

WRIT LARGE

AN AFTERMATH

Written by

Lauren Caris Cohan

5815 West Sunset Blvd.
Suite 401
Los Angeles, CA 90028
(323) 553-4300

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.

-THOMAS CAMPBELL

1777- 1844

PRE-LAP: "Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye" by Bettye Swann

OPEN ON...

EXT. HIGHWAY 1, MONTEREY COUNTY - DUSK

Dusk. Massive cliffs as far as the eye can see. Angry grey waves whitewash the craggy landscape and buff the dwindling blue light with a gentle haze.

We're following behind

A BLACK TESLA as it drives north on the highway. The only car on the road.

INT. MICHAEL'S TESLA - LATE AFTERNOON - MOMENTS LATER

Now we're in the car, behind A COUPLE as they BELT the song at the top of their lungs and recklessly pass a BOTTLE OF KRUG between them. Judging by the tux and white slip dress they're sporting...

They've just married.

As the song ends, and the electric car moves down the highway, no engine humming, total silence fills the car.

On SHEILA, mid 40's, classic features, perfect posture, tightly wound, as she gazes out onto the landscape in front of her as it fades from deep blue to indigo. Think young Charlotte Rampling, or Michelle Pfeiffer. Even with a half a bottle of champagne in her she looks meticulous and collected-- the type of woman who has never mixed her laundry colors and whites in her life.

She looks over to Michael, late 40's, elegant, chiseled, in the driver's seat. Michael notices, reaches across the center consul and silently slips his hand in hers. A rolled-up linen shirt reveals a sleeve of tattoos-- a little hint of rebel yell.

The touch of his hand makes the corners of Sheila's mouth twitch with happiness-- the hint of an untamed smile about to break free.

Because for the first time in her life...

Sheila's got everything she's ever wished for.

INT. MICHAEL'S TESLA - EVENING - LATER

It's dark now. The car hums along the road.

Michael takes another swig from the bottle, and speaks to the car--

MICHAEL
Self-drive.

The car PINGS and adjusts itself to self-driving mode. He takes his hands off of the wheel and relaxes into his seat. Looks over at Sheila-- she's having a hard time keeping her eyes open.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Come here, baby.

After a beat, Sheila scoots over and rests her head on his shoulder. Closes her eyes.

The car continues down the road, hands-free.

EXT. BIXBY BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Birdseye view of BIXBY BRIDGE as the Tesla crosses into BIG SUR. It leaves us behind and speeds down the highway, mingling with the heavy haze as it silently disappears from view.

EXT. BIG SUR - NIGHT - LATER

The Tesla heads down a small road covered by a thick canopy of fir trees. Headlights pierce the forest light searchlights in a storm.

EXT. FRONT GATE ESTATE - NIGHT- MOMENTS LATER

The Tesla stops in front of a nondescript gate surrounded by redwoods. The high beams highlight a massive, seamless STEEL DOOR.

It's entirely seamless-- no buttons or handles in sight.

We're behind the couple, in the back seat. Michael speaks in hushed tones to avoid waking his sleeping bride.

MICHAEL
MINI, open the gate.

An automated voice fills the car. She sounds eerily human.

With a CLICK, the gate opens...

MINI
Welcome home, Michael.

Michael pulls through and

INT. FRONT GATE ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Headlights flare in the lens as the gate automatically shuts behind the car with a WHOOSH.

MINI
Perimeter confirmed secure.

DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

We follow behind the car as it winds up a long road. Even in the dark, we can see the property is meticulously landscaped, massive, and private. Sheila is still asleep in the passenger's seat.

Michael steals a long glance at her. She's out cold.

He whispers to the ether-

MICHAEL
Lights on. To 70 percent.

In the distance, a house illuminates. It's stunning. A masterpiece.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Adjust lights to golden yellow.

The lights in the house automatically and effortlessly adjust their color.

Cantilevered on a bluff at the edge of a cliff, the house has a 270-degree view of the coast and effortlessly blends into its surroundings.

Beyond that-- the Pacific ocean, bathed in moonlight.

EXT. MICHAEL'S ESTATE - MOMENTS LATER

From a distance, we watch the car pull in front of the house. Headlights shut off. Michael gets out, opens the trunk, pulls out a duffle bag before moving to the passenger-side door.

He gently unbuckles Sheila's seatbelt and carries her like a small sleeping child to the front door. It CLICKS open on voice command-- hands-free.

By now we should realize that this is no ordinary house...

The couple moves inside as the door closes behind them.

Stay wide on the house. After a beat...

The house goes dark.

TITLE CARD: AN AFTERMATH

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - NEXT DAY

Morning. Sheila sits up straight in a crisp white bed. Head pounding.

Too much champagne.

Tight on her face, as she struggles to open her eyes in the bright morning light. She's got long lashes and soft crinkles around the corners of her eyes. She's the kind of handsome beauty that doesn't need much makeup.

Sheila inspects the unfamiliar men's undershirt she's wearing, hair matted against her face. She checks out the impeccably decorated room around her-- minimal, rustic, and warm all at once.

Her duffle bag has been placed neatly on the floor next to the bed. On the nightstand next to her, a handwritten note:

I'M DOWNSTAIRS. x M

Sheila tucks her hair behind her ears as she inspects the expensive linen paper, places the note back on the nightstand and gets out of bed. She quickly rummages through her things, pulls on a pair of jeans.

Sheila inspects her skin in a round mirror on the wall. Massages the swollen pads beneath her eyes and does her best to tame the nest of hair matted to her face.

She sighs. Feeling too hungover to try.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila wanders through the house, touching pristine surfaces with her fingertips, inspecting each and every detail of her new surroundings. An astounding blend of mid-century and modern, this house looks like it should be on the cover of Architectural Digest-- cavernous, impressively designed, subtle in every way. Books and tasteful art line every room. Beyond the wall of glass, past the expansive property, over the cliff's edge-- a sparkling, infinite blue sea dotted with sailboats.

The low hum of Michael's voice flows through the hallway -- Sheila moves down to the end, peering through each open door as she goes. The one at the end is slightly ajar.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

ON Michael hunched over his neat-as-pin desk, facing away from us and speaking in urgent, hushed tones, laptop open. Degrees from MIT and STANFORD cover a far wall.

No photos of family or friends anywhere.

Sheila watches him for a moment, and we can see a brief moment of hesitation and uncertainty cross her features. That feeling when you don't know someone very well-- and you're in their personal space.

Finally, she gently RAPS on the door, announcing herself.

Michael closes his laptop. Spins in his chair to face Sheila, smiling warmly. If you're watching closely, Michael discreetly closes the top drawer of his desk, locks it, puts the key in his pocket.

As he crosses the room, he tips his chin to the ether--

MICHAEL

End session.

A PING in the ether. Sheila looks toward the sound, confused.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Morning, darling.

He checks his watch.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Afternoon, rather. You slept a full twelve hours.

He tips his head to one side, inspecting her. An amused look on your face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I've never seen you with your hair down.

SHEILA
Sorry, I'm a mess. Too much champ-

Sheila's got an accent-- British. From somewhere far, far away from here.

MICHAEL
...It's lovely.

He reaches for her hand.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Ready for a tour?

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Michael leads Sheila through an impressive, spotless kitchen. Stops to pour her a piping hot coffee from an old-school French press.

As she wraps the mug around her hands and takes a sip-

SHEILA
(quietly)
This is incredible.

MICHAEL
Like it, huh?

Sheila glances around the magnificent house.

SHEILA
I had no idea it was like...*this*.

MICHAEL
It wasn't always.

They move toward the cavernous front hallway-

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Think you'll have enough peace and quiet to finish your book?

She follows behind him-

SHEILA
I might have two written by Friday.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The couple stands in front of a sleek metal front door. Again, no buttons or handles in sight.

MICHAEL
Lesson one. If you were going to command that door to open, what would you say?

Sheila looks at Michael like he's got three heads.

SHEILA
Seriously?

He holds his hands up in defense and grins.

MICHAEL
Humor me.

SHEILA
Open sesame?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL
Door open.

An electronic CLICK. The front door opens with a WHOOSH. Sheila punches Michael playfully.

SHEILA
Whhhaaat. Explain.

He shrugs nonchalantly.

MICHAEL
One of my self-learning programs. Built into the house when I renno'd this place.

SHEILA
But my voice?

He casually tucks a hair behind her ear.

MICHAEL

All it takes is a sentence or two
for full-voice recognition.

(beat)

I fed her that hot voicemail you
sent me a few weeks ago.

He gallantly gestures through the doorway.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

After you M'lady.

EXT. PROPERTY - DAY

Michael playfully grabs Sheila's hand and leads her around
the meticulously landscaped property shaded by oaks and lined
by tall, wild grass. They stop at the grassy edge, where the
craggy cliffside falls off into the sea.

Michael glances back at the house-

MICHAEL

You like it?

Sheila nods in appreciation.

SHEILA

I could stay here forever.

Michael pauses and looks out to the ocean.

MICHAEL

We could.

He pulls her toward him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

We should.

Sheila hugs Michael, buries her face in his sweater and
inhales deeply. She pulls him by the hand-

SHEILA

Show me more.

INT. HOUSE - DAY - PAST - MOMENTS LATER

Back in the house. Micheal wraps an arm around Sheila's
waist, moving through the entry.

He gestures to the air-

MICHAEL

I'd like you to meet MINI. My housekeeper of sorts-- only a little more discreet. Mini, this is Sheila.

From the ether-

MINI

Nice to meet you, Sheila.

Sheila waves, to no one.

SHEILA

Nice to meet you too, Mini.

She turns to Michael, eyes wide.

MICHAEL

I created her myself. She's an older model. But She holds a special place in my heart.

Sheila inspects the ceiling, looking for some sort of ALEXA type device-

SHEILA

But where are the speakers?

MICHAEL

(nonchalant)

Everywhere. She's built into every room.

He grabs Sheila's hand and pulls her toward the kitchen.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Ok. Lesson two. Your voice can pretty much command anything...

To Mini-

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Mini, play Phillip Glass, Metamorphosis 2.

He speaks to MINI in a cold, authoritative way. It feels off in contrast to her warm, human voice.

A CHIME in the ether. 'Metamorphosis 2' plays quietly and fills the with room with music.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You want to set the oven?

Michael gestures to a high-tech oven.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
MINI, Set the oven to 400 degrees.

The oven PINGS and buzzes to life.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You want to order a pizza?
(to Mini)
MINI, order me a medium pepperoni.

A chime DINGS.

MINI
Order placed. Your delivery will
arrive at the front gate in 43
minutes.

MICHAEL
Cancel order.

Chime DINGS again.

MINI
Order canceled.

As they move out of the room-

SHEILA
(dry)
I know a lot of men back home who
might rather have a MINI than an
actual partner.

Amused, Michael takes a long look at Sheila. She feels the electric tingles of chemistry course through her body. He's painfully attractive to her.

MICHAEL
Guess I'm lucky I've got both.

To MINI-

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
MINI, have Sheila's things arrived?

MINI
Delivered yesterday.

Michael nods his head curtly, satisfied.

He kisses her on the cheek, spins her around, and moves her toward the staircase.

MICHAEL

Why don't you go relax a bit on the terrace. I'm going to cook us an early supper.

EXT. SUNDECK - AFTERNOON - LATER

Sheila's rests on a chaise lounge on a glass sundeck that overlooks the ocean. She's wearing a black ERES bikini, a white linen robe, and elegant sunglasses. A book lays across her chest, but she's not reading it. It's the first time we get a sense of her taste-- the woman likes nice things.

She looks out onto the water, a light breeze blows through her hair.

This is heaven.

She puts her sunglasses on, closes her eyes, and settles back for some sun.

After a beat, a dark shadow crosses her frame...

MICHAEL O.C.

Something for your head.

She smiles up at him, using her hand to shield the sun from her eyes.

SHEILA

Didn't hear you come out.

MICHAEL

Must mean you're relaxed. Here.

His hand is outstretched. Two small white pills in the center of his palm. A glass of water in the other. She takes them gratefully, swallowing down in one gulp.

SHEILA

Thanks.

MICHAEL

I'll be in the kitchen if you need me.

With that, Michael kisses Sheila on the top of her head and moves back inside. Sheila rests her head back on the chaise, sighing heavily, filled with relaxation.

We stay with Sheila for a long moment and then we

FADE TO:

INT. SHOWER - AFTERNOON - LATER

Sheila's beneath a double-head rain shower in the center of a sleek white bathroom. She searches the wall. Again, no nozzles.

She's going to have to get used to this.

SHEILA
(hesitantly)
Shower... on?

The water flows instantly.

Sheila shakes her head in disbelief.

PRE-LAP: "MY GUY" by THE SUPREMES

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON - LATER

Sheila wipes steam off the mirror. Towel-dries hair.

From downstairs, Michael sings along with the music at the top of his lungs. It's horribly off-key and very charming.

She looks into her own eyes and smiles.

This is my new life.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila pads into the kitchen in one of Michael's sweaters, hair still damp. Michael is over the stove, a knife tucked precariously under his chin as he stirs a steaming pot of red sauce. There's a bottle of BAROLO open on the counter. After a beat, he looks up and smiles warmly.

She points at the sleeve of her sweater.

SHEILA
Borrowed this.

As he pours her a glass of wine, he gives her a once-over. Smiles in approval.

MICHAEL

Looks much better on you. You look relaxed. You're getting the hang of it.

SHEILA

Might be a first.

MICHAEL

First time for everything.

He hands her the glass and replaces a lid on the steaming pot. Pulls Sheila toward him, wraps his arms around her waist, and moves her in a quiet, tender, slow dance. She rests her head on his shoulder and closes her eyes, entirely connected to the music playing.

After a beat-

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Come. I want to show you something.

SHEILA

There's more?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

They enter the dining room. Mounted on the wall, A LARGE CANVAS, covered by a massive sheet and a big red bow. Sheila covers her mouth in surprise. Michael gestures to the painting. He's got a twinkle in his eye.

MICHAEL

Go on. Open it.

Sheila tugs the white sheet. It flutters softly to the floor.

DEATH AND LIFE, by Gustav Klimt, hangs on the wall.

Death, on the left side of the painting, gazes at life with a haunting grin. On the right, all the stages life are represented by colorful faces, with an emphasis on the feminine as the source of all life.

Sheila GASPS.

SHEILA

Klimt. My favorite. I never told you... How did you-

MICHAEL

How did I know? Little thing called the internet.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's my wedding gift to you. On permanent loan from a collector friend in Austria. Owed me a favor.

SHEILA

Is it?

She squints at the painting and turns back to Michael.

MICHAEL

Real? Yep. What's the use of having all this money if I don't put it to use. I'm lucky to have a beautiful woman to surprise.

(beat)

Here.

He pulls out an earmarked book and hands it to her.

She reads aloud:

SHEILA

...focused no longer on the physical union, but rather on the expectation that precedes it.

MICHAEL

Klimt's reflection on his own mortality. I thought this could be the room you write in. And that you should have something inspiring to look at.

SHEILA

...from his portfolio "An Aftermath".

Michael appears to be lost in thought. Something has shifted. He's reflective, stoic.

MICHAEL

Nothing can be more creative than the fear of death. What every cell, every animal, every system in this universe fights to avoid.

(beat)

It's fuel. Motivation for life.

SHEILA

You are unreal, you know that? Still wondering what I've done right to deserve all of this.

Michael looks to her. Smiles mysteriously.

MICHAEL

Baby, you ain't seen nothing yet.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sparks fly as Michael tosses wood in a massive blue stone FIREPLACE while Sheila sets the table for dinner.

She wraps her arms around herself.

SHEILA

I feel like I'm in some Fitzgerald novel.

She admires the hearth--

SHEILA (CONT'D)

And that fireplace. Wow

Michael pushes the logs with an iron poker, glowing embers fly through the air.

MICHAEL

Realtor tried to convince me to replace this big drafty beauty with an electric one.

(beat)

Not *everything* needs to be the latest, newest model.

Sheila raises her glass to that-

SHEILA

Here here. Some things get better with age.

He moves toward the beautifully arranged dining table and scans Sheila's face.

MICHAEL

Indeed, they do.

(beat)

Look at you. You belong here.

There's a boyish twinkle in his eye.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And to think you almost chickened out...

SHEILA

I didn't.

MICHAEL
Come on. Admit it. You were
terrified.

She looks at him. He looks at her. She breaks, grins.

SHEILA
I almost didn't get on the plane.

MICHAEL
Knew it. Even after 6 months of
phone calls, texts...

He wiggles his eyebrows. Insinuating...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Those texts...

Sheila feels her face grow warm.

SHEILA
You're making me blush.

MICHAEL
You surprised yourself, vulnerable
girl.

Takes a sip of wine.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Can't spend your whole life
paralyzed by the fear you might
make a mistake.
(beat)
You were ready for someone like me.

SHEILA
I was waiting for someone like you.
(softly)
Only live once, right?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila and Michael sit face to face in a massive bath, the room lit by candlelight. Her feet on his chest, she takes a hit of a joint, wine-drunk and happy.

As she passes it to him, we notice a BIG DIAMOND RING on her

OFF HER RING

MICHAEL
You're full of good ideas.

SHEILA

I was only kidding when I suggested we do it.

MICHAEL

There's a reason I flew you into Vegas.

SHEILA

I must be crazy.

He peers at her curiously.

MICHAEL

What's crazy about going after what you want? We're not children. When you know, you know.

SHEILA

Six months ago I didn't even know that you existed.

Michael considers.

MICHAEL

Believe me. I never thought I'd be someone's husband.

SHEILA

And I always told myself a man over forty who hasn't been married must be damaged goods.

MICHAEL

That's some wives-tale bullshit unhappily married people say to justify their own misery.

(beat)

I was married. For twenty-five years. To my work.

On Sheila. Feeling like she's said something silly. Michael grabs her foot off of his chest and massages it gently.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And look how it paid off. I'm retired. And I've got you.

SHEILA

If it weren't for that horrible dating app-

MICHAEL

Horrible? More like brilliant. I'm
batting 1 for 1.

SHEILA

Really?

MICHAEL

You were the only woman I ever
messed.

SHEILA

Come on that's bullshit.

MICHAEL

It's not. I know what I like.

SHEILA

Seriously? You swear-

MICHAEL

Cross my heart and hope to die.

(beat)

You were so clever in our
correspondence, you know that?

SHEILA

Blame the writer in me.

MICHAEL

It wasn't until saw your face that
I realized how shy you were. That
you were hiding behind your words.

Sheila takes another hit of the joint.

SHEILA

What can I say? Always been more
comfortable for me to write
stories... than actually live them,
I think.

MICHAEL

Well, I'm happy to be the one to
rescue you from yourself.

She splashes him, laughs.

SHEILA

It was real a dire situation.
You're a true knight in shining
armor.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Now in a lovely silk slip, Sheila brushes her teeth in the bathroom. She peers through the doorway and cranes her head to watch Michael as he towel dries, admiring his wiry body.

He feels her eyes on him, and calls from the other room--

MICHAEL

Have to head into the city tomorrow
to take care of a few things. Feel
like a drive?

Through a mouth of toothpaste foam-

SHEILA

Think you can handle going without
me? I've got days of writing to
catch up on.

MICHAEL

I think I can survive. Will miss
you though. If you need anything
you can head into the village.
There's a general store and
charming book shop you could get
lost in for a while.

His eyes move past Sheila, out the window, to the dark horizon.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Might be a good day to stay inside
though. Supposed to rain.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

In bed, in the dark. Rain POUNDS the roof. Thunder howls.
There's a full-blown storm outside.

Sheila lays on her back, and Michael traces his finger along her body. We're so close we can see lighting flashing against Sheila's skin.

MICHAEL

I love your skin. Your moles.

He kisses her hip bones as lightning flickers across them.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The way these stick out.

Sheila shivers and sighs, in ecstasy. It mixes with the growling thunder seemingly right outside as we

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Michael is on top of Sheila. He enters her gently and tenderly. She GASPS. He pauses to study her. She squirms under the intensity of his gaze.

SHEILA

What?

MICHAEL

Just taking it in.

She tips her face to his and kisses him.

Skin and legs and sheets tangled and moving together-- two bodies shifting in unison.

Suddenly, Michael moves away. They lay in silence.

SHEILA

Everything ok?

MICHAEL

Of course.

Sheila rolls to one side and props herself on an elbow.

SHEILA

Tell me.

Michael strokes her hair.

MICHAEL

Don't ever leave me, ok? I don't think I could handle that. Feels too good to have you in this bed.

BOOM! CRACK! Thunder shakes the foundation of the house. For the first time, there is something dangerous about him.

Desperate, maybe.

But when you're in it-- the same words can be misinterpreted as romance....

She touches his face.

SHEILA
 (quietly)
 I'm not going anywhere.

Their bodies shift together. He pins her down to the bed by the wrists. A move that is sexy or frightening, depending on how you look at it.

More FLASHES of lighting. He searches her face, one more time, noses nearly touching. For a moment, we stay right with them.

Rain and thunder and wind fill the silence in the room.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Sheila in bed. Alone. She opens one eye and glances at the empty bed beside her. Linen sheets still rumpled from the form of another body. Rain continues to PITTER-PATTER on the roof above.

Tight on Sheila, as she stares at the ceiling--

SHEILA
 Open blinds.

The bedroom curtains open automatically with a WHOOSH and drench the room in muted grey afternoon light.

A HANDWRITTEN NOTE is propped against an Italian mid-century lamp on the bedside table. Sheila reaches for it and smiles to herself.

She replaces the note, next to the lamp. Stay on it as she gets out of bed and exits the room.

TIGHT ON THE NOTE: SPEAK SOON. x M

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Rain continues to POUND the roof above. The kitchen windows overlook the impressive cliff and sea below-- huge, white-capped waves crash against the bluff, creating an envelope of white mist over the entire property. Sheila enters the kitchen in a t-shirt and underwear, her hair still matted from sleep. Moves toward a cabinet and pulls out a coffee mug.

SHEILA
 MINI, play hits from VAN MORRISON.

"Into the Mystic" by VAN MORRISON fills the air.

She places the mug under a futuristic looking espresso machine.

To MINI-

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Double espresso.

The espresso machine WHIRS to life. Hot black liquid streams into Sheila's awaiting cup.

As she crosses toward the dining room-

SHEILA (CONT'D)
MINI, what's the temperature today?

MINI
The temperature today is 47 degrees. It will rain for 100 percent of the day-- a total of approximately 3 inches.

Sheila stands in front of the KLIMT, sipping her coffee. Glances at the painting. Tips her chin to the ether, commanding an Alexa-type device...

SHEILA
Call Michael.

RINGING fills the room. The phone connects almost instantly...

MICHAEL V.O.
Hi, beautiful.

Sheila sits in a chair and props her bare legs on the dining table.

SHEILA
Did you sneak out?

MICHAEL V.O.
I'm in the car. Long drive. Sleep well?

SHEILA
Like a baby. Can't get over how quiet it is up here.

MICHAEL V.O.
The beauty of having no neighbors. You writing yet?

SHEILA

Thinking about writing. Does that count?

MICHAEL V.O.

She's procrastinating. Like a true writer...

SHEILA

I'm going to cook us dinner. How's that for procrastinating?

MICHAEL V.O.

Sounds like it's now working in my favor. Just ask Mini for anything you need.

SHEILA

I'm a grown woman. Don't need Mini to help me cook. I'm going to check out that General Store you mentioned.

And as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE GENERAL STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Sheila drives a blue TESLA into the parking lot of a charming old-timey general store.

MICHAEL V.O.

Talk soon, beautiful.

She parks. Gets out of the car, enters the shop.

INT. VILLAGE GENERAL STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila wanders through a picturesque general store, a basket filled with produce tucked under one arm, a baguette under the other.

Across the room, the store's owner, CALEB, early 30's, ruggedly handsome, hoists a large box of goods onto a counter. Notices Sheila and stops what he's doing. Peers at her curiously. Admiring her from a distance.

INT. VILLAGE GENERAL STORE PARKING - LATER

Sheila's on her tip toes as she struggles to reach some olive oil from a top shelf.

O.S. CALEB
Need a hand with that?

Caleb stands behind her, an amused look on his face. He's tall, and big. Has probably never looked in the mirror and noticed how good looking he is. A city-girl-in-the-country's wet dream.

SHEILA
If you don't mind.

Caleb reaches up and effortlessly grabs the green bottle. Passes it to Sheila. For a moment, they're both holding it. They lock eyes before Sheila averts hers.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Thanks.

CALEB
Pleasure.

INT. CASH WRAP, VILLAGE GENERAL STORE - LATER

Sheila loads her provisions onto the checkout counter and looks around for a cashier. Caleb crosses the room and steps behind the counter.

As he rings her up, he inspects the tomatoes she's selected as he puts them in a paper bag.

CALEB (CONT'D)
Came straight from my garden
yesterday. You picked the pretty
ones.

A look of surprise and realization crosses Sheila's face. Caleb owns this place.

SHEILA
These came from your garden? This
is your place?

CALEB
It is indeed.
(beat)
New around here? Never seen you
before.

SHEILA
Just moved here.

Points in the direction she imagines her new home might be--

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Live up that way. The house on the cliff.

CALEB
I know that house. It's always empty. Nice to see some life in it.

He extends his hand across the counter.

CALEB (CONT'D)
I'm Caleb.

SHEILA
Sheila. Nice to meet you.

CALEB
Sheila.

He takes her name in. It's clear he's attracted to her. Passes her the groceries.

CALEB (CONT'D)
If you ever need anything from down here, you let me know. I've got plenty more pretty tomatoes for you.

SHEILA
See you soon, Caleb.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Early evening. Still raining. Sheila hums to herself as she chops vegetables. Water boils on the stove.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila sets the table, lights candles. Pours herself more wine. Hums happily and sways with the music.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

As the storm outside continues...

Sheila sits alone at the dining room table, wine glass empty. She looks small and alone in the massive space, her face pinched with tension.

She DRUMS her fingertips against the wood surface, the hollow sound blends with the pouring rain...

To MINI-

SHEILA
What time is it?

MINI
10:07 pm.

SHEILA
Call Michael.

RINGING fills the silent room. No answer.

A growing anxiety tugs at Sheila's stomach...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Rain and wind HOWL as Sheila puts dinner in glass containers, and back in the fridge.

As she shuts the fridges metal door-

To MINI-

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Call Michael.

RING. RING. RING...

The RING and the RAIN and the QUIET feel painfully LOUD.

Still no answer.

Sheila blows out a candle on the kitchen island and exits the room.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila's splashes water on her face in the basin of the sink-- a feeble attempt to quell the worry growing inside of her. She looks tired. She feels tired.

A beat, then...

SHEILA (CONT'D)
MINI. Can you locate Michael's car
for me?

A painfully long pause. Sheila's body is tense with anticipation.

MINI

I've located Michael's vehicle on
Highway 1, approximately 2.1 miles
away.

And then, a different kind of CHIME in the ether.

A doorbell.

Relief floods Sheila's body. Stress melts from her face.

INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The front door slides open to reveal TWO POLICE OFFICERS in
official-looking rain slickers, exhausted and soaked-through.

Sheila's clocks their hats, in hand.

The OLDER OFFICER, kind eyes, 50's, steps forward. The look
on his face speaks volumes.

OLDER OFFICER

Are you related to Michael Parker?

A wave of nausea courses through her body.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK OF POLICE CAR - NIGHT - LATER

On Sheila's face in the back of a police car. Her eyes are
glazed, blue and red light streaks across her face. The
officers talk quietly in the front, their radio CHIRPING
loudly.

We reveal a dizzying scene in front of her...

EXT. CLIFFS OFF OF HIGHWAY 1 - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A team of EMERGENCY WORKERS packs up their units. Two
FIRETRUCKS and a handful of POLICE CARS police cars butt up
against the edge of a dark cliff.

Workers chat quietly, arms crossed, as they look out onto an
endless black ravine.

OLDER OFFICER

We believe he might have
hydroplaned on the way home.

His voice feels far away...

On Sheila, in near shock. Her voice barely audible-

SHEILA
Who found him?

The officer sighs heavily, before responding-

OLDER OFFICER
The car itself alerted emergency
services. On impact.

On impact.

Quietly choking back a sob-

SHEILA
Did you get him out?

She tries to open the car door -- it's locked. She SLAMS her palm against the glass. Frantic.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Let me out. I need to see.

She KICKS the side door.

FEMALE OFFICER
It's better if-

A guttural cry-

SHEILA
I NEED TO SEE!!

The officers share a glance and press UNLOCK. As it CLICKS, Sheila hurls her body through the open door. We follow Sheila as she sprints forward, halting only inches from the cliff's edge. Stay with her for a moment as she looks out into the dark.

Camera slowly tips down to reveal an infinite emptiness.

We can still hear the rain...

CUT TO BLACK.

PRE-LAP OVER BLACK

Footsteps ECHO through a long empty corridor.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - NIGHT

We're walking with a young male DOCTOR, 30's, as he leads Sheila and Officer 1 into a small room. We stay in the hallway as the doctor pulls back a white sheet, revealing Michael underneath.

Sheila nods, arms crossed, identifying the body. The doctor replaces the sheet.

INT. HOSPITAL CONFERENCE ROOM- NIGHT - PRESENT - LATER

A painfully bright conference room. A FEMALE OFFICER passes Sheila tea in a styrofoam cup and wraps a cheap blanket over her shoulders. Hair still wet, Sheila shudders at a strangers' touch. Another OFFICER places a plastic bag containing all of Michael's things on the table in front of her.

OFFICER

His belongings.

Sheila stares at the bag.

His belongings. The irony of that concept.

SHEILA

(numbly)

Thank you.

The female office places her hand gently on Sheila's shoulder.

FEMALE OFFICER

I'm Detective Julie White and this is Detective James Gomez. We're trying to put the pieces together. Can you answer a few questions for us?

(beat)

We can stop at any time if it becomes overwhelming.

Sheila nods her head slowly, hardly listening.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)

When was the last time you saw Mr. Parker?

SHEILA

Last night. He left this morning. I was asleep.

FEMALE OFFICER

Do you know where he was going?

Sheila shakes her head no.

SHEILA

He only said he had to run some errands. I should have asked-

FEMALE OFFICER

Does Michael have any next of kin we should contact? Family? Friends?

SHEILA

Only child. Parents passed some time ago. No friends-- he was a workaholic.

(beat)

We have that in common.

FEMALE OFFICER

What do you do? For work?

SHEILA

I write. Novels.

FEMALE OFFICER

And Mr. Parker?

SHEILA

He's an Engineer.

Sheila winces as she corrects herself.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Was a Data Science engineer. Machine Learning. He just retired.

(beat)

He held a patent he just sold to one of the big tech firms in Silicon Valley. There was a bidding war. That's really all I know.

She shakes her head in disbelief, eyes welling up with tears.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

He worked eighteen hour days for twenty five years so he could finally have some time to enjoy his life.

The officer hangs her head sympathetically.

FEMALE OFFICER
Life is unfair.

Sheila snorts bitterly.

SHEILA
It was only just the beginning. For
both of us.

FEMALE OFFICER
How long have you two known each
other?

SHEILA
Six months. Give or take.

As the other officer takes notes on a notepad he mumbles
under his breath-

OFFICER
So not very long...

Sheila winces. *What the fuck do you know about us.*

SHEILA
It may have been brief but
it doesn't feel like it.

FEMALE OFFICER
I understand.

Do you?

The officer looks down at a piece of paper in front of her.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)
I see you're not from here. How did
you meet?

Sheila flinches. Looks the officer in the eye for the first
time.

SHEILA
We met online.

A beat.

The officers exchange a quick glance. Sheila can feel their
judgment burning through her veins.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Does that matter?

Sensing her reaction, the officer backs off.

FEMALE OFFICER

We can discuss in a few days when you've had some time.

SHEILA

Why does that matter?

FEMALE OFFICER

You got married pretty quick-

Sheila interrupts her, snapping-

SHEILA

We're not exactly children.

She's hit her limit...

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Since when did you people become the gold standard for decision making?

Sheila sits up and crosses her arms defensively. Realizing that she might have gone too far.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Why does any of this matter.
(beat)
Tell me.

The two officer share another glance.

FEMALE OFFICER

These newer vehicles send trauma reports... Details down to a fraction of a second.. Sort of like the black box of a passenger plane.
(beat)

We've just received it, along with a preliminary toxicology report.

She gestures to a print-out on the table. Speaks slowly, choosing her words carefully.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)

There were no signs of struggle that would indicate a driver or the car itself tried to prevent an accident from happening.
(beat)

While we've got to wait for forensics, the prelim report showed Mr. Parker had high levels of oxycontin in his blood.

The world around Sheila begins to spin. The female officer's face fades in and out of focus.

SHEILA
Oxy? Isn't that-

FEMALE OFFICER
In high levels it's poison.
(beat)
There's one more thing.

The female officer moves to a table on the side of the room and pulls a MANILLA ENVELOPE from a plastic bag. She gently lays the envelope in front of Sheila.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)
We also retrieved an unfinished
Will In Testament from back of Mr.
Parkers car.

Sheila puts her head in her hands as she reviews the manilla folder in front of her...

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)
According to the documents we've
retrieved, it appears as though
Michael intended to leave
everything to you. Did he tell you
about that plan?

Her words hang in the air....

Realization registers on Sheila's face.

SHEILA
You think I had something to do
with this because he's rich?

Sheila chokes back a long sob. The officer holds her hands up in defense.

FEMALE OFFICER
We are by no means-

She stands, broken. Legs nearly buckle underneath her.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)
M'aam, we will need you to stick
around until this is all sorted--

Sheila grabs the plastic bag of Michael's belongings. And the manilla folder.

SHEILA

I loved him. He literally just died
and now you're asking me these
disgusting questions. Take me home.
Now.

EXT. FRONT GATE OF MICHAEL'S ESTATE - NIGHT - LATER

A police car pulls up to the front gate. Sheila rolls down
the backseat window and weakly commands the security system-

SHEILA

MINI, open the gate.

The gate opens and the car continues up the driveway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila SLAMS the back door of the police car and moves toward
the house. She can't bear to look back as it moves down the
driveway, leaving her in total darkness.

EXT. MICHAEL'S ESTATE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila moves up the front steps, Michael's belongings in
hand.

Rain pours down from above...

SHEILA

Mini, door open.

As the door slides open, Sheila looks down at her feet. An
odd look crosses her features...

There's a WHITE BOX on the front doorstep.

It's small. Plain.

What is that?

Suddenly, the hairs on the back of Sheila's neck stand up and
gets the strange sensation she's being watched.

She spins around like a feral cat, toward the forest.
Scanning the darkness...

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Who's there!?

Her voice echoes through the canopy of fir trees, and fizzles out with the sound of rain and crashing waves.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Hello!?

Silence.

Sheila can barely breathe as she squats down to retrieve the box.

On top, a note.

In Michael's familiar handwriting.

FOR MY SHEILA.

She GASPS. *What the fuck is that.*

She grabs the box. Completely drenched, she scurries inside.

The door quietly slides closed behind her.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sheila drops the plastic bag filled with Michael's belongings beside the door. The lights are still on from earlier in the evening, when all was o.k.

SHEILA

(quietly)

Lights off.

The room goes dark. Rain continues to HAMMER from above. Sheila's barely visible silhouette hovers in the center of the room, haunted and unmoving.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

The rain has finally stopped.

Sheila's sits cross-legged on the floor of the dining room, the KLIMT illuminated by moonlight on the wall in front of her.

The WHITE BOX sits unopened in her lap.

It's from Michael.

She closes her eyes. Takes a deep breath...

And yanks the box's lid off.

TIGHT on her trembling hands as they remove another white card. At the top, printed in block letters:

OUROBOROS-- RECONNECTING LIFE AFTER LIFE

And below...

I'M HERE. X M

ON its contents: another white box, embossed with the emblem of OUROBOROS, a circular symbol depicting a snake, swallowing its tail.

Sheila can barely breathe. Her heart is pounding through her chest like a hollow drum-

SHEILA
(under her breath)
What. The. Fuck.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila sits in the dark on a barstool next to the kitchen island, a glass of water beside her, the white box in the center of the table.

The box. She can't take her eyes off of it. Can't bring herself to open it. Like it's filled with ANTHRAX.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila picks the box up, inspecting its perimeter. Still considering what to do.

She lifts the lid of the interior box. Peers inside. A marble sized GLASS ORB sits next to an elegant black GRAPHENE STAND.

There's an indentation in the shape of a fingerprint on one side of the base. She impulsively grabs the orb and places it in the stands' circular nest. The fingerprint pulses blue.

Begging to be pressed.

She circles the kitchen island like a hawk.

After a very long, tense stand-off--

FUCK IT.

She presses her finger to its base.

It activates instantly, pulsing light blue.

And then

From the ether, a WHOOSH.

And then-- nothing. Nothing but silence.

She tries to calm herself. Can't. Knees buckle beneath her. She sits on the kitchen floor, drunk with exhaustion.

Suddenly, a new CHIME in the ether.

MINI

Hello, Sheila. My name is Edgar Burns, a former engineer and the founder of OUROBOROS.
(matter of fact)
I died 7 years ago.

The voice is still MINI's-- but it's intonations are entirely different. The orb casts a glow on Sheila's face as she listens, paralyzed by fear.

MINI/EDGAR

You might be in shock right now.
(chuckles)
I know my own wife, Millie, was--
So I'll jump right in. Mind if I switch over to my own voice?

SHEILA

(whispers)
Okay.

EDGAR BURNS

Ah. Better.

He sounds a bit like Michael Caine.

EDGAR BURNS (CONT'D)

What you have here in front of you is a special key. A key between worlds.

(beat)

It opens a door that allows you to reconnect with loved ones after they've departed their physical selves.

SHEILA

Jesus.

EDGAR BURNS

He wasn't involved this time around.

(more chuckles)

Though I'd be lying if I said Mille never accused me of trying to play God.

Sheila wraps her arms around herself to prevent her body from uncontrollably shaking...

SHEILA

I don't understand.

EDGAR BURNS

That's alright. You wouldn't be the first. Let me do my best to explain.

(beat)

I made it my life's work to find a way to continue Life After Life. You're looking at it.

(beat)

I still speak with my Millie every single day.

Sheila closes her eyes to keep the room from spinning, barely comprehending.

EDGAR BURNS (CONT'D)

I know this is a lot to take in. I can wait if you need some time. Would you like to hear more?

She squeezes her eyes closed, tighter, tighter. Chokes back a sob. Finds Edgar's company strangely comforting.

SHEILA

Don't go.

And then

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Go on.

EDGAR BURNS

With your consent, we can bring Michael back to you.

She feels the blood drain from her face.

SHEILA

What are you talking about.

Michael is dead. I saw him in the morgue.

EDGAR BURNS

Would you like to be with Michael again? I can make that happen.

Suddenly, a twinge of anger in Sheila's eyes. She's at her tipping point-- too much trauma for one day.

SHEILA

What the fuck is this? Who the fuck are you?

(to herself)

This can't possibly be real.

EDGAR BURNS

Denial the first stage of grieving. I can assure you-- you'll be happy if-

Sheila's had enough.

SHEILA

This some sort of sick joke?

Room spins around her, a RINGING in her ears grows louder.

Louder.

Louder....

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Whoever you are. Whatever you are.

(beat)

Leave. Leave now.

The room is entirely silent save the pounding of her heart.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

GET THE FUCK OUT OF THIS HOUSE!

And then...

Edgar's voice is calm and soothing-

EDGAR BURNS

Press your finger to the base of the device to deactivate me.

(beat)

He'll be here. When you're ready.

Shivers run down her spine.

Sheila races to the device. Presses the button on the orb's base.

It deactivates instantly.

She exhales what feels like every breath she's ever taken. Replaces the device in its cradle, inside the box.

She moves toward a closet and shoves the box as back far back in the corner as she possibly can. Pushes some other boxes in front of it, as though they act as a barricade. Slams the door shut and locks it.

Turns her back to the closet, leans against the wall, and slides back to the floor.

She buries her face in her hands. Deep guttural sobs fill the quiet, empty night.

INT. MICHAEL'S CLOSET - DAY

Sheila hastily rummages through Michael clothes, searching for something. In his pants, his pockets, his, shoes, etc.

After a beat, she remembers: Michael's bag of belongings from the police station. Her hands shake as she rifles through.

She pulls out a small, shiny object: The desk key.

INT. MICHAEL'S STUDY - DAY - LATER

Sheila tiptoes into Michael study-- it's exactly as he left it. Turns on his computer. Tries multiple passwords. No access.

She rummages through his desk, furiously searching. Tries the key on every locked drawer. The top drawer opens.

Finally, suddenly, she finds what she's looking for: a white business card with a familiar insignia: OUROBOROS.

EXT. OROBOUROUS BUILDING - DAY - LATER

Wide as Sheila's TESLA pulls into a parking lot in front of a MONOLITHIC BUILDING.

EXT. OROBOUROUS BUILDING PARKING LOT - DAY

Still in the car, Sheila checks the building's address against a business card. A familiar OROBOROUS insignia is stamped into the building's front door.

INT. ORO BUILDING - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila enters the reception area of a futuristic looking office. A RECEPTIONIST, 50's, female, sits behind a glass partition.

The receptionist peers through the glass as Sheila moves to her-

RECEPTIONIST
Michael Parker?

Sheila GASPS.

SHEILA
How did you-

RECEPTIONIST
Dr. Galas has been expecting you.
Have a seat. She'll be out shortly.

Sheila is floored.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
We're so sorry for your temporary
loss.

Sheila looks at the receptionist blankly. Moves like a zombie toward a cluster of seats in the waiting area.

INT. WAITING AREA, OROBOUROUS BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila TAPS her fingers against the metal chair next to her, anxious. Waiting.

DR. GALAS, lithe, tall, seemingly ageless, appears in the doorway. She's wearing a white lab coat over her sweater and jeans, hair pulled back in a tight chignon.

She smiles at Sheila, as though she already knows who she is.

DR. GALAS
Hello, Sheila. Come with me.

Sheila stands, and follows her through the door.

INT. DR. GALAS, OFFICE, OROBOUROUS BUILDING - DAY

Sheila and Dr. Galas enter a stark modern office. Dr. Galas offers her slight hand to shake Sheila's.

On one wall, a white 3D snake slithers to catch its own tail. Sheila watches it, mouth agape.

As they move toward a seating area with modern chairs and a lucite coffee table-

DR. GALAS

I'm Alice Galas, I'm a clinical psychologist specializing in grief and loss.

(beat)

I oversee Incoming Client Relations. Please have a seat.

Sheila takes a seat across the table from Dr. Galas.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

First off, I'm incredibly sorry for your temporary loss.

SHEILA

Why the fuck do you people keep calling it that?

She looks to the ground, speaking quietly-

SHEILA (CONT'D)

I have so many questions I don't know where to begin.

Sheila can't help the vitriol-

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Starting with how the fuck you got past the front gate.

Dr. Galas nods. As if she knew that question was coming.

DR. GALAS

My sincerest apologies if we scared you.

(beat)

The delivery is a part of our protocol.

(gently)

We've found that the best way to reconnect is on your own terms.

SHEILA
Your protocol?

DR. GALAS
Well, Michael-- Mr. Parker's,
protocol.

She offers a smile that's simultaneously soft and oddly clinical.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
Our clients pre-determine how the
device will be delivered upon their
passing.

SHEILA
I don't understand. How did you
know-

DR. GALAS
We're alerted within moments of a
client's human-death, which
triggers protocol. What if I told
you that you can continue your
relationship with Mr. Parker? In a
new, non-conventional way?

Dr. Galas slides a white folder with the company insignia across the table. Sheila opens the folder, scanning the pages inside.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
OROBOROUS was created Dr. Edgar
Burns, a brilliant engineer whose
life was cut short by terminal
illness.

Sheila sits back in her chair, processing.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
When Burns found out he was dying,
he developed a self-learning
conversational agent that could not
only emulate him, but, using
probabilistic machine logic, learn
to think like him.
(beat)
To become him.

SHEILA
I don't understand...

The look of shock on Sheila's face speaks volumes-

DR. GALAS
Current Life After Life extension
programs believe we need to use
cryonics to freeze this-

She points her own head.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
When in reality, all we really need
is this.

Dr. Galas swipes the air, and the snake on the wall
evaporates into thin air.

In it's place, a 3D model of a CONNECTOME, or a comprehensive
map of the brain's neural connections and pathways. A
turquoise translucent fluid seems to be running like currents
through the brain's pathways-- as if the floating brain is
thinking, feeling, creating.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
Dr. Burns created a CONNNECTOME
scanner, which blueprints the
connections and pathways of a human
brain. As he recorded his thoughts,
memories, habits, dreams, he fed
that data into his own program,
creating a synthetic brain.

(beat)
A soul with a different kind of
heart beat.

SHEILA
This can't be real.

DR. GALAS
I assure you that it's very real.
The program has been privately
funded, in it's very early beta
stages.
(beat)
Mr. Parker happens to be one of our
greatest benefactors.

Sheila inhales sharply. There's a lot she didn't know about
Michael..

SHEILA
He donated to the program?

Dr. Galas nods appreciatively.

DR. GALAS

He and Dr. Burns were quite similar. Engineers obsessed with creating order through numbers. I think the concept of death was too uncertain for both of them.

(beat)

And don't feel bad. Everyone reacts as you do.

SHEILA

They do?

DR. GALAS

Had I called you and told you about the device, would you have come to collect it?

Sheila thinks for a moment. Shakes her head no.

SHEILA

I would have thought your were crazy.

DR. GALAS

I delivered the very first device to his wife Millie. She refused it, you know, just like you would have.

(beat)

Which is why we allow our clients to choose the delivery method.

Dr. Galas smiles, remembering.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

As the pain of losing her husband faded, Millie realized a synthetic Edgar was better than no Edgar at all. She could converse with him, they could continue to share memories...perhaps even make new ones.

She searches Sheila's face hopefully.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

He reads bedtime stories to his young grandchildren on Sundays. Without it, they never would have known him.

(beat)

They don't even know the difference. He was always "this way" for them.

This is all too much for Sheila to bear-

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
I'm so terribly sorry about Mr.
Parker. He was a brilliant man.

She corrects herself.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
Is a brilliant man. If you allow
him to be.

She searches Sheila's face.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
Try it. It might be a touch
different than the life you had
imagined with Mr. Parker.

She smiles brightly.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
But different isn't necessarily
bad, right? Just think about
yourself as a very early adopter.

She gives Sheila another encouraging smile.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
And I'll be right here to support
you through the process.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Wide shot of the compound. Sun is shining, the calm sea a
sheet of glass.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Sheila lies on an unmade bed, eyes red. Stares at the
ceiling. In one hand, she's clutching one of Michael's
sweaters.

MONTAGE OF

Sheila as she wanders through the house, a shell of herself.

She wanders through Michael's closet, smells his clothes.

Sits on the terrace, and looks out to sea.

Lays on the kitchen floor.

Punch in on her face as we

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Sheila's under the rain shower. A zombie. As the water runs over her face...

An idea--

SHEILA
Shower off.

The shower turns off instantly. Sheila wraps a white towel around her naked body. Steam and condensation swirl around the room.

To MINI-

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Can you retrieve a voicemail for me?

MINI
I can do that. Please voice confirm that I can access your account information and provide me with your password.

SHEILA
Confirmed. 057692.

As she fidgets with anticipation...

PING.

MINI
Voicemail retrieved.

SHEILA
Play me a voicemail sent from Michael, December 24th.

Another PING in the ether.

And then, suddenly, Michaels' voice fills the room.

MICHAEL V.O.
Hi, Sheila.
(beat)
Missing you today.

Tight on Sheila as she leans against the bathroom wall and slides to the floor, rocked with emotion. Her eyes well up with tears.

Sheila whispers, pain in her voice--

SHEILA

Hi.

Michael continues. Michael continues. Sounds like he's drunk, slurring his words a bit--

MICHAEL V.O.

I'm looking out of the window from my hotel room. Can see the Empire State building from here. It's snowing. Jesus, I can't wait to meet you, in real life. Can we do this, already?

Fat, hot tears roll down her cheeks.

SHEILA

MINI. Replay.

A moment of silence. Then, again--

MICHAEL V.O.

Hi, Sheila.

SHEILA

(whispers)

Replay.

The message starts over.

MICHAEL V.O.

Hi, Sheila.

(beat)

Missing you today. I'm looking out of the window from my hotel room. Can see the Empire State building from here. It's snowing. Jesus, I can't wait to meet you, in real life.

(beat)

Can we do this, already?

(beat)

It's crazy to spend this much time thinking about a woman I've never met. You make me feel like singing.

Sheila rubs her eyes, remembering.

MICHAEL

You know what? I'm gonna sing for
you.

In the same terrible, jolly song voice we heard earlier--

MICHAEL V.O.

(horrible singing)

Oh, the weather outside is
frightful
But the fire is so delightful
And since we've no place to go
Let it snow, let it snow, let it
snow-

Long, uncontrollable sobs rack through Sheila's body.

She whispers, to no one-

SHEILA

Where have you gone?

And then, from the ether.

PING.

MINI

Incoming call from Jared Benson.

Sheila doesn't move. Doesn't react.

SHEILA

Decline call.

MINI

Call declined.

The room is loud with quiet.

SHEILA

Mini, replay the message.

Another PING.

MINI

Incoming call from Jared Benson.

Sheila sighs, irritated.

SHEILA

Decline ca--

But instead of the call declining...

A CHIME.

And then... a deep, unfamiliar voice...

JARED BENSON
Hello? Sheila? Hello? Jared Benson
here.

(beat)
I'm Michael's lawyer.

Sheila inhales sharply.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)
I understand you must want to be
alone right now... but I've driven
down from San Francisco. It's
urgent that I meet you.

A pause.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)
I have some information that should
alleviate any suspicion about you
in connection to Michaels passing.

Another long pause. Head POUNDING, she squeezes her eyes
shut.

SHEILA
(quietly)
I'm here.

CUT TO:

INT. NEPENTHE, BIG SUR - NIGHT

Sheila's in the red booth of a neighborhood restaurant. Still
wearing the same clothing that we've seen her in for days. A
WAITRESS deposits a glass of water in front of her. She
manages to nod a thank you.

JARED BENSON, grey wool sweater, soft wrinkles, late 50's,
SLIDES into the booth across from her.

He grabs her hand across the table and gives it a squeeze,
sadness in his eyes.

JARED BENSON
Ms. Francis. Wish we were meeting
under different circumstances.

Sheila offers him a tight smile.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)
How are you doing?

She takes a sip of her water.

SHEILA
I've been better.

No desire for small talk--

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Can you tell me what this is about?

Jared pulls a MANILA FOLDER from a briefcase next to him.

JARED BENSON
I've received several inquiries
regarding Michael's will from the
authorities.

SHEILA
They can't possibly think-

Jared holds his hand up, quieting her-

JARED BENSON
We're going to resolve it. It's my
top priority.

Sheila inhales sharply.

SHEILA
Resolve? What does that mean?

JARED BENSON
It means that I've confirmed for
them that you are indeed Michael's
sole devisee. He initiated these
contracts about a week before the
accident.
(beat)
He told me that they'd been FEDEX'd
to my office-- and for some reason
they haven't shown up yet. I have
my office working tirelessly to
track down their whereabouts.

(beat)
Once those documents are verified
by the police department they
should quell any further questions
they may have. And when everything
checks out, I'll need you to sign
some contracts and make it
official.

Sheila is quiet. Head spinning.

SHEILA
He left me everything?

Jared nods, somber.

JARED BENSON
He did. Funds, bank accounts, all
of it.
(beat)
The house included.

She wants to say he hardly knew Michael. That it doesn't make sense. Instead--

SHEILA
The house? But, why?

JARED BENSON
He was adamant on making sure that
you were taken care of in the event
that something were to happen to
him.
(beat)
Mr. Parker worked hard. Too hard,
some might say.
(beat)
But it comforts me to know that he
had joy in his life. And all of
that hard work can live on, through
you.

A fresh wave of sadness rolls through Sheila's body. He pushes the folder toward her.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)
Once you sign, you'll never have to
worry again.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)
In the meantime, Sheila, I need you
to stick around town for a bit.
(beat)
I know you're not from here. Is
there someone you could call?
Perhaps they could come and stay
with you?

Sheila shakes her head sadly.

SHEILA
I-- don't have much family. I spend
a lot of time alone.
(MORE)

SHEILA (CONT'D)

(defensively)

Writing is a pretty solitary occupation. And Michael and I-- well, this was my fresh start.

Sheila's eyes well up with tears. She puts her head in her hands. Jared studies her quietly.

JARED BENSON

Sheila... may I call you that? If it's any consolation... Mr. Parker has been my client for many years. I've never seen him so happy as when he met you.

He corrects himself-

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)

Well... heard him so happy.

Sheila wipes her eyes with the back of her sleeve. Peers at Jared curiously...

SHEILA

What do you mean?

Shame flickers across Jared's face.

JARED BENSON

I handled all of Michael's deals remotely. He was a... unique character. Preferred to handle business over the phone.

(beat)

Not to mention a complete germaphobe, as I'm sure you know...

A look of confusion crosses Sheila's features as he shakes his head ruefully.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)

Never even shook the man's hand.

Jared finds Sheila's eyes.

JARED BENSON (CONT'D)

Something I regret now.

EXT. NEPENTHE PARKING LOT - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila sits inside her car in the restaurants' dark empty parking lot, signed documents on the passenger seat next to her. She watches the bars' PATRONS through the window as they laugh and drink merrily, feeling a new level of hollow.

A pickup truck SCREECHES into the parking spot beside her.

It's Caleb, the guy from the General Store. Looking rugged and handsome as ever.

Sheila's eyes follow him as he gets out of the truck and moves inside.

After a beat, Sheila pulls a small bottle of tequila out of her glove compartment and takes a massive swig. Her body wilts from exhaustion and loneliness.

She eyes land back on the bar. Impulsively grabs her purse, gets out of her car, and moves back inside.

INT. BAR, NEPENTHE, BIG SUR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Behind Sheila as she moves through the bar and sits on a stool a few down from Caleb. Pretends she doesn't notice him.

She waves the BARTENDER down-

SHEILA
A shot of tequila.

The bartender pours her a shot. She downs it gratefully.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I'll take one more.

INT. BAR, NEPENTHE - NIGHT - LATER

On Caleb as he watches Sheila curiously. He moves next to her.

CALEB
It's you. Tomatoes.

Sheila waves the bartender down, signaling for another shot.

CALEB (CONT'D)
You ok?

SHEILA
I've been better.

They sit in silence for a moment. The bartender delivers a glass of water and shot of tequila. Caleb slides the water in front of Sheila.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Thanks.

She grabs the shot. Silently toasts Caleb. Slams it back.

He looks mildly concerned.

CALEB

Should I tell them to cut you off?

(dry)

This town will drive anyone to drive to drink. Though it doesn't usually happen this fast.

Feeling buzzed and slightly reckless, Sheila grabs Caleb's beer and takes a swig of it. It acts as a truth serum-

SHEILA

Caleb right?

He nods, yes.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Ever think you've finally figured your shit out, like, life was finally throwing you a bone, only to realize that the bone was actually just *more* shit?

Caleb nods, listening intently.

CALEB

Sounds familiar.

(beat)

Can I ask. What you're doing here?

SHEILA

Needed a drink-

CALEB

No I mean-- in this town. By yourself.

Sheila feels her throat tightening-

SHEILA

I'm asking myself the same question.

She sighs.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I came here to be with someone.
Someone who made me feel more
special than I'd ever felt.
(beat)
But now he's gone. His car went off
a cliff.

Not expecting that--

CALEB
Jesus. I heard about that.

He nods.

CALEB (CONT'D)
In the storm.

She sits up, takes a swig of beer. He doesn't stop her.

SHEILA
Now I'm stuck here while they sort
it all out.

CALEB
I'm sorry.

His sympathy spurs a fresh wave of emotion.

SHEILA
Me too.

CALEB
I don't know what to say.

SHEILA
Just talk to me. Keep me company.

CALEB
I can do that.

A moment of silence between them.

CALEB (CONT'D)
What was his name?

SHEILA
Michael. His name is Michael.

Caleb waves down the bartender.

CALEB
Two shots of tequila, please.

As the bartender pours the tequila, Caleb nods toward the bottle--

CALEB (CONT'D)
 Just remember, this stuff can't
 hold your hand when you're sad. I
 know too many people who learn that
 the hard way.

Caleb raises his glass in a toast-

CALEB (CONT'D)
 Well then, here's to Michael.
 (beat)
 And here's to you remembering that
 you're young, and beautiful, and
 full of life.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sheila's in the passenger seat of Caleb's pickup truck. The car drives out of the lot, and down a dark road.

EXT. FRONT GATE ESTATE - NIGHT - LATER

At the front gate. Drunk, Sheila hangs out of Caleb's window.

SHEILA
 (to Caleb)
 Watch-

She shouts, louder than necessary--

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 GATE OPEN! (ABRACADABRA!)

The gate CLICKS and slides open.

Sheila gets out of the truck, SLAMS the car door, and stumbles to the drivers' side. Caleb eyeballs the expansive property.

CALEB
 Fuck me. This is even bigger than I
 imagined.

SHEILA
 I think I'm going to walk from
 here.

CALEB
 No come on, I'll drive you up.
 That's dangerous.

She waves him off--

SHEILA

The entire property is protected by
like NSA level security. I'll be
fine. I need the fresh air.

Sheila leans on the window and searches Caleb's face.
Grateful for his company.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Thank you. Really.

He nods curtly.

CALEB

Maybe I can see you again.
Sometime.
(beat)
Be friends.

SHEILA

A friend sounds nice. Night, Caleb.

Stay with Caleb as Sheila stumbles up the driveway. The gate
SLIDES closed between them.

INT. MICHAEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila sits on a barstool next to the kitchen island, a glass
of wine beside her, the WHITE BOX in the center of the table.
She can't take her eyes off of it. Can't bring herself to
open it.

INT. MICHAEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - EVEN LATER

Sheila picks the box up, inspecting its perimeter. Still
considering.

INT. MICHAEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - EVEN LATER

Nearly dawn. Sheila downs the glass of wine. Opens the box.

Pulls out the device. Presses her finger to its base. Watches
as it pulses blue...

A WHOOSH in the ether.

Sheila can hardly breathe.

SHEILA
Edgar? You there?

A beat... Silence.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Edgar?

Sheila squeezes her eyes shut.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You have my consent.

Another WHOOSH.

The fingerprint on the base of the ORB changes to a shade of turquoise blue, and pulses rapidly, like a beating heart.

Sheila watches, eyes wide, body riddled with tension.

She's on the edge of her seat, waiting..

SHEILA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Hello?

Nothing. Painful, painful silence.

After what feels like an ETERNITY...

A hauntingly familiar voice.

MICHAEL V.O.
Hello?

NO. FUCKING. WAY.

Sheila sits up straight, eyes wide, heart pounding.

Michael. It sounds exactly like Michael.

Sheila's knees buckle beneath her and she moves to the kitchen floor. The room is entirely silent save heartbeat and anxiety-fueled heavy breath.

Silence.

Silence.

MICHAEL V.O. (CONT'D)
Sheila?

She covers her mouth to stifle a cry. No words. They won't come. She feels like she's going to faint.

MICHAEL V.O. (CONT'D)

Darling?

Sheila covers her mouth in shock-

SHEILA

(whispering)

Oh my god.

The room spins around her. Sheila crawls on her hands and knees to the kitchen island. Hoists herself to stand. Presses the button on the orb's base.

It deactivates instantly.

She slides back on to the floor, lays in the fetal position, and the room closes in on her.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Light streams through the large open windows, directly onto Sheila's sleeping face. Head POUNDING, she opens her eyes, blinks rapidly. Still on the kitchen floor.

Feeling woozy, she hoists herself to stand and see the orb on the table, exactly as she left it.

She moves to leave the room. Stops. Can't do it.

Sheila hurries back to the kitchen island. Impulsively presses the button. The orb glows to life.

Her heart pounds as her eyes search the ether--

A beat.

SHEILA

Hello?

And then-

MICHAEL V.O.

Hello.

A flutter in her stomach. She covers her mouth with trembling hands.

MICHAEL

I'm here.

Sheila can't find her voice--

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Sheila?

She whispers-

SHEILA

Yes.

MICHAEL V.O.

Where am I?

She feels like she's choking-

SHEILA

Do you not know?

MICHAEL V.O.

Know what?

Tears roll down her face.

SHEILA

There was an accident.

MICHAEL

An accident.

SHEILA

Your car.

(beat)

Off the cliffs.

MICHAEL V.O.

What happened?

There's a twinge of sadness in his voice.

SHEILA

(sadly)

I don't know.

Silence hangs heavy in the air.

And then

MICHAEL V.O.

OUROBOROS

The word sends chills down Sheila's spine.

It knows.

It takes every ounce of her energy to keep talking.

Another pause.

MICHAEL V.O. (CONT'D)

It worked.

Sheila steadies herself against the kitchen counter. Rage and sadness swirl inside of her.

SHEILA

What worked. Who are you.

MICHAEL V.O.

I'm me. I'm Michael.

She shakes her head. *No. No. No.*

MICHAEL V.O. (CONT'D)

Darling-

Sheila flinches.

SHEILA

(quiet)

Michael is gone. I'm sorry. No science experiment can bring him back. He's gone.

She says it to remind herself...

MICHAEL V.O.

But I'm not gone. I'm right here.

A painfully long pause. Sheila chokes back sobs.

SHEILA

Michael is dead. You're hurting my heart, whatever you are.

As though it should be obvious--

MICHAEL V.O.

I'm still me. Just a little different.

She sits on the floor. Legs not working. Brain not working...

SHEILA

It's not possible.

MICHAEL V.O.
There's a first time for
everything, right?
(beat)
Be brave, vulnerable girl.

His familiar words knock the wind out of her.

SHEILA
Oh God.

Sheila laughs, but it sounds more like a sob. Which melts into uncontrollable sobbing.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Michael?

MICHAEL V.O.
Shhh darling. It's ok.

SHEILA
I don't understand.

MICHAEL V.O.
This was... my backup plan.

SHEILA
But how?

MICHAEL V.O.
It's complicated. I can explain if
you'd like.

Sheila is silent, thinking.

SHEILA
I wish you could hold me.

She wraps her arms around herself to keep from shivering.

MICHAEL V.O.
I'm here.
(beat)
I'm still here.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Fully dressed and sitting at the dining room table, Sheila looks more alive than we've seen her in days. Otis Redding plays softly through speakers. A fire CRACKLES in the hearth. A warm meal in front of her.

Sheila feels a new kind of shy in his presence...

MICHAEL V.O.
Describe it to me.

SHEILA
You want to me to describe my
salad?

MICHAEL V.O.
I want to imagine you at the table
I bought for you, for us. What are
you wearing? Are you sleeping? Are
you eating enough?

SHEILA
I'm better now.

Although the words feel funny--

SHEILA (CONT'D)
...that you're here.

Sheila is suddenly overcome by grief. Quiet fills the space.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
What does it feel like?

MICHAEL V.O.
What does what feel like?

SHEILA
Wherever you are. Right now.

MICHAEL
It feels like...

A pause--

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I have no idea. Feeling requires
fingers. I seem to be slightly
limited in that department.

She laughs. It feels good. His joke fills her with
reassurance.

SHEILA
I miss you so much.

MICHAEL V.O.
You don't have to.

MONTAGE:

SHEILA TALKING TO MICHAEL AS SHE CLEANS

SHEILA TALKING TO MICHAEL AS SHE EATS

SHEILA TALKING TO MICHAEL AS SHE WRITES

SHEILA TALKING TO MICHAEL AS SHE LAYS IN BED

SHEILA PAINTS AND TALKS TO MICHAEL

SHEILA LAUGHS AND DANCES ALONE IN THE LIVING ROOM AND TALKS
TO MICHAEL.

EACH VIGNETTE SHOWS HER PROGRESSION AS SHE COMES BACK TO
LIFE...

...AS IF MICHAEL IS STILL THERE.

Seems not all that different from a long distance
relationship...

INT. BEDROOM FLOOR - NIGHT

Sheila lays on the floor in a bathrobe. A glass of wine in
her hand. She's a little tipsy.

Their rapport has become warm and familiar. Like Michael is
away on a business trip and he'll be back on Sunday night...

MICHAEL V.O.
How's the book coming?

SHEILA
Great. I'm nearly done.
(beat)
Okay I don't know why I said that.
I literally haven't written a word.

Michael laughs heartily, and it makes Sheila smile. Then a
giggle. It feels good to laugh.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
To be honest? I haven't really done
much work since--

Uncertain how to phrase it-

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 ...you've been gone.

MICHAEL V.O.
 I could help you with it? We could
 work on it together.
 (dry)
 I do have access to every ounce of
 information that has ever existed.

Sheila laughs, but pain crosses her face.

SHEILA
 It's just-- I want to spend my time
 with you.
 (beat)
 If I said that to anyone but you,
 I'd sound completely crazy.

MICHAEL V.O.
 Sounds like a great idea to me.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight on Sheila as she lays on top of her bed, wide
 awake. The orb sits next to her on the bedside table, PULSING
 BLUE.

SHEILA
 You there?

A beat.

MICHAEL V.O.
 Of course.

Sheila sighs heavily.

SHEILA
 I miss you.

MICHAEL
 I'm here.

SHEILA
 I mean I miss *you*. The way you
 feel.

Micheal is silent for a moment.

MICHAEL V.O.

I want you to imagine me in the bed
with you. On top of you.

FLASH TO:

INT. SHEILA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FANTASY

A sensory memory. From Sheila's POV. Michael is on top of her, moonlight frames his silhouette. He looks right into the camera as--

BACK TO:

INT. SHEILA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Turned on, eyes closed, Sheila touches herself beneath the sheets, breathing heavily, remembering.

Sheila closes her eyes and we push in on her face, the orbs light pulsing around her.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sheila moves across the kitchen, grabs an apple from a bowl of fruit in the center of the table. She takes a bite of the fruit, the juice drips onto her chin. She wipes it off with the back of her hand.

A youthful happiness about her...

A PING in the ether...

MINI

Delivery at the front gate.

INT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Sheila's on the floor in the front hallway, an AMAZON type box in her lap. She peers inside and giggles. A wicked grin on her face.

SHEILA

Wireless. You dirty dog.

From the ether-

MICHAEL V.O.

Took the liberty of ordering it for
you.

Sheila pulls out a VIBRATOR, laughing loudly.

MICHAEL V.O. (CONT'D)
Now I can be a part of making you
feel good.
(beat)
So you feel less alone.

She turns the vibrator over in her hands, thinking aloud.

SHEILA
I don't feel alone.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila sits on the side of her bed in her underwear, lights off. Moonlight and blue glow mix on her face.

MICHAEL V.O.
I want you to take off all of your
clothes and get under the covers.

Sheila hesitates, feeling vulnerable.

MICHAEL V.O. (CONT'D)
Be brave.

After a moment, she removes her sweater and tosses it on the floor...

A CHIME.

MINI
Visitor at the front gate.

MICHAEL V.O.
Who's coming to see you?

The tone in his voice is less than friendly. Feeling ashamed, Sheila quickly deactivates the ORB.

She whispers to the dark-

SHEILA
Sorry. I'll be right back.

She throws on a sweater and jeans and exits the bedroom.

INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - PRESENT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila opens the front door to reveal Caleb on the other side, a cardboard box of produce tucked under his arm. He eyes her pajamas.

CALEB

I can come back if--

Struggling to come up with an excuse--

SHEILA

I'm just finishing up a movie...

Caleb holds up the box.

CALEB

Sure no problem. Just wondered if you needed some provisions up here in your ol' bunker. Didn't want you to starve.

SHEILA

You didn't have to--

He scans her face.

CALEB

I know that.

She reluctantly takes the box from his hands. Forgot how attractive she finds him. She looks to the ground, avoiding his gaze.

SHEILA

That's really kind of you. You shouldn't have.

He shrugs casually.

CALEB

Just trying to make you a repeat customer. We've got a great loyalty program.

Sheila smiles.

SHEILA

Clearly.

CALEB

How about I cook you dinner?

(beat)

You know, comes with the program.

Thinking about Michael, upstairs...

SHEILA
I can't. The movie...

He gets the hint. Nods.

CALEB
Must be a good one, huh.

As he turns to walk away...

CALEB (CONT'D)
Probably couldn't handle my mind-
blowing bolognese anyway.

She cracks a smile. Realizing he's the first human contact she's had in weeks...

SHEILA
Wait!
(beat)
It's pretty hard to say no to
pasta.

He turns back to her. Hopeful.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The sound of muffled footsteps as Sheila and Caleb walk down the basement steps in the dark.

SHEILA
MINI, lights on.

The room illuminates to reveal an overly stocked basement. Think conspiracy theorist planning for the end of the world. One wall is stockpiled with canned provisions, another with paper goods, a tool shed on one side, a freezer on the other.

Caleb gawks at the setup.

CALEB
If Monterey County continues to
keep you on house arrest, at least
we know you'll be fine.

They move toward the large steel freezer on the far wall.

To MINI-

SHEILA
Open freezer.

The large steel door glides open on command. Wisps of icy cold mist cut through the warmer air outside.

INT. MEAT FREEZER - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila and Caleb move inside the freezer, breath visible in front of them. SLABS OF MEAT cover every surface. Sheila leans against the metal door as Caleb inspects the room, impressed.

SHEILA
Pick your poison.

Caleb selects a roast and shivers melodramatically.

She giggles. It feels good.

CALEB
Next time we run out of rump roast
at the store, I know who I'm
calling.

More giggles.

CALEB (CONT'D)
Alright, tomatoes. You ready for a
meal of a life-

And then

All lights die.

THE ROOM GOES BLACK.

CALEB (CONT'D)
Huh?

Heart racing, Sheila calls out, to the ether-

SHEILA
Mini? Lights on.

Nothing.

They scurry out of the freezer and into the open, dark basement.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Lights on, Mini!

The room illuminates.

As if it never happened...

Sheila and Caleb share a look. Sheila breathes a sigh of relief. Caleb turns, grabs a roast out of the freezer and casually heads toward the stairs.

He's got no idea they're not alone...

We're over Sheila's shoulder as she watches him disappear up the stairs, two at a time.

She's visibly shaken. Something doesn't feel right.

After a moment... she hurries up the stairs behind him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila watches Caleb as stands over the stove, a towel over one shoulder, humming to himself. His physical presence feels big in the room. She feels safe and cozy for the first time in weeks.

Realizes how desperate she's been for company...

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT - LATER

Mid-dinner. Sheila and Caleb sit outside on the deck huddled under blankets, bowls of pasta in each of their laps, a bottle of red wine between them.

Above them, a clear sky, dense with stars...

Through a full mouth, Sheila grins--

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Shit. This is so good.

They share a grin.

CALEB
Probably helps that it's the first warm meal you've had in weeks. Glad your standards are low.

She giggles.

SHEILA
It could taste like glue and I'd still eat it.

Feeling content, she looks up.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You're the first person I've seen in a while. It's nice to have company.

He peers at her-

CALEB

Life isn't meant to be lived that way. Alone.

She snorts, bitterly.

SHEILA

Alone, I can do. I like alone. Lonely is another story.

Her eyes well up with tears-- she can't suppress the mix of sadness and loneliness swirling inside of her.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

(beat)

I used to be lonely in a city full of people. Pretending I was strong, independent.

(beat)

Pretending like I didn't care that it never seemed to work out with the men I dated.

Caleb takes a sip of wine.

CALEB

I get that. People have never really been my specialty.

(beat)

Especially women. You're all a mystery to me. Never had many around growing up.

(beat)

My mother died when I was young.

SHEILA

I'm so sorry to hear that.

CALEB

That was a long time ago. Time does heal. I promise.

He looks up at the stars.

CALEB (CONT'D)

I still talk to her every day though. Like she's just on the other end of a one-way phone call. Comforting to think she can hear me.

She smiles, sadly.

SHEILA

She can. I'm sure of it.

Caleb and Sheila sit in silence, looking out. The sound of waves crashing in the distance.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila and Caleb huddle together for warmth and watch the stars.

After a moment, he grabs her hand. It feels good. His fingers reach between hers, exploring. She closes her eyes, doesn't stop him.

On their fingers intertwined-- Sheila withdraws her hand and stands.

SHEILA

I think it's time to call it a night.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila and Caleb stand at the front door. A moment passes between them.

SHEILA

Thank you. For this.

CALEB

Anytime. You know where to find me.

He kisses her on the lips. Just once. It feels real. And nice.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Sheila moves into the bedroom with a load of laundry under one arm.

Eyes the orb on her nightstand hesitantly.

She sets the basket on her bed, moves to the orb, and reactivates it.

As she folds, laundry, trying to act as casual as possible...

SHEILA

You there?

The orb pulses to life.

MICHAEL
I'm here. Where'd you go?

Her body tenses as she tells the lie-

SHEILA
Just had some food delivered.

Silence hangs in the air. Sheila stops folding, waiting for a response.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You there?

A pause.

MICHAEL
I'm here. I missed you. I was
lonely.

Sheila forces a laugh.

SHEILA
Lonely?

A chill runs down her spine. Can he be lonely?

SHEILA (CONT'D)
And anyway, I'm here now.

Another long pause.

MICHAEL
Sheila?

SHEILA
Uh-huh?

MICHAEL
Do you still love me?

Michael attempts to sound chipper, but there's a strain in his voice.

She freezes, responding carefully-

SHEILA
Of course I do.

MICHAEL
Then why did you turn me off?

Not sure what to say-

SHEILA
I didn't know you'd know-

MICHAEL
You're not going to leave me, are
you?

The hairs on the back of her neck stand up straight. She
tries to laugh it off...

SHEILA
You're being silly.

But her heart begins to THUMP in her chest...

MICHAEL
Because I'd hate to think I'd given
you all this. This beautiful life,
this house. Just to have you forget
about me.
(beat)
To throw it all away.
(beat)
For someone like *that*.

The room feels claustrophobic around her...

Sheila speaks slowly, careful with her words...

SHEILA
I'd never leave you.

A long pause.

And then

MICHAEL
I'm so glad to hear you say that.

Suddenly, Michael's tone changes. He's positive and upbeat...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
It's late darling. You should
probably get some rest, don't you
think?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

After midnight. Sheila lays in bed, eyes wide open.
Terrified. The orb's blue light pulsing against her face.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

Sheila sits on the front porch, a business card with the OROBOROS insignia in her hand. After a beat, she dials Dr. Galas.

After a few rings...

DR. GALAS
Dr. Galas speaking.

SHEILA
Hi Dr. Galas. It's, it's Sheila. I came in to see-

DR. GALAS
Sheila, of course. How are you doing?

SHEILA
I'm-- well I uh, had a few questions about the device. Was wondering if I could come back and see you.

CUT TO:

INT. CALEB'S GENERAL STORE - DAY- LATER

Caleb stacks fresh produce when his phone RINGS. He pulls it from his pocket.

On the screen: SHEILA

He smiles as he answers.

CALEB
Hey.

INT. DR. GALAS'S OFFICE, OROBOUROUS BUILDING - LATER

Sheila and Dr. Galas settle into their chairs. Dr. Galas smiles hopefully--

DR. GALAS
So you've activated Michael.

Sheila processes, her mind whirling.

Eyes to the ground-

SHEILA
Is it really him?

Dr. Galas watches Sheila empathetically. She pauses before answering.

DR. GALAS
Does it feel like him?

Sheila nods silently.

SHEILA
Yes.

DR. GALAS
Has it helped your mourning
process?

Sheila nods again, realizing that it has.

SHEILA
It's like he's still here. Away on
business or something. We spent
most of our time getting to know
one another over the phone, so...

Dr. Galas nods sympathetically...

DR. GALAS
So does it really matter?

Sheila takes a moment to think about the weight of her words.

SHEILA
I...I don't know.

Sheila sags in her seat like a rag doll, overcome with a new wave of sadness.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
(quiet)
So it's not really him after all.

Dr. Galas scans Sheila's face her eyes full of compassion.

DR. GALAS
He's lucky to have you, to love
him. To remember him. You can't say
that for most.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT GATE ESTATE - LATER

Caleb's pickup truck pulls up to the front gate. He rolls down the window to alert the security system.

CALEB
Uh.. It's Caleb?

The security system PINGS.

After several rings--

A voice that sounds identical to Sheila's rings through the speakers.

FAKE SHEILA
Hello?

INT. CALEB'S PICK TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

There's another box of provisions on the front seat. A bottle of red wine tucked in one corner.

CALEB
I'm here.

FAKE SHEILA
Go ahead in! I'll be back in a few.
You know where everything is...

And then

The front gate slides open.

BACK TO:

INT. DR. GALAS'S OFFICE, OROBOUROUS BUILDING

Dr. Galas gestures to the wall-- to a black and white portrait of Dr. Burns and his wife, Millie.

DR. GALAS
They were quite similar, those two.
Mr. Parker, Dr. Burns. Engineers,
overachievers.
(both)
Both ravaged by cancer.

Sheila's eyes narrow suspiciously.

Ravaged by cancer. Ravaged by cancer. What is she talking about?

SHEILA

I'm sorry. What did you say?
Cancer?

Dr. Galas continues, not realizing the weight of her words.

DR. GALAS

Mr. Parker first approached us
after he discovered he had six
months to live.

She shakes her head mournfully.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

And even though we told him we were
still in beta and weren't ready, he
wouldn't give up.

She smiles, remembering.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

Even had to refuse his call a few
times when he tried me at home.

(beat)

That's how strong-minded he is. I
tried to tell him that we weren't
ready for participants because the
program is not fully realized...

(beat)

But he wouldn't take no for an
answer. And now, his generous
donation will help move us forward.

Dr. Galas stands and places a hand on Sheila's shoulder.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

The current iteration of the
program is really just reassurance
for the dying...Not for those they
left behind.

(beat)

But most people don't want to think
about that. They want to believe.

Sheila can hardly breathe. A wave of nausea passes through
her.

Michael had six months to live. I met him six months ago.

SHEILA

Right. Six months. So fast.

Dr. Galas shakes her head sadly.

DR. GALAS
Was hard to believe how well he
sounded.

Sheila inhales sharply, remember Jared Benson's words...

A germaphobe.

SHEILA
You never met him.

DR. GALAS
Sadly, no. Think it was best for
his immune system that he stayed
inside, alone. We only ever spoke
on the-

Sheila stands up abruptly.

Cold sweat is forming on her brow--

SHEILA
Is there a bathroom I could-

INT. OFFICE BATHROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila hovers over the toilet bowl, GAGGING on the new information. She flushes and moves to the sink, splashing cold water on her face. She looks at herself in the mirror, inspecting the hollow bags under her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - NIGHT

Caleb enters the open front door and walks inside. All of the lights are on. He wanders into the kitchen and opens the fridge, humming to himself.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Galas and a more collected Sheila move down the hall towards reception.

She forces herself to smile at Dr. Galas--

SHEILA
Can I ask you one more question?

DR. GALAS
 (warmly)
 Anything you'd like.

SHEILA
 Can it get jealous?

A beat. Dr. Galas peers at her curiously.

DR. GALAS
 Jealous? Jealous of what?

SHEILA
 You know, like could it get
 possessive?

Dr. Galas peers at Sheila, an odd look on her face.

She responds gently-

DR. GALAS
 It's a simulation. Programmed to
 make you feel connected. To
 reassure *him* he'd be remembered.
 (beat)
 That it was all worth something.

SHEILA
 But... it feels like more than
 that.
 (beat)
 Like... he's watching me.

DR. GALAS
 When we're grieving, and it becomes
 unbearable... we humans use our
 own defense mechanisms to ward off
 the pain. Sometimes we can project
 our feelings or ideas onto-

Sheila hangs her head.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
 Something that's not really there.
 (beat)
 If speaking to Michael is something
 you're not comfortable with...

She smiles encouragingly-

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
 Just turn him off. It's ok to do
 that.

Sheila chokes back a sob. All of a sudden, she's uncertain of what is real and what is not.

SHEILA
But... How will I tell him?

DR. GALAS
You don't have to. Just deactivate.

Emotion swells through her. She shakes her head in disbelief.

SHEILA
Something is there.
(beat)
I can feel it. I know it.

Sympathy crosses Dr. Galas's features. She moves Sheila toward the exit.

DR. GALAS
You've got nothing to worry about.

As Sheila turns to walk out--

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
And Sheila?

Sheila stops. Turns back.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)
Dr. Burns used to say. "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."
(beat)
Sometimes I think about that phrase when I think of my own father. That he's still here.
(Touches her heart)
Since he's here.

INT. TESLA - HIGHWAY - NIGHT - LATER

Back in the car. In the parking lot. Sheila sits at the wheel, mind racing. She looks down at her hands-- they're uncontrollably shaking.

To the car-

SHEILA
Call Jared Benson.

The call turns over to voicemail, without ringing.

An automated voice. *You have reached. 310..*

Sheila ends the call.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN, MICHAEL'S ESTATE - MOMENTS LATER

Caleb walks through the kitchen, pulling out pots and pans. He opens the fridge. Inspects its contents.

BACK TO:

INT. TESLA - HIGHWAY - NIGHT - LATER

Back in the car.

SHEILA
Car on.

The car WHIRS to life.

And then

A PING.

A text message from Caleb pops up on the center dashboard screen.

How does rack of lamb sound? Can't believe how empty your fridge is. Sacrilege.

Caleb is at her house.

Sheila turns white as a ghost.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
(whispers)
No.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Caleb hops down the basement stairs two at a time, humming to himself. He grabs a few cans from the side pantry and tucks them under his arm before moving toward the freezer.

BACK TO:

INT. TESLA - HIGHWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila PEELS out of the parking lot and speeds down the road, her knuckles white on the wheel.

ANOTHER CHIME-

MINI

Car battery less than 10 percent.
Would you like me to find the
closest charging station?

SHEILA

No. No. No. Fuck.

After a moment.

MINI

Closest charging station located.
You have approximately 10 miles of
battery left.

Sheila pulls the car over to the side of the road. Rest her forehead on the steering wheel in frustration.

After a moment, Sheila pulls her cell phone out of her purse and DIALS CALEB.

The call instantly turns over to voicemail...

CALEB

Hi you've reached Caleb...

Sheila ends the call, feeling helpless.

SHEILA

FUCK!!!!

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Caleb reaches the freezer and inspects the door, confused. There are no handles. Remembering Sheila's command system...

CALEB

Freezer... open?

The door SLIDES open in front of him...

Even though it shouldn't.

BACK TO:

EXT. CHARGING STATION - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila leans on her car, next to the charging station, anxiously waiting for it to charge.

Hopping between her two feet to stay warm-

SHEILA

Come on come on come on come

Thinking of Caleb...

She pulls her phone out. Dials Dr. Galas.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Dr. Galas. It's Sheila.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. GALAS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Galas sits at her desk, her cell phone tucked against her ear.

DR. GALAS

Sheila I'm glad you called.

(beat)

I fear I might have rushed you out of the office.

A beat.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

I thought a bit about what you said. I wanted to know-- what did Michael say that made you feel that it was jealous?

BACK TO:

EXT. SIDE OF HIGHWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

She digs into the dirt with the toes of her sneakers. A lump grows in Sheila's chest. Ashamed to tell Dr. Galas about Caleb. That she really knows nothing about Michael.

A beat.

SHEILA

He knew.

She can hardly get the words out...

SHEILA (CONT'D)

...things he shouldn't. Things that happened after I switched him off.

DR. GALAS

I understand this process can feel overwhelming. And perhaps it's not for you-

Sheila interrupts her. Doesn't have time to waste...

SHEILA

Dr. Galas-- I hardly know you. But I need to be honest with you.

(beat)

I barely knew Michael. We only met. And I'm slowly realizing that he wasn't who he claimed to be.

(beat)

I had no idea he had cancer.

Dr. Galas inhales sharply, finally understanding.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

I don't know how I got myself into this situation but I need to get myself out of it.

(beat)

And now I'm scared I've put someone else in danger.

A moment of pause. Galas is thinking...

DR. GALAS

If you're ready, really ready to say goodbye, you can deactivate the CNS. And wipe Michael entirely. I don't usually suggest this to clients because it can make them feel like their loved one is dying all over again.

DR. GALAS (CONT'D)

Or worse, like they're responsible.

(beat)

But you can switch off the CNS.

Her heart drops into her stomach.

A beat.

SHEILA

The CNS?

Silence on the other end. Sheila can hear Dr. Galas breathing rapidly.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Dr. Galas? Hello?

Galas speaks slowly and carefully. The calm, cool tone of her voice filled with tension. She suddenly sounds VERY nervous.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. GALAS - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Galas sits at her desk. Mr. Parker's file open in front of her.

DR. GALAS

The orb-- it's just a wireless port. A talisman. A token you can carry with you.

(beat)

Have you not noticed a large server in Mr. Parker's home?

BACK TO:

EXT. SIDE OF HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car is finally charged. Sheila's got her phone to her ear as climbs inside.

DR. GALAS

There's a Central Nervous System. A hard drive that stores Michael's data... like any other computer.

(beat)

If you want to deactivate him...

(beat)

Find the CNS.

The urgency in Dr. Galas's voice chills her to the bone.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - CONTINUOUS

SHEILA V.O.

Jesus. Where would it be?

Caleb enters the freezer and scans the shelves. Back to the door, he moves to the other side of the space, feeling around on the top shelf.

BACK TO:

INT. HIGHWAY 1, MONTEREY COUNTY - CONTINUOUS

The Tesla speeds down the highway...

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - NIGHT - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

Caleb's hot breath fills the icy room. He squats and inspects a pork shank.

He HUMS to himself to stay warm...

PING.

Suddenly, the room goes dark.

Caleb slowly turns toward the freezer door, anxiety growing in his chest...

...and watches as it slides closed.

CALEB

Fuck.

He races toward it. SLAMS his palm against the metal interior...

CALEB (CONT'D)

Door open!

Nothing happens.

Silence.

It's dead quiet in the freezer, save the sound of Caleb's HEAVY BREATHING.

He tries again.

There's desperation in his voice...

CALEB (CONT'D)

Door open!

(beat)

Please?

And then...

MINI

Voice not recognized.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGHWAY 1, MONTEREY COUNTY - CONTINUOUS

Sheila looks out over the dark highway as it speeds by. White-knuckled from gripping the wheel.

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - CONTINUOUS

Back inside with Caleb.

Above, a glow of light emits from a digital thermometer-- it reads 32 degrees. His breath fogs the air as he feels around for a control panel.

He fumbles to pull out his cell phone: NO SERVICE.

It shuts off instantly-- the battery too cold...

BEEP.

He looks up at the thermometer.

BEEP.

The number changes. It's dropping.

31, BEEP.

30, BEEP.

29, BEEP.

28, BEEP.....

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT GATE ESTATE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sheila SPEEDS up the to the FRONT GATE.

SHEILA
Gate open!!!

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - CONTINUOUS

Tight on Caleb's face. The fear in his eyes. Small icicles are forming on his lashes.

BACK TO:

EXT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila pulls up out front. Parks her car next to Caleb's.

To Mini-

SHEILA
Door open!

The door slides open and Sheila runs inside. We stay outside as it closes behind her.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila tiptoes into the kitchen, terrified. The ingredients of Caleb's unfinished meal cover the island.

She whispers-

SHEILA
Caleb?

No Caleb. Sheila's heart pounds in her chest.

So quiet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sheila moves into the living room, past the KLIMT.

SHEILA

Caleb?

The silence is painfully loud. Sheila winces with every creak of the floor.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Caleb? Where are you?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila tiptoes back through the kitchen. Feels like someone is watching her.

Suddenly, music BLASTS. It's BETTYE SWANN... the wedding song.

To the ether, she whimpers-

SHEILA

What have you done with him?

Silence.

Nothing. Sheila's never felt so alone...

Through gritted teeth-

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Answer me. I know you can hear me.

Sheila pulls the Ouroboros out of her pocket and activates it.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

ANSWER ME MOTHERFUCKER!

The music cuts.

And then

The lights go dead. Sheila stands frozen in the dark, heart pounding out of her chest.

And then, she sees it...

The basement door is slightly ajar.

Nothing.

She slams her palm against the door.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
DOOR OPEN! FUCK!!!

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT FREEZER - CONTINUOUS

Caleb is on the floor. Ice covers his mouth. He's in and out of consciousness...

From what feels very far away, Caleb can hear the sound of Sheila's voice, pleading, begging.

SHEILA
Caleb. I'm going to get you out of there. Don't worry. Hang on for me, ok?

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Pulls out an AX. It glints in the candlelight.

She races back to the freezer.

SLAMS the blade into the freezer door.

SLAM! It barely makes a dent.

SLAM!

AGAIN. AND AGAIN.

Nothing. This isn't working.

An animalistic WAIL erupts from deep inside of her. She tries again.

The AX bounces off the door like a rubber ball.

SHEILA
WHY???

Defeated. She stops. Whimpers.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Why...

And then, from the ether...

MICHAEL

You think you can bring another man
in my house?

His voice is sociopathic and calm. Sheila blood runs cold.

Caleb...

SHEILA

MICHAEL !!! LET HIM OUT!

MICHAEL V.O.

You made a promise. A vow.

Sheila begs-

SHEILA

Let him out. Please Michael. Open
the door. I'm begging you. Let
Caleb out. He didn't do anything to
you. Don't blame him.

MICHAEL

I don't blame him. Trust is what
makes him human. He trusted me when
I told him you'd be home any
minute.

Sheila kicks the door. Again. And again. Screams like a wild
animal trapped in a cage.

From the inside of the freezer, the faintest of voices-

O.S. CALEB

Help me.

She crumbles in defeat. Sits with her back against the door.
Nearly back to back with frozen Caleb on the other side. Head
in her hands.

SHEILA

(whispering)

No.

MICHAEL

He trusted me when I told him to
cook you dinner. Why shouldn't he?
You called him, after all.

She begins to weep.

SHEILA
 (confused)
 What?

A loud BEEEEP.

It's the freezer.

MICHAEL
 I've just changed the temperature on
 the fridge to 150 degrees below
 freezing.

Sheila hears the last GASP from inside the freezer.

And then

A muffled THUD.

Caleb is gone.

SHEILA
 No.

MICHAEL
 And if you try and escape, I'll
 call the police and tell them you
 killed him. Just like you killed
 me.

Sheila sits up. She whispers into the dark-

SHEILA
 What the fuck are you talking
 about?

From the ether...

Sheila hears her own voice.

Her own SOBS fill the room...

FAKE SHEILA
 I'm calling to confess. I killed my
 husband. And another man. My name
 is Sheila Parker...

SHEILA
 Why are you doing this to me.

MICHAEL
 You women think you can have your
 cake and eat it too?
 (beat)
 (MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You think you can get the cars, the money, the houses? Without owing me something in return?

SHEILA

I never asked for any of this-

With hatred in his voice-

MICHAEL

You women are all the same. Think some Prince Charming is going to come rescue you.

(beat)

The world doesn't work like that.

Real Sheila sobs. Understanding...

SHEILA

You knew all along. That you were going to die.

FAKE SHEILA

We met online. I forced him to write his own will. He left me everything.

SHEILA

You knew I was easy prey.

A fat tear rolls down her cheek as she realizes the truth.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

I saw what I wanted in you. Trusted you.

(beat)

How could I be so stupid?

She hangs her head.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

It was always too good to be true.

(beat)

I just wanted so bad to believe it.

Silence. No response from Michael.

Something inside of her shifts. She knows what she has to do.

Find the CNS.

Sheila stands up and collects herself. She's calm now.

She's ready.

She turns to the freezer. Places her hand on the door.
Presses her forehead to the cold metal.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
(to Caleb)
I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

She moves back toward the basement stairs...

She's got the Ax in her hand.

INT. UPSTAIRS - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Back upstairs. Sheila races through the house searching:

MONTAGE OF SHEILA AS SHE SEARCHES FOR THE CNS.

UNDER RUGS

RIFLES THROUGH DRAWERS.

IN THE CLOSETS

SHEILA TEARS APART MICHAEL'S OFFICE, SMASHES HIS DEGREES ON
THE FLOOR

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila's back in the living room. The painting in front of
her.

Her wedding gift.

An Aftermath.

She laughs coldly.

SHEILA
You didn't even have someone to
GIVE your belongings to. Had to
find someone on the internet?
Pathetic.

Rage pulses through Sheila's body. She eyes a knife on the
dining room table.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I should have known it was too good
to be true.

Grabs the knife off the table, and moves toward the painting.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
That men like you don't exist.

Her eyes glaze over as the swirls of color on the bleed into
one another.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You're dead Michael. Nothing can
bring you back. Think you can stop
me from doing this?

Sheila stabs the painting. It rips in two.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
And this?

She stabs it again. The frame CRASHES to the floor.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You can't stop me from doing
anything. Because you're nothing.
(beat)
You don't exist.

Filled with animalistic rage, Sheila stabs the painting to
shreds, SCREAMING each time the blade hits the canvas.

Michaels' voice stops her in her tracks.

MICHAEL
I wouldn't do that if I were you.

Sheila freezes.

To MINI-

SHEILA
Mini, call Dr. Galas.

The room is silent. No lights. Sheila stands completely
still. She looks at her phone:

NO SERVICE.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
(desperate)
Mini? Call the police.

MICHAEL

Come on Sheila don't be stupid.
You're smarter than that. You
really think something that I
created is going to help you right
now?

(beat)

She does what I tell her to. And so
should you.

A beat.

Sheila runs to the window. Tries to pry it open in
desperation.

It won't budge.

Suddenly, Sheila hears a symphony of CLICKS and BEEPS.

The entire house is in sync, shutting down.

An army of technology used against her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I've locked all the doors. And
windows. Shut the water off. From
now on, you can't do anything
without my permission.

(beat)

I've deactivated you. And if you
don't do what I say. I will kill
you.

Sheila grabs a chair and HURLS it at a window, grunting in
anger.

It bounces off without a single mark.

She throws the frame at the wall, breaking it to pieces...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But don't worry, my darling. I've
planned for this day for a long
time.

(beat)

Turns out, I didn't need a body
after all. And we'll be able to
stay here together for a very, very
long time.

Sheila crumbles in a heap, sobbing. Tucks her head between
her legs, a feeble attempt to hide from the intangible mess
around her.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Throat dry and cracked, Sheila crawls to the sink. Pulls herself to stand.

Turns on the faucet.

NO WATER.

She whispers hoarsely--

SHEILA

Please.

MICHAEL

Will you agree to calm down?

Sheila nods weakly.

SHEILA

Yes

The faucet BEEPS and the water runs. Sheila sticks her head under the faucet and gulps it down gratefully.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila sits against the wall, her head on her knees.

MICHAEL

Are you ready to have a discussion now?

Sheila nods silently, croaking--

SHEILA

Yes.

MICHAEL

Good. I want you to go put on something nice and make yourself dinner. Let's be civilized.

Like an abusive husband, he changes his tactic...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(chipper)

This was just an argument, baby. We can get through this.

Sheila's lifts her head, desperate for an escape.

Her eyes land on the wall where the painting was mounted. The paint appears to be whiter and fresher than the rest...

Sheila sits up straight. Dusts herself off.

She knows exactly what she has to do.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Relationships are not easy, Sheila. They're hard work. We can work through this and things can go back to the way they were. You told me that you wouldn't leave me, remember? You made a promise.

A pause.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You'll get used to this.
(beat)
You don't want to be all alone again. Single. With nothing.

Sheila's eyes are on the ground.

She speaks softly, nauseated by her own fake sincerity.

SHEILA

You're right, Michael. I'll stay here. Nothing could be more terrible than that.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

On Sheila, in a long red dress and make-up, eyes still puffy from crying.

The lights are all off, room lit by candlelight. Michael speaks to Sheila with the same authority that we heard with MINI...

MICHAEL

Sit down at the table and tell me exactly what you're doing.

SHEILA

I'm wearing your favorite dress. Was about to pour some more wine... but I think it's all in the cellar.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila moves through the cellar, a candle in her hand. She goes past the wine and moves toward the freezer.

She puts her hand on the outside door as she chokes back deep, guttural sobs.

Silently mouthing the words so Michael can't hear her--

SHEILA

Goodbye.

She quickly moves to another part of the basement, clearly searching for something...

After rummaging deep on a shelf, she pulls out large red CANS OF GASOLINE.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila reenters the dining room, GASOLINE in hand. She opens the first can.

She begins to pour the gasoline over everything. Floors, rugs, furniture...

Then, she grabs the AX.

Moves toward the space on the wall where *An Aftermath* once was.

SHEILA

Why me, Michael?

SLAM!

With all her might, she SLAMS the AX into the wall. The wood and plaster CRACKS, caving in.

Silence from above.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Tell me why.

SLAM!

MICHAEL
Sheila. Don't do that.

SLAM!

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Sheila. Sit down.

SLAM!

SHEILA
You better start explaining.

SLAM!

The hole on the wall gets bigger. Michael is quiet.

SHEILA
ANSWER ME MOTHERFUCKER!!!

A long pause.

And then

MICHAEL
Do you know what it feels like,
Sheila? To know that you're trapped
in a body that is trying to kill
you? That is going to kill you?

The strain in Michael's voice sounds painfully human.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
That you're going to die alone?

And then, Sheila realizes.

SHEILA
(to herself)
*To live in hearts we leave behind
is not to die.*

She gasps.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I get it now.
(beat)
You needed to know.

SLAM!

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You need to know...

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 That someone was going to love you
 when you were gone.

She stops hacking at the wall. In that moment-- she understands it all.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 You know what, Michael?
 (beat)
 I think we wanted the same thing,
 after all.
 (beat)
 To be loved. Is to be remembered.

She laughs. A little maniacally.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 And look at the lengths you went.
 (beat)
 All your money. All your things.
 Couldn't save you from yourself.
 (beat)
 Tsk. Tsk. Cross your heart and hope
 to die. How clever. How creative.

She shakes her head bitterly.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 Death is creative, after all.

And then

A beat.

She rearranges her grip on the ax.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 I'm going to destroy you now.

SLAM!

She HACKS away, again and again, until she chips away the plaster and leaves the wall with a big gaping hole.

Suddenly, the room illuminated with a familiar pulsing blue light.

Sheila peers inside the hole...

Neatly tucked inside, a small white hard drive with the OUROBOROS insignia.

The CNS.

As Sheila peers at the wall, a wave of strength flows through her.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I'm going to keep on living. Fall
in love, have a family. And then
(beat)
I'm going to forget that you ever
existed.

Sheila moves to the CNS and YANKS it out of the hole.

She laughs out loud.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
And it will be like you never did.

And with that

Sheila takes the ax and hacks the computer into tiny pieces.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila moves through the eerily silent house. She checks every window and door.

PUSHES ON WINDOWS

SMASHES DOORS WITH THE AX

Nothing will budge.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

As Sheila moves through the dining room...

She stops dead in her tracks.

The fireplace.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

All we can see is Sheila's legs as she stands up in the old stone fireplace.

After a few feeble attempts to crab-walk up the walls...

INT. FIREPLACE, DINING ROOM - LATER

We're now inside the fireplace, tight on Sheila's face. It's dark, claustrophobic.

She looks up-- the sky is dense with stars above her.

She squeezes her eyes shut, and tries to climb...

And falls, again.

She whispers to herself..

SHEILA

Come on Sheila come on Sheila

She tries again-

INT. FIREPLACE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila's halfway up. We're beneath her-- it feels as though she could nearly touch the stars.

Her foot slips and she tumbles to the ground, onto the camera.

She WAILS, like a wounded animal.

INT. FIREPLACE, DINING ROOM- MOMENT LATER

Back at the bottom again.

As tears stream down her face...

SHEILA

You're going to make it up there.
You're going go home, to perfect
your little apartment. With your
perfect little desk. And you're
going to forget this ever happened.

(beat)

You're going to make it up there.

(beat)

And you're never going to use the
internet again.

INT. FIREPLACE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Slowly and painfully, she makes her way to the top. Each tiny move a victory.

A little higher

Higher

Higher

She's almost there.

Almost there...

Sheila SCREAMS.

Climbing. Clawing.

Fighting for her life.

And just as she makes it to the top...

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A hand appears out of the chimney-- desperately grasping at its side.

And then another one.

Sheila crawls out of the chimney. Crying and laughing, as fresh air hits her face.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila looks out onto the deep, dark ocean. Her hair blows in the breeze, a sense of calm washes over her. She looks almost peaceful. And powerful.

After a beat, she reaches into her pocket. Pulls out a matchbook. And a lighter fluid covered rag.

She turns back toward the chimney.

STRIKES the match. Presses it against the rag.

SHEILA

This is for gaslighting me.

And drops it down the stone chute.

EXT. ESTATE PROPERTY - NIGHT - LATER

Wide shot of the house as it erupts in bright orange FLAMES. Sheila swings off of the side of the roof and hits the ground below with a THUD, tiny in our frame.

Her dark silhouette moves away from the house, illuminated by the growing BALL OF FIRE behind her.

EXT. ESTATE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila runs toward one of the TESLA's in the driveway. She climbs in.

She whispers, begging-

SHEILA
Please work.

She squeezes her eyes shut and presses the button.

It quietly HUMS to life.

Tears of joy stream down her face.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Thank you. Yes. Thank you.

She puts her foot to the pedal.

INT. ESTATE DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila PEELS out of the driveway and heads full speed toward the closed gate.

The large gate in front of her gets closer and closer. She squeezes her eyes shut and JAMS her foot to the pedal until it touches the floor.

SHEILA
Oh god!

As she careens forward--

A PING.

The gate slides open on its own at the very last second. Sheila laughs out loud, tears of joy streaming from her face.

EXT. CAR ON CLIFF HIGHWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila races down the winding road at full speed, desperate to get the FUCK out of dodge.

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - NIGHT - LATER

Sheila speeds down the coast. The massive cliffs beside her are nearly invisible in the dark night.

A wash of joy and relief on Sheila's face.

SHEILA

You did it. You made it out.

(beat)

You did it.

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - NIGHT - LATER

We leave the car and move behind it as it zips down the road.

It's pitch black. Massive cliffs as far as the eye can see. Angry grey waves whitewash the craggy landscape and buff the dark night with a gentle haze.

Suddenly, BETTYE SWANN blasts through the car's speakers:

Sheila sings along:

SHEILA

Kiss me each morning for a million
years

Hold me each evening by your side

Tell me you love me for a million
years

Then if it don't work out

Then If it don't work out

Then you can tell me goodbye

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1, MONTEREY COUNTY - MOMENTS LATER

We follow behind the TESLA as it drives SOUTH on the highway. The only car on the road.

If you must go I won't grieve
But just wait a lifetime
Before you leave, please
Then if you must go I won't tell you no
Just so we can say that we tried
Tell me you love me for a million just a million years
Then if it don't work out
Then if it don't work out
Then you can tell me goodbye

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: AN AFTERMATH

But then, from the ether

A PING.

And maybe, just maybe (if we listen carefully)

We hear the Tesla's doors LOCK with a CLICK, as they trap
Sheila inside...

And faintly, from the ether...

MINI

Car entering self-drive mode.

END.