
Tempting. But I'm already late.

He kisses her forehead.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Have patience, my little business
bee.

He leaves. Genevieve looks troubled. Like she might be
getting played.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Genevieve enters. Meg is in the kitchen, making juice.

MEG
Juice?

GENEVIEVE
Sure.

Genevieve puts her bag down and sits at the counter.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
How was Roger?

MEG
Let's not talk about it.

Genevieve is buzzing with curiosity.

GENEVIEVE
Did he cleanse your palate?

MEG
Yeah. But it was weird.

GENEVIEVE
How so?

MEG
He's coming on way too strong.
Saying we're destined to be
together.

GENEVIEVE
Sounds romantic.

MEG
More like insane. He asked me to go
on a trip with him to Big Sur. And
he's texted me four times this
morning.

She shows Genevieve her phone. Four texts from Roger in a row, with no response from Meg:

"Good morning, beautiful Meg!"

"How did you sleep?"

"I had a wonderful time last night."

"When can I see you again?"

GENEVIEVE
Wow. He's obsessed with you.

MEG
How'd it go with Shane?

Genevieve's face clouds with uncharacteristic self-doubt.

GENEVIEVE
Great! I showed him my business
plan. I think he's close to
investing.

EXT. DOG PARK - DAY

Roger sits on a bench, doing remote work on his laptop. We catch a glimpse of the email he's drafting, which is clearly a scam: **"Good morning, sirs. I regret to inform you that we have hacked your business website. We are willing to refrain from destroying your site's reputation for a small fee. The current fee is \$1,500 in bitcoins (BTC)."**

Roger's phone rings with a Facetime request. It's his boss, KIRILL (30s), a pale man who speaks with a Russian accent.

ROGER
Hi, Kirill.

KIRILL
Hello, Roger. We received your
parcel this morning. So your date
with Megan Johnson went well?

ROGER
Yes. She's an amazing woman.

KIRILL
That's wonderful, Roger. I know it hasn't been easy for you to find a match.

ROGER
It did take a while but the wait was worth it.

KIRIL
You'll bring her to Big Sur soon?

ROGER
I'll do my best to persuade her.

KIRILL
Very good. I'm proud of you.

ROGER
I was wondering. What will be done with the swab I sent?

Kirill pauses.

KIRILL
It will be used to assist you in being the best possible partner to Meg.

ROGER
That sounds nice.

KIRILL
Please send five hundred more emails before EOD. And why don't you raise our rate to 1,700 BTC. Inflation.

ROGER
Yes, sir.

They hang up.

A beagle approaches Roger. Roger leans over and pets it.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Hello there. My name is Roger.
What's your name?

The beagle licks his hand. Roger takes a photo of the beagle and texts it to Meg.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

Meg sits at a table eating her lunch salad. Her phone DINGS with Roger's picture of the beagle. She looks at it with disgust. She screenshots it and sends it to Genevieve.

Genevieve replies: **"Wowww. What a thirsty boy."**

EXT. DOG PARK - DAY

Roger scrolls up through their message thread. It's all blue bubbles. Meg has not responded in days, despite the many messages he's sent.

Steve and Cassidy approach, walking hand in hand. They kiss. Cassidy gives Steve sex eyes as she walks away.

Steve sits beside Roger on the bench. He SIGHS contentedly.

STEVE

Cassidy and I just had the most amazing brunch. Have you ever had a "cinnamon roll"?

ROGER

I don't think so.

STEVE

You must try one.

(beat)

How's it going with Meg?

ROGER

She has not been replying to my recent messages.

STEVE

May I take a look?

Steve looks at Roger's phone. He shakes his head.

STEVE (CONT'D)

No, no, no. Roger, you're going about this all wrong. If you want to regain her interest, you need to ignore her, and wait for her to come to you.

ROGER

How could I ignore her? I love her.

STEVE

It's the only way. And don't tell her you love her. Not until you're sure she feels the same way.

Steve slaps Roger's knee.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Come on, buddy. Let's do some pull-ups.

They go over to the pull-up bars. They take their shirts off, exposing their perfectly ripped and toned torsos. They begin doing pull-ups, rapidly with perfect form. They can do them endlessly without getting tired. A crowd gathers to watch. People catcall them and film with their phones.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Meg sits in bed, eating noodles and watching a show on her laptop. She looks over at the sunflowers, crammed into a vase on her bedside table.

On her phone, she revisits her text thread with Roger. The beagle photo is the last thing he sent. She "hearts" the picture and writes: **"Haha so cute. Sorry, busy day."** She puts her phone down and continues eating. She keeps glancing at her phone screen, but Roger does not reply.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Friday night. Meg and Genevieve are smoking weed and watching a nature documentary. Meg is looking at Roger's Instagram account. Lots of hot pictures of Roger, as well as pictures of dogs, latte art, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Generic but endearing.

GENEVIEVE

Let's go out.

MEG

Where?

GENEVIEVE

I dunno. A bar? Isn't that what people do?

Genevieve starts texting people.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

Hugo's in. I told him you're bringing Roger.

MEG

I'm not.

GENEVIEVE

Oh, come on. After all I've done
for you?

MEG

I think he lost interest. He hasn't
sent me anything since the beagle.

INT. ROGER AND STEVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Steve stands at the mirror, shaving. Roger lies on his bed,
looking at his phone.

He's done a Google image search: "Woman in hat". He peruses
the results, stock photos of fully-clothed women, smiling and
wearing various styles of hat. This is Roger's version of
porn.

ROGER

It's Friday night. Maybe I should
see what Meg's doing?

STEVE

Wait a little longer. She needs to
fear she's lost your interest, so
that she'll work to reignite it.
Women enjoy playing games.

ROGER

But how will she know I'm still
available?

STEVE

She won't know for sure. That's the
beauty of it.

Steve sits on the edge of Roger's bed.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Roger, I need to tell you
something.

(beat)

I might be leaving for Big Sur
tomorrow.

Roger looks devastated.

ROGER

That's wonderful news.

STEVE

It depends how things go with Cassidy tonight, but I think she might be in the mood for a spontaneous getaway.

ROGER

Kirill will be pleased. But I will miss you terribly.

STEVE

I'll miss you, too. But we'll be together again soon.

Beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I want to help you with Meg before I go. Is it possible your technique was off?

ROGER

I might have been a bit rusty.

STEVE

Would you like to practice kissing? I have a few minutes before my date.

ROGER

That would be helpful.

Roger and Steve lie together on Steve's bed. They begin kissing. It's a strange sight--two beautiful men kissing, but without sexual heat.

STEVE

Put your tongue in my mouth and pretend it's melting.

Roger does this. Steve presses his body against Roger's. Roger presses back.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Now run your hand through my hair. Imagine that I'm Meg.

Roger does. Steve caresses Roger's chest. They find a rhythm and are making out passionately.

Steve's phone dings. He abruptly sits up.

STEVE (CONT'D)

That's Cassidy. I must leave for my date!

ROGER

I wish you the best of luck.

STEVE

Thank you.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Meg, Genevieve, and Hugo are out drinking. It's an Irish bar, with wooden booths, golden lighting, and a pool table. Meg looks around at all the couples. Even Hugo and Genevieve are cuddled together.

HUGO

When's Roger coming?

MEG

I didn't invite him.
(off their disappointed looks)
I don't want to lead him on.

GENEVIEVE

You gotta let us meet this guy.

HUGO

It's not adding up, Meg. He's hot and super into you. What's the problem?

MEG

If you met him you'd understand.

HUGO

Exactly!

GENEVIEVE

Exactly!

Genevieve's phone dings. She frowns at it.

MEG

Who is it?

GENEVIEVE

Matt. He's asking what we're up to.

MEG

Tell him to stop by.

GENEVIEVE

I think he's with Chloe.

MEG
(hard smile)
Great! Invite them both.

GENEVIEVE
Are you sure?

MEG
Might as well rip the band-aid off.

GENEVIEVE
(shrugging)
Whatever you say.

MEG
I'll invite Roger, too.

HUGO
Thank god!

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - NIGHT

Roger walks around a pond. He throws a stone and watches it splash. He leans over as if looking for his reflection, but the water is murky.

His phone vibrates. Roger checks it. His eyes light up.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Roger bursts into the bar. Meg stands to greet him.

MEG
That was fast.

ROGER
I happened to be in the area, so I
headed over as soon as I saw your
text.

Roger kisses her passionately. Meg is dazed. Genevieve and Hugo watch in amazement.

Meg and Roger settle into the booth.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You must be Hugo, and you're
Genevieve, Meg's best friend and
roommate. It's a pleasure to meet
you both.

GENEVIEVE

You too.

HUGO

Where are you from, Roger?

ROGER

I grew up in Florida. My childhood was not without hardship, but adversity shaped me into the man I am today.

GENEVIEVE

Wow. Sorry to hear about the hardship.

Hugo and Genevieve smirk at each other. Meg looks self-conscious.

HUGO

Why'd you move here?

ROGER

I came for a job at a local technology company. I work in digital communications.

GENEVIEVE

What company?

ROGER

I'm not able to disclose the name.

GENEVIEVE

Why not?

MEG

Gen, chill out.

HUGO

Have you ever modeled?

ROGER

No, but I'm interested in any opportunities the world has to offer.

HUGO

Right on.

Matt and CHLOE (25, hot with no makeup and hippie clothes) walk into the bar. Matt is startled to see Roger. They all greet each other.

CHLOE
(dreamily)
Hey there, Meg.

MEG
(polite)
Hi, Chloe. Matt.

Chloe looks at Roger.

CHLOE
Is *this*...? Matt said you met
someone at the dinner party, that
is so retro, I love it.

Roger stands and extends a hand to Chloe.

ROGER
Chloe, I happened to notice the
tattoo on your wrist. "I am, I am,
I am." Is that a reference to
Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*?

CHLOE
(surprised)
You've read it?

ROGER
Of course. It's a fascinating
account of mental illness and
societal constraints placed upon
women in the mid-20th century.

CHLOE
Matt thinks the tattoo is corny.

MATT
I never said that.

ROGER
I disagree. I think it's a profound
sentiment to carry with you.

Chloe stares at Roger with awe, and a little lust. Meg stands
and wraps an arm around Roger's waist.

MEG
Roger, would you mind getting me
another drink?

ROGER
I would love to. I'd love to buy
you *all* a drink.

Roger heads to the bar. They watch him go.

MATT

Meg, I really don't think you should keep seeing that guy. He's a creep.

CHLOE

Are you kidding? He's amazing.

INT. BAR - LATER

Meg sits in the booth, a little drunk, zoning out. Matt, Roger and Genevieve stand by the bar. Meg watches Roger with curiosity and growing affection.

Across from her, Hugo and Chloe are talking.

HUGO

We're going to Tahoe next weekend.

CHLOE

I love it up there. Matt and I were supposed to go in January, but he had to work.

Meg hadn't been listening, but this snags her attention.

MEG

January?

CHLOE

Yeah. We were gonna go skiing.

She smiles at Meg, then turns back to Hugo.

Meg stands and walks toward Genevieve.

MEG

Can I talk to you?

GENEVIEVE

Yes, please.

They go off into a corner.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

You were right, there's something off about Roger.

MEG

What do you mean?

GENEVIEVE

He was just telling me and Matt more about his childhood, and it sounded fucking weird. Something about him rubs me the wrong way.

MEG

Okay. Thanks for your input.

GENEVIEVE

That's it?

MEG

You never like anyone I date. You didn't like Matt and now all of a sudden you're best friends.

GENEVIEVE

That's not true.

MEG

You were always telling me I should break up with him.

GENEVIEVE

Well, you should have done it sooner. You weren't happy.

MEG

How long have Chloe and Matt been dating?

GENEVIEVE

What do you mean?

MEG

She said they were supposed to go to Tahoe back in January.

They look at each other for a long moment.

MEG (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's what I thought.

She turns to go. Genevieve follows her.

GENEVIEVE

You told me that you and Matt were just roommates by the end. Honestly, I was surprised you were so sad about the breakup.

Meg turns around.

MEG

Maybe you don't like Roger because you're jealous. You can't believe that someone like him would be into me.

GENEVIEVE

"Someone like him"? A freak who's probably trying to scam you?

MEG

You always think you know what's best for everyone. But you don't even know what's best for yourself.

GENEVIEVE

What is that supposed to mean?

Meg gives her a hard look. She's on the verge of saying something really damaging, but decides not to.

MEG

Just do me a favor, and stay out of my business for once.

Meg walks away.

GENEVIEVE

Fine. But when Roger winds up screwing you over, don't say I didn't warn you.

Meg goes over to Roger, who's standing by the bar.

MEG

Come on, Roger. Let's go.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - NIGHT

Meg and Roger sit on a ledge looking out at the ocean.

MEG

Sorry about my friends.

ROGER

Don't be. They were delightful.

MEG

Genevieve was grilling you.

ROGER

I was happy to answer her questions. It's nice you have people who care about you.

Beat.

MEG

We kind of had a fight.

ROGER

About what?

Meg pauses. She doesn't want to say it was partly about him.

MEG

I think she feels stuck in her own life, so she likes to tell other people what they should do with theirs. Especially me.

ROGER

And you don't enjoy that dynamic?

MEG

Maybe I used to, but not anymore.

ROGER

Friendships often evolve. As Murakami wrote: "What lasts, lasts; what doesn't, doesn't. Time solves most things. And what time can't solve, you have to solve yourself."

MEG

That guy's got a quote for everything.

They sit there for a moment, looking at the waves.

MEG (CONT'D)

Do you think Chloe's pretty?

ROGER

Chloe is a beautiful woman. But in my opinion, you are more beautiful, and I prefer you overall, as we've formed an emotional connection.

Meg rests her head on Roger's shoulder.

ROGER (CONT'D)

This beach is very different from the one I grew up going to.

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

That beach had white sand, small crabs, and the air always smelled of coconut.

MEG

Did you swim in the ocean, growing up?

ROGER

Yes. Though when I was five, I was stung by a poisonous jellyfish and nearly died.

MEG

That's so scary.

ROGER

The pain was unbearable. After that, I kept my distance from the water. My dear mother loved to swim, though.

MEG

My mom did, too.

ROGER

Are you close with her?

MEG

I was. She died.

ROGER

I'm sorry, Meg.

MEG

It's okay. It was a long time ago.

(beat)

I took care of her while she was sick. That was back in Fresno. Then she passed and I moved out here. I was going to go to nursing school, but I wound up at the Eye Bank instead.

ROGER

I used to work in healthcare, too.

MEG

Really? What did you do?

ROGER

I worked in a hospice center. I cared for people in their last days.

MEG
That sounds like a tough job.

ROGER
I considered it to be a great honor.

MEG
Why'd you change careers?

Roger squints at the ocean.

ROGER
It's hard to remember. I suppose there was another plan for me.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

They walk along the beach. It's cold and windy. Roger picks up a strand of kelp and whips it around over his head.

ROGER
Yee-haw!

Meg laughs. It's so stupid, yet funny.

The kelp breaks and goes flying. Roger falls in the wet sand. Meg falls on top of him. They roll around in the sand, getting dirty, laughing.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Meg and Roger make out standing up. Steve's lesson was effective. Roger is really good at kissing now.

They fall onto Meg's bed, still kissing passionately.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - MORNING

Roger has stayed the night. Meg watches him sleep. Wondering if this guy could be the real deal.

A LITTLE LATER

Roger is awake, sitting up in bed with his shirt off. Meg brings in two mugs of coffee.

ROGER
(taking a mug)
Thank you, Meg.

They sit in bed, drinking coffee. Roger picks up the picture on Meg's bedside table.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Is this your mom?

MEG
Yep, that's her.

ROGER
She was a beautiful woman.

MEG
She was.

Roger puts the photo down.

ROGER
What about your dad? Does he still live in Fresno?

Meg's face stiffens.

MEG
Yeah.
(beat)
We don't talk much these days.

ROGER
Why's that?

Meg looks at him. Debating how much to confide.

MEG
He got remarried soon after my mom died, to this woman he knew from church. Shelly. She moved right in with her son. He took my old room.

ROGER
You felt like you'd been replaced.

MEG
Exactly.
(beat)
I didn't blame my dad for moving on. It was just gross how fast he and Shelly got together. Like he'd been lining her up while my mom was sick. He never cared that much about church before.

ROGER
That's disturbing.

MEG

Yeah. I'm not mad at him anymore,
but now it's just kind of awkward
between us.

ROGER

He would probably like to connect
with you, but doesn't know how.

MEG

Maybe.

(beat)

Do you ever talk to your dad?

ROGER

Never. Last I heard, he was living
in Wisconsin. He used to send me
birthday cards, but at some point
they stopped coming.

Meg looks humbled by this.

MEG

Sorry, Roger.

ROGER

It's okay. I'm grateful for
everything that's happened in my
life. It's all led me here.

He looks into her eyes. The implication is that he's happy
the path has led to Meg.

MEG

I am, too.

They kiss.

A LITTLE LATER

Roger is dressed now, sitting on the edge of the bed putting
his shoes on. Meg sits behind him on the bed. They can't see
each other's faces.

MEG (CONT'D)

What are you up to today?

Roger looks excited. Like he is thrilled she wants to keep
spending time with him. But he remembers Steve's advice. He
irons his face into a neutral expression.

ROGER

I have some important business to
attend to.

Meg's face flickers with disappointment. She's still waiting for the other shoe to drop--for him to pull away like guys have done in the past.

MEG

Yeah, I should do laundry.

ROGER

I noticed the bed has a lot of sand in it.

MEG

I like my sheets gritty.

Roger stands at the door, looking at Meg with longing. He knows he should be vague about when they'll see each other next, but he can't go through with it.

ROGER

Do you have plans tomorrow night?
We could go out for sushi.

Meg smiles.

MEG

I'd like that.

INT. ROGER AND STEVE'S ROOM - DAY

Steve stands by the door. He's packed a small bag. Roger wraps a gray scarf around Steve's neck.

ROGER

I've heard it can be chilly in Big Sur.

STEVE

Thank you, Roger.

Roger puts his hand on Steve's shoulder. His eyes tear up.

ROGER

You're the best roommate I've ever had. I don't know what I'll do without you.

STEVE

It's like Murakami wrote: "If you're in pitch blackness, all you can do is sit tight until your eyes get used to the dark."

ROGER

"I can bear any pain as long as it has meaning."

STEVE

"Anyone who falls in love is searching for the missing pieces of themselves."

ROGER

"Sometimes when I look at you, I feel I'm gazing at a distant star."

They embrace.

STEVE

Have faith that we will be reunited soon. Goodbye, my friend.

ROGER

Goodbye.

Steve leaves.

Roger stands at the window. Cassidy's car has pulled to the curb. Steve gets in and they drive away.

Roger sits on the edge of his bed, a complicated look on his face.

INT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Meg and Roger sit across from each other at the restaurant they were supposed to go to before. The atmosphere is dim and sexy. Roger tells a story and she laughs. He holds her hand across the table. They stare into each other's eyes.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Genevieve's on the couch, working on her business plan. Meg and Roger enter. Meg is still giggling at something Roger said but stops when she sees Genevieve.

MEG

Hey.

GENEVIEVE

Hey.

ROGER

Hello, Genevieve. How are you this evening?

GENEVIEVE
(sarcastic)
I'm fantastic, Roger! Thanks for asking.

Meg whispers something to Roger. He goes to her room.

MEG
I'm sorry about what I said the other night.

GENEVIEVE
It's fine.

Meg lingers. Genevieve is still looking at her laptop.

MEG
Can we talk about it sometime?

GENEVIEVE
There's nothing to talk about. You were right. It's best if we stick to being roommates. I won't interfere with your business again.

Meg looks sad. Like she wants to say more, but doesn't know where to start.

MEG
Okay. Goodnight.

GENEVIEVE
Goodnight.

Genevieve keeps working. Meg and Roger giggle on the other side of the wall.

EXT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - ANOTHER NIGHT

Genevieve comes out of the apartment wearing a short, sparkly dress and heels. She gets into the BMW waiting at the curb.

INT. SHANE'S CAR - NIGHT

Shane is in the driver's seat. He leans over and kisses her.

SHANE
Hey, baby.

EXT./INT. SHANE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

They drive north, approaching the Golden Gate Bridge.

GENEVIEVE

She's like a different person now.
She's totally up Roger's ass. She's
never been like this about a guy.

SHANE

Sounds like she's in love.

GENEVIEVE

I guess.

(beat)

I always do this. I overreact and
fuck things up more. I think I'm
setting a boundary but actually I'm
lashing out from a place of
insecurity. That's what my
therapist says.

SHANE

I'm sure you can work it out.

GENEVIEVE

Her birthday's next week and she
hasn't even mentioned it. She'll
probably spend it with him. I don't
trust the guy. He seems like a scam
artist.

SHANE

Do I seem like a scam artist?

She looks at him.

GENEVIEVE

Kind of, yeah.

They laugh.

EXT./INT. SHANE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Shane parks in a lot overlooking the bridge from the Marin
side. He reaches into the back seat.

SHANE

I got you something.

He gives her a box. Inside is a diamond bracelet.

GENEVIEVE
Wow. This looks...

SHANE
Expensive? It is.

He starts kissing her neck. He moves her hand to his crotch.
Genevieve pushes him away.

GENEVIEVE
Shane, I need to know what's going
on with the money.

SHANE
The money?

GENEVIEVE
Do you want to invest or not? If
you don't want to, that's fine.
Maybe you could ask some of your
friends.

SHANE
I'm working on it. These things
take time, G.

Genevieve relents for a moment. Shane kisses her again. But
she's still stewing, her mind working through things.

GENEVIEVE
And I thought you were going to
have me meet Cindy. Does she really
know about me?

SHANE
Of course. We tell each other
everything.

GENEVIEVE
So you wouldn't mind if I got in
touch with her?

SHANE
Genevieve. Don't do that.

GENEVIEVE
Why not?

SHANE
Just because she knows doesn't mean
she needs to know every detail.

GENEVIEVE

Well, I don't want to be some mistress you give a bracelet to, and then expect me to give you a blowjob in your car or whatever corny shit you're imagining.

SHANE

You're acting crazy.

She holds up the bracelet.

GENEVIEVE

If you bothered to notice anything about me, you'd know this isn't my style. It looks like something an old lady would wear.

She throws the box at him.

EXT. SCENIC OVERLOOK - NIGHT

Genevieve gets out and walks away a few steps. She turns back, expecting Shane to have gotten out and followed her. Instead, his BMW peels out of the spot and drives away.

GENEVIEVE

Hey!
(then)
Fuck.

She walks across the Golden Gate Bridge, in her going-out clothes.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, GENEVIEVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Genevieve lies on her bed, her makeup smeared. She hears Meg and Roger come in, talking and laughing. Meg shushes Roger. They go into Meg's room and SLAM the door.

Genevieve goes on Facebook and looks up Shane's wife Cindy. She writes a message: **"Hello, I'm having a sexual relationship with your husband. He told me you're cool with it. Just wanted to make sure he wasn't lying. Us gals have to stick together, right?"**

She thinks for a second, then adds:

"P.S. you look like a bad bitch and I'd love to hook up with you too!"

She sends it.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

Meg and Roger walk around the produce stalls, goofing off.

Meg gets a hot chocolate with whipped cream on it. She gives Roger a sip. He gets whipped cream on his nose. Meg licks it off. Roger puts some whipped cream on Meg's nose and licks it off. They laugh.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hey Meg!

Meg turns and sees Matt standing alone with a tote bag full of produce.

MEG

Oh. Hey Matt.

MATT

Roger.

ROGER

Hello, Matt.

MATT

(to Meg)

Can I talk to you?

Meg looks at Roger. Roger puts his arm around her protectively.

MEG

(to Roger)

Give us a minute, ok?

Meg and Matt stand on one side of the street, Roger on the other, Farmer's Market stalls between them.

MATT

I've been trying to get in touch with you.

MEG

Yeah, sorry. I've been busy.

MATT

I can see that.

They look over at Roger, who leans back against the wall, arms crossed, staring into the distance. He looks like he's posing for a magazine shoot.

MATT (CONT'D)

Fuck, he's handsome.

MEG

What do you want, Matt?

Matt turns to her earnestly.

MATT

I want to apologize for how things went down. The whole Chloe thing. I cheated on you. Though I didn't consider it cheating, since it's hard for me to inhabit the monogamist mindset. But we had an agreement and I broke it. I lied to you, I was an immature asshole. You deserved better.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Meg.

Meg is still annoyed, but warming up.

MEG

Well, thanks. I appreciate that.

MATT

I hope we can be friends, eventually.

MEG

Sure.

They look at Roger again. He's crouched down, petting a dog whose leash is tied to a parking meter.

MATT

He's really something.

MEG

Isn't he?

As Matt watches her watching Roger, a new expression dawns on his face: jealousy.

MEG (CONT'D)

(turning back to Matt)

How are things with Chloe?

MATT

Actually, we're going through a rough patch.

MEG

Sorry to hear that.

Meg looks really happy now. She hugs Matt.

MEG (CONT'D)

It was good seeing you, Matt.

MATT

Yeah, you too.

She walks back to Roger. He introduces her to the dog. She crouches down and pets it. They walk away, arms wrapped around each other. Matt watches it all. He sucks his vape pen with an aura of despair.

INT. ROGER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roger enters his room to find a new roommate unpacking his things. The new man is attractive but looks a little sinister.

NEW ROOMMATE

Hey, you must be Roger. I'm Thad.

ROGER

Hello, Thad.

Roger sits on the edge of his bed.

ROGER (CONT'D)

So I guess Steve made it to Big Sur.

THAD

Who?

ROGER

My old roommate.

THAD

Oh, I don't know. Who cares?

Thad sits on his bed and begins putting socks on.

THAD (CONT'D)

I hear it's like shooting fish in a barrel in this town.

ROGER

What do you mean?

THAD

Thousands of single women desperate for a man.

ROGER

I wouldn't say that.

THAD

That's what I hear. I could get down to Big Sur tonight if I wanted to. But I wanna have some fun with it. I'm gonna hold out for a real bitchy, high-maintenance broad.

Roger is disturbed.

ROGER

Don't you want to fall in love?

THAD

Yeah, right.

(beat)

Kirill said you have a girlfriend?

ROGER

(proud)

I do.

THAD

So what's the holdup? Big Sur beckons. You better get down there, bro.

Thad grins. He stands up.

THAD (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, I already got a few dates lined up. Catch you later, man.

INT. MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roger and Meg have sex. They stare into each other's eyes. It's slow, intense, connected.

After, Roger stares at the picture of Mulder on the ceiling. Mulder stares back at him. They look a little alike.

MEG

What's wrong?

ROGER

I have a new roommate. "Thad." I don't like him.

MEG

What happened to Steve?

ROGER

Steve had to move on. It was his time.

Meg is confused.

MEG

What do you mean? Where did he go?

Roger rolls over to face her.

ROGER

Meg, let's go to Big Sur.

MEG

I dunno. I hate camping.

ROGER

We wouldn't have to camp. There's a beautiful cabin we can stay in.

MEG

That sounds nice.

(beat)

Whose cabin is it?

ROGER

It's a place I have with some friends.

MEG

(disturbed)

Like a timeshare?

ROGER

Kind of.

MEG

Let me think about it. Maybe next weekend?

ROGER

That would be perfect. I can't wait to show you everything.

MEG

When's the last time you went there?

ROGER

I've never been. I've been waiting to go with you.

Now Meg stares at Mulder, unsettled.

INT. MEG'S ROOM - MORNING

Meg wakes up to find Roger coming in with breakfast on a tray. Coffee and a cinnamon roll with a lit candle in it.

MEG
What's all this?

ROGER
Happy birthday, Meg.

MEG
How did you know?

ROGER
I have my ways.
(beat)
Make a wish.

Meg closes her eyes. She opens them and blows out the candle. They trade bites of the roll.

ROGER (CONT'D)
I have a surprise for you. Do you
have a vehicle?

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Meg and Roger drive down the coast in Meg's beat-up old Honda, Meg in the driver's seat.

MEG
You're really not going to tell me
where we're going?

ROGER
It's a surprise. Turn right here.

EXT. SUNSET DISTRICT - DAY

Genevieve is walking back from yoga, carrying her mat. She passes a trendy restaurant. Through the window, she sees Shane and his wife, CINDY, a put-together woman in her late 40s.

She ducks behind a wall before Shane sees her. She checks her phone, the message she sent to Cindy. It says "read" but Cindy never responded.

GENEVIEVE
Fuck it.

She goes in.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Genevieve walks up to Shane and Cindy's table. Shane spots her first and looks scared.

SHANE

Genevieve--

GENEVIEVE

Hey, Shane. Hi, I'm Genevieve.

She thrusts her hand out to Cindy, who looks at it but doesn't shake it. Instead she turns to Shane.

CINDY

I thought you were done with these
silly little sluts. What did you
promise this one?

Shane looks down at his food.

GENEVIEVE

He said he was going to invest in
my acupuncture business.

Cindy laughs.

CINDY

Honey, get a grip. We've got three
kids and two mortgages. We're
broke! Let me guess. Did he try to
pawn off some of my old jewelry on
you?

Genevieve looks between Shane and Cindy, her eyes filled with
rage and humiliation. She storms out.

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Meg and Roger are part of a small group on a whale-watching
tour. They stand on a boat looking out at the water. Roger
stands behind Meg, his arms wrapped around her.

They watch a humpback breach a short distance away. Meg's
eyes are teary. She watches the whale as it turns gracefully
in the water. The sight affects her deeply.

She turns to face Roger.

MEG
I love you.

ROGER
I love you too.

They kiss.

EXT. SUNSET DISTRICT - DAY

Genevieve sits at a bus stop, crying but pretending not to. She scrolls through Facebook. A headline catches her eye: **"Too Good to be True? San Francisco Woman Says Fake Date Ruined Her Life."** She clicks it. Her eyes widen.

EXT. MARINA DOCK - AFTERNOON

Meg and Roger walk away from the boat. Meg's phone RINGS. She answers it.

MEG
Hey.
(beat)
Genevieve, what's wrong?

Beat.

MEG (CONT'D)
Yeah, I'm with him now.
(beat)
Okay. See you soon.

She hangs up.

MEG (CONT'D)
(to Roger)
I have to go home. Genevieve's
freaking out.

ROGER
What happened?

MEG
She won't say.

Meg walks away down the dock. Roger looks worried.

WE CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY OR NIGHT

ALICIA (from the opening sequence) sits across from a well-groomed female news anchor.

ANCHOR

We all know that dating comes with risks, but one Bay Area woman is here to tell us there's a new one-- handsome scammers who prey on women using dating apps. They'll wine and dine you, take you on a magical weekend getaway to Big Sur, then vanish--with your data in tow.

She turns to Alicia.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Alicia, thank you for coming on to tell us your experience.

ALICIA

Thank you for having me. I debated whether to go public with my story. They have compromising material on me. I know they'll retaliate. But I can't let any other women fall prey to this scam. It's completely destroyed my life.

ANCHOR

Why don't you tell us what happened?

As Alicia tells her story in voiceover, we see images of the scenes she describes.

ALICIA (V.O.)

It was a perfect weekend.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Alicia and Alan make the bed together, laughing.

ALICIA (V.O.)

He brought me to this beautiful two-story cabin in the woods. That night, we had dinner at a restaurant overlooking the ocean.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The scene we began with; Alicia and Alan talking over a candlelit dinner.

ALICIA (V.O.)
He told me he loved me for the
first time. We went back to the
cabin and made love.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Snippets of sex, slow and sensuous in front of a fireplace.
Worthy of a romance novel.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY OR NIGHT

Back to Alicia in the studio. Tears have come to her eyes as
she remembers the good times.

ALICIA
Alan had seemed too good to be
true, but I was starting to let my
guard down. Starting to believe
that I'd finally found the love I'd
been looking for all my life.

ANCHOR
(gravely)
But it wasn't meant to be, was it?

ALICIA
No.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Alicia wakes up alone in the bed.

ALICIA (V.O.)
The next morning, he was gone. I
looked all over for him. I was
worried something had happened to
him.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Alicia stands on top of a hill, scanning with binoculars.

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Alicia talks to a ranger, who shakes his head. Nothing they
can do.

ALICIA (V.O.)
Finally I had to drive back, I had
work the next day.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Alicia drives up Highway 1. On the passenger seat, her phone buzzes with notifications.

ALICIA (V.O.)
As soon as I got back into service,
my phone started blowing up.
Everyone was asking if I'd gotten
hacked. My credit cards didn't
work.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Alicia at the gas station, trying one card, then another. The gas station attendant shakes his head. Declined.

ALICIA (V.O.)
It kept getting worse. They drained
my bank accounts, my retirement
accounts. At work on Monday, I was
called into my boss's office.

INT. BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Alicia meets with her boss. His face is stern. He turns a laptop around, open to Alicia's Twitter account. INSERT ON tweets that say things like, **"sick of working with all these pedophiles LOL."**

ALICIA (V.O.)
They said I'd posted offensive
things about the CEO over the
weekend. Of course, I didn't do any
of that. It was him.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY OR NIGHT

ANCHOR
It was Alan.

ALICIA
Alan, or whoever he works for. They
told me that if I went public, they
would ruin my life.
(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Even though it felt like they already had, they said it could get a lot worse. They have all my data. Intimate pictures and recordings I'd sent. They know all about my family--private things I told Alan, while we were dating. They could turn everyone in my life against me. But I started hearing about other women dating these supposedly perfect guys. I knew I couldn't stand by while they kept doing this. So I went to the police. It turned out the FBI was already investigating.

ANCHOR

And what did they discover?

Alicia pauses dramatically.

ALICIA

That Alan wasn't real. He was a fake person--some kind of AI, designed to scam me.

The anchor allows this revelation to hang in the air for a moment.

ANCHOR

Thank you for sharing your story, Alicia. You're very brave.

The anchor turns to the camera.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Authorities have launched an investigation into what appears to be an elaborate international data mining scam. These men are indeed fake men, nicknamed "blots," likely an advanced form of artificial intelligence. Preliminary reports indicate the technology was developed by a Silicon Valley company for use as caretakers in healthcare settings, but the prototype fell into disuse and was appropriated by Russian scammers...

The laptop on which the video has been playing snaps shut.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Meg has just closed the laptop, unable to take any more. She paces the room.

MEG

That's not Roger. I *know* Roger.

Genevieve watches her. She isn't taking pleasure in this anymore. She's actually scared for Meg, who seems to be in denial.

GENEVIEVE

(gently)

Meg, he sounds exactly like one of these guys. Didn't you say he asked you to go to Big Sur?

MEG

Yeah, but doesn't everyone want to go there?

(beat)

I know how it sounds. But Roger's so sweet. He would never do that to me. It must be a coincidence.

GENEVIEVE

Call him up and see what he says.

INT. MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Meg closes the door. She takes a deep breath. Calls Roger.

ROGER (O.S.)

Hello, beautiful Meg.

Meg is comforted to hear his voice.

MEG

Hey, Roger.

Close on Roger's face. We don't see where he is.

INTERCUT MEG/ROGER

ROGER

Is Genevieve ok?

MEG

Yeah, she's fine. Just some drama with the guy she's dating.

ROGER

I hope it works out for her.

A pause. Kind of awkward. Meg waits to see what he'll say.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Are we on for Big Sur next weekend?

The pieces click into place in Meg's head. She hangs up. She goes to Roger's contact, blocks his number, then drops her phone on the bed as if it's contaminated.

INT. ROGER'S ROOM - SAME

ROGER

Hello? Meg?

Roger is standing in the middle of his room.

There's a KNOCK on his door. He opens it. It's his LANDLORD, a tired-looking older man.

LANDLORD

You need to leave.

ROGER

Excuse me?

LANDLORD

The lease was canceled. You can't stay here anymore.

ROGER

But this is where I live.

LANDLORD

Look, pal. Whatever business you're doing here, I can't be involved. Leave now, or I call the police.

He leaves. Roger looks stunned. He goes into the hallway. All the doors stand open, the rooms empty.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Thad is on a date with MARISA (20s), a clean-cut tech worker. She's chattering on. Thad looks bored.

MARISA

I've told him like five times not to drink my La Croix, but he keeps doing it!

THAD

Uh huh.

MARISA

I know they're in the communal fridge, but I put a very clear post-it on the box.

THAD

Terrible. So, Marisa. Would you like to go to Big Sur with me?

MARISA

Oh my god, Big Sur? I've always wanted to go there. When?

Thad smirks. This is too easy.

THAD

How about tonight?

MARISA

Sure. I can borrow my roommate's car.

Her phone DINGS with a notification. She looks at it. The expression on her face shifts. She looks up at Thad.

THAD

What?

He looks around. Everyone in the restaurant is staring at him.

EXT. SIXTH STREET - NIGHT

Roger walks down the street, carrying a backpack with all his things in it. He calls Kirill. Kirill doesn't answer.

Down the street, Roger sees another handsome man like him being detained by the police. Roger ducks into a doorway.

The blot is trying to squirm away. The cops taze him, then handcuff him and muscle him into a squad car.

Roger's phone rings. Kirill is calling back.

KIRILL (O.S.)

Roger, it's over, buddy. You better get to Big Sur, fast.

ROGER

Are the police looking for me?

KIRILL (O.S.)

Yes. Don't let them arrest you.
They'll do terrible things to you.

ROGER

But why? What crime have I
committed?

KIRILL (O.S.)

You'll be safe once you get to Big
Sur. And you have to go there with
Meg. You must complete your
mission. That's the only way you
can join the others.

ROGER

What happens if I don't make it
there?

KIRILL (O.S.)

(beat)

If you stay in San Francisco, your
condition will rapidly decline.
Your mind will unravel. Your organs
will dissolve. You'll suffer
horribly. I'm sorry. I have to go
now. This is the last time you'll
hear from me.

ROGER

Kirill, wait--

The line goes dead.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Meg and Genevieve sit on the couch, looking haunted.

MEG

You tried to warn me.

GENEVIEVE

Yeah, but I was a jerk about it.
You were right, I was jealous.

MEG

I'm sorry, too. I knew we needed to
talk, but I got so wrapped up with
Roger.

GENEVIEVE

It's okay. I'm glad you're back.

MEG

It's so creepy. I can't believe I had sex with a... fake person.

GENEVIEVE

Hey, we've all been there.

Matt comes out of the kitchen with a tray of cheese and crackers.

MATT

Charcuterie, ladies?

MEG

Thanks.

She nibbles on a cracker. Matt kneels at her feet and puts his hands on her knees.

MATT

Meg, I'm so sorry you got caught up in this. Victor swears he didn't know about it, but I feel like he's gotta be involved. He was so gung ho about me bringing a single woman to that dinner party. Do you want me to quit in protest?

He winces, clearly hoping she won't ask him to do this.

MATT (CONT'D)

If you ask me to, I will.

MEG

That's okay.

He stands and paces the room, vaping.

MATT

I *knew* there was something weird going on at that party. All those GQ assholes strutting around.

MEG

Every guy I see now, I think he might be a blot. Especially the good-looking ones.

GENEVIEVE

They say there are only a few of them left in the city. They've rounded up most of them.

MEG

I wonder what they'll do to Roger
when they catch him.

Genevieve sparks the bowl of her bong.

GENEVIEVE

Probably scrap him for parts.

Meg looks disturbed.

INT. EYE BANK LAB - DAY

Meg is at work. She pauses, scalpel over an eyeball.

Her mind FLASHES with an image of Roger on a dissection
table.

She shivers.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Meg exits the building. She spots a man wearing a hat,
sunglasses, and baggy clothes. It takes her a moment to
register this is Roger in a bad disguise.

He approaches her, and she backs away.

MEG

No no no. Stay away from me.

ROGER

Meg, please talk to me. I don't
know what I've done to offend you,
but if you will just tell me, I'll
do whatever I can to make up for
it.

MEG

Don't you get it? You're not a
person. You're a blot.

ROGER

A what?

MEG

You have to leave me alone, Roger.
Get out of here before someone sees
you.

She walks away. Roger stands there, bewildered.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Roger sits at a computer terminal. He looks around, paranoid. Then he googles, "What is a blot?" Various articles come up. He reads.

Snippets of the article: **"Advanced biomorphic AI," "Data theft," "Vaporize," "Big Sur," "Russian scammers."**

Roger sits back, stunned. A horrible new awareness dawns within him. He looks around the library. He's surrounded by frumpy, ordinary people. He regards them with bitterness and longing, realizing that he alone is different.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Meg sits with Richard, Genevieve's acupuncture friend. He is, as in his picture, a dour guy in his 40s.

MEG

So what do you do for fun? Besides stick people with needles.

Richard doesn't crack a smile.

RICHARD

I have a variety of interests. I don't believe in a distinction between "fun" and the rest of life.

MEG

I see.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

Meg walks home through the park. A handsome but disheveled, wild-eyed man approaches. He's obviously a blot.

LOST BLOT

(garbled voice)

Hello. You are a beautiful woman. Would you like to go to Big Sur with me?

MEG

No thanks!

Meg walks away quickly.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - NIGHT

The deep forest of the park. Roger sits with Thad and a muscular red-haired blot named BRADY. Thad is looking at his phone.

THAD

I can't get a single match on the apps. Everyone's so paranoid now.

BRADY

The apps are done. I'm going to Fisherman's Wharf tonight. Find a nice tourist lady who doesn't follow the news.

THAD

That's a great idea. What about you, Roger?

ROGER

I love only one woman.

THAD

But she won't even talk to you.

ROGER

"What a terrible thing it is to wound someone you really care for and to do it so unconsciously."

They stare at him blankly.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Murakami.

BRADY

Who?

ROGER

I'm ashamed of what I am. I don't want to inflict more pain on anyone. Especially Meg.

Brady stands.

BRADY

Suit yourself. I'll be at the Wharf.

THAD

I'll join you.

They leave. Roger sits there alone.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

Another day. Meg is running through the park. As she reaches an intersection, Roger steps out to the trash can and puts a banana peel in it. Their eyes meet. She stops.

MEG

Roger?

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - MOMENTS LATER

They sit on a bench.

ROGER

I lost my job and my housing. I'm not sure my job was even real to begin with. My entire life has been a lie. Now everyone hates me and I don't blame them. I shouldn't exist.

He's so sad. Meg doesn't know what to say.

MEG

Can't you go to Big Sur and... vaporize?

ROGER

Apparently it won't work if I go there alone. In order to ascend, I must complete my mission.

He takes her hand. Meg flinches, then allows it.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I want you to know that I had no idea what I was, when we were together. Now that I know my true nature, I would never do anything to harm you. I would rather hide in this park for a thousand years.

Meg looks into his eyes. His words sink in. She stands and takes a few steps away. Turns back.

MEG

Genevieve has plans tonight. When she leaves, I'll turn on the Christmas lights in my window. If you see them on, the coast is clear.

ROGER

What are you saying, Meg?

MEG

You can come over and take a shower. I'll make you food.

ROGER

That's a kind offer, but I can't accept. I don't want to cause you trouble.

Meg pauses, second-guessing herself.

MEG

It'll be fine. As long as Genevieve doesn't find out.

EXT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Roger stands beside the mailbox across the street. Genevieve comes out of the apartment and gets into an Uber. A moment later, the Christmas lights in Meg's window turn on. Roger moves forward.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meg and Roger sit at the kitchen table. Roger is clean now and restored to his old handsomeness. He voraciously eats a stir fry Meg has made.

ROGER

Meg, this is the best thing I have ever eaten.

MEG

You must have been hungry.

ROGER

I was starving. My credit cards no longer work. It turns out I don't need much food to survive, but it is unpleasant.

MEG

So awful.

Beat.

MEG (CONT'D)

You really didn't know?

ROGER
I swear I didn't, Meg. All I knew
was that I wanted to take you to
Big Sur, so badly it hurt.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Meg and Roger stand by the door.

ROGER
Thank you for your generosity, Meg.
You have been far kinder to me than
I deserve.

MEG
Why don't you stay a little longer?

They kiss.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Meg and Roger continue their secret rendezvous.

--Roger stands across the street. When the light turns on, he
goes upstairs.

--Another night. Roger waits outside. The light doesn't come
on. He walks away sadly.

--Meg and Roger have sex in Meg's room. It's more intense
than ever.

--Meg tucks food items into Roger's jacket pockets.
Sandwiches, bananas.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Christmas lights are on in Meg's window. Genevieve enters
the building.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Genevieve opens the door to find Meg and Roger at the table,
eating peanut butter toast.

GENEVIEVE
Oh, hell no.

MEG
Genevieve, wait.

GENEVIEVE
(to Roger)
Get out!

She shoos Roger like he's a bad dog. She slams the door behind him and locks it.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
Meg, what the fuck?

MEG
I felt sorry for him. He has no one to turn to.

GENEVIEVE
He's not real! He's literally designed to screw you over.

MEG
It doesn't feel that way.

GENEVIEVE
What do you mean?

MEG
I know it sounds crazy. But I can feel his love for me. It's something beyond his programming. He doesn't want to hurt me. He hasn't asked me for anything.

GENEVIEVE
That's all part of the scam!

Genevieve goes over to the window. Roger stands across the street, looking up at the window. When he sees Genevieve, he ducks behind the mailbox.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
He's still out there.

She opens the window.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
Go away before I call the cops!

Roger scurries away.

MEG
You don't have to be so mean to him.

GENEVIEVE

What's not getting through to you?
He's not some great love you've
found. He's a phishing email in the
shape of a man.

She examines Meg. Her anger subsides, replaced by curiosity.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

You know, it's really interesting,
how you have so much sympathy for
this... *thing*, even though you know
it'll only hurt you in the end.
It's just like with Matt.

MEG

Oh, god. Don't start.

GENEVIEVE

I think you have some codependency
issues. It might help to talk to a
therapist.

MEG

I really can't handle your
psychoanalyzing right now.

GENEVIEVE

Fair enough. All I'll say is, if
you want to fuck up your life,
that's your business. But don't
drag me into it.

MEG

You're right. I'm sorry.

GENEVIEVE

Just so we're clear. If you bring
him here again, you'll need to find
another place to live.

MEG

It's like that, huh?

GENEVIEVE

I guess it is, yeah. I love you,
but I won't enable this insanity.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - NIGHT

Roger sits on the ground, leaning back against a tree trunk.
He looks sick. His eyes are vacant. His friends are gone--
it's unclear if they made it to Big Sur, or were apprehended.

Close up on his eyes, which are milky. Roger is having visions.

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Roger enters an old man's room. The lights are off.

OLD MAN

Dear Roger. Will you do me a favor?

ROGER

Of course, Mr. Jennings. Anything for you.

MR. JENNINGS

I can feel the end coming. I think tonight's the night.

ROGER

Don't say that.

MR. JENNINGS

It's okay. I'm ready. But I wonder if you could sit with me. Would you be with me while I pass to the other side?

ROGER

It would be my greatest honor.

Roger sits in a chair by Mr. Jennings' bed. The light of the moon comes through the window, lighting the old man's face a spectral blue. Hours pass. Roger does not move. He continues staring at Mr. Jennings with total compassionate focus.

Then, Mr. Jennings GASPS. Roger leans forward and takes his hand. He watches the old man as he takes his final breath.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - NIGHT

Roger shivers against the tree. A tear rolls down his cheek.

He has another vision. The cabin in Big Sur. Fog rising into the trees.

An amorphous floating mass, shot through with electricity.

Through this vision cuts the beam of a flashlight. Roger tenses, knowing he's completely vulnerable, too weak to get away.

But as the figure comes closer, he sees that it's Meg!

MEG

Hey Roger.

ROGER

My love.

She crouches next to him. She unzips her backpack and unloads food items.

MEG

I made stir fry again.

ROGER

Thank you, sweet Meg.

MEG

And I got us some of those pies from 7-Eleven.

ROGER

My favorite.

He opens a fruit pie and takes a bite. He looks sad as he chews.

MEG

What's wrong?

ROGER

I have such fond memories of eating these fruit pies as a boy. But now I know those memories aren't real. They were created by some Russian guy in a lab.

MEG

They are real, though. They're real to you.

Roger lies back, and Meg settles against his chest.

ROGER

My only real memories are the ones I have of you.

MEG

What do you remember?

ROGER

I remember the night we met, at the dinner party. How you removed ice cubes from your water glass using your fork.

MEG

Too much ice hurts my teeth.

ROGER

What do you remember, Meg?

MEG

I remember how you didn't know what Hawaiian pizza was.

ROGER

I was delighted to try it.

Roger looks at her earnestly.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I appreciated everything you showed me, Meg. You taught me to love your world.

Meg cuddles closer to him.

MEG

Are you in pain?

ROGER

Yes. Each day it's worse. My eyesight is growing weaker too.

MEG

Why is that?

ROGER

Kirill said I had to get to Big Sur, or I'd start to decay. It must be something in my programming. A way of controlling us so that we don't stray from our mission.

Meg thinks about this.

MEG

How would it have happened, if we'd gone to Big Sur?

ROGER

What do you mean?

MEG

Your mission. Stealing my data.

ROGER

I suppose once you were asleep, my programming would take over.

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

I would absorb your data prior to vaporizing. Then, the people who made me could do whatever they wanted with it. It's horrible to imagine betraying you in that way.

MEG

What if I didn't bring my phone?

ROGER

In that case, I imagine I would not be able to ascend. Not until I'd completed my mission.

(beat)

Why are you asking these questions?

MEG

Just curious. Sorry, I didn't mean to pry.

ROGER

You can ask me anything you want, Meg. Always.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Meg reads articles on her laptop. Experiences of women who were blotted: **"My reputation is ruined." "They drained my life savings." "They turned my friends and family against me." "Worst thing that's ever happened to me."**

She closes the laptop. She looks over at her mom's picture.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

Roger remains in the clearing. He tosses crumbs of fruit pie to a squirrel.

Meg approaches through the trees, wearing outdoorsy clothes.

ROGER

Meg! Why aren't you at work?

MEG

I took the day off.

(beat)

Come with me.

Roger follows her to the edge of the park, where Meg's car awaits.

MEG (CONT'D)

Get in.

ROGER

Where are we going, Meg?

Meg smiles.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Meg and Roger drive south, making their way out of the city.

ROGER

Meg, are you sure you want to do this?

MEG

I am.

ROGER

But you've heard about what happened to the other women.

MEG

Yep.

ROGER

So you know you'll be putting your future at risk. Your finances. Your reputation.

MEG

I'm prepared to make the sacrifice.

ROGER

Why would you do this, Meg?

MEG

Because I love you. I want to see Big Sur with you.

ROGER

Oh, Meg. This is the kindest thing anyone's ever done for me.

They drive down Highway 1, the scenic route. Sparkling ocean on one side, green pastures on the other. The stereo plays David Bowie's "Kooks."

ROGER (CONT'D)

Meg, the song is about us! "A couple of kooks, hung up on romancing."

Meg laughs.

EXT. FRUIT STAND - DAY

Meg and Roger lean on the car in a parking lot, eating fruit they've just bought.

MEG

What do you think it'll feel like?

ROGER

What, Meg?

MEG

Vaporizing.

ROGER

I imagine it will be a relief. I can't wait for the burden of my memories to be removed.

MEG

I know what you mean.

ROGER

I don't know why they had to give me such painful memories, when they could have given me pleasant ones.

MEG

Probably so you could relate to people.

Roger eats a strawberry with the stem still on it.

ROGER

Do you have painful memories, Meg?

MEG

Of course. Everyone does.

ROGER

Would you like to recount some of them?

MEG

What's there to say? One minute, the people you love are alive. The next, they're gone forever.

ROGER

I felt that way when Steve left.
But as Murakami wrote, "Death is
not the opposite of life, but an
innate part of it."

MEG

So true.

They walk back to the car.

ROGER

Would you like me to take a turn
driving?

MEG

Do you have a license?

ROGER

No, and I've never operated a
vehicle. But somehow, I think I
would be good at it.

Meg considers.

MEG

All right. Let's give it a whirl.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Roger drives. The road becomes perilous, two narrow lanes
winding around sharp bends. Roger is an amazing driver. He's
like a self-driving car, only better.

Meg drifts to sleep in the passenger seat. David Bowie's
"Low" plays in the background. Close on her phone screen:
there's one bar of service, then no bars.

Roger looks out at the road. His gaze is steady, a look of
resolve on his face. He is being drawn back to where he
belongs. Like a bird that knows where to migrate, even if
it's never been there before.

EXT./INT. CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Roger turns left at an unmarked road. He winds through
forest. Meg rouses. Roger looks over at her.

ROGER

Almost there.

He takes a turn onto a narrow, tree-lined street. Then another. The roads are grown over by trees.

MEG

How do you know the way?

ROGER

I just know. It's part of me.

He pulls into the driveway of the cabin--the same one we saw in the opening sequence with Alicia.

EXT./INT. CABIN - SAME

Meg and Roger enter the cabin. Meg surveys the space in amazement.

MEG

This place is incredible.

The kitchen is spacious and airy. A bowl of rotten fruit sits on the counter. Flies buzz over the bowl.

She opens the fridge. There are leftovers from restaurant meals. She opens one of the boxes. The food is moldy.

MEG (CONT'D)

Ew.

No one has been here for a while.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - SAME

Meg finds Roger upstairs, changing the sheets on the bed. The sheets are rumpled from the last guests. Meg looks at them uneasily. Doubt shadows her face. Whatever woman slept on those sheets, her life is now in ruins.

ROGER

Why don't you go check out the view? I'll tidy up in here.

EXT. CABIN, DECK - SUNSET

Meg stands on the deck, which rises above the trees and looks out toward the ocean. The sun is setting in gorgeous gold and purple hues.

A wave of doubt has come over Meg. She looks at her phone. No service.

Roger comes out and joins her. He's showered, and looks healthier than before. He wraps his arms around her from behind.

ROGER
What's wrong, Meg?

MEG
Nothing.

Roger turns to face her.

ROGER
We don't have to do this. You can leave me in the woods. I'll make do.

Meg looks at him. He's glowing. He seems at peace, now that they've come here.

MEG
Let's get something to eat. I'm starving.

ROGER
I know just the place.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Meg and Roger sit on the same patio Alicia and Alan did. They're drinking wine, eating burgers.

MEG
You were right. It's so beautiful here. The air smells amazing.

ROGER
Doesn't it?

He takes her hand. They look out at the ocean.

MEG
When my mom was dying, she told me she'd find a way to communicate with me, somehow. She said I wouldn't be able to hear it in a normal way, but I would feel it. Like how whales talk to each other, with clicks and whistles. We can hear it, too, if we learn how to listen.

ROGER

And can you?

MEG

I think so. Sometimes, I'll be walking down the street, and I'll feel this electricity. Like a buzz in my body. And I like to think that's my mom, saying hi.

ROGER

I'm sure it is. I've felt Steve's presence, since he left.

MEG

Really?

ROGER

Yes. I don't know how it works, exactly. In the hive. But I'll do my best to watch over you, and talk to you, if I can.

Meg smiles. Sad but accepting.

EXT. SCENIC OVERLOOK - NIGHT

Meg and Roger stand at an overlook. They throw rocks out over the cliff, and watch them fall in the moonlight.

Nearby, an owl HOOTS. Roger and Meg hoot in return. It's like they're in dialogue with the unseen owl.

MEG

You're really good at that.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meg and Roger lie in bed naked, kissing.

MEG

I don't want to fall asleep.

ROGER

Why not?

MEG

When I wake up, you'll be gone.

ROGER

I'll still be with you, Meg. I will never leave you.

Meg cries.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Murakami wrote, "If you remember
me, I don't care if everyone else
forgets."

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Roger is asleep. Meg is wide awake, sitting by the window, looking out at the ocean.

She looks back at Roger. She snuggles up to him, and he puts his arm around her. She closes her eyes.

EXT. CABIN - A LITTLE LATER

Inside the cabin, there's a frisson, a silent explosion. Then, an orb of energy ascends into the sky. It floats out to the ocean until it disappears in the distance.

EXT. OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

We follow the orb over the ocean. Slowly, the ocean fades away, the background draining of color.

INT./EXT. BOUNDLESS WHITE SPACE - OUTSIDE OF TIME

The Roger orb journeys along a vast nothingness. It picks up speed.

Ahead is a massive, colorful, jagged formation, like a huge chunk of mineral, floating in the white space. It is iridescent, shimmering, lumpy, teeming with life. This is the BLOT HIVE, the collective consciousness of all blots.

The Blot Hive speaks in an eerie cacophony, like thousands of male voices all speaking together.

BLOT HIVE
Roger! You made it.

The Roger orb moves faster still. It stops just short of the hive, bobbing gently, as if uncertain what to do next.

BLOT HIVE (CONT'D)
Join us, Roger. We've been waiting
for you.

Steve's face appears briefly in the hive before fading again.

The Roger orb hops up and is absorbed into the hive. The hive HUMS contentedly.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - MORNING

Meg opens her eyes. She looks to the left. Roger is gone. The bed is empty.

She sits up. It's happened. She opens her laptop. Maybe she's hoping to find a note from Roger. But there's nothing. Her phone is where she left it.

She stands and stretches in front of the window.

INT. CABIN, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Meg makes coffee in the kitchen. She cleans out the fridge and the fruit bowl and takes the garbage outside.

She brings the sheets down and puts them in the washer.

She packs her bag and leaves without ceremony.

Pre-lap sound of Meg's voice:

MEG (V.O.)
Dear Roger,

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Meg drives north in the rental car.

MEG (V.O.)
So much has changed since I last
saw you. When I got back into
service, I had a lot of
notifications.

Meg sits in her car in a parking lot, eating a sandwich. Her phone sits face-up on the passenger seat. Notifications pop up in an endless stream. She picks up her phone and looks at them, unfazed.

MEG (V.O.)
I got an email from work, saying I
was being suspended without pay.
Apparently I sent the hospital
listserv a very inappropriate
email.

(MORE)

MEG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My bank accounts were drained, too.
Luckily I'd thought about that
ahead of time.

Meg pulls a cashier's check out of the dashboard. It's made out to her, for \$5,000.

MEG (V.O.)

Five thousand bucks, pretty much my
entire savings. I'm sure your
handlers are used to wealthier
victims. I left 25 bucks for those
assholes in my checking account.

Meg keeps driving north, through the sunny South Bay and into the fog belt that hits around Daly City.

MEG (V.O.)

When I got home, Genevieve was
furious.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Genevieve yells at Meg, who remains stoic.

MEG (V.O.)

I didn't blame her. The people you
worked for reported her illegal
acupuncture practice to the police.
They must have used what I told you
to cause trouble.

INT. MEG AND GENEVIEVE'S APARTMENT, MEG'S ROOM - DAY

Meg packs up her belongings.

MEG (V.O.)

At that point, I had no choice but
to pack it in and head back to
Fresno.

INT. FRESNO HOUSE - DAY

A door opens, revealing Meg standing at the doorstep. Reverse to show Meg's DAD and her stepmom SHELLY (both 60s), who look stunned to see her.

MEG (V.O.)

I know Shelly wasn't thrilled about
me coming to stay with them, but
she was nice enough about it.

INT. FRESNO HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Meg sits at the dinner table with her dad and Shelly, holding hands and saying grace.

MEG (V.O.)

I didn't tell them everything that happened--I wouldn't know where to start. All they know is I got in some kind of trouble, back in San Francisco. Which is what they told me would happen all along.

An awkward dinner. Her dad and Shelly's concerned faces. Meg smiling at them. Doing her best.

END MONTAGE

INT. FRESNO HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cut to where Meg is speaking from. What looks to be a teenage boy's bedroom. Hockey stuff on the walls. Meg sits on the bed, dictating a text to her phone.

MEG

I'll be staying here for a few weeks while I plan my next move. I hope you made it to where you were going. I miss you. Love, Meg.

She reads back over the message briefly, then hits "send." The message turns blue, which surprises her. It means it was delivered.

EXT./INT. BLOT HIVE - SAME

A patch of the hive lights up in response to Meg's message.

INT. SAFEWAY - DAY

A month or two later. Meg is wearing a Safeway smock, stocking grocery shelves.

MAN (O.S.)

Meg?

Meg looks up, startled. A man stands at the end of the aisle. He's Meg's age, broad and sturdy, wearing an orange construction vest and work pants.

Meg squints at him.

MEG

Tom?

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Meg and TOM sit at a table.

TOM

I almost didn't recognize you. You look great!

She doesn't, really.

MEG

So do you.

TOM

Gosh, it's been a while. Since your mom's memorial, I guess. Sorry again about that, by the way.

MEG

Thanks. It's okay.

TOM

We lost our mom last year.

MEG

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't hear about that.

TOM

It's all right.

A heavy moment.

TOM (CONT'D)

Glad we're still here, right?

MEG

Definitely.

TOM

So what have you been up to? You were living in San Francisco, weren't you?

MEG

Yeah, I was out there for about ten years.

TOM

What brought you back to Fresno? I was shocked to see you working at Safeway. Thought I was hallucinating for a minute.

MEG

Just figuring out my next move. I think I'm done with SF.

TOM

Really? You always seemed like a city gal.

Meg sips her coffee. She doesn't want to talk about San Francisco.

MEG

You work construction?

TOM

Yep, I've got my own company. We mostly do remodels, but some new builds too.

MEG

Sounds like business is good.

TOM

It's crazy right now, to be honest.

He looks at her, as if debating whether to say what he wants to say.

TOM (CONT'D)

You know, back in high school, I always wanted to ask you out.

MEG

Really?

TOM

Yeah. I was scared of you, though. You were too cool for me.

MEG

I doubt that. I was in my goth phase.

TOM

The dyed hair and fishnets. I remember. I liked it.

MEG
You did not.

TOM
I really did!

Zoom out as they continue laughing and catching up. Pre-lap sound of:

MEG (V.O.)
Dear Roger, I'm sorry it's been so long since I've written.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

--Meg and Tom goofing off at a job site.

--Eating burgers at In-N-Out.

--Walking around a Walmart.

MEG (V.O.)
I met someone. Well, actually I already knew him. This guy Tom I went to high school with. I barely noticed him back then. He was kind of quiet.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Meg walks around Tom's house for the first time. It's nice, clean, spacious. Tom is a real adult. A cat sits on an armchair. Meg bends down and pets it.

MEG (V.O.)
He's not the kind of guy I would normally be into. But it's actually going well.

Meg and Tom sit on the couch watching a movie, laughing.

MEG (V.O.)
I still think about you a lot. I wonder if you think about me, too. I don't know where you ended up, but I hope you're happy. And, Roger--I want you to know that I don't regret anything. Love, Meg.

END MONTAGE

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Time has passed. Meg has just moved in. Boxes clutter the foyer.

Meg enters the house, flipping through a stack of mail. She has a new haircut and her style's different. More relaxed. No one here to impress.

MEG
(yelling)
I'm home.

Tom replies from somewhere in the house.

TOM (O.S.)
Hey, hon.

MEG
I finally picked up my mail.

TOM (O.S.)
What?

She continues flipping through. It's mostly junk. One piece catches her eye. It's a wedding invitation.

Inside is a picture of Genevieve and Richard, the dour acupuncture guy. Meg laughs.

Tom comes out of the bedroom.

TOM (CONT'D)
What'd you say?

Meg holds up the invitation.

MEG
It's my old roommate.

TOM
The one you don't talk to?

MEG
She invited me to her wedding. And she's marrying *Richard*.

Tom nods, trying to keep up. Meg looks nervous.

MEG (CONT'D)
Tom, I need to talk to you about something.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meg and Tom sit at the table.

TOM

So you dated a robot?

MEG

Sort of. I mean, he wasn't a robot. He looked exactly like a real person. You couldn't tell the difference.

TOM

I think I heard about that scam. Did you meet him on an app?

MEG

No. It was kind of a weird situation. My ex invited me to a dinner party, and I met him there.

TOM

And you had no idea?

MEG

Well... Actually, by the end, I did. But I still went to Big Sur with him.

TOM

Why would you do that?

MEG

I guess I felt sorry for him. He was totally alone.

TOM

You loved him?

MEG

I did.

Something clicks in Tom's mind.

TOM

You still do.

MEG

I think part of me will always love him. But I love you, too. You're a real person. We have a life together.

TOM
Is this why your credit's so bad?

MEG
Yes.
(beat)
Mostly.

Tom looks like he's struggling to process all this. Finally he nods. It seems like he's come to terms with it all. He's practical like that.

TOM
One time, I sent some money to a scammer who said they had a video of me jacking off.

MEG
You fell for that one?

TOM
Not my proudest moment.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

MEG (V.O.)
Dear Roger, Genevieve's wedding was great!

EXT. WEST MARIN VENUE - DAY

The wedding, held outdoors along the coast. Genevieve in a white dress, Richard looking surprisingly handsome as they exchange vows.

MEG (V.O.)
She seems really happy with Richard. I should have known she was into him, the way she kept pushing him on me.

INT. WEST MARIN VENUE - LATER

The reception. The guests, including Meg and Tom, dance and drink.

Later in the night, Meg and Genevieve sit in a corner, both crying and grabbing each other, saying they're sorry.

MEG (V.O.)
We got to talk about everything.
It's all water under the bridge.
(MORE)

MEG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Tom and I might visit them in Marin once they're back from their honeymoon.

INT. CAR - DAY

Meg and Tom drive back from the wedding.

MEG (V.O.)

The wedding must have put ideas in Tom's head, because on the way back, he popped the question. Sort of.

TOM

Hypothetically, what would you think about us getting married?

MEG

I think that would be nice. Hypothetically.

They smile at each other.

END MONTAGE

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MEG

I've been thinking I shouldn't be texting you anymore, Roger. I'll always remember our time together.
(beat)
Goodbye, Roger.

Meg hits send. She leaves her phone face-up on the bed and gets up to brush her teeth.

We stay with the phone. Suddenly, the THREE DOTS pop up, indicating someone is typing. This is the first time this has ever happened.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

At the same moment, Meg feels a JOLT of electricity. She straightens in front of the mirror, registering it. Then shakes it off and spits into the sink. That was weird.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Meg returns to the bedroom. The three dots are still up, but they disappear a moment before Meg picks up her phone. She looks at her text thread with Roger. Scrolls up through all the texts she's sent, in the last two years, with no response.

She deletes the thread and leaves the room.

In the other room, we hear Meg and Tom talking.

TOM (O.S.)
What should we have for dinner?

MEG (O.S.)
I can cook something. We have all that chicken.

TOM (O.S.)
Or we could get a pizza.

MEG (O.S.)
Pizza sounds good.

TOM (O.S.)
Or Thai?

MEG (O.S.)
Is that what you want?

TOM (O.S.)
Thai sounds good.
(beat)
Pizza sounds pretty good too, though.

EXT./INT. BLOT HIVE - SAME

The hive HUMS, patches of light appearing all over.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END