

VERVE

APEX

Written by

Aja Gabel & Myung Joh Wesner

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ajagabel@gmail.com
mj@mjwesner.com

ON BLACK:

The bone-rattling sound of a CRASHING WAVE.

EXT. BEACH - LATE MORNING

The tense back of bikini-clad KATE (22, Asian-American, pretty, a wired energy) watching her friends scramble into a SMALL BOAT.

CHARLIE (22, white, charismatic and curvy) pauses.

CHARLIE

Kate! Sure you don't wanna come?
Water out there is totally flat!

Kate hugs herself. She smiles tightly and shakes her head.

Another earth-shaking WAVE CRASH.

From the boat, JAMES (22, African-American, charming, winningly handsome) holds out his hand to Charlie. She grabs it, steps into the boat and into James's arms.

EXT. OCEAN - EARLY AFTERNOON

The anchored boat looks small on the open water. The beach is nowhere to be seen.

Charlie, James, ADRIENNE (22, blonde and unapologetic), and ADRIENNE'S BOY TOY (22, hot and forgettable), all in snorkel gear, PLUNGE into the water.

BEACH - EARLY AFTERNOON

Kate paces the beach, looking ANXIOUSLY to the horizon. Biting her nails.

UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

SEA TURTLES moving in slow motion; BRIGHT FISH darting. Shards of sunlight lancing through the clear water. The friends swim around the turtles in states of WONDER.

BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is low. Kate sits in a beach chair, her book ignored, eyes glued to the ocean.

She brightens, RELIEVED: her friends' boat is back, in the distance. They JUMP OUT many yards from shore, and start swimming in.

The waves knock them back, WORRYING Kate, but they emerge from the waters -- together -- energized, ALIVE with joy.

As they walk, sun-drunk and LAUGHING, toward Kate, she notes James and Charlie holding hands, sharing a special look.

BEACH - DUSK

They sit around a FIRE, roasting marshmallows and clutching Tecates. Adrienne shares a gooey marshmallow with Boy Toy. Charlie sits on James's lap.

CHARLIE

Bathroom trek. Who's escorting me?
James?

James makes an *Only if I absolutely have to* face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Jerk. Adrienne?

ADRIENNE

(to Boy Toy)
Friends don't let friends go to
lizard-infested bathrooms alone.

With Charlie and Adrienne gone, James scoots his chair closer to Kate.

JAMES

Wish you came with us today.
We missed you.

KATE

Charlie was probably making fun of
me for being a pussy, huh?

JAMES

("yes")
Naaaah. She wouldn't do that.

KATE

Isn't it enough that I love the
beach? I've always hated the whole
concept of open water. It's
just...so big!

JAMES
 (laughing)
 Uh, the *ocean*? Yeah, pretty big.

KATE
 How do you know what all's down there? Out there with nothing between you and, and -- what?

She shivers, hating the very idea.

JAMES
 You don't know. That's kinda the point. Sometimes the unknown can be...exciting.

What's that? James's HAND migrating onto Kate's bare thigh. She notices. He notices her noticing. He doesn't move it.

A beat. Is this...happening?

KATE
 (softly)
 I wish I were the type of person who--

CHARLIE (O.S.)
 Every fucking time.

Kate whips her face around. Charlie LAUGHS. James's hand is gone as quickly as it appeared.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 You're not even sunburned! How?

JAMES
 Melanin advantage for the win!

Charlie sits back on James. Kate is DISAPPOINTED, but smiles. She's not the one who gets the guy. She's never the one who gets the guy. And ALL THREE OF THEM know it.

CHARLIE
 Kate always plays it safe. Don't you, Kate?

Kate and Charlie LOOK at each other. It's a complicated look, one that we won't fully understand until later. The fire FLICKERS on Kate's face as she forces a smile.

KATE
 You know me.

ON BLACK:

One more wave CRASH, and the title: **APEX**

EXT. AGUAS SERENAS RESORT - DAY

LOWER THIRD: FIVE YEARS LATER

The entrance to Aguas Serenas eco-resort: all is placid. White sand, blue sky, thatch-roofed buildings, an open-air structure with sheer white curtains blowing in the breeze.

A brown PIT BULL sleeps in the brush, next to an old wooden sign reading

BIENVENIDO A AGUAS SERENAS!

Just the sounds of the lapping shore, buzzing flies, the breeze rustling the palm trees.

Paradise.

A white van RUMBLES in, its noise a disturbance, wheels CRUNCHING, the doors sliding noisily open.

Out pour the young, athletic legs of our protagonists (27, for the most part), shiny limbs and bright voices.

First, Charlie surveys the scene, hands on hips. Big GRIN.

CHARLIE

I knew it. Perfection. Happy birthday to me!

Then James exits, loaded with BAGS and SUITCASES.

JAMES

You done good, Charlie! Happy birthday, babe.

She strokes his cheek absently, does NOT take any bags.

Then Kate steps out and pauses. She's transfixed -- not by the scenery, by Charlie and James.

KATE

(quietly)

James.

(then louder)

James! Let me help. You don't have to carry everyone's bags.

Kate takes a couple bags while Adrienne and GREG (22, white, the kind of boy who absolutely ruled his high school) stumble out. Their faces are kiss-bitten, hair mussed.

ADRIENNE
 (giggling)
 Shit, Charlie. Are we all on a
 honeymoon together?

GREG
 I thought it was a birthday.

ADRIENNE
 Joke, honey.

Greg straightens his ASU sweatshirt, then shrugs, starts to strip it off. Adrienne, grinning, puts her arm around Charlie's shoulders as they watch. Greg is a specimen.

CHARLIE
 (deadpan, to Adrienne)
 Oh no, however will we remember
 where he went to school.

No problem: Greg pulls an ASU visor from his back pocket and sticks it on his head.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Adrienne, where did you *find* this
 guy?

ADRIENNE
 ("duh")
 ASU.

Greg helps Kate and James with the bag madness. James heaves one up: it's very, very heavy.

JAMES
 Who the hell-- Kate, this yours?
 Damn, girl, what'd you bring?

Kate shrugs, sheepish.

KATE
 You know me. Always prepared.

Charlie steps forward as resort employee PEDRO (40s, male) in a polo shirt comes out to greet them.

CHARLIE
 Ok, bags in a sec. First, photo
 time!

Kate is shaking hands with the resort employee.

KATE
 (to Charlie)
 This is Pedro.

CHARLIE
Hola, Pedro! Charlie. Foto, por favor? Es mi cumpleaños.

PEDRO
Ah, feliz cumpleaños! Sí, sí!

Kate hands Pedro her phone and Charlie arranges everyone in front of the sign. James pulls Greg's visor off.

GREG
 Bro! What're you--

JAMES
 No, Greg, man! You're Wesleyan for this trip.

GREG
 (confused)
 But I went to ASU.

ADRIENNE
 Just pretend, hon.

PEDRO
Uno, dos...

Charlie takes one step back to situate, landing --

-- directly on the sleeping pit bull's PAW.

CLOSEUP: Snarling, SNAPPING jaws, a violent, primal response.

SCREAMING, panic, confusion: James backing up and tripping over the bags, Charlie on the ground, Adrienne's face in terror, Greg frozen. Pedro's yelling for quiet.

But Kate steps in.

KATE
 (controlled)
 NO! BAD DOG!

Kate assumes a power stance, positioning herself between the snarling dog and Charlie. A face-off of wills.

Kate kneels. The dog quiets.

Kate holds out her hand; the dog sniffs. Then she pets the dog gently. Kate's won the dog over.

CHARLIE
Shit! When did you become a dog
whisperer?

Pedro comes with the leash, distraught.

PEDRO
Lo siento. How awful. This is no
introduction to Aguas Serenas!

CHARLIE
I'll say.

Kate looks up.

KATE
What's her name?

PEDRO
Magda. Her owner died last year.
Now she's Aguas Serenas dog.

Charlie stands up, dusts herself off. James tends to her.

JAMES
(to Pedro)
Keep that dog away from us, ok?

Charlie pushes James's hand away.

CHARLIE
Too late, James.
(to Kate)
Thanks. Didn't know you had that in
you!

Kate stands.

KATE
Pit bulls aren't aggressive by
nature.

CHARLIE
Well, that one obviously was.

KATE
I mean, they don't have to be, as
long as you don't provoke them.

JAMES
Kate, it was an accident.

KATE

I know, but all you have to do is own your accident. Animals are much more intuitive than we usually--

CHARLIE

(lightly)

Thanks for the lesson, Professor.

Kate stops talking -- she's put back in her place. Adrienne steps in to moderate, assuming the role of tour guide.

ADRIENNE

(cheerily)

Ok, ok, start over. Reboot. Welcome to Aguas Frescas!

CHARLIE

It's Aguas Serenas.

ADRIENNE

(in a "commercial" voice)

Aguas Serenas! In this quaint, intimate eco-resort, you'll have everything your heart desires. To your right you'll see our five-or-four-star al fresco restaurant, while to your left are the romantic thatched-roof abodes bearing the feather beds of your dreams. Straight ahead lie the crystal-clear waters of Playa del Carmen, where we've gathered to celebrate the blessed birth of one Charlotte Marie Kingston.

Charlie CURTSIES. Adrienne's so over-the-top silly with her megawatt smile that everyone loosens up.

Kate gives the pit bull one last pet, and trails behind as they follow Pedro into the resort. There are a few decorations up: bright hanging GARLAND PUFFS and SKULL ART.

GREG

Whoa! I almost forgot it's Halloween!

CHARLIE

(rolling her eyes)

It's Day of the Dead. Different.

GREG

Huh?

CHARLIE

Have you ever heard of, like,
Wikipedia?

Kate, still following, looks at the picture Pedro took,
milliseconds before the attack.

CLOSEUP on photo: Greg and Adrienne, goofy; James with Kate
smushed up against him; Charlie, about to take a step back.

Below them, unseen, the presence of something TREACHEROUS.

Kate puts the phone down, replacing the photo with the view
of gentle, clear waters: calm, serene, peaceful.

Marring the postcard-perfection is the beach, littered with
tons of driftwood, seaweed, palm fronds and branches. A MESS.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Pedro? The beach looks pretty bad--

PEDRO

Si, from yesterday. We clean up
today, no problem!

CHARLIE

Ok, *great*, 'cause we were all
excited about how it was before?
And the photos online? That's kind
of why we chose this place instead
of the place we stayed at before,
so--

PEDRO

No problem, no problem! We make
beach beautiful for you.

CHARLIE

Well, the weather is *perfect*.
(to James)
See, babe? I told you not to worry
about the storm. It all worked out.

Kate catches up to them.

KATE

I wouldn't call it a "storm,"
Charlie. It was a category 2
hurricane as of 24 hours ago.

CHARLIE

(nerd voice)

"And uh, with a, uh, maximum rotational velocity of 51.2 miles per hour, this Cat 2 hurricane, colloquially referred to as a, uh, 'shitstorm'--"

James is cracking up, Kate smiling wryly. The old gang, back together again.

KATE

Sorry, sorry! Just trying to be factual.

Charlie slings an affectionate arm around Kate's neck.

CHARLIE

And I mean, you know, *thank* you, because what's a vacation without facts? I'm so glad you came.

(to everyone)

Aren't we glad Kate came with us? Even if she did need a little coaxing.

KATE

Charlie, I would *never* miss a chance to binge drink with you.

CHARLIE

Well, we got five years of blackouts to catch up on, so come on, you're bunking with us.

Charlie pulls Kate along to a large BUNGALOW as Kate tries to hide her dismay. But she lets herself be dragged.

KATE

Oh, yeah? I figured I was gonna stay in the little casita--

CHARLIE

(undertone)

Um, you think I want to hear those two scream-boning all night?

On cue, Adrienne gives a PIERCING SQUEAL behind them.

Charlie, Kate, and James turn: Adrienne is clutching her untied BIKINI TOP to her chest. Greg easily hoists her over his muscular shoulder. More of Adrienne's screaming laughter.

JAMES

That Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality
Studies degree, really paying off.

CHARLIE

Nothing more feminist than our God-
given right to fuck hot morons,
sweetie.

KATE

Scream-boning sounds...violent?

Pedro unlocks the bungalow, leading them inside...

INT. BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

Large, breezy, with an open kitchen and a big common area.
Wide glass doors open onto a shady patio with outdoor
furniture and a massive grill. Just beyond, ocean waves
gently slap the beach and hiss back out.

PEDRO

Very nice, yes? I will show your
friends to casita now, but call
reception if you need anything!

CHARLIE

Gracias, Pedro! And, um, the beach?

PEDRO

Yes, no problem! We clean up.

James and Kate drop the bags while Charlie pokes her head
into both bedrooms.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Babe, here's the queen, bring our
stuff.

Kate lugs her heavy suitcase into the other room: small,
neat, clean. Single bed. She sighs.

After heaving her suitcase onto the bed, she opens it up:
it's very neatly packed.

REFERENCE BOOKS and MAPS; SWIM-FINS, GOGGLES, SNORKEL,
HEADLAMP, a neoprene FANNY PACK, DUCT TAPE, a KNIFE, a
COMPASS. Everything looks brand new.

JAMES

Whoa.

KATE
(jumping)
Jesus!

JAMES
You like, *moving* under the sea?

KATE
(smiling)
Shut up.

JAMES
No, for real, this some Jacques
Cousteau shit going on right here--

KATE
Give me a break!

Charlie PASSES THROUGH the common area.

CHARLIE
(calling out to them)
No, it's cool, you guys catch up.
I'll just carry everything. On my
birthday.

JAMES
Did you hear?

KATE
It's her birthday? No way.

JAMES
(gesturing at suitcase)
So what's all this for? You never
even go into the water.

KATE
Not the ocean, sure. But you know
how you guys are doing the cenote
cave dive again? I thought maybe
this time...

JAMES
Oh, for real? Come with us!

Outside, Charlie is talking to Pedro, showing him where she
wants the beach cleaned. Kate looks out the window at her.

KATE
(quieter)
I figure it's the only way to keep
Charlie from hounding me for being
a coward. Like last time.

JAMES

She just likes to tease. Doesn't mean anything.

Kate SITS on the bed and gives him A LOOK. They know each other.

KATE

I guess you would know.

JAMES

Would I? ...I *don't* know.

KATE

What don't you know?

James SITS next to Kate on the bed.

JAMES

(even quieter, closer)

How it feels when you're...not on the same page anymore. She's-- There are problems. With her, with us. All this time...

KATE

I'm sure she'll just power through whatever obstacles are in her way. Shit just bounces right off of her.

JAMES

(quietly)

There are cracks in everything, Kate. No one's invincible. Not even Charlie.

Beat.

KATE

Why are you telling me this?

JAMES

(spell is broken)

Never mind. It's fine. We're fine. Everything's fine. Just don't tell Charlie I said anything.

KATE

Uh, Charlie and I aren't really in the slumber-party-and-secrets phase of things anymore. Plus, it's really not my business.

Kate begins laying out her gear on the bed, piece by piece.

JAMES

Kate--

KATE

No, no, it's ok.

And it really is: she smiles, relaxed. James picks up a reference book, *Exploring Mexico's Cenotes*, and a magazine titled *Underwater Speleology*. It's research, all right.

JAMES

Same ol' A-plus, magna cum laude valedictorian.

KATE

First of all, it was Alice Haneda who was valedictorian and second, only way to fight fear of the unknown: minimize the unknown. Oh, check this out!

She pulls a map out, unfolds it: it's a CAVE SYSTEM, marked up with her notes and highlighted pathways.

JAMES

Huh. Is this the one we--

KATE

--Ojos Rojos, yeah! I just wanted to know what I'm getting into.

JAMES

(laughing, tracing a finger on the map)
Where did you even-- Shit, you got your own itinerary!

KATE

Well, there's a lot of cool stuff down there. I thought if the guide doesn't mind taking some detours--

She shrugs, suddenly EMBARRASSED.

KATE (CONT'D)

Last couple years, I've been trying to be more open to new things, you know? So after we booked our tickets here, I started getting ready...

(quietly)

Anyway, just didn't want to get shit on again for skipping out.

James reads her mood, taps her on the thigh with his fist.

JAMES

Hey, nah, seriously. Proud of you.

Kate picks up a compass, turns it in her hands to make the N match up with the needle.

KATE

Last trip here feels like forever ago. Doesn't it?

Their eyes meet -- and suddenly the air is charged, full of something unspoken but oppressive. Long, long beat.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Wow.

This time, both Kate and James jump. Charlie's leaning against the doorjamb, looking like a *Sports Illustrated* cover in her bikini. She's silent, ASSESSING. Then she smiles.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You didn't tell us you're a prepper now, Kate!

James jumps up a little too quickly, moves to Charlie and holds her from behind, so they're both facing Kate.

JAMES

Our girl here's coming with us tomorrow! To the caves.

CHARLIE

Seriously? What about your big ocean phobia, are you cured?

KATE

(softly)

Cenotes aren't the ocean. I'm not claustrophobic, or anything.

("wait")

Am I?

(resolves)

No. I'm good.

Charlie moves forward smoothly, with deliberation. She picks up the roll of duct tape, twirls it around her wrist.

CHARLIE

Well, sweetie, if you do get scared...just "stick" with me.

Charlie smiles, but the air is still TAUT with awkward tension.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Ok, I'm gonna go for a quick dip
before I have to deal with the pig.

She whirls around and leaves the room.

KATE
(to James)
The what?

SMASH-CUT TO:

CLOSEUP - CHARRED FACE OF A SUCKLING PIG

PULLING OUT: the piglet's sizzling away on the patio grill...

EXT. BUNGALOW - PATIO, TWILIGHT

Island music on the stereo, sunset rays: EVENING MODE warming up. Everyone's got First Night of Vacation vibes. Charlie dances alone, margarita in one hand, cigarette in the other.

Kate and James play CHESS on a tiny travel set at the patio table; Adrienne is making an Instagram story of Greg doing back flips on the sand.

CHARLIE
Babe, can you check on the pig?

James jumps to obey. Charlie drifts over; she's clearly tipsy but still on her game. Kate glances at the grill, grimaces.

KATE
Did we really need a whole pig?

CHARLIE
Nothing but the best for you
assholes! And it cost a pretty
peso, too, believe me.
(beat)
Don't tell me you're a vegetarian
now, Kate!

KATE
No, it's just, I mean...it has a
face.

JAMES
 (to Charlie)
 It's done. I guess? I don't fuckin'
 know, smells good.

Charlie drains her glass, returns to the grill. James sits back down as Charlie gives a shrill two-finger WHISTLE.

CHARLIE
 All right, all right! Everybody!
 Dinner is served!
 (in a flawless Miss Piggy
 voice)
 And the star of the show is moi, a
 slender yet succulent swine in her
 prime!

Adrienne hoots as Greg dizzily shotguns one more beer. Kate picks up her rook, thinking about where to go.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (to James and Kate)
 Guys, move the board, come on.

Kate starts to comply, but James stops her.

JAMES
 (to Charlie)
 One sec, I got her just where I
 want her!

Charlie, annoyed, comes back to the table, glances at the board for two seconds, then decisively moves Kate's bishop.

CHARLIE
 It's Kate in three, babe, can we
 set the table now?

She flounces to the kitchen to get plates. James studies the board, registers the moves, then groans.

KATE
 (amused)
 Remember when we just like, *assumed*
 she was dumb? Because, you know,
 tits?

JAMES
 Mmm, trophy wife body, first wife
 brain! Learned that from Jay-Z.
 (then faux-kindly)
 Hey, though. You don't look all
 that bright yourself, ok? No, I
 mean it--

Kate, laughing, chucks a pawn at him.

KATE
(looking beyond him)
Speaking of which...

Greg comes panting up to them like a happy, drunk puppy, somehow already sunburned.

GREG
You guys see my moves out there?
Still got it!

Adrienne runs over, hops onto his back: he carries her weight like it's nothing. She kisses him on the cheek.

ADRIENNE
C'mon. Mush, mush!

Kate and James watch as she rides him into the kitchen.

JAMES
(admiringly, earnestly)
She is my *hero*.

BUNGALOW - PATIO, NIGHT

The table is set: hurricane lamps and pillar candles lend a SOFT GLOW to the food and everyone's face. Soft, indistinct music blends with the muted surf and a distant wind-chime. Everyone's relaxed, drunk, happy, hungry.

At the head of the table, Charlie stands, weaving slightly.

CHARLIE
Guys, guys. Ok, so before we dig in! Way back in May, when I first started planning my birthday and mentioned coming back here to James, he was like-- James, what were you like?

JAMES
I was like, "Babe, yo, that'd be straight-up *liiiiit*! But like, remembrance of things past is not necessarily remembrance of things as they were."

CHARLIE
Stop showing off, babe, we've all read--
(a glance at Greg)
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 No, he was all, "Waaah, let's just
 throw a party in the *city*, waaah!"

JAMES
 (nodding to others)
 Truth, truth, that is what I said.

CHARLIE
 But I wanted to bring us back *here*,
 because-- Well, to be honest, I've
 never been happier than I was then.
 Senior spring. No, no, like, I'm
 happy now, too -- babe, don't make
 that face! -- it's just...

Charlie takes a huge gulp of her margarita.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I miss that time in our lives so
 much. I miss all of *you* so much.
 And like, who knows how much longer
 we'll be able to just drop
 everything and get away like this.
 God knows it's been too long since
 the last time.

She looks at Adrienne, James, and ends on Kate.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I love you guys. You're the only
 friends who've always let me be my
 best self. The only ones who really
 know me. Thank you for...for coming
 here this weekend, and letting me
 relive all that. Even if it's just
 for a few days.

Long pause. Is Charlie actually getting WEEPY? Without anyone
 noticing, Kate reaches out and puts her HAND on top of
 Charlie's hand. They share A MOMENT.

ADRIENNE
 (through cupped hands)
 Take your top off!

Light laughter, as James stands and grabs Charlie from behind
 in a hug. She looks embarrassed.

CHARLIE
 All right, all right, I'm drunk.
 (gesturing at piglet)
 Let's tear into this bitch.

BUNGALOW - PATIO, 30 MINUTES LATER

The moon is high in the night sky, leaving a silver smear on the ocean.

VARIOUS SHOTS of everyone drinking and laughing; Charlie is shoving meat into her mouth with an exhibitionist, Skinny-Girl-Pigging-Out flair.

CHARLIE

Kate, you have to try the cheek!
You'll love it.

KATE

Um, hard pass.

CHARLIE

I *insist*.

Charlie tears off a giant hunk off the pig's face with her fingers. It glistens in her outstretched hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You're up for trying things you're not *normally* comfortable with, right? So go ahead.

ADRIENNE

(lazily)

Shit's getting real Lord of the Flies around here, is that strictly necessary, Charlie?

GREG

Shit, I'll eat it!

ADRIENNE

Shh, shh.

Kate reaches out, takes the meat. She hesitates, then shoves it in her mouth all at once. Chews.

CHARLIE

Well?

KATE

(reluctantly)

It's good.

Charlie sits on James's lap. Leans forward, rips off the PIG'S TAIL, puts it in her mouth like a tiny cigar to chew on. She's so sexy and disgusting at the same time.

CHARLIE

There's one thing I know for sure
in this life, and it's fuck
vegetarians, Kate.

KATE

(laughing, exasperated)
Oh my God, I'm not a vegetarian!
Forgive me for caring about
animals, and global warming, and,
you know, the *Earth*.

CHARLIE

Give me a break.

KATE

Hmm, you're a *climate change denier*
now? Interesting.

CHARLIE

Oh, no, I'm not denying anything!
I'll be the first to say we're
utterly fucked as a species.

KATE

Okaaaay...

CHARLIE

So: why bother? Look, Kate--

Charlie comes and sits on Kate's lap, strokes her hair.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

In a hundred years, all the major
coastal cities are gonna be
underwater. Just a string of
gorgeous, real-life Atlantises, up
and down the seaboard. But *Earth*?

Charlie stands. She whirls around and around, gesturing at
the starry, moon-lit sky, the ocean waves.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Earth's gonna be fiiiine! The tides,
the jet-streams, fires and floods
and earthquakes and volcanoes,
they're outlasting us. And all the
animals strong enough, or smart
enough, or *fucked-up* enough to
outlive us: they're gonna be fine.

KATE

(wryly)

So, we should take what we can get while we can? Fuck everything?

CHARLIE

Yeah, Kate. Because guess what: nature don't give a fuck about us.

Charlie sticks the whole pigtail in her mouth, sucks all the meat off of it and pulls out the bones. Grins at everyone.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Yummy.

CUT TO:

BEACH - BONFIRE, 1 HOUR LATER

The moon is higher and smaller in the sky; the bungalow glows in the background.

Adrienne and Kate, drunk, share a cigarette by the bonfire, watching the others in the distance: Greg is trying to teach James how to do a flip, while Charlie helpfully criticizes.

ADRIENNE

So. Are you surviving?

KATE

Sure. I mean, it's paradise, right? How're things with you and li'l Gregg?

ADRIENNE

Hmm, how to put this. Ok, so imagine you're eating a cake but it's like, 5% cake and 95% icing--

KATE

Ok, gross--

ADRIENNE

--*BUT*, but, but! You love icing, you never get sick of it, you can't get enough icing, you're like, an icing *fiend*--

KATE

Ok, I get it!

ADRIENNE
--and all you want to do is fuck
icing, all day, every day.

KATE
That does sound amazing.

They watch James trying to help Charlie do flips on the sand.

ADRIENNE
She's really happy you're here.

KATE
(scoffs)
We hadn't talked in, like, a year
when I got the invite.

ADRIENNE
People get busy--

KATE
We live in the same city, Adrienne.

ADRIENNE
It happens.

KATE
Yeah, well, a lot happens.

ADRIENNE
I'm happy you're here. I think
it's...important.

KATE
What do you mean, important? Why?

Adrienne shrugs, a little smile on her face. Charlie falls in
the distance, and James tends to her.

KATE (CONT'D)
(softer)
It does feel nice to be together
again. I've missed this feeling,
too. Not as much as Charlie, maybe,
but still.

ADRIENNE
(watching James and
Charlie)
You know, I always thought you and
James would end up together.

KATE
That's crazy.

ADRIENNE

You guys were always Jim and Pam-
ing it in the cutest way, it was
always that, will they or won't
they thing, until...

Beat. They watch James and Charlie KISSING, backlit by the
moonlight. Kate lies down on the sand, Adrienne follows.

KATE

Yeah, well. It was "they won't."

ADRIENNE

Are you ever like, mad, or--

KATE

No, no way. James needs someone
like Charlie. Strong personality.
Or whatever.

Long silence between them, as Charlie laughs in the distance.

ADRIENNE

(lightly)

Not really about what *James*
needs...

KATE

It was all a long time ago.

ADRIENNE

Ok. Ok. You seem...different.

KATE

(laughing)

Uh-oh. Different how?

ADRIENNE

For one, you called Charlie a
climate change denier. Old Kate
woulda...

KATE

...eaten the entire pig if she
asked me to?

ADRIENNE

I was gonna say, would've *become*
the pig, if it made Charlie happy.

Adrienne puts her cigarette out, glances at Kate.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

That's why it's important you're here. Because--

Adrienne is interrupted by Charlie running over to them, drunk, laughing, James just behind her.

CHARLIE

What are you two plotting over here?

ADRIENNE

Oh, just talking politics, Israel and Palestine, the usual--

CHARLIE

Come on, we're going skinny-dipping!

Adrienne stands up and wipes sand off her butt.

ADRIENNE

I'm in.

Charlie holds her hand out to Kate. Kate shakes her head.

KATE

I'm good here.

CHARLIE

Come onnnn! Please? For me?

An uncomfortable beat.

ADRIENNE

If she's good, she's good, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Ok, ok. Let's all go tragically drown. But naked!

Bikinis and trunks DROP to the sand. Kate watches their bodies disappear into the DARK, CHURNING WATER.

Linger on Kate's face, watching intently, fearful despite herself. The sounds of waves CRASHING, WIND over the sand, crackle of dying fire. The sound of the world, and she's alone in it.

BEACH CHAIRS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kate and Charlie sit on wooden chairs, looking up at the night sky. Charlie's hair is wet, and she wears a thin silk robe. Kate is in shorts and a tank top.

They pass a joint back and forth. When they talk, it's quietly and patiently, as old friends.

CHARLIE

Pedro--
 (holds up the joint)
 --is the best. Period.

KATE

Pedro is 100 percent the best.

CHARLIE

Let's marry Pedro.

KATE

Let's.

They each take another puff.

KATE (CONT'D)

(tenderly)
 It was a nice toast.

CHARLIE

Was it?

KATE

I'm sorry I haven't, um, seen you
 in a while.

CHARLIE

I mean, James and I *did* move to
 Harlem. Bushwick might as well be
 Baltimore. I get it.

KATE

Yeah. Bal-ti-more. I live in
 Baltimore.

Charlie rests her head on Kate's shoulder -- a quick burst of warm affection that's very *Charlie*.

CHARLIE

I'm so glad you're here, Kate.
 Doesn't this feel so nice?
 Familiar.

KATE
It really does.

CHARLIE
Five years goes by so fast.

KATE
Sure.

CHARLIE
...when you're having the best sex
ever.

A beat. Charlie starts laughing, and Kate joins in.

KATE
(laughing, high)
Shut the fuck up.

CHARLIE
Never! I will never shut the fuck
up!
(beat)
I'm glad you came.

KATE
You said that already, stoner.

CHARLIE
But I am.

KATE
And I know.

The tone is still light, even though they're getting a little
intense. Waves crash.

CHARLIE
Kate, come on. Give me something.

KATE
(smiling)
I'm here. I ate the pig. I took the
twin bed. Isn't that the something?

Charlie stands and grabs a NEARBY STICK. She starts drawing
HUGE LETTERS in the sand in front of Kate.

CHARLIE
See, what you don't get is that all
of this, this whole thing, isn't
about you.

KATE
No, no, I know. It's about you,
birthday girl!

CHARLIE
No, fucker.
(wipes brow)
It's about this.

Charlie points to the letters. Kate STANDS to get a better look. Charlie has drawn **C + K** in the sand. Kate is obviously touched. She stares at it and seems to DRIFT OFF somewhere. Then she SNAPS back.

KATE
I mean, you *could* have put the K
first.

Charlie laughs and POKES Kate, who's smiling. This is old Kate and Charlie.

KATE (CONT'D)
This is very sixth grade of you.

CHARLIE
What can I say? You inspire sixth
grade me.

Suddenly, a WHOOSH. A WAVE washes up over their feet, surprising them, and SMEARS Charlie's drawing. Now it's illegible.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Fuck.

KATE
Well.

CHARLIE
(looking down at her smart
watch)
No, I mean. Fuck. I think it's my
birthday right now.

Kate does a PLAYFUL LITTLE DANCE on the C + K smear, ruining it some more. The mess of it is between her toes now. She looks up at Charlie and GRINS.

KATE
Happy fuckin' birthday, babe.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Distinct sounds of SEX, only vaguely muffled through a thin bungalow wall. It's Charlie and James.

Kate rolls over in the dark, trying to shut it out.

Close on her eyes: watery with RAGE, getting more and more frustrated, and red, the feeling swells and SWELLS until--

Kate sits up, SLAMS the wall so hard a piece of it falls off.

KATE
(with unleashed fury)
SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!!!!

Suddenly: Kate is lying back on the bed, the wall intact, nothing disturbed. The sounds of sex continue.

Her rage is real, but her expression of it was imagined.

Kate screws her eyes closed and the pitch of James and Charlie's cries rise until--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PATH TO OJOS ROJOS CENOTE - EARLY AFTERNOON

The loud SCREECHING of a flock of birds suddenly taking flight from a tree, as though fleeing something invisible.

Kate looks up, startled.

The group is hiking on a path through sparse trees, sweating and fighting flies. The women wear bikini tops and shorts, the men are in trunks. Kate has her NEOPRENE PACK on.

Charlie turns, gestures to Greg's ASU trunks.

CHARLIE
Is ASU *paying* you?

GREG
Huh? No...I bought these?

ADRIENNE
Honey, don't listen to her. She's just got PAC-12 jealousy.

CHARLIE
(to no one)
Pack *what*?

Greg and James whoop and holler to hear how far their voices go -- until they are silenced: the path opens up...

OJOS ROJOS OPENING - CONTINUOUS

KATE

Holy shit.

The entrance to OJOS ROJOS feels prehistoric: a cave opening up from darkness, like something alien emerging from below. It's filled with crystal clear, neon-blue water, eerily still. A rickety wooden platform leads into the water.

It is beautiful.

It is menacing.

Kate is shaken to her core.

Charlie walks up to her and puts an arm around her neck.

CHARLIE

Breathe, Kate. We're gonna be right here with you.

(trying to distract Kate)

Now, should we sing to me here or wait 'til we're inside? I think the acoustics will be better in the caves.

MIGUEL (22, slender, chill, friendly) jogs over to the group.

MIGUEL

(searching)

Charlie?

CHARLIE

That's me. It's my birthday.

Everyone groans good-naturedly, Charlie gives a *What?* look.

MIGUEL

Ah! Feliz cumpleaños. Me llamo Miguel. I'll be your cenote god today.

KATE

(to Adrienne)

Did he say "god"?

ADRIENNE

Guide. Jesus, you're not dead yet.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
Also, there is no god.

MIGUEL
Now. Who has been to cenote before?

Everyone raises their hand except Kate.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)
Are you good swimmer?

Kate opens her mouth but can't answer.

ADRIENNE
She's a *fine* swimmer. In a pool.

JAMES
She's a little...open-water-shy.

Miguel takes Kate's hand and walks her to the wooden platform.

MIGUEL
No open water today. Very closed!
Look, you can see the bottom. 10,
15 meters here. Nothing there but
rock. Some fishes. And see, see the
divers! The divers are a-ok. You
will be a-ok with me.

KATE
What about when it's dark?

MIGUEL
Ah! But see, you have your light.
Here, we do orientation.

On Kate, still looking uncertain.

PICNIC TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

While everyone squeezes into their awkward WETSUITS and FLIPPERS, Miguel lays the ground rules.

MIGUEL
First rule. If you breathe in water
through snorkel, is bad, come up.
Second rule. Follow me always. Use
flashlight. Watch your head.

Kate examines the small underwater flashlight around her neck.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

Stalactite is everywhere. Do not be surprised by scuba diver. They come to explore the deep underwater caves. Very magical. But us, we stay on surface, unless you know how to snorkel dive.

Kate practices breathing with the snorkel, struggles with her goggles.

Nearby, a HANDSOME DIVER (35, heavily tattooed) is pulling on a sporty sleeveless suit. Kate smiles at him. He smiles back.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

Try to control breathing. If you become panic, tell me. If you become too cold, tell me. If you become hurt, tell me. I am your god. This trip is maximum one, 3 hours, with water break in one cave. I carry water.

(mostly to Kate)

Do not worry. I know cenote system like my own house. I was born in cenote.

GREG

You were born...there?

CHARLIE

Seriously, Greg.

KATE

One thing, Miguel. Please.

Kate gets her new map from her pack and lays it out on the picnic table.

KATE (CONT'D)

Will we be going to all six caves? And do we come back via the same route in reverse? Also, do you carry first aid supplies? What if--

MIGUEL

Yes, ok, all six caves, *señorita*. But you must leave some to mystery, otherwise where is fun?

Kate sighs. She returns the map to her waterproof pack.

KATE

Ok.

She does a check of the rest of her supplies: underwater FLARES, a KNIFE, GAUZE, DUCT TAPE, ROPE, and a WHISTLE.

MIGUEL

We have life jacket, but is optional. Swimming only with flippers, very easy.

Kate quickly grabs a life jacket. Charlie starts to say something, but Adrienne shakes her head: *No, Charlie.*

As everyone walks toward the entrance platform, Kate stays behind, buckling her life jacket.

Handsome Diver comes over. He shoots a dreamy grin at Kate.

HANDSOME DIVER

Wow, really...prepared, there.

KATE

(sheepish)

I-- I've never done this before.

HANDSOME DIVER

I've done these caves seven times. Trust me, you'll be fine.

KATE

Seven times? You keep coming back!

HANDSOME DIVER

They keep being totally fucking beautiful.

He looks at her pointedly and Kate flushes.

HANDSOME DIVER (CONT'D)

I almost didn't make it this time. Planned the dive for Wednesday, but they closed it after the hurricane. Just opened back up today...

(beat)

You'll have fun, I promise.

KATE

Ok.

HANDSOME DIVER

Look, we'll be on about the same track. Whenever you feel scared, just look down. I'll wink up atcha.

He FLASHES his headlamp three times: ***blink blink blink.***

KATE
 (surprised)
 Aww, that sounds nice. Thanks.

The diver winks and walks toward the platform. Adrienne walks back to Kate, takes her hand and squeezes it.

ADRIENNE
 It's like every single time someone hits on you, you're shocked.

KATE
 (flustered)
 Was he hitting on me?

ADRIENNE
 (taps Kate's pack)
 No, Kate, I'm sure he was just wondering what brand of *whistle* you prefer to use while snorkeling.

KATE
 (enthusiastically)
 Ooh! I switched from basic stainless steel to these brass ones from Acme, they are *tops*.

ADRIENNE
 Sometimes I think you're the dumbest person I love. And I love Greg.

Adrienne walks away. Kate thinks a beat.

KATE
 Wait, you *love* Greg?

ENTRANCE CAVE - AFTERNOON, MOMENTS LATER

A body CRASHING into the crystal clear water and sinking, before popping violently up.

It's Charlie, grinning, GASPING.

CHARLIE
 Feels *amazing*.

James follows, then Greg and Adrienne. Treading with their flippers, they call to Kate.

JAMES
 You got this!

GREG
Swim, baby, swim!

MIGUEL
¡Venga!

Kate grips the hand railing as she walks down the underwater steps. She hesitates at the last step. Looks at her friends' expectant faces.

She JUMPS.

FLASH: Kate and Charlie sitting on a DOCK somewhere. Charlie slips into the water like a fish. From the water:

CHARLIE
You make me feel strong.

BACK TO CAVE:

MIGUEL
Fantástico. Ok, group. Swim around, get comfortable...

FOLLOW very closely on Kate: the sound narrows to only her environment, water SLOSHING, shallow BREATHS, fast HEARTBEAT.

We feel her struggle. Not to stay afloat, but to stay calm.

She looks down at her flippered feet, and the bottom appears so far away. Ahead of her: the DARK MAW of the next cave.

KATE
(whispering to James)
I don't think I can do this.

James takes her hand underwater.

JAMES
Hold on. Let's swim a slow lap.

Together, they take a slow spin around the edges of the cave, Kate occasionally trailing a free hand along the rock wall.

Charlie TRACKS them -- pretends not to watch, but sees all.

MIGUEL
All right, ok, everybody good?
¡Vámonos!

Natural as a sea creature, he slips into the next cave. Charlie casts a BRIEF LOOK back at Kate and James but, unwilling to show any kind of insecurity or neediness, follows Miguel and disappears.

JAMES

It's gonna be great. I promise.

Kate hesitates -- then trails James into the darkness.

CAVE #1 - CONTINUOUS

Magnificent, huge, creepy, dark. LIGHTS bobbing and flashing against the rough walls. ECHOES of laughter, whispers. Adrienne and Greg goof off, spitting water at each other.

Kate, bobbing in the water, gets DIZZY -- spits out her snorkel, starts GASPING. **A panic attack.** She RIPS her goggles off as Miguel and James come close, make soothing sounds.

KATE

I'm-- I'm so dizzy, I can't--

Charlie drifts nearby. Is she worried, or annoyed?

MIGUEL

Ah, pick one place, look, look at one place... Focus...

Kate complies, staring across the cave at the entrance to the next one. She calms down.

JAMES

There you go. Breathe.

Charlie puts a hand on Kate's back.

CHARLIE

(quiet, soothing)

Think of the story you'll get to tell when you get home. The Instagrams. The Instagrams!

ADRIENNE

(to Charlie)

For fuck's sake--

KATE

No, actually, it's, it's helping...

ADRIENNE

Kate, you're not even on Instagram.

KATE

(a little smile)

Yeah, but think of *Charlie's* Instagram!

CHARLIE
See? My 'grams save lives,
Adrienne.

KATE
Sorry, sorry! Go -- I'm ok, go.

Embarrassed at the fuss she's made, Kate puts her goggles back on and PLUNGES her face underwater... It's dark...

WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT?!

Something massive! Drifting, a BLACK SHADOW, distorted by rippled water!

No...just one of a cluster of THREE DIVERS, swimming by like SEALS...

Kate can make out more bodies in the CRYSTAL CLEAR water at different depths, including one or two who seem so distant -- their little TWINKLY LIGHTS far away in the shadowy deep.

A blue-lit TRIO, way deep down, look like ASTRONAUTS exploring the dark abyss of space. Or like ALIENS themselves.

One of the furthest lights flashes right at Kate: **blink blink blink**. The wave of an arm, barely visible.

Kate POPS up from the water, giant smile on her face--

WHOA. James is right there.

JAMES
Got yourself a little diving buddy?

Kate shrugs, a bit embarrassed. Is he jealous?

Charlie swims between them, her back to James, finally staking her territory.

CHARLIE
You all good now, Katie-K?

You can never tell whether Charlie's being nice, or a bitch.

KATE
Yeah, thanks.

CHARLIE
(to James)
Want a ride to the next cave, babe?

She gets James on her back, starts swimming away.

JAMES
 (hooting)
 Let the reparations begiiiiin!

It's cute. Too cute. Kate looks away.

MIGUEL
 Everyone, please, over here.

They gather at the entrance to the next cave, where Miguel waits.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)
 Next cave is very special, but we must be very quiet. No splashing, no noise. *¿Comprende?*

GREG
 (whispering)
 What's "*comprende*"? I don't--

ADRIENNE
 Shhh.

MIGUEL
 Kate, please, with me.

CHARLIE
 Make way, everyone! Special treatment for Katherine, Duchess of Fear!

Kate swims over, embarrassed.

MIGUEL
 (to Kate)
 Path to next cave, is very -- ah, very--

KATE
 Very what? Miguel?

Miguel puts his two palms very close together: *Narrow.*

MIGUEL
 Is fine. Just stay close. Use snorkel.

KATE
 Wait--

Miguel gently grabs her hand and off they go...

NARROW TUNNEL BETWEEN CAVE #1 AND CAVE #2

Boy, is it close in here. The passage is as narrow as a hallway, an aisle, a coffin...

Miguel's next to Kate, but he occasionally has to swim a bit ahead of her (because, again, it's NARROW). Behind her goggles, Kate is FIGHTING PANIC again. Before she can freak--

Miguel STOPS, turns. Puts his finger to his lips as a reminder: *Shhhh*.

Kate swivels, briefly BLINDS Adrienne with her lamp, then gives her the sign: *Shhhh. Pass it on.*

She follows Miguel, only her head poking above the water, into the next cave...

CAVE #2 - CONTINUOUS

A HUGE cave: super high ceiling, where a small hole lets a RAY OF SUNLIGHT stream down. But wait -- why do the walls look so weird...

They're rippling with nested BATS.

Hundreds of them. Guano streaks all the walls, and the rocks. From Kate's reaction, it REEKS in here.

Miguel ushers each person in, gesturing for silence.

Kate spins around in awe, staying as quiet as possible. There's something she LOVES about this cave; she's suddenly happy she came. What if she had missed this?

WIDE from above: We see the line of heads, single file, cutting through the center of the cave, headed to the far exit...

Miguel swims into the next passage. Charlie, Adrienne, and James are close behind. But Greg -- well, he can't resist: he swivels around and gives a PIERCING WHISTLE.

The air fills with leathery WINGS, panicked SQUEAKS, flying RAT BODIES...

Charlie and Adrienne SCREAM and splash through the passage to the next cave. Greg and James laugh and follow.

But Kate -- surprisingly -- lingers, only her eyes poking above the surface. There's something beautiful about a SWARM in movement together.

PASSAGE BETWEEN CAVE #2 AND CAVE #3

Again, the rocky passage NARROWS -- even narrower than the last, with a LOW CEILING to boot.

There are some sticky moments, a couple spots where the men really have to SQUEEZE and PUSH themselves through. The group is a little ahead of Kate... a little further now... *Damn, it's dark...*

The passage widens enough for Kate to PUSH FORWARD and swim to catch up--

Something JERKS HER BACK in the darkness.

Kate's eyes WIDEN and she THRASHES around, her light swinging wildly around the rocky space--

Oh. Her neoprene pack is caught on something. Whoops. She yanks herself free and rushes to catch up with everyone.

We linger as the water settles. Dark. Forbidding. Silent.

CAVE #3

When Kate enters this cave -- large, unremarkable -- everyone's floating, relaxing. She pulls her goggles up.

MIGUEL

Ah, Kate! All good, *si*?

KATE

Good, yeah, great.

MIGUEL

Everyone: this is the skeleton cave. Bones at the bottom.

ADRIENNE

Human? Animal?

MIGUEL

Both.

Greg grabs Adrienne and swings her around in the water.

GREG

(pirate voice)

"You best start believing in ghost stories, Miss Turner...yer *in one*."

As Adrienne giggles, Charlie swims over to Kate.

CHARLIE
 (undertone)
 What are the odds that Greg has
 ever seen a non-Disney movie?

Now he's singing "Just keep swimming" from Finding Nemo.

KATE
 (undertone)
 Slim to none.

They smile at each other. Suddenly Charlie SHRIEKS, kicks,
 stares into the water--

CHARLIE
What the fuck was--

James POPS up, his grin dazzling white in the darkness.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (laughing)
 Asshole!

She starts chasing him through the water. Kate sighs. Alone
 again. She puts her goggles back on, slowly swims around,
 staring into the black depths.

For a long time, nothing. Then, many yards below: a tiny
blink blink blink.

ADRIENNE
 I wish I had a picture of this
 shit.

CHARLIE
 Oh, God, didn't you see? Kate's
 phone is waterproofed to the
 apocalypse degree.

ADRIENNE
 (to Kate)
 Seriously? You're a genius. Take a
 picture of us!

Kate pulls out her waterproofed PHONE while Adrienne and Greg
 arrange themselves on some high rocks.

Greg inexplicably puts a flipper in his mouth. Adrienne lets
 the snorkel dangle from hers.

SNAP. Kate takes the photo.

Greg swims over to a submerged ledge, starts showing off some underwater handstands. Charlie swims over to him, not one to miss out on some friendly competition.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna need that phone, Kate. I have to document this but I don't want to subject you to any of it.

KATE

Knock yourself out.

Kate hands her the phone; Adrienne swims to Greg and Charlie.

James scoots closer to Kate on the rock. They watch Adrienne and Charlie take a cute selfie with Kate's phone, then giggle as they make Miguel take a selfie with them, too.

JAMES

Always. Be. Influencing.

KATE

Hashtag, *muy auténtico*.

From the corner, Charlie whoops.

CHARLIE

(pointing to Greg's
crotch)

Hey, Kate! Do your maps have this on it?

Not understanding, Kate pulls a laminated map out of her pack, peers at it. James palms it down.

JAMES

She was kidding.

(to the group)

You guys might be half the assholes if you had a third the knowledge Kate has!

CHARLIE

(cheerfully)

Cool speech, bro!

James speaks quietly to Kate, as the cave echoes.

JAMES

I like your maps.

KATE

At least someone does.

JAMES

Cut her some slack. It's her--

KATE

--birthday, I know, I heard.

As if on cue, Adrienne and Greg start SINGING "Happy Birthday" to Charlie, who's doing a perfect handstand--

--but Adrienne breaks off with a SHRIEK. A Something's Wrong kind of shriek.

She's swimming away furiously, yelling. Charlie and Greg are also backing up.

Kate withdraws her feet from the water. James stands.

ADRIENNE

(breathless)

It's-- They're -- dead!

WIDE from above: we see the cave is FULL of DEAD FISH floating on the surface.

Closer now: it's not just fish, but WEIRD OCEAN LIFE -- JELLYFISH like plastic bags, NEON FISH that shouldn't be here, tiny SQUID, an OCTOPUS, even a GULL. All dead.

A panic sweeps through the group, except for Miguel.

He treads in the center of the cave, and as chattering in the group increases, FOCUS IN on Miguel. Trying to comprehend. Sound narrows to his feet and arms treading water.

SNAP BACK to Kate. She's got her map out again.

KATE

There's a cave that opens up to the Gulf, just ahead of us.

MIGUEL

Si, si. But opening is very high.

KATE

Maybe the storm flooded ocean water into here? But saltwater animals can't survive in fresh water. So, they died, and the underwater currents made the bodies collect here--

CHARLIE

Wow, thanks, Sherlock. Let's get the fuck out of here.

Miguel makes for the exit to the cave. It's definitely time to fucking go. One by one, they EXIT through a passage.

From ABOVE, the Skeleton Cave is empty now.

Except.

With slicing menace.

A barely visible, MASSIVE SHADOW glides past underwater.

WIDE TUNNEL PASSAGE

Led by Miguel, the group swims through a WIDE TUNNEL with other tunnels branching away from it.

ADRIENNE

Where do these go?

MIGUEL

Cave system is *complicado*.

KATE

That one up there is the one I was talking about. That leads to the ocean. Maybe we could--

MIGUEL

(tight voice)

No time today.

As they pass that branch, Kate LOOKS at it a beat.

GREG

(a beat behind everyone)

Wait...why were there human bones in that last cave?

Miguel stops swimming and turns to face them. His face is serious. Suddenly, it's very quiet.

MIGUEL

The caves, they are master. We are just guest. If you do not breathe right, or swim right, done. If you do not respect the cave: done.

Miguel turns abruptly and swims on.

GREG

Did I ask the wrong question?

CAVE #4

They enter the serene LEDGE CAVE.

It's a smooth, inverted bowl with nothing to hold on to, no rocks, nothing except a NARROW LEDGE running an arm's length above the water line, all the way around.

Greg reaches up and starts doing pull-ups on the ledge, facing the wall. Kate and Charlie share an eye-roll...but then look back to Greg. It *is* kinda hot.

ADRIENNE

Let me try!

Adrienne, barely able to reach the ledge, tries to do a pull-up and fails, splashes back into the water.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

Fuck it, I don't need muscles, I have a masters.

GREG

(grunting)

That's right, baby.

JAMES

I could do that if I wanted to, but I'm busy.

Charlie swats him with some water.

GREG

(earnest)

C'mon, James, you can do it!

While James tries, Miguel looks around, still inspecting, investigating. What is he looking for?

Charlie's at one side of the smooth cave wall, treading. Kate swims over to join her.

KATE

This is wild.

CHALRIE

Right? I feel like we're really *inside* the earth.

Kate flashes her lamp at Charlie briefly. She grins.

KATE

Are we technically spelunkers now?

CHARLIE
Fuck yeah, we are.

This is a nice moment.

SUDDENLY: Kate feels something bump against her flippered foot. She lets out a YELL, JUMPS and SPLASHES, getting Charlie in the face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
What? What? More dead stuff?

Kate, WHIMPERING a little, tries to SCRAMBLE up the wall, but she can't get a hold. Adrienne swims over. She's breathing heavy. She's freaked out.

ADRIENNE
You're okay. You're okay.

KATE
No, it's not -- I mean, I'm not having a panic attack. I felt something! Against my foot.

JAMES
(from afar)
Prolly your hunky tattooed diver man!

Adrienne puts her goggles on and peers down into the water. She comes back up.

ADRIENNE
Nothing. There's nothing. But maybe we dragged some crap in from the dead animals cave...

Kate and Charlie shudder.

CHARLIE
Kate, gimme your knife.

KATE
(small voice)
I *felt* something.

Kate hands over her knife. Charlie takes it solemnly -- then starts STABBING at the water, GRINNING at Kate. She's stabbing at nothing, of course.

CHARLIE
See? I handle it.

Close on the knife thrusts. Little VIOLENT splashes of water.

CAVE #5

Again from ABOVE, we see our group swim into a cave that finally, really, looks like a cave: STALAGMITES protrude from the water, STALACTITES hang from the LOW CEILING. Water DRIPS. Some of the sharp rocks GLITTER.

MIGUEL

Cuidado. Very sharp, go slow.

KATE

(softly)

Wow.

This cave demands the respect Miguel spoke of. They whisper. They swim very, very SLOWLY to avoid getting scratched up.

KATE (CONT'D)

Some of these are, like, 200,000 years old. They grow super-slowly. Like, centimeters per millennium.

Kate reaches out to touch a sharp one, and at the last minute pulls her hand away.

KATE (CONT'D)

We're like...in living history.

Kate looks down and shines her underwater flashlight on the stalagmites around her. So many, like a FOREST OF ROCK.

KATE (CONT'D)

The maps didn't really get into--

A SHOUT. Adrienne again.

UNDERWATER: we see a tiny RIBBON OF BLOOD unfurl from Adrienne's calf.

ADRIENNE

Shit!

Next to her, Greg's breaths get shallow. Kate swims over and, with James's help, HOISTS Adrienne onto a rock.

CHARLIE

(to Greg)

You ok there, Hemsworth?

ADRIENNE

(wincing)

Oh, fuck, right -- he has this thing. About blood.

GREG
(gasping)
And... asthma...

CHARLIE
What?

GREG
(coughing now)
And asthma!

Kate gets out GAUZE and DUCT TAPE from her neoprene.

KATE
(to no one and everyone)
Aren't you glad I brought my
prepper stuff now?

ADRIENNE
Fuck nature.

Kate inspects: it's a FAIR-SIZED scrape, oozing watery blood.
She starts patting it dry with some of the gauze.

JAMES
Seriously, man, asthma? Do you have
your inhaler?

CHARLIE
Where would he keep his inhaler?
Kate's psycho bag is full.

Greg's face is reddened. PANIC is setting in. The group is
dissolving into DISARRAY.

GREG
Is it done? The blood?

KATE
(to James and Charlie)
Can you guys calm him down?

Kate has made a little gauze pad, and is fastening it to
Adrienne's leg by wrapping her whole calf in duct tape.
Adrienne grits her teeth.

KATE (CONT'D)
(to Adrienne)
Can you swim? I dried you off
pretty good so the tape should
hold.

This is Kate shining, taking care of things. Adrienne's grateful for the tenderness while Charlie and James awkwardly try to calm Greg.

Miguel stands on the tallest rock he can find.

MIGUEL

Company policy is, return if injury. We go back now.

Charlie CLIMBS up next to him. She puts a hand on his arm.

CHARLIE

We're almost to the end. Reconsider your policy.

Miguel looks wary. Greg is calming down.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Look, our girl is fine. Captain America over there is fine. We're all fine.

(to Adrienne and James)

And this last cave is a cannot-fucking-miss, you guys, remember?

Kate stares at her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Whattaya think, Kate? Ms. Maps? It's the best one, and you've never seen it. You *have* to see it.

KATE

If Miguel says we should go, maybe we should go? Don't you think? Like, Adrienne's bleeding, she's held together with literal duct tape--

CHARLIE

(exasperated)

Honestly, it was just a scratch! Adrienne, right?

ADRIENNE

Your concern is truly touching, Charlie.

CHARLIE

It'll add ten minutes to our trip, tops.

KATE

But seriously, shouldn't we listen
to the only expert here...?

She looks helplessly at James...who is NO HELP at all.

Miguel starts to speak but is cut off by Charlie.

CHARLIE

(in Spanish, dead serious)
*The next cave. Now. Or I will
report you.*

Miguel, now threatened, climbs down from the rock. He is a
man without a care now: *It's your fuckin' grave, gringa.*

GREG

(cracking)
What? What's happening?

MIGUEL

(to Adrienne)
Your choice.

Adrienne sighs. Charlie swims over with a pleading look.

CHARLIE

You don't have to get me anything
else! Coming with me to the last
cave can be my present--

ADRIENNE

(exasperated, relenting)
Bitch, this whole trip is your
present! I took time off work!
(to Greg)
Greg, hey, it's ok. No more blood.

Adrienne gives her legs an experimental kick. Everyone waits,
Charlie with a cartoonish hopefulness. Kate's frustrated --
but not enough to protest again.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

(sighing)
All right. But let's make it fast.

Miguel swims toward the cave exit and the others follow.
After Greg, Adrienne -- grim-faced -- brings up the rear.

PASSAGEWAYS TO CAVE #6

They move quietly, tensely. Charlie's annoyed, Miguel's
pissed. The passageways Miguel takes keeps branching off.

KATE
 Didn't we just make two right
 turns?

But no one answers. Just silent swimming. They take another
 turn and CREEP through a passageway as it narrows.

KATE (CONT'D)
 (trying)
 There's a whole...system.
 Underneath.

And deep below: **blink blink blink**. We see it. Kate doesn't.

It's super-narrow, a single-file kind of situation, with
 stalagmites poking up through the water. Everyone's BREATH is
 labored, close.

A brief, high YELP from Greg.

Close on Greg's face, crushed up against the ceiling of the
 passageway. His lower body THRASHES. He's a big guy. STUCK.

GREG
 (gasping)
 Guys? I can't -- I'm -- help -- I
 can't move -- Something's got me--

There's no turning around for anyone, it's so tight.
 Everyone's TALKING at once, trying to figure it out.
 Eventually Miguel DIVES UNDER all of them.

While he's under, it's deadly silent but for the knocking of
 water against the cave walls, and close, wet breathing.

Finally, Miguel POPS up next to Greg.

MIGUEL
 Just foot! Ok now. Is ok.

ADRIENNE
 Just breathe, ok?

JAMES
 These fuckin' stalagmites are all
 under us.

Greg breathes slowly, and one by one, they move on.

Underwater, Adrienne's swim fins flick, barely touching
 SOMETHING IN THE DARK. Then gone.

CAVE #6

Wow, Charlie wasn't kidding: this cave is *breathtaking*.

As our group swims in, there's a sense that everyone's thinking, *Ok, this was worth it*. It's a reprieve from the tenseness.

The cave GLOWS with PHOSPHORESCENCE. Everyone swishes their hands and fins to make FAIRY SPARKLES in the water. MAGICAL.

CHARLIE

(to Kate, in fake-Kate voice)

"Thank you for forcing us to come to the last cave, Charlie." Oh yeah, no prob, guys, here to help.

But she's grinning, and Kate reluctantly smiles back. Over by Adrienne, Greg pulls out his dick underwater (offscreen), waves it around:

GREG

(to Adrienne)

Whoooooo, I'm a unicorn! My jizz is magical!

She laughs. In his dumb Greg way, he's helping her relax. Everyone's feeling more normal. Except Miguel, still alert.

FROM FAR, FAR BELOW: We look up at our happy gang, their bodies tracing sharp shadows at the distant surface.

A deeply beautiful yet utterly foreboding image.

Charlie and Greg are having an underwater somersault competition, with Adrienne as the judge. James swims over to Kate again. They speak in an undertone.

JAMES

So, you glad you came today?

Kate lets a beat stretch out.

KATE

(quietly)

What was that, back there?

JAMES

What're you talking about?

KATE

I needed you to back me up.
Adrienne needed you to back us up.

JAMES

Don't make this into a big thing--

KATE

No, it's just kind of like, if the world doesn't conform to Charlie's needs, she pulls a meltdown out of her back pocket until she gets what she wants. Even if her friend is literally bleeding...

James shrugs, looking into the water. What's he supposed to say? He doesn't have the balls to stand up to Charlie. But no one else does either.

WHOA! Charlie POPS up from underwater, just in front of them.

CHARLIE

I won.

JAMES

Huh? What's that?

CHARLIE

I beat Greg. Over there. Weren't you watching?

KATE

He didn't need to. You always win.

Charlie and Kate trade smiles that have miles of meaning under the surface.

MIGUEL

(firmly)

We go now.

Everyone turns. Miguel is at the entrance to the cave.

CHARLIE

Where are all the divers, Miguel? I haven't seen them in here.

MIGUEL

Not many people this far in.

CHARLIE

(triumphantly)

We're not "many people," my friend.

MIGUEL

But we go now. *Vámonos*.

From his face, he's DEEPLY UNEASY.

PASSAGEWAYS TO CAVE #5

The gang's pretty tired. It's that point where you're like, *Ugh, shit. I forgot how long it took us to get here.*

CHARLIE

I can't wait to suck down a giant marg. Adrienne, how's your leg?

ADRIENNE

("Now you care?")

Fine.

Miguel keeps putting his face underwater, like he's looking for something.

Or looking OUT for something...

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

Actually... My legs are cramping up a little. Can we take a break before that insane cave with all the rocks?

They're close to the entrance to the stalagmite cave.

MIGUEL

Yes, short break. Very short, *si*?

Kate swims over to Adrienne.

KATE

Hey. Do you want my life vest? I don't really need it.

ADRIENNE

God, I know I should say no, but *yes*, that would be amazing. Thanks.

Life vest on, Adrienne floats on her back with a big sigh.

Kate DIVES into the water to look for her hot scuba buddy.

Very dark, very deep. She turns off her headlamp: now it's BLACK. She tries blinking her own light: **blink blink blink**.

Darkness...then, way, way down: **blink blink--**

Behind her mask, Kate frowns. She swims a little deeper, her headlamp illuminating nothing but blue water--

A RED CLOUD surrounds her.

Confusion, then horror: *OH GOD-- BLOOD--*

Kate SCREAMS an underwater scream, air bubbling out, her headlamp swinging WILDLY in the RED MURK. A small THING floats past, she instinctively grabs it, thrashes up...

Kate BREAKS the surface GASPING and screaming, COUGHING. BLOOD sloughs off her. Everyone turns.

JAMES

Hey, hey, what's wrong?

KATE

Look--!

She holds up the THING: it's a TORN HEADLAMP. She's shaking uncontrollably.

JAMES

What is that?

KATE

It's ripped up-- The diver-- there, there's all this blood, he's hurt or something--

GREG

BLOOD?!

He's already scrambling over to the lone rock jutting into the cave, pulling himself onto it. Adrienne looks confused, Charlie annoyed.

ADRIENNE

Babe, it's ok, wait, everything's ok, hang on--

JAMES

Don't go losing your shit again, big man--

CHARLIE

Everyone, calm the fuck down!

MIGUEL

Kate, please, can you--

Miguel takes the torn headlamp from her. Everyone shuts up, except for Greg, who's starting to wheeze already.

Miguel examines the ripped elastic and shattered glass.

Silence. Then--

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Tiburón.

GREG

(screaming)

MY AUNT LIVES IN TIBURON! THAT MEANS SHARK! THERE'S A FUCKING SHARK IN HERE!

What an inconvenient time for Greg to finally know something.

Everyone flattens themselves against the cave walls (except skeptical Charlie), starts yelling and screaming: ad-libbing disbelief, fear, anger. With the ECHOES, it's total insanity.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, but there is not a *shark* in this freshwater cave system!

KATE

Actually, there are sharks that can survive in fresh *and* salt water--

CHARLIE

Don't *actually* me, Kate! How would a shark even get into these caves? Did it call a fucking Lyft?

Kate, as always, subsides into silence. Greg, gasping, is pulling SHIVERING Adrienne up onto the tiny rock with him. There's barely enough room for them both.

Now Miguel and Charlie are ARGUING in quiet, rapid Spanish. Kate's trying to follow, but her high school Spanish is no match. James is looking helpless (what's new).

MIGUEL

Enough. We go, now, fast. Rápido.

CHARLIE

Wait, wait. WAIT! What are we going to do, race through all those stalagmites and get shredded?

Everyone looks at her like, *You got any better ideas?* So she tries a different tack.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Also, am I the only one who cares that there might be a freakin' diver who's hurt down there? Not from a *shark*, but clearly something happened to him.

(to Kate)

I mean, he's *your* little buddy, don't you want to see if he's--

MIGUEL

No! Diver did not hire me, *you* hire me. I keep *you* safe.

Unseen by anyone, a tiny THREAD OF BLOOD, no thicker than a hair, trickles down from Adrienne's duct tape bandage.

Charlie is screaming at Miguel in Spanish (something *not* woke, you can be sure of that).

Kate looks at James: *Do something!* James is like, *Look at her, you can't talk to her when she's like this.*

CHARLIE

Look, I don't think we should just rush out of here like crazy people, someone's *actually* going to get hurt if we do that--

MIGUEL

¡Cállate! Everyone, follow me. We go.

He swims to the entrance to the next cave, looks back. They all look at Charlie.

CHARLIE

(steely)

No one is leaving yet. We stick together. Miguel, here's the plan--

MIGUEL

Fuck you.

To everyone's surprise, even Charlie's, he turns and swims away. He's GONE.

A long silence, except for Greg trying not to hyperventilate. Everyone stares at Charlie. She recovers quickly.

CHARLIE

Ok, well, fuck that guy. We know the way back. Hell, Kate has like, five maps! And I was keeping track, too, by the way. Let's not panic, for fuck's--

SPLASH!

The diver's HAND and TATTOOED ARM shoots up in the center of the cave, breaking the water, waving: *HELP!*

KATE

Oh my God, that's him!

She swims over as fast as she can, GRABS his hand to PULL HIM UP...

It's just a bloody arm.

Everyone. Fucking. SCREAMS.

CAVE #5

The stalagmite cave again. They swim slowly, to avoid getting sliced. And holy shit, has the mood ever changed.

We see each GRIM FACE in order: Charlie in the lead, slim and graceful; James close behind, looking back for Kate, who is angry and scared; Adrienne, exhausted and pale as hell, next to Greg, who is OPENLY WEEPING as he swims.

CHARLIE

(hissing)

Greg, I swear to God, if you don't fucking stop *blubbing*--

ADRIENNE

Charlie, can you just--? Please.

Kate drops back a little to talk to Adrienne.

KATE

(whispering)

Are you ok, Aid?

With a shock, Kate sees how frightened Adrienne is.

ADRIENNE

(whispering)

My leg...I think the tape's a little loose? And maybe... I'm still bleeding? Oh, God, Kate... Don't tell Charlie, ok--

KATE

(whispering)

Shh, it's ok. We're gonna get out of here, all of us. Together.

On Charlie: She can hear everything. Her face hardens.

Swimming... Swimming... Swimming...

Suddenly -- everyone seems to realize at once: *Why can't we hear Greg?*

ADRIENNE

Greg?

Silence.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

(alarmed)

GREG!

Her voice ECHOES.

CHARLIE
(hissing)
Shut up! Do you want it to hear us?

ADRIENNE
(out of her mind)
FUCK YOU, CHARLIE! GREEEEEEEG!

A huge, wheezing GAAAAAAAAAASP! From the side of the cave.

James is first to reach Greg, cowering behind a stalagmite. He's deep in an ASTHMA ATTACK, looking utterly TERRIFIED.

GREG
Please... I'm sorry... just...
just, don't... leave-me-here...

He's staring at Charlie -- because he's talking only to her. Greg may be dumb, but even he knows who's in charge.

JAMES
Hey, hey, big man! What are you
talking about? I'm counting on you
to Aquaman our way outta this shit.

Greg's really trying not to cry. He squeezes out a smile.

CHARLIE
Jesus Christ. Give him the life
vest, Adrienne. I'll drag his ass
out of here myself.

They strap the vest on Greg (even maxing out the straps, it barely fits). He floats on his back and Charlie dutifully starts pulling him by the scruff... carefully, carefully...

Painfully slow. Painfully suspenseful.

Now James takes over Greg duty, letting Charlie swim ahead again.

But ok. They're past the worst of it now, almost to the entrance of CAVE #4 (inverted-bowl ledge cave)--

Adrienne, who's fallen behind, SCREAMS.

Everyone turns.

IT'S A FIN.

Oh, God -- it PASSES Adrienne... ZOOMS toward the others, cutting the water clean like a knife, which is AWFUL...

Then it disappears. Which is so much worse.

No one breathes. Not even Greg. The world may have stopped spinning, for all they know.

As if by MAGIC, Greg is WHIPPED into the nearest rock formation. *CRUNCH*: his skull, bashed.

Everyone SCREAMS.

The shark, underwater, has him by the LEGS -- we track Greg's LIFE-VESTED upper body as it's DRAGGED all around the cave, *SMASHING* into stalagmites, *RICOCHETING* violently from one to the next, flesh RIPPING to shreds against the rocks.

Absolutely HORRIFIC and GORY! Everyone's screaming!

Barely conscious, close to DEAD, Greg SWISHES past Adrienne--

She GRABS him, screaming -- and now ADRIENNE is pulled along, too, back toward the others -- until Greg is finally DRAGGED UNDERWATER, taking Adrienne under with him.

	JAMES	KATE
Fuck!		Adrienne, noooo!

Charlie looks stunned. Now what?

But Adrienne POPS up, spluttering, RIGHT IN FRONT of them.

Crying, she struggles to go BACK to Greg, somewhere underwater, but James and Kate drag her into the next cave...

CAVE #5

...where Charlie has already pulled herself onto the NARROW LEDGE. She kneels sideways -- one leg in front of the other -- reaches a hand down.

CHARLIE
(to James and Kate)
Hurry, you push, I'll pull.

Working together, they get Adrienne onto the ledge. Then Kate's pushed/pulled up. Finally, James.

The ledge is too narrow to sit on, but the sloping bowl ceiling means they can't stand comfortably, especially with their clumsy flippers.

But ok. They're safe. For now--

Except, oh, God: *Adrienne is a bloody mess*. Her arms and legs are SHREDDED from hanging on to Greg while he was pinballed. She looks like fucking Carrie in a cave. And she is in SHOCK.

Kate is crying as she tries to comfort zombified Adrienne. She gets gauze out of her neoprene pack, starts dabbing, but... Jesus. What's the point?

KATE

(lying)

They-- ok, these are pretty shallow, actually? I think they'll, like, scab over... Let's wait for the water to dry and see what--

CHARLIE

Sharks can smell a drop of blood in a lake. It's not going to work.

JAMES

C'mon, guys, let's--

KATE

So now you're a shark expert, Charlie? We'll tape her up--

CHARLIE

That shit doesn't work, and you both know it.

(to Adrienne)

Your leg was bleeding back there. Yeah, I heard you two whispering about it.

(beat)

You basically left a little trail of bloody breadcrumbs. And look what happened.

A stunned silence. This is going too far, even for Charlie. Something SNAPS inside Kate.

JAMES

Jesus, Charlie.

Looks like James grew a pair, finally. But when Charlie CUTS A LOOK at him, he looks away, silent.

KATE

(razors in her voice)

You're blaming *her*? We could've turned around when she first cut her leg and none of this would've even happened. If it's anyone's fault, it's yours.

CHARLIE

Because I'm supposed to know a
fucking shark would be--

JAMES

Shhhhhh!

A FIN blades through the water, entering the cave. As the group watches, FROZEN, the fin cuts a slow circle around and around, looking for its prey.

Very quietly, Adrienne starts to GIGGLE. A little louder. Now it's a LAUGH. Then hysterical HOWLING. She's lost it.

ADRIENNE

It's -- it's like a cartoon! I
can't -- what if it's just, like, a
guy, wearing a *fin hat* on his, his--

She's dissolving into mania. No one moves. The fin circles. Adrienne melts into CRYING.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

Greg was so sweet, you guys. Like,
really sweet. Oh my God, he talked
to his *mom* every night, she--

CHARLIE

(hissing)

Be fucking serious for once in your
life, Adrienne.

Adrienne starts to WAIL. Charlie SHOUTS at her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Shut the fuck up! Do you want
to get us killed? Stop it!
Shut up shut up shut up!

JAMES

Come on, guys. Both of you.
Just take a breath. Ade, I'm
so sorry. Charlie, give her a
minute. Just one minute.

Enough is enough. Kate opens her mouth and SCREAMS a primal scream, one that fills the entire cave, her neck veins throbbing. She is DONE with Charlie.

KATE

SHUUUUT UUUUUUUP!!!!

The fin slips underwater, out of sight.

Charlie turns to Kate.

CHARLIE

(dangerously)

What did you say to me?

Kate's still vibrating with newfound rage. It looks unfamiliar on her, and maybe she's even a little scared of it still, but she's leaning into it.

KATE

You are not...always...the decider.

CHARLIE

(scream-whispering)

Then who is? You? James? When have you ever decided something in your entire miserable life? You, who can't commit to a job or a man or *anything*, because you're afraid of, what? Failure, rejection? God, Kate. Life will be much easier if you accept it. You're the kind of person who is just. Fucking. Average. I mean, hell. The last time you decided to really go for something, God, that had to be about five years ago, right?

(to James)

Right?

SOUNDLESS FLASH

Five years ago. Lightning fast images: James's hand on Kate's bare thigh. Her tiny room on the beach. Darkness. Mouths open to the shape of moaning.

BACK IN THE CAVE

Oh, shit. Now it's out there. Charlie knows something. Something true. The mix of RESPECT and RESENTMENT on her face reveals her, finally. Even Adrienne quiets.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You thought I didn't know.

SOUNDLESS FLASH

James's hand pulls at a sheet. Moving up his leg, his ass, his lower back.

On Charlie: smoking a cigarette on the beach, in the dark.

BACK IN THE CAVE

JAMES

Let's all just take a breath.

But no one is paying any attention to James.

KATE

(evenly)

I thought those were "your best days"? It doesn't even matter, Charlie. A quick fuck behind your back? It changed nothing. You stayed exactly who you were, and I stayed exactly who I was, and that was just perfect, wasn't it? That's exactly the way you wanted it.

A beat. The sound of water lightly sloshing.

Charlie's SHOCK at being spoken to this way subsides into shrewd calculation.

CHARLIE

You know why he did it, right?

Silence. James opens his mouth but says nothing.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(thickly)

He felt sorry for you. Scared of the water, left behind all day. Poor little thing.

SOUNDLESS FLASH

James's face as he pauses before leaving her room. Something like regret and lust, intermingled.

Kate alone in that room, staring up at the ceiling. Looking shocked at herself, but happy -- and feeling her POWER, for once.

BACK IN THE CAVE

Now, here in this cave, Kate's remembering what it felt like to have that brief taste of SECRET DOMINANCE over Charlie.

KATE

You weren't expecting me to do that, were you? Not little mousy Kate. But you were wrong. Just like you've been wrong all day today. 'Cause, *ACTUALLY*, there *is* a shark that can survive in both salt and freshwater. It's called a bull shark and it adapts, Charlie. It kills -- that's what it's built to do -- and it adapts.

Adrienne WHIMPERS, breaking the tension. Kate inches toward her and pulls out some more DUCT TAPE.

CHARLIE

This is a waste of time. We should be getting the fuck out of here. But we can't tow her around.

ADRIENNE

(crying)
I'm right here!

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, babe. Look, we can send help. The shark can't get you up here.

ADRIENNE

You want me to...wait here? Stand here and...wait?

The idea is cold and absurd. It hangs in the air.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

(small)
I don't want to die.

It's a plea to a tribunal.

The FIN reappears, cutting through the pool. The splitting of water is the only sound. It heads OUT OF THE CAVE, toward the entrance of the cenote system.

A little sigh.

CHARLIE

Now. Now we move. Give me the map, Kate. I'm getting us out of here.

Kate, newly full of rage and power, gives her a LOOK.

KATE

No.

CUT TO:

NARROW TUNNEL

Miguel swims steadily through INKY BLACK water, opaque as oil. His lamp DIMLY LIGHTS the way. The ceiling is LOW AND TIGHT, he can't even lift his head all the way above the water. The sound of BREATHING echoes off the cave walls.

This is a tunnel we haven't seen before.

Something else is different: Miguel, so sure, who grew up in the cenote, who knows these caves inside and out, is AFRAID.

Suddenly he STOPS: *What was that?* A swishing of water.

A few silent TEARS fall down his face. He can't help it. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

He continues. Here, the tunnel gets so narrow he has to dive underwater to go through. A big BREATH, then he DIVES.

DARKNESS. He can't see anything. We can't see anything.

And then suddenly, fuck, the blunt FACE of the SHARK. *Coming straight at him.*

Miguel SCREAMS underwater. Disoriented, he turns and swims, furious, as fast as he can.

Finally he POPS UP above the surface, gasping, little screams escaping. But, oh God, the place he's popped up in, it's so NARROW, he can barely move--

He's STUCK. His upper body is WEDGED between two cave walls. We move down to see his legs are THRASHING under the water. No foothold, no leverage.

And going straight toward those thrashing legs -- the SHARK.

Close on Miguel's face at the moment of attack. A blood-curdling SCREAM.

CUT TO:

CAVE #5

Miguel's SCREAMS carry. The group looks up at once. His agony resonates. It's a catalyst to spring them into action.

CHARLIE

Give me the map, Kate. Now.

KATE

You don't know how to read these maps.

CHARLIE

How would you know what I can and can't do?

KATE

Oh, sure. You, who absolutely skewered me for these maps when we came into this, this *hellhole*--

CHARLIE

Don't be petty. It doesn't look good on you.

KATE

Unlike you, I don't care what doesn't look good on me. So you can stop trying to put me in my place with shit like that.

Furious about not getting her way for once, Charlie STANDS fully and walks on the narrow ledge toward Kate and Adrienne.

CHARLIE

I'm not dying in these caves.

Charlie LUNGES toward Kate and her maps.

KATE

Charlie, stop!

But Charlie doesn't stop. She CHARGES ahead and tries to wrestle the maps out of Kate's hands. In the scuffle, Charlie topples Adrienne. Adrienne starts to SLIP, and Kate grabs onto her, the maps falling into the water.

Despite Kate's grip, blood-soaked Adrienne PLUNGES into the pool with a DEAFENING SPLASH.

She pops back up, gasping.

KATE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

It's ok. It's ok. We heard it way out there. Just get out of the water, Adrienne. Hurry.

Adrienne, a little stunned, swims back to the wall.

KATE (CONT'D)

Good girl, yes, great.

Adrienne tries to PULL HERSELF UP on the ledge -- no, of course she can't do it now, bleeding and weak! She couldn't do it before! She's CRYING in fear and frustration.

Kate CROUCHES, REACHES for her, but she can barely stay balanced on the ledge herself, much less pull Adrienne up--

There it is. A SHARK FIN, cutting the surface of the water.

KATE (CONT'D)
 (urgent)
 Now, Adrienne. Now.

But Adrienne's look is BROKEN. Tears spill down her face.

ADRIENNE
 I can't. I can't.

KATE
 (quickly)
 No! Shut up and listen to me! Turn
 around. When it's close enough, you
 punch it square in the nose. In the
 nose, Adrienne. Ready?

Solemnly, Adrienne turns. The fin blades steadily toward her. She breathes, tries to find resolve. The shark LIFTS out of the water, and we see its DEAD EYES and GAPING MOUTH--

KATE (CONT'D)
 NOW!!!!

With everything she has, Adrienne PUNCHES the shark in the nose. The shark retreats!

A beat of shock, and then ELATION. James and Charlie CHEER. What a turn of events! Maybe they *can* beat this asshole.

With no time to waste, Kate LEAPS into the water and starts PUSHING Adrienne up.

KATE (CONT'D)
 (to James)
 Help me!

James kneels and leans down to GRAB Adrienne as Kate PUSHES. Charlie tries to help, too, but James loses Adrienne's arms.

She FALLS back onto Kate.

For a second, Kate is plunged underwater, where she opens her eyes. In the thick distance, she sees the SHARK. It's PISSED.

Kate and Adrienne are treading in the water, GASPING. Quickly, Kate reaches into her neoprene, grabs the KNIFE. Gets herself set.

This is Kate and Adrienne versus the shark, woman versus vicious, predatory nature.

The shark DARTS straight at Kate. Kate SCREAMS and PLUNGES the knife directly into the meat of the SHARK'S EYE.

The shark JERKS away, taking the knife with it.

But it's not done yet.

Underwater, the shark chomps Adrienne's legs in its MASSIVE MOUTH and yanks. Adrienne SCREAMS and SCREAMS: it echoes so loudly that Charlie covers her ears.

The screams land on her friends' faces, tortured as they watch, utterly helpless. *Adrienne is dying.*

KATE (CONT'D)

No!

Kate SWIMS toward Adrienne and the shark, but she can't get close -- too much thrashing.

Adrienne is DRAGGED away, popping above water then going back under, CLUTCHING futilely at the smooth stone walls.

Then both the shark and Adrienne are gone.

Kate's breath, thick with tears. Silently, she cries.

The others stand there, stunned. Frozen. Finally:

CHARLIE

(shaky, panicked)

This is fucked.

JAMES

(disbelieving)

She's...she's...

CHARLIE

We-- We have one goal. To get out of here. One. That's it.

JAMES

How did that...she and Greg are...

CHARLIE

We have to get out. Anything else is pointless.

KATE

Pointless to you.

Through silent tears, Kate gathers up her maps, floating around in the water.

Folds them deliberately, puts them in her pack. Then, like a fucking SUPERHERO, she REACHES and clutches the ledge with ONE HAND and then the other.

She PULLS herself up onto the ledge, all by her goddamn self.

SOUNDLESS FLASH

Timed to each new step Kate makes getting up on the ledge:

Charlie's face, smiling. [knee]

Wider: Charlie standing on a beach in a white dress. [step]

Now Charlie opens her mouth. [step]

She's laughing? Or screaming? [stand]

BACK TO CAVE

Wobbly as a newborn deer, Kate fully STANDS.

KATE (CONT'D)

We're going to the next cave, and then we're going to find the ocean outlet. The cave with the hatch that opens to the sea. The faster we can get out of these caves, the better.

CHARLIE

That's insane. You have no idea how far up the opening is, how far away from shore we'd be! Miguel said--

KATE

I know exactly how far we'd be. I know the maps because I studied them. Because I'm not fucking stupid and reckless.

CHARLIE

No. We keep pushing forward. In the next passage, there's a tunnel that splits off, a shortcut to the entrance. We should take it.

KATE

A secret shortcut tunnel? Really?

CHARLIE

Miguel told me, Kate. In Spanish.

KATE

Oh, oh, oh. Miguel *told* you in a language none of us understand, at a moment none of us heard. Gotcha.

Silence.

KATE (CONT'D)

Well, my map doesn't have a shortcut on it. So have fun. James? You coming with me?

They both turn to James. He's like, *Oh shit*.

JAMES

You all are not making me be the tiebreaker here.

KATE

Are you *kidding me* right now? Charlie's the one whose decisions got us in this mess--

CHARLIE

Fuck you, Kate.

KATE

--but now you're gonna trust her to get us out?

He looks back and forth between them, then DIVES underwater.

He pops up again at the entrance to the passage, looks back, then swims out.

Charlie and Kate glare at each other before following.

WIDE TUNNEL PASSAGE

James is clinging to an outcropping of rock. Along the passageway, TUNNELS branch off to the left and right.

JAMES

Ok. Let's decide. Ocean tunnel, or shortcut tunnel? Kate, bring out the maps--

CHARLIE

Enough with the goddamn maps.

She swims about a dozen yards to the left, to the opening of a tiny, dark TUNNEL.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This one. We take it straight to the first cave, bypass everything in between.

KATE

(incredulous)

Are you crazy? We have no idea if that thing branches off, gets too low, nothing--

CHARLIE

You said it yourself, Kate. We have to get out of here as soon as possible. I'm giving you that option now. So do you want to get out, or do you want to get your own way? Which is it?

Kate turns helplessly to James.

JAMES

(quietly)

Look, Kate--

CHARLIE

By all means, guys, take your time.

JAMES

You know she's not going to come with us. And I can't let her go on alone.

KATE

So, I'm being punished...for *not* being the stubborn asshole?

JAMES

Please don't splinter the group. I'm begging you. Do this for me.

Kate stares at him, then turns to look ahead on the right, at the LARGE, more welcoming passage leading to the ocean cave.

CHARLIE

Ok, *chums*. See you on the other side. Or not.

She slips into the tiny opening, and is gone.

KATE

She fucking knows we're going to follow her. I can't stand it.

JAMES
 (quietly)
 I hate it, too.

They both swim after her.

CHARLIE'S TUNNEL

Close on Charlie: For once, we see her uncertainty, her fear. This place is tight as fuck, she *doesn't* actually know where she's going, and now she's responsible for whatever happens.

She hears the other two behind her.

CHARLIE
 (with false cheer)
 Now, don't lose your buddy.

She turns and shines her lamp on their faces: both PISSED.

KATE
 You didn't have a problem with leaving a buddy behind before. What changed?

This HURTS. But Charlie isn't going to break, goddammit.

CHARLIE
 She was my friend, too. I saw her die, just like you did.
 (beat)
 Buck up, we're almost out of here.

In her voice, there's an edge of INSANITY. They're *all* skimming that razor-thin line.

Uh-oh. A BRANCH: one tiny tunnel to the left and one tiny tunnel to the right.

KATE
 Show us the way. If you know.

Charlie hesitates before shooting to the right.

Now it's an even narrower tunnel... Lights bobbing...

The rocky ceiling is just six inches above the surface of the water...

Uh-oh. A ROCK WALL blocks the way.

CHARLIE

Before you shit yourselves, let me
just take a look.

Charlie plunges underwater to check out the passageway while
Kate glares at James.

KATE

Who could have predicted.

JAMES

Kate--

KATE

Our best friend just died *in front*
of us and she's treating this like--

JAMES

Just let her do it. Please.

KATE

God. You're such a nice guy, but
doesn't it get old? *Begging* for
people to treat you with respect?

He's stung -- and angry. Charlie splashes back up.

CHARLIE

(panting)

So, it's fine. The water is high,
but there are little pockets of air
on the way to the open tunnel.

KATE

No. We turn around, right now.

CHARLIE

This is exactly how Miguel
described it to me. We're really,
really close.

Before they can protest, she's gone.

KATE

There's no way that Miguel--

JAMES

(curtly)

Enough talk. We're wasting time.

He's gone. Kate's frustration is close to bubbling over.

NARROW TUNNEL

The narrow corridor is now ENTIRELY UNDERWATER, except for tiny AIR POCKETS every 15 feet or so. They swim single-file, stop in a pocket, take a DEEP BREATH, then swim to the next.

Each pocket meeting is TENSE, utterly cramped, and stressful. They're all terrified.

During one long underwater swim, Kate looks down: the floor of the cave DROPS AWAY to nothingness, then is SUPER CLOSE again. She's in a little underwater tube, a death pipe.

The next pocket is extremely shallow and small. Kate POPS UP to see Charlie and James glaring at each other, panting.

KATE

(gasping)

I don't know how much longer I can do this.

CHARLIE

I looked ahead -- I think after the next two, it opens up again.

KATE

I hope you're right.

CHARLIE

It's wider underwater, too. We can go together.

JAMES

Everyone ready?

They PLUNGE DOWN.

Swimming through darkness, the floor abruptly rises. Kate LIGHTLY SCRAPES her leg on the rocky surface. A few BUBBLES blow out of her mouth when she notices.

As she swims, Kate reaches her hands out to measure the side of the tunnel. Her fingers catch on the edge of a WINDOW-LIKE OPENING, barely big enough for a thin human to slide through. Looking ahead, the irregular window openings go on for the visible length of the tunnel.

Her hand brushes against something -- she turns to look with her lamp.

It's the KNIFE HANDLE.

Oh shit. It's sticking out of the SHARK'S EYE: the shark is GLARING and CHARGING and BITING through one of the windows.

Kate SCREAMS underwater. Bubbles and muffled sound escape. The shark's face POUNDS at the not-big-enough opening.

Charlie and James turn, but Kate motions for them to *swim swim swim!*

The shark is still GNAWING and HAMMERING at the rock edges. As the group swims through the tunnel, now FURIOUSLY, the shark TRACKS them on the other side, charging and biting through the openings.

The worst game of Whac-A-Mole ever.

In one opening, one of the shark's TEETH snags on the strap of Kate's neoprene. She's STUCK.

But the shark YANKS and YANKS, so Kate grabs what she can from the pack and unsnaps the strap, leaving it in the shark's mouth.

It CHARGES. This window is a bit bigger: more of its head gets through. Struggling, Kate KICKS the shark in the face, and it BITES HER FEET -- she's STRUGGLING, panicked --

But it's just her FLIPPERS. She reaches down, peels them off her feet, and the shark DISAPPEARS with them.

Now the group is on top of each other, RUNNING OUT OF BREATH, pushing and swimming and frantic, and they JUST make it to the next air pocket.

But it's so tiny. Their three faces mashed into a pocket the size of shoebox. They GASP panicked breaths. Are they running out of air? They need to get it together.

There are no words. They have to push on.

BACK UNDERWATER, the openings are narrower, but closer together, wide slits. They see the shark TRACKING them on the other side of the wall...

HUNTING.

Charlie and James are ahead...

The shark CHARGES at a weak slit, and the rock CRUMBLES! The tip of the shark's face is BLOCKING Kate's way!

Kate sees James turn back -- but then he's pulled away by Charlie. They're leaving her behind.

Kate's eyes narrow. *That bitch.*

The shark is CHOMPING, snapping and thrashing, more rock crumbling away. It's mere inches from Kate's body.

She makes a decision.

She grabs the KNIFE HANDLE and YANKS it from the shark's eye. Stunned, the shark WHIRLS away.

Kate zooms past the gaping hole. Charlie and James's legs are ahead, they're already in the air pocket, can she make it?

IN THE POCKET: On Charlie and James, gasping, staring at each other. *Is it just the two of us now?*

Kate BURSTS the surface, and the other two SCREAM. She GASPS for life.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What-- What is that?!?

Kate holds up her trophy: the knife...but at the pointed end hangs a bloody, PULPY SHARK'S EYE.

She YELPS and drops the knife. We follow its journey down through the water, into the death depths.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(almost crying)

God, Kate, I, I thought you were dead--

CHARLIE

We *both* did, I can't believe you got away! Jesus, you're such a badass.

A beat while they catch their breaths, but Kate is FURIOUS. She was almost abandoned!

KATE

"Badass"? Don't you mean *bait*?

JAMES

Stop it! What's the plan now? We don't know where the fuck that thing is or if it's finding a way into the tunnel so it can get us from below, or--

CHARLIE

Ok ok ok ok, let's keep going.

(close to hysterical)

There's no other choice! We have to!

Kate shares a grim look with James. It's true. There's no turning back.

Kate quickly STASHES what she took from her neoprene in the side strap of her bikini bottom: FLARE, MAP, and ROPE.

KATE

On the count of three? One... Two..

They PLUNGE once more.

Swimming in the darkness -- the floor drops away again -- it's too deep to see the bottom...

Side by side they swim, running their hands along the ceiling that's still right above them. Man. This is a long one.

The passage NARROWS again, pushing the swimmers together. They BARELY fit abreast when the passage finally opens up, and they POP UP, gasping--

--and SCREAM when their lamps shine on the gory vision right in their face.

Miguel's PALE UPPER BODY, chewed to the ENTRAILS, jammed in that rock passage, his DEAD FACE twisted toward them. His lamp still shining.

KATE (CONT'D)

(enraged)

FUCK!

They press themselves against the wall, as far away from Miguel as possible.

JAMES

(whispering)

That means... It was in here...

Kate looks down, but it's just ENDLESSLY BLACK. The map has come loose from her bikini bottom and it DRIFTS out of sight.

A long, scary moment.

The shark BURSTS up from below.

It's TOTAL CHAOS -- lights flashing everywhere, screams echoing, GNASHING JAWS, kicking and flailing legs --

Kate, closest to Miguel, grabs his dead arm and JAMS it into the snapping jaws. The shark GLOMS on and starts SHAKING IT like a dog with a chew toy. The arm finally RIPS OFF Miguel's body and the shark DISAPPEARS with it.

Holy shit. Even Kate is stunned: *Did I really just do that?*

They all stare at each other. *That was a really skinny little arm. It's not going to last long.*

Charlie's on the right, near another tunnel opening. She looks at them...**then fucking TAKES OFF.**

You know what they say about sharks: You don't have to be able to out-swim them -- just your pals.

Kate and James look at each other, stunned, before taking off after her. PUSH IN and HOLD on Miguel's horrible corpse face, staring right at us.

CAVE #3

A light coming up through the water. Charlie breaks the surface, looks around wildly: *Where am I?*

James and Kate swim through, too, and they all cling to the walls, panting hard.

KATE
(to Charlie)
What the hell was that?

CHARLIE
We had to get out of there. So I got out of there.

KATE
Was that what it was, Charlie? Is that *all*?

CHARLIE
What are you implying?

KATE
Just that I'm getting pretty tired of seeing the *back* of you as we're all trying to escape with our fucking lives.

JAMES
GUYS! Where the hell are we?

Kate sees the fish floating on the surface of the water -- even more ominous now. The specter of death hangs over them.

KATE
(quietly)
We're just one cave over from where
we were before. The skeleton cave.

James spins around wildly. He turns to the back of the cave,
where there's a large opening, and points.

JAMES
You mean, that's the passageway we
were in before we went, went
through--

KATE
Charlie's Tunnel o' Nightmares?
Yeah.
(points to far opening)
That way's the bat cave.

CHARLIE
Let's-- Let's go out the same way
we came in, then. Tunnel to the bat
cave, some more swimming, then the
first cave. Then we're almost,
almost out--

Suddenly, Charlie seems like she's about to break: *They're so
fucking close to getting out of this nightmare.*

KATE
Wait -- shh.

They listen: faint squeaking and flapping.

CHARLIE
The bats.

JAMES
Why they freaking out?

Kate swims gently, silently over to the far side, to the
tunnel leading to the bat cave.

KATE
Wait here.

James and Charlie stare at her. She's so brave, suddenly!

She slides her way through the narrow rock passage.

When she sees the entrance to the bat cave, she clicks her
headlamp off. It's PITCH BLACK now, and the squeaking sounds
louder. There's loud SPLASHING, too.

She stealthily peeks into the bat cave...

CAVE #2

Illuminated by the late-afternoon light from the opening at the top is a PRIMEVAL scene. Bats are swarming the air, thick as insects. Squeaking, swooping...

The enormous shark LEAPS out of the water, CHOMPING bats out of the air, sending them SWIRLING. It lands with a GIGANTIC SPLASH that sends water back against Kate, who's FREAKED.

CAVE #3

Kate is swimming FAST back into the skeleton cave.

KATE

Go go go, it's behind us, let's go--

They're all swimming now back to the passageway they were in earlier, Charlie and James ahead, Kate trying to catch up.

They keep having to brush dead fish and marine life out of the way, it's disgusting and horrible.

From Kate's perspective, it looks like James and Charlie are yet again ABANDONING her. She tries to swim faster--

--and swims directly into **ADRIENNE'S TORSO**. Bloody at either end, but clearly her bikini top, her flat tummy, the BELLY RING still intact.

Charlie and James TURN when they hear Kate's CHOKED CRY.

JAMES

Shit shit shit shit shit

CHARLIE

Fuck! Come on!

Kate looks over Adrienne's torso to James and Charlie. In a the silence, she sees it in their eyes, almost in the reflection of their eyes: *the SHARK has entered their cave.*

Close on Kate's own eyes, narrowing. RACK FOCUS to the shark fin gliding towards her.

Charlie and James dart into a NARROW CREVICE in the wall, screaming for Kate. She's swimming, and swimming, and swimming, but so is the shark...

20 feet from the crevice.

10 feet...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Get in, get in!

Kate WEDGES herself in with them, JUST in time.

The shark breaches the water, dead fish dropping off it, and LUNGES madly at Kate: its THICKENED BODY, its U-shaped mouth full of TEETH, its remaining BLACK EYE -- *so close up*.

The attack is stopped by the rock, but just barely: Kate is flush with the opening. The shark keeps attacking, swimming away and RUSHING back, water SLOSHING into the crevice--

Charlie's scream-crying now, finally. For herself.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(hysterical)
We can't beat it, we can't beat it,
oh my God, we can't beat it--

They all shriek again at another attack. But Kate is PISSED.

KATE
Shut up, Charlie, shut up -- let me
focus --

The shark has swum away to make another run. It's SPEEDING back... rushes forward with unhinged jaw--

IN SLO-MO: Kate unsnaps the top of the UNDERWATER FLARE and THROWS it into the shark's OPEN MOUTH.

As she does this, she lets loose a SOUND -- something like a scream but more guttural, coming from deep inside. The scream loosens TEARS from her eyes. The act changes her.

She is surviving.

In the briefest second, she locks eyes with the shark, one black eye to one brown eye. There is an understanding.

They are both surviving.

The shark CRASHES back down, JERKS back toward the bat cave. It's WRITHING, the FLAME from the flare glowing underwater, speeding away, then...blackness.

A long silence. The water turns flat and still again.

CHARLIE
Oh, my God. You did it.

JAMES
Did-- Did you just kill a
motherfucking *shark*?

Kate swims out of the crevice, slowly. No sign of the shark.

KATE
I'm not so sure it--

Charlie WHOOPS, her arms around James.

JAMES
(off Kate's skepticism)
Kate, can you *please* count your
wins.

CHARLIE
You sent *fire* down its throat. Even
if it's not dead-dead, it's
seriously fucking ill. Let's go!
We're so close.

She and James start swimming back toward the bat cave.

KATE
Stop. I don't think it's safe.

CHARLIE
(incredulous)
Are you serious?

KATE
I saw the shark heading back toward
the bat cave. I want to go back to
the ocean tunnel.

CHARLIE
Oh my *God*. Isn't it enough that you
killed the damn thing? You still
have to have your own way on this?
You're *obsessed*.
(points to bat cave)
The exit we know for sure is *that*
way.

KATE
You don't know everything.

JAMES
Is this really the best time to--

KATE

Yeah, James, it is, because I'm trying to stop your girlfriend from making a big fucking mistake. Even if you can't stand up to her--

CHARLIE

(record-scratch)
You're so pathetic.

FLASH: Kate, sitting alone on the beach years ago, waiting for her friends.

BACK TO CAVE

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You still can't get over losing him.

Close on Kate's face, breathing heavily, taking this in.

Then **FLASH:** James leaving her room. The door CLICKS closed. Kate sitting up. A look of worry. She STANDS, suddenly, roughly. The sheet falls from her body.

BACK TO CAVE

KATE

Losing and winning, that's the way Charlie's world works, right? Funny thing, though, for you to win, I have to lose. Someone has to. You always needed me because there had to be someone on that step below you. You feed on weakness.

(beat)

But guess what. That's not gonna be me looking up at you anymore. That's over.

She gives a WITHERING LOOK at James.

KATE (CONT'D)

I know what I saw, and I don't think it's dead. You do whatever you want, but I'm done trying to convince you.

Kate starts swimming back toward the passageway that leads to the ocean outlet cave. Alone.

CHARLIE

Fine, good luck! See you on the beach! Come on, babe.

Charlie starts swimming, but turns back when James doesn't follow. He's staring after Kate.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
James. *James, come on.*

She all but snaps her fingers at him.

But he's not looking.

JAMES
Kate, hold up!
(to Charlie)
I believe her. We should go with her.

Kate waits at a distance.

CHARLIE
Absolutely not! Babe, baby -- look, we just go through this dumb bat cave, then the other one, and *we're out of here*. Climb right up the steps. We can send people back for Kate, she'll be fine.

Now James is incredulous.

JAMES
Uh, you get that this isn't about me picking her over you? This is about me thinking there might still be a fucking shark swimming around in here!
(uncharacteristically
sarcastic)
Let's. Get. Away. From. It.

Charlie looks at Kate, who is stony-faced, unreadable.

CHARLIE
Unbelievable.

She keeps swimming toward the bat cave.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Whatever, losers. Ride off into the sunset, see if I care.

Right before she enters the exit tunnel, she turns around to face them.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (to Kate)
 You know what's really sad, Kate? I
 didn't need you around. I *wanted*
 you.

KATE
 (drily)
 That's even worse, Charlie.

BLOOP: Charlie is YANKED underwater.

Now she's back up, THRASHING! She's KICKED her way out of the shark's mouth. She's swimming furiously toward horrified James and Kate...

CHARLIE
 (labored)
 I. Won't. Go. Like this!!!

UNDERWATER: part of the shark's mouth is RAW and BURNT. Its exposed gums and teeth are a disgusting wreck. Its empty eye socket is gaping tissue and blood, but the shark is still headed straight for Charlie's KICKING LEGS...

Above the surface: we see Charlie being dragged out toward the bat cave by her leg.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Help me!

James reaches out but Kate stops him -- there's no point.

VARIOUS

Charlie's SCREAMING as she's dragged through the next tunnel...

Then towards the bat cave...

CAVE #3

Back on James and Charlie as they hear distant screams. Dark water LAPS through the open tunnel.

A beat. Horrified silence... And one last, dying SCREAM.

Then filling their vision, BATS: a dense CLOUD of them, rushing through the tunnel and shrieking into their cave, as if this is Charlie's essence escaping.

Kate and James dive underwater. The bats rush into the wide tunnel passageway that holds the ocean outlet cave, as if they know it's a way out.

First, James pops up. Kate lingers underwater. Close on HER EYES, which close softly. Then she slowly surfaces, the water slicking off her like a gentle baptism.

The final two look at each other. Their THIN BREATH and VULNERABLE BODIES are all that remain.

James opens his mouth to speak but--

KATE

This way.

She swims and after a beat, James follows. It's what he does best.

CONTINUOUS TO:

WIDE TUNNEL PASSAGE

They swim.

From above, breaststroking, frog legs kicking, exhausted and urgent, they look like animals they are -- living organisms fighting their way back to the top of the food chain...

OCEAN OUTLET CAVE - CONTINUOUS

This cave is smaller, almost tunnel-like but for the sloped tall walls -- and a large, almost perfectly CIRCULAR OPENING about ten feet above the waterline.

Kate climbs onto a small rock. We see the sinews of her body, which has carried her this far. She gazes up at the opening, temporarily safe: so close to freedom, and a new unknown.

James joins her, sitting slumped. Legs dangling into the water.

KATE

So that's where we need to go--

JAMES

Can, can we hold on a second?

She looks down. He's DISTRAUGHT.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Charlie's gone, Kate. She, just,
 she's just--

KATE
 Gone. Yeah. Like Greg, and
 Adrienne, and Miguel--

She almost breaks. But instead, she squats down and looks into James's eyes.

KATE (CONT'D)
 (gently)
But we're still here. And once we
 get out, we can take all the time
 we need to...figure out how to live
 with this. We can have all the time
 in the world.

JAMES
 And therapy.

KATE
 God. Yeah. Like, so much therapy.
 (beat)
 You ready to do this with me?

James nods.

Kate swims over to the wall right underneath the hole, explores.

KATE (CONT'D)
 Here.

She stands on a narrow UNDERWATER LEDGE several feet beneath the hole. James climbs up next to her. The top of his head is still a good four or five feet below the opening.

JAMES
 (frustrated)
 ARRRGH! We're so fucking close!

KATE
 Here. Let me balance on your
 shoulders.

He steadies himself on the ledge, his feet trying to stay stable underwater, and she climbs on his shoulders, knees around his jaw. Then, precariously, she STANDS.

Now she can PULL herself up, peek her head out.

This is it. She's outside of the cave system, if only half of her head. Late-afternoon sun, pelicans flying overhead, and AIR: fresh air that tastes like freedom.

BOOM: A wave crashes seismically.

Kate pulls herself up further, getting a boost from James. She looks down.

Oh, no.

Below the hole is a SHEER 25-FOOT DROP down a VERTICAL ROCK FACE. Waves crash against the wall -- then the water slides back to reveal BARE, STONY ground. Low tide.

KATE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

JAMES

What?

Kate jumps into the water, then climbs back onto the ledge.

KATE

It's just rocks below. A death drop.

JAMES

God. What the fuck?!

He's very upset. To have come this far--!

JAMES (CONT'D)

Can you climb down? What about the rope?

KATE

It's not long enough.

Kate fingers the rope tied to the side of her bikini.

JAMES

Someone will come for us. Someone will see we haven't--

KATE

No one's coming. Not for a while, anyway.

(thinks)

We'll wait. Not for people, for high tide. It'll be just after sunset. Hopefully the water level gets high enough for me to jump into.

JAMES
What if it doesn't?

KATE
(exasperated)
Then I guess I break my legs and
drown, and you die by shark, James!
I don't know, this is our best
shot.

JAMES
I should be the one to go.

KATE
How are you going to get up there?

They both look at the little patch of sky. So close.

KATE (CONT'D)
It has to be me. I'll swim to
shore, get help. You just stay
alive until then.

It's decided. They sit on the rock, and wait, alone together.

CUT TO:

OCEAN OUTLET CAVE - LATER

In the twilight-darkened cave, Kate's eyes are fluttering
closed and open. Closed and open. Water DRIPS. A bat
SCREECHES somewhere.

DREAM FLASH: Dusk. Charlie stands on the beach in a white
dress, back to us. The wind blows. Torches light the way. We
approach, footstep by footstep. We are so close. The waves
crash.

QUICK FLASHES: A series of images.

James's hand on Kate's leg.

Adrienne grinning.

Charlie's mouth laughing, but her eyes menacing.

Adrienne screaming and thrashing in the water.

Greg gasping.

Miguel holding Kate's hand under water.

In the dark: Blink. Blink. Blink.

Adrienne laughing, then sobbing. SOBBING.

James above Kate in bed. Kate's hands on his biceps. Gasping. Sobbing. Gasping. A cry.

DREAM FLASH: Closer and closer to the back of Charlie. A hand reaches out -- it's Kate's hand -- and spins Charlie around. But where her face should be is only a BLACK HOLE. Screams and cries and sobs and screams, echoing, and we PUSH IN on the black hole...

And then there is the sound of gentle WEEPING.

BACK TO CAVE: Kate's eyes SNAP OPEN.

James is crying quietly. Kate readjusts herself on the rock.

KATE

What? Come on. It's not even time yet. We'll get out. Just another hour or two...

James shakes his head.

JAMES

It's not that.

KATE

What is it? The fact that our best friends are dead?

James doesn't think this is levity.

JAMES

You don't know we'll get out.

KATE

No, I don't. But I have to believe we can.

JAMES

But you don't *know*, which means we might die in here. Of starvation, or hypothermia or whatevertheFUCK that monster is, wherever it is. Just waiting for us. We might die. And I was thinking oh, ok, so I might die.

KATE

It just now occurred to you?

JAMES

Will you please let me finish?

Kate leans back against the rock wall.

KATE

Sorry.

JAMES

So I might die. We might. Because Adrienne did. And she was so...good. You know? She was just good. And I was thinking, you know, all those years, five years I spent with her. With...Charlie. Who wasn't good. I swear, I didn't know it, Kate. I didn't know how Not Good she was! She was competitive, yeah, sure. She must have been mad at me about the cheating. For years! And that was partly why she treated me the way she did, and why she never wanted to go out of our way to see you--

KATE

Don't blame Charlie's behavior on me and cheating.

JAMES

I know. I know, I'm not trying to do that. I'm just trying to say...I don't know what happened.

KATE

To what?

JAMES

To my life.

James is really upset. Kate looks on him with mild disdain.

KATE

I think Charlie happened to your life. To all of our lives.

JAMES

I'm -- fuck! I -- can't die this way. You know?

KATE

Then don't die.

JAMES

I'm trying.

KATE
I'm trying, actually.

JAMES
I'm freaking out, Kate.

KATE
You don't think I am, too? Adrienne *clawed* for me. Greg is...ground meat. And Charlie, Charlie...I just didn't have a Charlie to fucking do everything for my entire adulthood, so I have to do it on my own.

JAMES
That's just -- mean, Kate.

KATE
How is that mean? How am I being mean to you? You, who apparently slept with me because you felt sorry for me?

JAMES
That was a story Charlie told herself to make it ok. You can see that, right? A way for her to save face, and make it about anyone but her.

KATE
Such clarity. You should have life or death crises more often.

JAMES
This is really how you want to leave it with us? How you want to talk to me, here, now?

KATE
I'm sorry. No. But, after this...I don't want to "anything" with you, James.

James's face falls.

KATE (CONT'D)
You want me to care about you wasting your life with Charlie but--

JAMES
No, but you're not understanding--

KATE

Oh, I'm understanding, quite well.

JAMES

I just meant it's not about you,
it's about me!

KATE

No, James. It's about me.

It's her turn to talk. She's frustrated, but tired, too.

KATE (CONT'D)

Fuck. If you wanted to change your life, James, you had five years to make the right decisions. But no. You stayed with her. And I think you stayed with her because you'd rather be led by someone who's bad than be alone in the chaos. You were afraid. And now that she's gone, you're completely lost, casting around for the next thing to hang onto.

James, open-mouthed, is withered. Kate is practically talking to herself at this point.

KATE (CONT'D)

But that's how it is. I've always known that. All those years ago, I mainlined Charlie's poison, too, played that stupid game of win or lose. I'm the one she wanted to make sure she was always a notch above. I should have seen, early on, that she was afraid of me. Because I was...strong. Always stronger than her.

(gently)

I didn't come here hoping your seesawing dick would point my way. I came here because we all have -- had -- history.

(a beat)

But it's not you I need to make it right with. It's just me. Myself.

("this is it")

I've always been enough.

Water drips. Outside, a gull squawks. Kate's face is hard and proud in its newfound voice and strength.

This is who she is now.

FADE TO:

OCEAN OUTLET CAVE - EARLY NIGHT

The sky framed in the hole to the ocean is clear and inky black, punctured with a few stars. The sound of the waves below is louder than before. Closer.

KATE

It's time.

James, a deadened man at this point, stirs, then follows Kate to the underwater ledge. He takes his position, and she scrambles up his body. Her knees hug his jaw. His eyes close. First one foot, then the other, on his broad shoulders.

Like a machine, Kate PULLS herself all the way out of the hole, sits. She looks down.

The water is covering up the rocks, but is it enough? The ocean looks like an angry mouth ready to swallow her up.

From JAMES'S POV: Kate stands on the precipice, framed against the night sky.

On Kate: The deadly cave she came from behind her; the vast, terrifying ocean ahead. She peers at the DISTANT SHORE, the twinkles barely visible. *I can do this.*

She turns to give one last look at James, gazing up at her, scared and trusting. He's weak, pitiful, standing alone in that dark hole of death. But he's not evil.

KATE (CONT'D)

Fuck it! You're coming with me!

She's the goddamn apex now.

Kate gets the rope from her bikini bottom, ties it around her waist, gets down on her stomach, leans back into the hole.

JAMES

You're too high up!

KATE

Motherfucker, I swear to God, if you just *try*, we can both get out of here!

She dangles the free end of the rope three feet down.

James sets his face: Kate's fierce energy is contagious.

With everything he has, James JUMPS. His hand catches the rope, and Kate counterbalances, leaning back. Kate's and James's eyes meet. They've fucking done it.

James's feet scramble for a hold against the wall to take off some of the weight. Now he's pulling/climbing up...

The rope strains.

And strains.

Uh-oh.

In a lightning quick moment, the rope snaps -- and *like a fucking pro*, Kate reaches her other hand out and grabs James's wrist.

Using all her strength, every bit she stuffed down for years and years, she PULLS up and GROANS. She's using her FULL WEIGHT to pull back. He's dangling free now...one hand GRABS the bottom of the opening...

But the shark has other plans.

It slides through the tunnel, LEAPS out of the water, and SNAPS James up to the waist! James SCREAMS, and Kate SCREAMS as she's YANKED forward, almost back into the hole.

KATE (CONT'D)

JAMES!!!

The shark jerks its head once, twice, and just like that, James's lower body is GONE.

The shark DISAPPEARS back into the depths, having claimed its last victory.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Kate, still holding on to James's wrist, goes FLYING backward with the top half of him -- falling, falling, falling --

Plunging flat on her back, into the ocean.

UNDERWATER: Darkness. Churning water, bubbles.

Kate's hand, still wrapped around a dead man's wrist.

James. Wide-open eyes, seeing nothing.

Kate. Anguished eyes. Crying.

Her hand, letting go. What's left of James is PULLED away by the waves, engulfed in darkness.

She GASPS back up to the surface. The sound of the waves, her breath, it's WILD up here.

She's PUSHED back into the wall by the waves: OOF.

She must survive.

She SHOVES off with her legs as hard as she can, swims fast and hard through the choppy water, gasping for air, CRYING, screaming in RAGE and FRUSTRATION and FEAR...

Pausing for a breath, floating in the dark water, she turns to look back.

Oh man. She's only come 10 or 12 feet.

Ahead of her, the coastline glimmers, then disappears, glimmers, disappears as the waves go up and down. So, so far.

All around her, the dark ocean. Her biggest fear.

She's really crying now, sobbing. She's been through so much. And now she's really alone. But she still has further to go.

Still crying, she starts swimming in the pitch-black waters.

We follow her slow progress, water occasionally splashing in her face...

Sometimes she's doing a few yards underwater...

The water seems ALIVE, aggressively fighting her progress...

Always the shoreline ahead, never looking closer, sometimes looking further.

Pull UP and OUT: she's a tiny pale dot swimming in an inky black expanse.

FADE TO BLACK.

ON BLACK:

The deep roar of the ocean. Distant, faint screams.

BEACH - NIGHT

A shallow wave, licking the shore. Shushing back. Innocent.

Tilting up to the dark surf: In the distance, a pale form...

Emerging like a GHOST, trudging to land, it's KATE (in a grim echo of the opening scene, when her friends swam laughing back to shore).

Kate COLLAPSES onto her knees...then FACE-PLANTS. Water washes over her. She's a piece of refuse from the sea.

She looks up.

Staring down at her: the face of a DEAD CHILD.

Wait -- it blinks.

It's a curious young girl, her face painted like a beautifully decorated SKULL. She runs away.

Kate forces herself to sit up. From Kate's POV: a hazy, unclear vision of SMOKY FIRES, the horizon TIPPING dizzily.

Again: faint screams.

Kate staggers to her feet, her lips dry and cracked, her eyes hollow. She moves toward the fires, LURCHING like a zombie...

It's a Day of the Dead celebration, with bonfires, and clusters of people with GORGEOUSLY PAINTED skeleton faces.

People aren't screaming in terror, they're laughing and shouting with friends.

The revelers, mistaking Kate for a tourist out for a late-night swim, usher her in, as though welcoming her into a beautiful vision of HELL: skeletons all around her, grinning, drunk and happy, bonfires everywhere. Children scampering.

Someone, somewhere, sings a song in Spanish, accompanied by guitar.

Kate drifts along, HALF-DELIRIOUS. Someone puts a CROWN OF FLOWERS on her head.

She moves toward a clutch of WOMEN putting finishing touches on their face-paint, using a big cheap MIRROR propped up on the sand.

The women turn to her, smiling, like the underworld's handmaidens, and let her into the group. Kate moves forward to the mirror as though in a dream.

A PRETTY SKELETON WOMAN offers up a container of greasepaint, but Kate shakes her head no.

She stares in wonder at her reflection: **she looks like a stranger to herself.**

Her friends are dead.

So is the person Kate used to be.

But maybe that's not a bad thing.

THE END