

Rabbit Season

by

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Hi Reader,

With the exception of the opening scene, this story is told devotedly, relentlessly through our lead's POV. This means we never leave her side.

The equally devoted male gaze shouldn't surprise you, but if it does, that's okay.

Now you know.

With everything,

Shanrah

INT. HOUSE PARTY - 12:20AMPOV OF FRAT GUY'S IPHONE CAMERA:

A HOT GIRL cackles. She's wearing a tight, strappy dress from the ASOS sale tab and precariously high heels. Her matte red lips gulp from an overflowing red cup, as she waggles a playful finger between a sofa full of FRAT GUYS, including the one filming this. Their college sweatshirts are emblazoned with the letters "FSU".

Beyond the offscreen pandemonium of a house party at its peak, 90s HIP HOP blares.

Hot girl's waggling finger lands on--

HOT GIRL

You! With the James Dean floof.

She's slurring. She's drunk. James Dean frat guy likes it.

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)

What's your star sign?

JAMES DEAN FRAT GUY

Capricorn.

HOT GIRL

Eh, too mechanical. I'm partial to at least a *little* sensuality.

Her finger waggles to the next guy, who's eager for his turn.

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)

You. Timothée Chalamet.

FRAT GUY

It's Pete--

HOT GIRL

You shall all be named according to your hairstyles. What's your sign, Chalamet?

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY

Pisces, the fish--

HOT GIRL

Oh hell no, I want to get fucked, not have my palm read. On a romantic bed of rose petals.

Chalamet's buddies HOWL with delight at his unfortunate diagnosis. Hot girl's mouth twitches into something like a smile.

FRAT GUY

What about me? I'm an Aries.

HOT GIRL

Passionate and bold, *now* we might be talking...

(examines his hair)

Jason Momoa.

JASON MOMOA FRAT GUY

I'll take it, babe.

He grabs hot girl's dress and YANKS her into him. She wasn't quite expecting that, but his buddies roar.

HOT GIRL

I didn't say we're *definitely* fucking, just that you're through to the next roun--

He smooshes his face into hers, something like a kiss. She's surprised. But she likes it, she thinks.

JASON MOMOA FRAT GUY

How's that for bold?

He kisses her harder, like a man-sized demogorgon, and she's not sure she liked that as much. His hands SNATCH her waist, because *he's caught this one*, and then--

We LOSE EYES ON HOT GIRL as the frame swings away from her. Now it's all WHOOPS and WHISTLES over a drunken blur of--

Shots being thrown back. A spilled baggie of coke. A zealous game of Flip Cup. *Couple of other guys also filming*. Then a Coors can fizzes open, we travel up the nostrils of the filmer as he chugs, and--

There's a PING offscreen!

HOT GIRL (O.S.)

Psych!

Frame swings back around to the hot girl, who we now find in Momoa's lap. She yanks herself off and peers at a TEXT. Maybe she feels saved by the bell, but she'd never show them that.

Instead, she does a happy dance. A happy wiggle. A happy whatever-drunk-girls-do, and Momoa's face DROPS because--

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
 Just kidding, I'm outta here. The
 actual man of my dreams just
 inboxed me, and he and I are going
 to fuck like rabbits this evening.
 Can I get a high five?

JASON MOMOA FRAT GUY
 Fuck off.

The camera PANS DOWN, PUSHES IN unsteadily on--

Her legs and butt waddling out of the room on those
 precarious heels, as she bellows--

HOT GIRL
 Miiiish!!

The HOWL of frat guys becomes louder...

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
 Where are you? I'm heading over to--

SMASH TO BLACK.

EXT. CITY - WHEN THE DARK JUST GETS DARKER

Now we ZIIIIIP across the dark city, fanning high above high-
 rises and skimming the tops of cabs, pushing through a dense
 cluster of trees, establishing the passage of time, until we--

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

CLOP, CLOP, CLOP-CLOP, CLOP. The loud, uneven smacking of
 high heels against cold, wet pavement.

This should be good.

The clapping continues as we reveal its source...

EXT. PARK PERIPHERY - 1:57AM

CLOSE UP on HOT GIRL'S FACE, only now with her red lipstick
 smeared, mascara on her cheeks, hair disheveled and only one
 strap of that tiny dress still surviving on her shoulder.

*Russian Red by Mac, if we had to guess. Her lip color, that
 is. It really stands out against the dead quiet night sky.*

Now that we get a proper look, she could actually pass for a young Meryl Streep. Not that Meryl would get this freakin' trashy.

Would she?

The gaudy CLOP-CLOP of heels continues. *Ouch*, she's gonna get crazy blisters.

But a SMILE tugs at her lips nonetheless, and boozey eyes be damned, the smile grows FULL!

Then it DROPS. The hot girl's thoughts take a turn, and now she just looks pensive. *Uncertain*.

Until a new thought invades, her smile RETURNS and a EUPHORIC GIGGLE slips out into the night air!

But then she becomes timid again, like maybe euphoria isn't the appropriate emotion for right now.

And here we stay. Contemplative. On task. *Fine*.

In case you were wondering, her name is ADIE.

We PULL OUT of close up to present her in full, heeled legs wobbling like a baby giraffe, dress riding up her left thigh, a cropped denim jacket jammed between her handbag and armpit.

And *goosebumps*. Lots. It can't be more than 20 degrees out.

Her drunkenness levels can be assessed at a two-am-appropriate fading haze.

Now we FLIP 180 so we're on **ADIE'S POV, for the first time tonight.**

It's dark, damp and dewy. Not a soul in sight. The moon is clouded over, so not throwing a ton of light. Adie traverses the sidewalk, alongside an elegant black and gold fence-line...

And she's just reached its GATE. It's an ostentatious beast, like anyone needs Palace of Versailles vibes on their daily jog with pooch, but whatever.

We PUSH IN on a golden arched sign that welcomes Adie to--

FRANKLIN STERN MEMORIAL PARK.

There's an unnerving WHOOSH as an owl flaps away, and Adie passes under the arch to enter--

EXT. FRANKLIN STERN MEMORIAL PARK - 1:58AM

The odd street lamp meekly illuminates dense shrubbery, trees, swampy marshes either side of the sealed asphalt path. Adie's heels CLIP-CLOP, still clunky, still an absolute *shit* to walk in.

In the daytime, this would be a pretty park. An apt escape from the looming high-rises either side.

But it's dark now, and fucking cold. Adie shivers. Remembers her cropped denim jacket, pulls the thing out from her armpit and wraps it tightly around her shoulders. It does a mediocre job of warming her.

Then Adie pulls her IPHONE from her handbag. Opens FaceTime.

A quick glance reveals her recents: missed calls from TYLER, a few to and from MAMA DEAREST, and the rest are all MISH<3.

She dials MISH<3.

GAHHH. Adie's blasted by an aggressive view of her own face. She licks her finger and deals with the smeared makeup situation.

Not that there's a single soul in this park other than her.

BLB-BLB-BLB-BLB. BLB-BLB-BLB-BLB. Oh FaceTime, you sweet, undignified history-maker.

Mish doesn't answer.

ADIE

God damn it.

She hits CALL BACK. *Come on, Mish*. Adie's biting her bottom lip now, and some of us are beginning to wonder if she's in trouble. Still pensive, her eyes piercing the screen, willing her best friend to pick up.

BLB-BLB-BLB-BLB. BLB-BLB-BLB-BLB.

Not paying attention, Adie hits a DITCH in the asphalt, her ankle FALTERS and handbag RATTLES. But she steadies herself.

Narrow save.

The handbag rattle reminded her she has Ice Breaker Sours in there. She fishes out the tub (mixed berry flavor) and pops one. Sucking on these is her nervous safety habit.

Finally--

The screen bursts to life as Mish ANSWERS.

ON THE SCREEN, MISH is still at the party Adie came from, and damn is it LOUD. And messy. It reached its expiration a good hour ago, and the 10 or so remaining, Mish included, are the real heroes of the night.

A moment to preach about Mish. The first thing you'll notice is her dark, alive eyes. She could *kill* you with those things. A vintage Canon camera hangs precariously around her neck, she's got the whole oversized-vintage-tee over miniskirt thing down-pat, and she was sporting the neon pink scrunchie way before they became cool again.

Mish is the best friend you always wanted. Adie loves her to death, and Mish loves her right back.

Okay. Back to--

MISH

Adie, what the *fuck*?

A DRUNK KID stumbles into her, knocking her Canon. She shoves him away, not so sober herself.

MISH (CONT'D)

Watch it, this cost more than your *life*.

(back to Adie)

Where'd you go? I saw your Stories, are you *uptown*?!

Adie breaks into a GRIN, skips a little in the darkness, and perhaps now we exhale with relief-- *she's not in trouble*.

ADIE

Guess.

MISH

No. You didn't.

Adie squeals a little. It's a little annoying and piercing.

MISH (CONT'D)

Nuh-uh, no way.

But Adie's triumphant belly laugh tells her otherwise.

ADIE

I fucked Nathan.

Adie's so thrilled about this that she's almost forgotten it's freezing outside and she's having a private conversation very loudly in a public park.

MISH
You dirty little slut!!

Adie blinks. Works hard to hold her grin in place. She knows Mish means that as a compliment, but still.

A street lamp SIZZLES and FLICKERS, and Adie FLINCHES... *like she felt it a little in the other way, too.*

MISH (CONT'D)
 Dude, I mean it as a compliment of the highest possible order.

ADIE
 No, I know, duh--

There's a loud CRACK sound behind Adie, something in the dark trees, and she WHIPS her head around to see. Just to check.

Nothing's there. Was an animal, probably.

Back to Mish, who is moving through the party now. Her already-thick, woozy eyelids narrow in at Adie and she presses her nose in to look quizzically at her... *because Mish's best friend spidey sense has been activated.*

MISH
 What.

She's got her.

ADIE
 It's not like, *actually* slutty, is it?

MISH
 To fuck a guy you've wanted to for years?

ADIE
 At one am, shitfaced, booty call, y'know.

MISH
 Shut up, what are you even talking about? Adie you're the breathing definition of Miss Empowerment--

ADIE
 Of course I am, forevs. It's just, *you know...*

Adie's eyes flit around, her ears pricked for anymore weird park sounds.

ADIE (CONT'D)
 ...the theory is always easier than
 the--

A tiny RABBIT darts across the track and Adie JUMPS. Then she exhales. *Phew. Must've just been a rabbit earlier.*

ADIE (CONT'D)
 Whatever, I'll be fine tomorrow.
 (then, off Mish's swaying)
 Are you still drunk?! I think I
 might be.

MISH
 Accurate. Plus I smoked half of
 Northern California, so make of
 that what you will.

As hip-hop THUMPS, Mish WHIRLS her phone around, showing Adie that yes, she *is* one of the last ones standing.

MISH (CONT'D)
 Come at me, fun police!

Now Mish gives Adie a close-up tour of her nostrils. Adie giggles. Then, with a devious grin--

MISH (CONT'D)
 Tell me *everything*.

That's the green light she's been waiting for!

ADIE
 So, his buddy Joe was at the party.
 Joe-- something or other. He was
 going on about his buddy Nathan who
 has a boat, we put it together that
 it was *my* Nathan, so we texted him
 a photo of us together. *From my*
phone. Next minute Joe's gone and
 me and Nath are texting about old
 times.

MISH
 Yeeewwwww!

ADIE
 Apparently it's been over with
 crazy Tori for *months*.

MISH
 Get *out!* Annie Wilkes finally got
 the gong?

ADIE

Yup. First time we've ever been single at the same time. Mish I've wanted that guy for ages--

MISH

Duh of course he wanted you back, like that's ever been a question.

ADIE

Anyway so later I get a text saying he's watching *The Shining*, and that I can come over if I want--

MISH

I bet he wasn't watching shit.

ADIE

Right. But I was like, of course, the Grady Twins never get old. Next thing we're fucking on a brown leather sofa in his creepy old red Victorian mansion. Did you know he's got *serious* cash--

WHOOSH! A FIGURE gushes past Adie, her eyes go wide and she gasps--

But it was just a JOGGER GUY. He's in head-to-toe neon lycra, advertising all the marathons he's done or thought of doing.

Adie rolls her eyes. Quietly, not *really* meant for him to hear--

ADIE (CONT'D)

Asshole.

(then, a little louder, a little braver)

The path's wide enough for a family of eight!

Mish cackles.

We *do* catch Jogger Guy's face briefly. He's frowning and his eyebrows are pulled together. Adie was a dent in his training.

Adie resumes her walk with a tad more pep in her step, and is forced to remember her grippy dress because it's hiked up again. It cost \$49.95 and was made for standing still, not long walks through darkened parks at two am. But--

MISH

Where are you?

ADIE
In the park.

MISH
Are you walking home?!

ADIE
(nodding yes)
Walking off that booze. He offered
me a ride but it's only a mile and
it's practically morning.

Now Mish is hovering over what's left of the snack table, shoveling Cool Ranch Doritos into her mouth. She goes to leave, but then gets a brainwave from the goddess herself and takes the *entire bowl* with her onto the DANCE FLOOR, as--

MISH
Was his dick leathery and wrinkled?

ADIE
Fuck off, he's not that old--

MISH
I meant because he's always tanning
on that yacht in Florida or
wherever.

CRAAAACK! There it is again, only louder now. Adie flinches. It's coming from somewhere in the trees.

Mish hasn't heard, 'cause she and her Doritos have since been swept into the dance floor and are swaying delightedly to Beyoncé and Jay Z's *Bonnie & Clyde*. She doesn't notice when--

Adie spins around. Tightens her denim jacket around her shoulders. Not because she's cold, because *that was fucking freaky*.

CRAAAACK, *CRACK!*

And again! Adie frowns. *Sounded closer that time.*

Of course she's aware it's almost certainly just an animal, but she picks up the pace. You know, just to be sure.

ADIE
Anyway--

Best not to think about it.

ADIE (CONT'D)
I can't believe it finally
happened.

It's so easy to freak out over *nothing* just because the sky happens to be dark.

ADIE (CONT'D)

And despite high risk of anti-climactic horror, it was actually an epic session.

Mish missed that part, because dance floors are like sinkholes and she and her Doritos are *in deep*.

Mish raises her phone close to her mouth, giving us a full audit of her tonsils as she BELLOWS--

MISH

Did you tell Tyler??

Adie winces. If any name could kill her vibe right now, it would be that one. Nice one, Mish.

ADIE

I texted him the moment I came.

Adie's eyes roll even harder than they did at Jogger Guy.

Her voice is a few decibels lower now. Not for any reason; it's just that walking quickly in the dark makes you talk quieter on instinct, she considers.

ADIE (CONT'D)

No, Mish, I didn't tell Tyler, nor do I plan to. It's none of his damn business.

Mish is quiet, and this time Adie knows it's not because of the loud party, because she's since moved into the hallway.

She bites her lip like Adie did earlier.

MISH

No, of course, and you're right.

She has *much* more to say about Tyler, and Adie knows it.

MISH (CONT'D)

Just, you *know* how he can be--

ADIE

Don't ruin my moment. Ask me about Nathan's anatomy again, promise I'll answer this time.

MISH

Yes girl, lemme fire up that *grill!*
Right after this scheduled snack
break.

Adie grins as Mish shovels more Doritos. And it sure is a good time to lighten the mood, because she's just noticed the street lamp up ahead has BLOWN OUT.

That means there's a big dark patch she'll soon have to walk through. Every girl knows it's smart to make sure that any potential shadow lurkers know you're on the phone to someone.

Suddenly--

"Big_man669 followed you."

An Instagram notification makes Adie's face scrunch up. She absently flicks it open. Scans his profile. A bunch of fratty bullshit, and maybe he's vaguely familiar, but... eh.

She flicks it away, grumbling.

ADIE

Why are trolls so on the nose?

Mish swallows big, then begins her assault.

MISH

Did he go down on you? How'd you
fuck? Was it a pretty dick?

Adie laughs, deliberately loudly again, because the *dark patch is drawing nearer*. Her eyes flit madly around.

ADIE

Steady woman, we have another--
(checks the time, then
even louder again)
Thirty minutes for storytime,
'cause I'm at--

She clocks her surroundings. There's a BENCH. A FOUNTAIN. A STATUE of some dude. A "chronological history of--"

Bingo.

Adie flicks to INSTAGRAM, snaps HOT SELFIE with CAT EARS by the statue, and begins to punch out the caption *"for the authorities in case i go missing, lol"*, as--

ADIE (CONT'D)

I'm at the Franklin Stern Memorial
statue in the park.

Adie POSTS the selfie to Stories and *exhales*. She did it. Smart, smart Adie, she geo-located herself with her own damn voice, and now Mish knows exactly where she is, probably *half the party* knows where she is, except--

MISH

Babe, what? You broke up,
reception's fucked here.

Shit.

ADIE

I said I'm at the--

It all happens very fast.

Her mouth opens, brow furrows, breath HALTS and there's no mistaking it.

A dark, towering, thick presence hangs over Adie from behind like a weighted blanket.

She doesn't see it; it's enough that she just *feels* it.

But Mish sees it. And Adie sees Mish FLING her eyes open in confusion.

Then Adie sees what Mish sees, and *we see it too*. Over Adie's shoulder, in the corner of her FaceTime frame:

A swollen, shadowy figure of a man.

MISH

Adie--

A quick THUD-THUD-THUD and Adie's eyes go wide, then another THUD, this time Adie feels something THUMP her lower back and then she's FLYING THROUGH THE AIR.

Flying through the dark patch.

Her phone's flying through the air too, and now all Mish sees, all we see, is the foggy night sky as it lands with a *clatter*, front camera up, on the asphalt.

MISH (CONT'D)

Adie???

Adie hasn't even had a chance to scream.

Offscreen, we can hear her raspy breaths, like she's been winded. Her lungs lurch, desperately struggling to restart.

A good few seconds go by, where all we can see is the night sky.

Then, finally--

ADIE (O.S.)
Who's there??

Her voice is *petrified*, screamly, like a cow when it's about to go through the meat machine on those animal rights documentaries.

But the dark night is silent. Nobody answers her question.

MISH
Adie, what the fuck? Are you there??

Adie's ruptured attempts at breathing get closer to us now, as do the grating sounds of denim and skin scraping across asphalt. *Army-crawling*.

Finally, Adie's face hovers into frame.

Whiter than before, her eyes wide and frozen, and there's a bloody gash on her cheek with gravel in it from where she scraped the ground on landing.

In a terrified whisper--

ADIE
Help.

MISH
Adie, get up!

All Adie can do is regain her breath.

MISH (CONT'D)
Get UP!

Adie blinks. Then she begins to clamor to her feet, the phone camera shaking hard in her hand. She's in shock, clearly, and badly winded.

ADIE
What the fuck was that?

MISH
Are you okay?? Your face.

Adie touches her cheek. Brings her fingertips to eye level and examines the bloody gravel on them. *Shakes harder.*

ADIE
What was *that*--

MISH
I don't know.

Mish has found the party's BATHROOM now. She slams herself inside and locks the door. Finally it's quieter on her end.

MISH (CONT'D)
Did you feel somebody push you?

But still in shock, Adie's eyes are only just now starting to flit around, survey for explanations. Her shaky fingers are searching for the flashlight on her phone.

MISH (CONT'D)
Adie listen to me, *look around you*.
Use the-- turn on the flashlight--

ADIE
I'm trying!

She got it. A BRIGHT LIGHT floods the wet asphalt, and shaky Adie swings it around behind her where the dark patch once was, to reveal--

ADIE (CONT'D)
Oh.

A FALLEN TREE BRANCH.

She exhales.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Oh, fuck.

MISH
(thrilled with the result)
You just tripped!

But Adie keeps shining the light around, unconvinced.

We're also unconvinced, but if we were Mish, we'd probably be gunning for the less sinister version of events, too.

ADIE
But I felt something.

MISH
Right, the tree--

ADIE

What did you mean, "did I feel
someone push me?" Did you see--

MISH

No! I don't know. I don't *think* so--

ADIE

Mish.

MISH

I guess it was a shadow--

ADIE

Yeah. *Nope*, I'm getting the fuck
out of here.

The CLOP-CLOP of Adie's heels resumes, as she begins, as
sworn, to make her way the fuck out of here.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm drunker than I thought.

On Mish's end, someone BANGS on the bathroom door. There are
MUFFLED COMPLAINTS about needing to pee out an entire keg.

MISH

Can't a girl take a shit in peace?
Fuck off!
(then back to Adie)
I'm staying on the line, okay?

ADIE

Thanks. God. What a *weird* fucking--

Adie COUGHS, still a little winded, and then--

EUUGGGHHHH! From somewhere deep in the trees, a creepy,
heaving moan-- one that *almost matches Adie's*.

ADIE (CONT'D)

What the...

MISH

Possums. Fighting.
(off Adie's look)
That's what they sound like! You're
good.

Adie walks on, briskly, focusing on steadying her breath.

The fog is even more eerie now she's had the goddamn *life*
scared out of her. The marsh looks deeper, dirtier. The trees
feel heavier, like they have an agenda.

Which they don't, of course, because this a city park, not Hogwarts.

Adie sucks in a deep breath. *Possums.*

ADIE

There was a possum in my grandparents' ceiling once. It had seven little babies and--

MISH

Your grandpa lured them with Girl Scout Cookies and bashed their heads in with a hammer. You told me.

ADIE

I know, I'm just trying to stay distracted.

She winces. *Ah, shit.* Another blown out lamp ahead, which means another dark patch is coming up soon.

MISH

Maybe try some lighter content. Tell me more about sex with Nath. I know you're dying to.

ADIE

Ha. Okay. This one part's kinda fucked up, sure you wanna hear it?

MISH

Please I'll pay you.

Adie grins. Mish is awesome like that. Sometimes Adie calls her Ilana, as in Ilana Wexler, because gross and illicit details are her life force.

ADIE

I'm on my period. Day four. But I kinda forgot.

MISH

Yes.

ADIE

So he gets down there, and--

Adie's reached the dark patch. She quietly braces herself, holds her breath and whisks through it...

And comes out unharmed.

She exhales with relief. So do we, honestly.

MISH
Don't cliffhanger me!

Fueled by the adrenalin of not-dying-that-round--

ADIE
He pulled my tampon out with his
teeth.

MISH
Oh, fucking *baller*. Only you could
get a dude to do that.

ADIE
The hell does *that* mean--

WHOOOSH! A FORCE gushes past Adie again and she gasps, almost drops the phone, but then--

ADIE (CONT'D)
Ugh!

It's just Jogger Guy lapping her again. Judging by his uncomfortable frown and anxious gait, he's heard the tampon story.

ADIE (CONT'D)
What is his *problem*?

MISH
Yo, maybe it was him that knocked
you before--

ADIE
I tripped on a branch, you said it
yourself. Stop freaking me out, I
just want to get the hell out of
here. Alive, preferably...

Which gives Adie a thought. One she doesn't love, but maybe it'll make up for her imprudent decision to begin this walk alone.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Hey! Wait up!

She's calling to Jogger Guy. He slows a little...

MISH
Huh? What are you doing--

ADIE
Excuse me, sir?

He looks back, jogging on the spot, and pops one earbud out.

JOGGER GUY
Can I help you?

Adie giraffe-waddles towards him. He flinches.

ADIE
Sorry, this'll sound weird, but...
can I maybe walk with you?

Still jogging on the spot, he scans her body: clingy dress, no shoes, undies showing, smeared makeup, *needy eyes*. She CLOPS closer towards him. He cracks his neck and--

JOGGER GUY
I would so say yes, but I'm
actually in the middle of training.

ADIE
I'm really sorry, it's just that--

Mish all but mutates into an active volcano.

MISH
Are you fucking kidding me? Walk
with her, *jerk--*

ADIE
Just to the gate.

JOGGER GUY
Sorry... I'm on my final mile.

Now Adie's jaw drops too. And the volcano erupts through the phone.

MISH
What the *fuck* is wrong with you? I
dox assholes like you!!

Earbud back in, hands fly up in defense, and we've lost him.

JOGGER GUY
Wow. I don't want to get accused of
anything tonight.

ADIE
What?! Sir, wait--

He's off and running. Not a chance in hell he'll turn back.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Shit.

(louder, so he hears)

Asshole!

As Mish goes off on an expletive-riddled misandry rant, Adie watches Jogger Guy dip around a corner... and disappear.

She glances over her body and winces. Part of her wonders if she'd have reacted in the same way... though she'd never say that to Mish.

Adie glances back towards the gate she's come from. The path behind her is just as dark and ominous.

But probably not as far if she turned back.

She thinks for a beat, Mish still going off, then stops. It's decided.

MISH

...and it's because of toxic
fuckbags like him that we can't
have nice things--

ADIE

Screw it.

She turns to head back towards the gate she came through.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Gimme a sec.

MISH

What, why--

She puts Mish on hold, finds her texts with NATHAN--

(which, we can't help but notice, are riddled with the fire emojis and winky faces of two people who just made an executive decision to fuck)

--pulls up his number and hits DIAL.

It goes straight to--

NATHAN'S VOICEMAIL

You've called Nath. Text me, I
don't listen to these.

Adie hangs up, and types rapid-fire--

ADIE (TEXT)

Too late to take you up on that ride home?

She hits SEND, but before waiting to see if it's delivered, she flicks back to FaceTime and takes Mish off hold.

MISH

What happened, tampon chef?

ADIE

Called Nathan to cash in on that ride. He must be asleep. I'm heading back to the gate near his place, it's closer. I'll grab an Uber from there.

MISH

Yeah good moves, McGrooves.

A sense of relief washes over Adie as the asphalt disappears beneath her feet. CLOP, CLOP, CLOP. Mere minutes until she's out of this creepy joint. She even heel-kicks a little.

MISH (CONT'D)

No prizes for being a hero.

ADIE

Yeah fuck it, I'm a pussy who can't make it through a dumb park. Sue me.

MISH

Sue her! Guzzle your money on legal fees!

ADIE

Sue me for my entire Forever 21 wardrobe and 2011 MacBook Air! See if I care!

They giggle. *Thank god for best friends.* There's another THUMP-THUMP on the bathroom door where Mish is.

MISH

Still pumping it out!

(then, to Adie)

It's one of those fuckboys from earlier. The ones you were talking to.

Adie scrunches her face trying to remember.

ADIE
Jason Momoa?

MISH
Wha?

ADIE
(laughing)
Nevermind.

Adie suddenly realizes something. Flicks back to Instagram.

MISH
Where'd you go?

ADIE
Checking something.

She pulls up that random new follower from earlier: Big_Man669. That's why she thought she recognized him. It's the Jason Momoa guy.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Hmm.

Adie goes back to her Stories, and clicks to check who's been watching. Big_Man669 is on the list.

Creep.

Macho, shithead, frat-banging creep. *God* they make it so easy to hate. *Big_Man669*, really? So you're huge, *and* definitely male in case we forgot, *and* you rate Satan, *and* you still think gags about mutual oral sex are funny?

Everyone knows 69'ing is the most overrated position ever.

ADIE (CONT'D)
He's watching my stories.

MISH
Yuck.

ADIE
Was he? My memory's shady.

MISH
The worst! Baffles me that you give guys like that the time of day when you could have literally *anyone*--

ADIE
Mish, do you think they might've followed me tonight..?

MISH

Doubt they'd risk their
scholarships.

(shrugs)

Though I wouldn't put it past them.

Adie flicks back to the start of her Stories, to refresh her memory on what else she posted that night. It starts with--

--A selfie of SHE AND MISH PRE-GAMING.

--Then, Mish with a BRA ON HER HEAD.

--A gif of her making them MARGARITAS ("*sup weekend, it me*")

--A video of them ARRIVING AT THE PARTY.

And here, righteously and rightfully, is where things begin to devolve.

--Another selfie of SHE AND MISH, now DRUNK, tongues out.

--A hot selfie of Adie outside the Uptown subway, alone, leg draped seductively over a trash can, half-eaten McChicken in hand, captioned "*en route to the sex*"

Yeah yeah, she's seen enough. She rounds a corner and reaches that dark patch again, with the branch, where she fell on her face earlier.

She braces herself and bolts past it, not making that mistake again. *The gate is almost in sight.*

Mish, by the way, confident that Adie's on her way to safety, is now picking at a pimple in the mirror with the party host's tweezers.

Soon, Adie passes the Franklin Stern memorial. Flips him off.

A text notification appears above Mish's concentrated, pimple-popping face:

TYLER has texted Adie.

Adie's heart drops. Or heel-kicks. Or *something*, she's never quite sure with that guy, but either way she's more excited than she should be about her ex texting her post two am.

Adie opens it without telling Mish, because if she told Mish, Mish would murder her through the phone. The text reads--

TYLER (TEXT)

I miss you.

Adie sucks in a sharp breath. Sucks in the three words.
Breathes out, discards, and--

Flicks back to FaceTime, where Mish is now trying out some
kind of Tik Tok looking dance in the bathroom mirror.

ADIE

What are you doing?

MISH

Do I look like Charli D'Amelio?

Adie giggles as she continues around a corner, surely less
than a minute from the gate now, when--

ADIE

FUCK.

She drops her phone. Picks it up again, shaking. We follow
her gaze, to see, up ahead on the path, basking in the fog...

A WOMAN?

It's hard to tell in the fog, but we could swear we see a
dash of lace, the shimmer of tights, the gentle silhouette
of...

Adie cocks her head.

Or is it just the swirling fog?

What strikes her is that she finds nothing particularly *scary*
about this view. It doesn't make her hair stand up like what
happened earlier. She, *if it's a "she" and not the fog*
playing tricks, feels calm.

MISH

What is it?

Adie inches closer. But as she does, the fog gently drops and
begins to cover what she thinks she saw...

ADIE

(whispering)

I think there's a woman.

MISH

You think there's a woman or there
is a woman--

ADIE

Shhhh.

(then, a little louder)

Hello?

Adie looks up ahead. The gate's just through the trees, she can almost see it. Finally, the fog begins to clear...

MISH

Flip the camera so I can see.

Adie does. She ventures forward. The fog lifts, and there she is.

There IT is.

There's no woman here, just a dead RABBIT. *Nearly dead.* Its paw is still pawing slowly, eerily at the air.

Adie exhales, and begins to walk past it.

ADIE

Jesus. I wonder if it's the same one from earlier.

Wet and matted fur, dead black eyes, ants already making their way to their feast, as its pawing paw begins to slow...

ADIE (CONT'D)

Morbid. It's not even completely dead.

MISH

That'd just be its nerves winding down.

Adie breathes out, a *gush* of cathartic air leaving her body as she breaks into a wobbly JOG, on a mission to get to that gate.

ADIE

Fuck this fucking creepy place forever. You can mark my words, I will never step foot in another public park as long as I live.

On Mish's end, behind her-- THUMP-THUMP-CRACK! Mish's face contorts angrily, and to somebody offscreen--

MISH

Dude, what the fuck, you broke the door!

She sets the camera on the bench so Adie can still see her and reaches for the door, letting in...

Timothée Chalamet Frat Boy from earlier.

Mish slams them both inside.

Adie half watches this on her phone as she wobble-jogs to the gate. *We watch along with her.*

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
I was gonna piss myself.

MISH
Fine. Go.

He does, with his back turned to Mish, a little nervous.

You know how in every group of assholes there's always one actually-not-that-bad asshole? He himself never does the actual egging or stealing or raping but he also doesn't do anything to stop it?

Feels like Chalamet might be that guy.

MISH (CONT'D)
Where are your stupid friends?

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
They left.
(then, trying to be cool)
To get some punani.

Mish stares at him. When Mish stares like that, it makes the staree want to crawl into a hole and curdle. *She's that good.*

Over in the park, Adie cringes.

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY (CONT'D)
Sorry, I dunno why I said that--

MISH
Where'd they go to fetch said
punani?

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
(deeply uncomfortable)
I dunno--

MISH
Where did they go?

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
Some other party, I dunno, downtown
or something.

Mish's stare intensifies. *God she's great at this.* Chalamet, whose dick has been out for that whole painful ordeal, zips up his jeans. Goes to wash his hands, but--

MISH
Get outta here.

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
Okay, okay.

He goes to leave, but turns back.

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY (CONT'D)
Yo, is your friend okay though?

MISH
Why would you think she's not okay?

Mish SLAMS the door, locking him back in. Looks like he's going to shit himself now.

Meanwhile, over on Adie's phone, another text from TYLER rolls in. *Jesus, the adrenalin.* She flicks it away, as--

Mish jabs at Chalamet's chest.

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
I don't! It's just a question!

MISH
Did they follow her?

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY
No, what? I just meant 'cause they were sort of dicks to her, that's all.

(genuine)
I swear.

Mish hard-eyes him. He looks like a deer in headlights.

What's funny is that Adie remembers Chalamet and his friends from earlier. She can't remember *what happened*, exactly, just that it feels...

Queasy. Deep in her stomach.

But Chalamet really looks pained, so it's easy to channel that into sympathy for the guy, and plus--

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET FRAT GUY (CONT'D)
Fuck, you need to chill.

ADIE
Mish...

MISH
Fine. Go.

Chalamet leaves, relieved. Mish slams the door behind him. But then, as she's messing around with the now-broken lock, trying to make it stick--

Adie's *jaw drops*. In a millisecond, all the color drains from her face. Once again, but this time for a new reason--

ADIE

Mish.

Adie stares dead ahead, her face bleak and white.

MISH

What, I wasn't *that* rough on him--

ADIE

No, *look*.

We SWING AROUND to see what Adie sees. The GATE she came in. It's--

ADIE (CONT'D)

It's shut.

Adie runs at the gate, grabs the black and gold bars and RATTLES IT, hard. It's for sure locked.

ADIE (CONT'D)

No.

It's not climbable. It's simply not.

Adie's eyes dart around for a solution but instead, they land on a SIGN. One that she, and we, must have missed before.

"North Gate closed between 02:00 - 07:00. Entrance and exit only via the South Gate."

ADIE (CONT'D)

No!

She swings her phone and shows it to Mish.

MISH

You're kidding.

ADIE

How did I miss that?!

Adie GROANS as she slides down the gate to the wet ground, defeated. And somewhere in the trees--

EUUUGHHHH! Again, something seems to one-up her, just like before.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Fucking possums!!! Go to sleep!

Mish looks at her best friend sympathetically. For a few seconds she tries to swallow it, but she's only human--

MISH
Possums are noctur--

ADIE
Don't.

MISH
Sorry. I so wish I was there with you.

Adie sighs, frustrated. Another notification invades the top of her screen-- another text from Tyler.

Adie bites her lip.

Dontreaddontreaddontread.

MISH (CONT'D)
Anything back from Nathan?

Welp, she's got to open those texts now. Adie flicks over to texts, disappearing from Mish's screen while she does.

She opens her texts with Nathan, and sees-- her text went through, but in *green*.

ADIE
Damn it. His phone must be off.

Adie's face falls. She's fresh out of ideas. Nathan sucks. She has an entire dark park full of scary shit to walk through. Everything is terrible.

Except...

Her face spells it out: she's caved, and is opening Tyler's texts. And Mish reads her like a book.

MISH
What are you doing?

ADIE
Nothing.

MISH
Who's texting you??
(off her silence)
Adie.

Adie caves. We see the texts now. They read:

TYLER (TEXT)

Hi
 (then the second)
 I want u backing
 (and the third)
 Back*

Adie sighs. She doesn't *hate* this, but doesn't love it. And it's hard to tell whether it's because he texted at all, or because it's not more loving and well-composed.

ADIE

It's Ty.

MISH

How?? You blocked him.

Yeah. About that.

MISH (CONT'D)

You didn't.

She didn't.

MISH (CONT'D)

Dude. What's wrong with you, you could have *anybody*--

ADIE

Would you stop saying that?

MISH

It's the truth! The rest of us have to pretend to love *bukakke* to get *half* as much attention as you do and yet--

ADIE

Okay, *stop*.

MISH

My point is, Tyler's a dick.

ADIE

He's not a dick, he's had a really hard time.

MISH

Is that why he fucked Sophie while y'all were together?

ADIE

We were in gray-area. She's always been his emotional support--

MISH

Impressive Adie, you let a stoner with the EQ of a Siamese fighting fish gaslight you--

ADIE

Wanna tell me what you *really* think?

Beat. Mish would *love to*, actually. But she sucks up her distaste like a dirty vacuum.

MISH

Just that you deserve better. You broke up with him for a reason, why let the guy have access to you?

Access. This makes Adie think. She pulls up Tyler's contact, and sees... location services are on.

ADIE

Fuck.

MISH

What.

ADIE

Location services.

MISH

Oh, turn it the fuck--

ADIE

(turns it off)

It's off now.

(blocks him)

He's blocked, okay? Gone.

MISH

But he could have already--

ADIE

I'm aware!

Now Adie opens Instagram and deletes her latest Story that announced her location at the memorial, plus the one headed uptown.

Maybe that's where she went wrong. Maybe those were a mistake.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Although I seriously doubt my ex-boyfriend thinks that scaring me is an effective way to get me back.

Mish shrugs. She wouldn't put much past that guy. Adie cradles her head in her hands, stressed out.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Fuck tonight, honestly.

She lets out an exasperated SCREAM into her handbag. And from the trees, *much* closer now-- EUUUGGGHHHH!! Louder, grotesque.

Adie gapes.

MISH

What the hell kind of possum *is* that?

ADIE

Not hanging around to find out.

Finally, she does what we've been screaming for her to do from page one: rips off her heels and tosses them away. Then she's up and MARCHING back through the park, *out of here*.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Don't leave me, okay?

MISH

Of course I won't.

Now shoeless, Adie's gait is smoother. More nimble. Her quick breath blows little white puffs into the air, which become one with the fog.

She rounds a corner. *So far so good*.

Another corner. *Still good*.

ADIE

Cold rough gravel between my toes never felt so goo--

CRAAACK!

She whips around to face the sound but there's only *darkness*.

CRACK! CRASH! CRACK! CRACK!

Like someone or something is CRASHING through the dark forestry, coming straight for Adie.

MISH
Jogger?? Possum??

No time to respond.

Because it's close enough to make out its silhouette thumping through the trees.

And it's not the jogger.

It's a very wide, towering, foreboding figure of a man, or a beast, either is plausible.

It's what Mish thought she saw earlier.

It's what Adie thought she saw earlier.

It's what we thought we saw too, but none of us were confident enough to make the call.

Until now.

Adie SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER.

EEEEUUUGGGHHHHH! It screams louder!

MISH (CONT'D)
What is it? Move Adie, run!

And as it tumbles through the trees towards her, tripping over its own feet, Adie realizes two things:

The obscured figure is heaving and growling like a bear that hasn't eaten for weeks. And--

She hasn't moved.

She lifts her bare feet and RUNS LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

ADIE
What the fuck is that???

It MOANS again. As we're beginning to suspect, **when Adie screams, whatever this is screams louder.**

She dares to turn around mid-stride.

And immediately wishes she didn't.

Because now it's RUNNING ALONGSIDE HER in the TREES.

She still can't make out the specifics of its form (nor can we), but the THUD-THUD of its feet SNAP and CRASH the shrubbery, and Adie can almost feel its lurchy, heaving breath on her now as it inches closer *and closer* out of the trees towards the path.

She SCREAMS again.

IT HOWLS LOUDER!

Adie ducks through a dark patch created by an overgrown oak, and in that moment--

THUMP. The thing THUMPS her in the back and sends her FLYING off the path, into the forest...

And SMACK into a tree.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: Adie's raspy, desperate breathing, and Mish--

MISH

Adie. Are you there?? Talk to me.

BACK TO:

Adie's slumped against the tree. A RED BUMP is forming on her head where she smacked into it. Her left PINKY is bent backwards. And her PHONE, where Mish is calling out from, lays face-up in the dirt nearby.

But Adie can't move. Her arms, legs, entire body seems to be PARALYZED. And when she opens her mouth, she realizes she can't scream. *She can't even speak.*

MISH (CONT'D)

Adie, hello??

Her eyes dart around inside their sockets. She can *just* see through the trees back onto the path. The thing that chased her has vanished.

MISH (CONT'D)

Please say something.

Adie tries again, but all that comes out is a *squeak*.

She shuts her eyes. Tries hard to steady her breathing.

Finally, her toes wiggle a little. Then her fingers. She *winces* at the broken one, her pinky.

Finally able to move a little, Adie slowly reaches over and grabs her phone.

MISH (CONT'D)

Oh thank god--

Adie's in tears of shock. They both are.

Because it's certain now.

Someone or something doesn't want her to make it out of the park alive.

ADIE

It was huge. I don't know what--

MISH

Some fucking creep followed you.
And I'll bet it was your ex-boyfriend.

Mish is up and out of the bathroom.

ADIE

(a barely audible whisper)
I don't think it was human.

MISH

I'm coming to you.

Mish BOWLS down the hallway through the party, as--

Adie starts to crawl out of the forestry she was thrown into, slowly. Carefully. *Terrified*.

She touches her forehead, and *winces* at the bump.

Glances at her baby finger; definitely broken.

Now at her feet, which are muddy and now a little bloody. *She ran hard*.

Her dress is up around her butt, but that's hardly the point now. She scoops up her HANDBAG, which must've fallen off as she went flying.

Meanwhile, Mish is now out of the party and RUNNING through the street.

MISH (CONT'D)

Subway will be quickest. Two stops,
then I think I can walk from Vista,
or grab a Citi Bike--

ADIE

Shhh.

Adie's never been more scared in her life.

She stumbles back out into the clear, and begins to make her way down that fated dark path again.

The ground stings her bare feet now.

She vigilantly surveys her surroundings as she walks, checking for scary surprises.

MISH

(whispering per request)

Or it's those guys from the party--

ADIE

No.

MISH

Or fucking Nathan! Or his batshit obsessive ex-girlfriend, if Tori knew you slept with--

ADIE

No.

MISH

Then it's Ty! Adie, it wouldn't be the first time he's come looking for you--

ADIE

Please keep it down, Mish. It might hear you.

Adie gets a CALL WAITING. An UNKNOWN NUMBER.

ADIE (CONT'D)

A private number's calling.

MISH

Don't answer, it's probably Ty.

Adie's already killed the call. No time to fuck around. She keeps walking, passing through yet another dark patch again.

A gush of relief as she makes it through.

The council really needs to replace those light bulbs.

After a period of contemplative silence--

ADIE

It wasn't Ty. Because it wasn't a person.

MISH

Adie...

ADIE

You saw it Mish, I know you did. When I tripped over the branch.

MISH

Yeah but I'm drunk and high. You're drunk.

ADIE

I know what I saw.

A long beat as Adie keeps walking. Mish, opting not to argue right now, ducks down a set of SUBWAY STAIRS.

MISH

I'm calling the cops. Then I'm gonna lose you until I get on the train. I'll call you right back.

Adie nods.

The call cuts out.

Adie sucks in a long, deep breath. *She's on her own again.*

She rounds a corner and comes across a row of Citi Bikes. Yes. She hurries over. Pulls out her phone and, with shaky hands, syncs one up to her app.

PING!

The bike's unlocked. She hauls it off the rack and jumps on.

Then she rides off and pedals harder than she ever has before, quickly picking up pace. She heaves a sigh of relief as the fog *whips* past her face, disappearing behind her.

More dark trees, marshes, scary shadows now simply *whiz* into Adie's past.

A GREEN LIGHT blips on the handlebars; if we're thinking about it, we might remember that these things have GPS.

She rounds another corner, determination building.

She's surely not far from the South Gate. She'll be out of here before Mish even calls back!

But, as she rounds the next corner--

There, about 70 feet ahead, is a FORK IN THE PATH marked by an over-hanging oak tree branch. But it's what's obscured by the branch that makes her blood run cold.

A pair of tall legs, thick as tree stumps.

Adie SWALLOWS her scream and instead, yanks the handlebars and veers a *hard right* into the trees.

But the heavy-duty public bike can't take the traction and SKIDS... Adie *flings off* and lands on her butt.

But at least she's hidden.

The wheel is poking onto the path, so she YANKS it in with her, trying desperately not to scream.

Then she peers through the trees, straining to get a look.

The legs stand dead still. And now she's silent, Adie knows for *sure* it's that *thing* again. Because she can hear its heaving breath.

The legs must be pushing four feet tall, and they're bigger, thicker all over than a person's legs should be. The skin is purple-brown and veiny like it's about to burst. Like a man got stung by a thousand bees and was left to rot in shit.

Silence permeates the darkness.

Adie strains a little closer to try to see better, and then--

There's a tiny SNAP! As her palm presses a stick to death. She holds her breath, hoping it didn't hear.

If it can even hear.

Can giant swollen man-looking creatures hear?

...apparently it either didn't, or pretended not to.

Because **the swollen legs begin to walk away.** Adie breathes out. But it STOPS DEAD STILL again, when--

ZZZZP-ZZZP.

Adie's PHONE VIBRATES. Mish is calling back. Adie instantly kills the call, but--

The thing must have heard, because it hasn't resumed walking. But it doesn't come closer, either. *It just waits.*

Adie holds every single muscle in her body dead still. She doesn't even breathe.

Annnd finally it **resumes walking**, down the path to the RIGHT.

Adie exhales once more.

Once she's satisfied it's gone, she dials Mish back on FaceTime. And the second she answers--

ADIE

I need you to listen to me.

Mish nods, now under the neon-ish lights of a train.

MISH

Okay.

Shaking, quiet, careful--

ADIE

It's got to be around seven, maybe eight feet tall. Its legs are bloated like balloons.

Mish yanks her earbuds from her pocket and plugs Adie in. Probably not train-appropriate conversation.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Swollen or something, like it's about to burst. It's purple-ish, rotten-looking and veiny. Like a huge swollen man, *but fucked up*.
(and then)
Do you believe me?

A beat as Mish takes this in.

MISH

I believe you.

Adie sucks in a breath. Eyes the bike laying in the sticks, and plots.

ADIE

Time to go.

She hauls herself up. A little disoriented but determined, she drags the bike out of the trees and back onto the path.

The front wheel is bent out of shape from being flung into the trees. Adie frowns, and kicks at it with her bare heel. *Should be rideable.*

ADIE (CONT'D)
Found this, by the way.

She sets Mish up in the basket, and then she's on the Citi Bike and pedaling. Shoeless, scratched, bumped and bruised.

Adie arrives at the FORK, where the swollen legs just were, and eyes the path to the RIGHT. *The path the thing took.*

And she veers to the LEFT.

MISH
You know where you're going?

ADIE
Been here a million times.

MISH
In the daytime--

ADIE
Gate's this way.

The fog is heavier here. Thicker, like it's got more to say.

Adie's eye catches the murky marsh beside the path. It's so Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* at this time of night. And when she reverts her gaze back to the path--

She GASPS and skids to a halt.

A pile of something soft and white, or is it lavender, laying in a low-hanging cloud of fog.

Adie lifts her finger to her lips, silencing Mish.

Mish keeps quiet. The fog covers the fabric, and Adie strains to see, but it's gone. The fog lifts, and there it is again-- clearer now, *it's a DRESS. A lavender lace dress.*

This time, Adie pulls her phone up and flips the camera around so Mish can see too.

Then she gets off the bike.

MISH
What are you doing??

ADIE
Shhh. *Look.*

She inches closer, closer still, until the fog lifts again, and we see, beside a distinct CRACK in the asphalt that we'll need to remember later--

THREE DEAD RABBITS.

Adie jumps back in horror.

MISH

Ugh.

ADIE

I could've sworn it was a dress.

She studies the rabbits, confused.

ADIE (CONT'D)

How weird.

They don't seem to have been attacked or anything. They're serene, like they just decided to lay down and die.

Adie sucks in a breath and gets back on her bike.

MISH

Just get out of there, no more
stopping for rabbits. I'm coming as
fast as I can.

Adie's phone lights up with that UNKNOWN NUMBER again.

ADIE

(softly)
Tyler's still trying.
(off Mish's look)
Even if it was him, *how?*

MISH

I don't know, could be his idea of
a really really fucked up prank.

Adie shakes her head, her lips pursed involuntarily.

You know when you find yourself standing up for somebody, but you've lost track of why you're doing it?

Then Adie's back on the bike and riding again.

Her bare feet dig into the jagged plastic pedals. That bent front wheel is *not* loving life.

But still Adie rides, and rides.

Mish watches intently from where she sits on the train.

Until suddenly--

Adie frowns. Everything looks a little too familiar. There's a fountain. A statue. A plaque about the chronological history of...

ADIE

Wait.

It hits her.

She's back at the Franklin Stern memorial.

ADIE (CONT'D)

No. That's not possible.

She looks around again. *Yup.*

ADIE (CONT'D)

I'm back at the fucking statue.

MISH

What? Did you do a loop?

ADIE

No! I-- well I must have. But I took the right turn back at the fork, I know I did...

Adie thinks. Her head spins as she *second guesses herself.*

MISH

The bike. It has GPS.

A beat. Adie looks at the green light on the handlebars.

MISH (CONT'D)

Maybe it messed you up somehow, or you got confused because you were going so fast, or--

ADIE

But *I decided* where to turn.

Another beat. Mish isn't so sure.

ADIE (CONT'D)

I'm sure I made the right...

She trails off, and *remembers something.* She pulls up Google Maps. But that doesn't track unless you ask it to.

She thinks again, and pulls up Strava.

There it is. The tiny squiggly line tells no lie: Adie did a loop. She screenshots and sends it to Mish, who pulls it up.

MISH

Shit.

Adie eyeballs the bike. That green light. *Maybe it did have something to do with it?*

ADIE

I should just walk. This is crazy.

MISH

I think that's smart.

Adie pulls up Google Maps again, types "Franklin Stern Park, South Gate" and maps it. *Which gives her another thought.*

ADIE

Will you Google the park? Franklin Stern Memorial?

MISH

Good idea.

The train Mish is on jerks to a halt.

MISH (CONT'D)

Gotta change trains. Call you right back.

She hangs up.

Adie eyes a BIG STICK at the edge of the path, full of jagged edges. Picks it up and white-knuckles it.

Then she hits START, and the Google Maps lady directs her to go straight ahead. With new resolve, Adie is *off*. And then--

A NOTIFICATION: "Big_Guy669 tagged you in a video"

What?

She opens it as she walks. Hits play. And her jaw drops.

It's another video from our cold open, from back at the party. And there's Adie, in peak blackout drunk zone...

She wiggles her butt for those guys she doesn't recognize. One of them SLAPS it; that Momoa dude thumps his shoulder.

Momoa yanks her into his lap. Her dress rides up, revealing her g-string and butt. His hands squeeze her naked thighs.

But it's the caption that really does it.

Her: #metoo
Also her: [the video]

ADIE
Fuck. Fuck you!

The likes are building fast. And the *comments are on fire*.

Damn son, bring home the bacon!!!

fat slut

LOL this hoe was in my undergrad #milkwagons

That caption tho... hahaha smfh

Adie's hands begin to shake, her broken pinky vibrating along with them.

She quickly untags herself, but it's too late. She's already been *tagged in another*, by some troll account, and suddenly her own photos are gaining a bunch of new likes.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Assholes.

She flicks back to her own page, where we get a quick glimpse:

A couple of cute selfies, the devil's ivy plant in her room, one of brunch, a Mother's Day tribute.

It's the cute selfies that are piling up with likes, fire emojis and that disgusting drooling tongue.

Adie fires off a DM to "Big_Man669"--

ADIE (INSTA DM) (CONT'D)
Please delete that!!

Then she looks around her in despair. Hopelessness. *Fear*. And then, out loud--

ADIE (CONT'D)
If you fucking morons are playing a trick on me, I get it. Joke's over!

Angry tears begin to come.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Do you hear me?? It's a shitty joke, and it's OVER!

Dead quiet. *Not a sound.* Until--

A CRACK from the trees. Adie swings around. She white-knuckles that stick for dear life, still *shaking* like a leaf.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Come out and face me! We'll see if you keep your scholarships after this!

ZZZB. A text from Mish. It's a link to a Medium article, and Mish wants her to--

MISH (TEXT)

OPEN RIGHT NOW.

ZZZB. Now she's calling. Adie answers, stick still out and ready.

ADIE

You were right, it's those douchebags from the party--

MISH

Look at what I sent.

ADIE

I don't have time to--

MISH

Trust me.

Adie does. It's a Medium article.

The headline reads: "*The Tall Tale of Franklin Stern: Are Missing Girls Tied to Old City Money?*" by Victoria Gomez.

ADIE

(shaking, still on alert)
What am I reading??

MISH

The *only* article that comes up about dark shit going down in the park.

Mish reads aloud from her next train, as Adie's eyes skim the words...

"Eight women have gone missing..."

MISH (CONT'D)

She claims there are eight unsolved disappearances-- *eight*, Adie-- from the early 1900s until recently. All women, none were found.

"You won't find their missing notices online..."

MISH (CONT'D)

But she had to dig through old newspapers at the library to find this shit, 'cause Google shows up zero. We all know Stern as the rich hero that built this city, right--

CRACK! Adie spins, shakily pointing her stick. But still, nothing appears.

ADIE

Mish, please. Just get here. Those frat assholes are following me, I'm sure of it. They posted something--

MISH

(reading on)

But! Surprise!

"dark underbelly and abusive reputation..."

MISH (CONT'D)

Actually he was a controlling monster, and surprise again! He ran a thriving brothel on the very edge of the park, where he supposedly kept the women in these horrendous conditions.

"a thriving full service hotspot, frequented by other wealthy men of the time..."

MISH (CONT'D)

She says all the records were single line reports, like the disappearances, the girls, were just insignificant write-offs--

ADIE

TLDR; a man from history was terrible. Not exactly front page news--

MISH

No photos, *nothing*--

ADIE
 Maybe because it didn't happen--

MISH
 Except for this one girl.

Adie zeroes in on a PHOTO of a GIRL. Something about her is eerily familiar, and that makes Adie *shiver*.

"but perhaps the most fascinating part is the way he died..."

MISH (CONT'D)
 But it was actually awesome because he met this horrific, untimely death.

"of gripping anaphylaxis."

Adie almost drops her phone in shock. Mish nods; it's all but undeniable. But still--

ADIE
 So you think I'm being chased by a ghost.

MISH
 Adie, Stern built *all* the red Victorians in the area, around the park--

ADIE
 (angry now)
 You *don't* understand. It's those guys, it has to be, they just posted a fucking video--

MISH
 Listen to me, it's *not*. Stop giving them airtime, you gave them *more* than enough tonight!

Adie blinks. Mish instantly regrets her words.

ADIE
 What are you *actually* trying to say, Mish? That it's because I gave them "airtime" that they fucked with me?

MISH
 Of course not--

ADIE

And that's why I'm now being hunted
in the park? 'Cause I asked for it?

MISH

No no no, Adie--

ADIE

You can just come out and say it,
I'm right here.

MISH

I'm sorry. That was a total dick
thing to say. I love you and I'm
coming, okay? I--

Mish freezes, and starts to drop out.

ADIE

Mish??

(still frozen)

Mish!

Annnd Mish is gone.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Damn it.

Adie locks her phone, narrows her eyes and RUNS.

The foggy SHADOWS are screwing with Adie now at every turn.
Every second one looks like it's sure to be the end of her.

Her phone keeps PINGING with Instagram notifications.

She glances down and instantly regrets it, because it's from
a WOMAN, and it says--

Girls like you ruin it for the rest of us!!!

And then, finally, a DM response from Big_Man669:

BIG_MAN669 (INSTA DM)

Lol u have to admit its funny

Hell NOPE. Adie ROARS!!

And now the UNKNOWN NUMBER is calling again! She answers in a
blaze of terrified fury--

ADIE

Stop! Leave me alone! I'm not
scared of you!

Oh, but she is.

Her dirty bare feet are sliced up now, and a limp has worked its way into her gait. She's exhausted, scared and cold.

But that's about to be the least of her worries.

Because all of a sudden--

Adie's eyes BULGE and she DROPS out of frame, her phone CLATTERING to the ground.

Offscreen, there's a THUMP and GRUNT, and we know she's been winded far worse than before.

We whip down to follow Adie in CLOSE UP, as, *no word of a lie:*

She's DRAGGED ON HER STOMACH, quickly and mercilessly along the asphalt, her nails scraping and *snapping* and THUMP! Her chin SMACKS off the edge of the path as she's dragged further down the embankment...

Through the mud...

And INTO THE MARSH.

Before she can even scream, she's FULLY SUBMERGED in the disgusting marsh water.

Oof.

We pull back out WIDE now, as bubbles rise to the surface.

She's dead. Surely our hero is dead. This is the part of the story where she stupidly thought she could escape, we rolled our eyes and knew she couldn't, and--

WHOOOSH!!

Adie SURFACES, GASPING FOR BREATH.

Her hands desperately, frantically slap at the water, her emergency freestyle skills serving her a few strokes, a few feet, until she manages to *snatch* the muddy bank.

Gagging for air, eyes wide and stricken, Adie's nails DIG into the mud.

Left hand.

Right hand.

One after the other, she *slowly drags* herself out of the dirty marsh. She's hauled her torso all the way out, when--

She's YANKED BACK IN.

Adie grabs desperately at the reeds, the mud, anything, and SCREAMS! Then, the sound nobody wanted to hear--

EEUUUUGGGHHHHHH!

Adie dares to look over her shoulder to see what dragged her.

And there, emerging from the water up to its waist, is *THE THING IN FULL VIEW: a towering and hideous figure of a man, swollen and bloated like a terrifying Michelin Man.*

The swollen man.

Its stomach, its face, the whole thing is tumefied like its legs, and its heavy shoulders heave.

Adie SCREAMS AGAIN! It SCREAMS LOUDER!! A bloodcurdling, deathly howl that *one-ups Adie's every time.*

Her body takes over and she goes to scream again, BUT--

The second its hand GRABS HER ANKLE, Adie FREEZES. Her mouth hangs open, but now NOTHING COMES OUT.

We can almost feel her thrashing inside, betrayed by her stiff, unresponsive body and vocal cords.

But she can't do a thing, because she's paralyzed.

And OUR FRAME is paralyzed with her.

The swollen man dips back under the surface, as it drags her further back into the marsh... *back...* until her stiff fingers are no longer touching the shore.

Adie goes under again.

More bubbles.

This time, it doesn't look like she'll come up.

Our FRAME DIPS STEADILY DOWN under the murky water, on a stilted vertical axis, until we meet Adie's submerged face...

Eyes wide and terrified. And behind her, those swollen, grotesque hands are *working their way from Adie's ankles up her paralyzed legs...* dragging her down deeper.

And there's not a thing Adie can do about it.

A FAT BUBBLE rises as the first GULP of water slides down her throat.

And our frame begins to abandon Adie, as we pull up out of the water again, to meet the dead silence of the night.

Then, curiously--

We hear the gentle CLIP-CLOP of horses' hooves offscreen, maybe 100 feet away.

And with that, a handful of marsh insects FLY OFF the water's surface as a certain dark energy seems to LIFT and flit away, and suddenly, *finally--*

Adie BURSTS up for air again! Coughing, spluttering, spewing up water, and our FRAME RELAXES with her.

Her ears are too blocked up to hear the faraway CLIP-CLOP, but the sound is getting closer. 50 feet away now.

Slowly and with greater heaviness this time, Adie HAULS herself out of the marsh again, her mud-clogged nails clinging to the banks as she struggles to find her life.

But she's painfully slow; her body is only gradually recovering from the paralysis.

Still, her torso is out. Drenched, out of breath, reeds in her hair, her dress clinging fruitlessly to her body. She tries to pull herself onto her elbows, but--

She COUGHS UP a gut-load of water, her muscles fail her and she FLOPS back down into the mud, exhausted. And *dizzy*. Weirdly disoriented again.

Like all the previous times she's seen the swollen man.

CLIP-CLOP, CLIP-CLOP.

Adie's eyes snap wide to attention. THAT TIME she heard it! Horses hooves!

She tries to look up, but her head is so heavy. She can only strain far enough to see--

Yes! TWO POLICE HORSES. COPS, up the embankment on the path!

Halle-fucking-lujah.

She opens her mouth to YELL... but nothing comes out.

It's okay. Try again, Adie.

She tries again. Nothing comes out. And again. Nothing but a mediocre wheeze. *Fuck.*

She's still paralyzed, voice-box and all. A RINGING sounds in her ears; she's severely discombobulated. And then--

Another sound. The PIT-PAT of sneakers jogging from the other direction, and--

COP #1 (O.S.)
Evening, sir.

JOGGER GUY (O.S.)
Evening, officers.

Adie has managed to twist her neck enough for an obstructed view: the two cops have stopped to chat with none other than Jogger Guy. They're no more than 30 feet from her, but the shrubbery blocks them from seeing Adie down by the marsh...

COP #1
Haven't seen a young lady in your travels?

JOGGER GUY
Actually, I did pass a woman earlier.

Adie's eyes brighten. Her breath quickens.

COP #2
Blond, denim jacket?

JOGGER GUY
That'd be her. Seemed like she'd had uh, quite the night.

Adie's breath catches hard in her throat.

COP #1
How so?

JOGGER GUY
She was on one. Kinda sauced, if I'm honest.

The cops LAUGH. Jogger Guy LAUGHS. Adie's eyes turn frantic.

COP #1
Was she with anyone else?

JOGGER GUY

Nope, solo. Think she'd have headed out the South Gate by now, if you didn't see her on your way in?

COP #2

We didn't. Mmm.

COP #1

Mmm.

All three exchange a look that make Adie feel like a beetle that's just been stomped on.

COP #1 (CONT'D)

Where would we be without drunk kids, eh?

JOGGER GUY

Power to her. We should all be living la vida loca, I say.

COP #1

Wouldn't that be the life. Well, thanks for your help.

JOGGER GUY

Sure. 'Night, officers.

The CLIP-CLOP and PIT-PAT of Jogger Guy's stupid Asics resume, and with that, Adie is alone again.

Only now do her fingers begin to wiggle, her limbs loosen, her voicebox regains momentum, and--

A hollow, desperate, defeated CRY tumbles out of her throat.

Adie hauls to her hands and knees, in FURIOUS TEARS. She SCRAMBLES up the embankment to the path, and--

ADIE

Hello? Please come back! I'm here!!

They're well and truly gone.

ADIE (CONT'D)

HELP ME!!!

As the night swallows her cries, Adie pulls her gaze back to the marsh, looking for any sign of the swollen man. *Nothing.*

As a sidenote, it doesn't seem to like spectators.

But it was definitely there. AND ITS TOUCH PARALYZED HER.

ZZZB!

Adie jumps. Her phone! It vibrates face-up in the mud nearby, by some miracle unscathed. Now almost fully functioning, she scrambles to it, never more grateful to see--

MISH. She frantically swipes until Mish pops up on FaceTime.

MISH
Sorry, tunnel--

ADIE
It's real.

MISH
What happened??

ADIE
Shhh, it might hear you.

Adie glances around, deeply wary. Her shock is palpable.

MISH
I'm calling the cops again--

ADIE
Fuck the cops.
(then, fervently)
The swollen man. Anaphylaxis. *It's real.*

She struggles to gather her thoughts, and her feet, because she cannot stay here another *second*.

ADIE (CONT'D)
It dragged me into the marsh and my body, I couldn't move--

MISH
Holy *shit*--

ADIE
Shhh. How far are you???

Adie's up and back on the path now, walking.

MISH
Thirty minutes, and I have a plan. I'll book an Uber to be waiting, and--
(exploding with love)
Adie, I love you and I'm *so sorry* for what I said earlier, you're my *best friend* and--

ADIE

Shhh.

(with full crazy eyes)

I don't want to disturb it.

Mish looks deeply disturbed. Her best friend is saturated, muddy, alone in a park... and either *losing it*, or *hunted*.

We hear the gentle SLAP, SLAP, SLAP as Adie's wet feet hit the path. Her face still spells a little discombobulation.

MISH

Are you okay?

ADIE

I get dizzy every time it...

Realization sweeps across her face. We zip around to follow Adie's eye-line, where we see--

She's back at that oak tree, the FORK in the path. The one that sent her in a loop back to the memorial after she saw the swollen man.

She gazes down the path to the RIGHT. Then to the LEFT. Then back to the RIGHT--

ADIE (CONT'D)

The gate's that way, I know it's that way.

Looks back to the left.

ADIE (CONT'D)

But I went left, which sent me back around the loop.

She thinks. *Remembers.*

ADIE (CONT'D)

Mish. When I see it, it throws me off. Stops me from thinking straight, my brain feels foggy, and then...

Adie touches her forehead and remembers. It hurts. *Is it a monster affecting her brain, or the golf-ball sized bump from where she smacked into the tree?*

Mish is biting her lip by now, desperately worried.

But Adie gets an idea.

She fumbles around in her handbag. Shoves aside a tampon, Chapstick, Mac's *Red Russian* (we were right!), an empty Clif bar wrapper, until she locates--

Her Ice Breaker Sours. She GRINS a very angry grin. And then, a woman on a mission--

Adie CRACKS the tub open and DROPS one on the ground.

And as she continues walking, she drops another. And another. And another, forming a trail of pinkish white candies behind her...

She shows Mish, who gives her an approving thumbs up, because at the very least, it's not a *crazy* idea.

Deeper back down the dark, foggy path Adie goes, only now with a fierce resolve that *looks good on her*. Bloodied and bruised, cold, full of marsh water-- it can't get much worse.

And now she thinks she's cracked the code to get the eff out of this hell park.

Mish stays with her, silent per request.

ZZZB! Another incoming call, and low and behold--

ADIE (CONT'D)

Tyler's calling. On Messenger.

His name illuminates the screen. Adie KILLS the call.

He CALLS AGAIN. She KILLS IT again.

He CALLS A THIRD TIME...

The adrenalin of not-dying has left Adie feeling a little stronger than before, a little more capable of handling--

MISH

Obviously don't answer.

ADIE

You know what?

MISH

No.

She's got *this*. She's totally--

ADIE

If I can take on a fucking swamp monster, I can take on my ex-boyfriend.

To Mish's horror, she ANSWERS, and now we're face to face with--

TYLER. He's skinnier than we perhaps imagined. Kinda weedy, and his once-gold nose ring is brassy and boasts a booger. Also his hair needs a brush, and it's easy to feel surprised that Adie-- who, you've got to admit, we're growing to love-- has been so hung up on him.

Oh, but she has. Because as soon as she sees his face, whatever strength she may have gained begins to slowly melt. But she fastens it back on, and--

ADIE (CONT'D)

This isn't a good time.

He breaks into a woozy grin. He's drunk, high or both.

TYLER

Hi baby--

ADIE

Why are you calling me, Tyler?

She remembers to drop another Ice Breaker.

TYLER

I miss you.

ADIE

I blocked you.

TYLER

I know, that made me so sad.

He moves closer to the camera. Brassy booger gets bigger, but we can also see his eyes now. And eyes equal humanity.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Baby.

Damn it.

TYLER (CONT'D)

I love you.

Damn it damn it damn it. Her feet SLAP the ground harder.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Adie. Please say you still love me too.

A tear sneaks into her eye.

TYLER (CONT'D)

I think we can do better, I really do. I can't sleep without you.

Fuck! Neither can Adie.

He shifts a little, she catches a glimpse of his lava lamp behind him and *quietly exhales. He's at home!*

Which means he's categorically not the one stalking her tonight. She hadn't wanted to straight-up ask, in case he took it as an accusation, y'know, but phew.

Adie met Tyler in her freshman year of college, when he was the one guy at Oktoberfest that wasn't slurping beer off her body after she lost a bet. It's funny what happens when you meet the best of a bad bunch. You feel so grateful for all the ways he's not an evil, self-centered pig, that you forget the ways that he is... an evil, self-centered pig.

TYLER (CONT'D)

My heart hurts so bad.

That's it, the words *gush* and Adie's not sure what she's even sorry for, but--

ADIE

I'm sorry.

TYLER

Maybe we can get together and talk about it? Tonight?

Adie's lip quivers. She's softening, and there's an almost loving moment between them. *She needs him, she's sure of it.*

ADIE

Ty, something horrible has happened tonight--

TYLER

'Cause I'm in my bed thinking of you. I'm naked.

He pulls the camera up to show her where he is. Racing car sheets, that lava lamp, a Smirnoff bottle beside an ashtray.

ADIE

Ty--

TYLER

Where are you right now?

Has he really not noticed her drenched hair, at least?

ADIE

I'm *trying* to tell you, I'm in the park, and--

TYLER

Are you alone?

ADIE

Sort of. Something really crazy--

TYLER

'Cause I saw your Stories.

ADIE

Please listen, *there's something in the park--*

TYLER

I know you're uptown. Did you screw that old dude you've always had a thing for?

A suspended beat. Adie's struck speechless. Her emotional tears are becoming angry ones.

TYLER (CONT'D)

I've been trying to call you all night, I even tried on a Google number, but you let me embarrass myself--

ADIE

(realizing)

The unknowns were you.

TYLER

--while you were out *getting it*. I saw what those guys posted about you on Insta.

Adie's jaw hangs low on its own volition now.

ADIE

Jesus Tyler, I'm being *hunted* in a fucking dark, creepy park and all you wanna know is--

TYLER

Well did you? Just tell me so I can know whether to move on, *it's not a huge ask*.

Adie KILLS the call, equal parts heartbroken and shocked.

She looks behind her, only to realize she's forgotten to keep dropping Ice Breakers.

ADIE

FUUUUCK.

She KICKS the ground in frustration, when--

EEEEUUUUGGGHHHHHHH! Somewhere in the trees, the swollen man.

ADIE (CONT'D)

No!!! Leave me alone!!!

EEEEUUUUUUGGGGGHHHHHHH!!

Adie's eyes darken and she breaks into a RUN again, dropping those Ice Breakers with shaky fingers.

On the upside, her broken pinky is beginning to learn how to fit in without getting knocked around.

She dials Mish back on FaceTime as she runs. Mish answers immediately.

ADIE (CONT'D)

I don't want to talk about it. Just stay with me, okay?

MISH

Forever.

And suddenly, in the darkness ahead, an unfamiliar SCREAM.

Only this time it was the scream of *another woman*.

ADIE

A woman.

MISH

Ignore it, just run.

Adie charges on, eyes peeled for the source of the screams.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Help me!

Adie runs faster.

She rounds a corner.

Then another. And then--

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

Please, somebody!

The owner of the voice is *right* through a set of trees and shrubbery, Adie is sure of it.

In the marsh.

Fuck.

It's hardly a decision. Adie veers off the path, towards the sound.

MISH

Adie, no. *Keep going.*

Adie pushes through the trees, shaking, eyes searching.

Until finally--

There she is. Lavender lace.

Just as Adie suspected, it's the SAME WOMAN she thought she saw earlier.

The same woman from the Medium article.

And now, she's splashing in the marsh, gasping for air.

Her desperate eyes land on Adie.

WOMAN

Please! I can't swim.

MISH

What if it's a trick??

Adie considers this. She looks back up to the path, and her Ice Breakers.

Back to the marsh, where the woman flails.

Maybe she should just leave.

So she backs up a little. Begins to turn away, when--

WOMAN

Hel--

GURGLE. The woman's head goes under.

Adie drops her phone and RUNS for the marsh at full speed.

She SPLASHES into the freezing cold water, as--

The woman disappears beneath the surface, bubbles rising. Just like they did when Adie went under.

ADIE

Hold on!

Adie's in. She thrashes and splashes towards the bubbles as fast as she can.

The bubbles get smaller, and--

Disappear before Adie reaches them. *Shit*. But then--

WOMAN (O.S.)

Here...

Adie swings around. She must have miscalculated, because the woman is ten-ish feet to her right!

She BURLS through the water again, as--

The woman goes under again.

Bubbles. *More bubbles*. Adie DIVES under the surface.

...but emerges sans drowning woman.

Where the hell is she?

She DIVES under again.

...and once again, emerges with nothing.

Fierce and determined, Adie DIVES under once more. We lose her for a beat as she swims beneath the surface.

A long beat.

And finally...

Adie BURSTS out and GASPS for air, spraying marsh water everywhere, and--

She's GOT HER! The woman is wedged under her arm, dead still and not breathing.

Adie swims her to the shore, freezing and out of breath.

Closer.

Closer still.

Until finally, Adie's crawling up the banks with the woman in her arms, her drenched hair covering her face, the lavender fabric of her dress clinging to her body.

Around her neck is a *GOLD HEART NECKLACE*. It's a distinct design with a series of letters engraved around the edges, but no time to study it, because--

Adie turns away to cough up a lungful of water. And when she turns back to the woman--

Her face DROPS. Her breath CRACKS. She begins to SHAKE.

The woman's face is ROTTEN. There are MAGGOTS crawling out of her nose. Her skin is SEEPING OFF in wet scabs.

Adie DROPS HER on the ground, her heart beating so fucking hard she might die. She COVERS HER FACE in horror. And when she looks back, her breath cracks again...

Because it's not a woman. **It's a DEAD RABBIT.**

Adie SCREAMS!!

Somewhere in the distance, not as close this time--

EEUUUGGGGHHHHH!

Adie is shaking HARD now, close to hyperventilating. *Is she losing her goddamn mother effing mind?*

She scrambles desperately backwards, away from the thing. Its drenched fur is clinging to its body like her dress is to her, and Adie's just noticing she's *covered in rabbit fur*.

She SCREAMS again.

EEUUUGGGGHHHHH! The thing echoes in the distance.

And as Adie stumbles towards the path, she notices something in her periphery.

Up on the path are TWO MORE DEAD RABBITS.

Her eyes fall back on the one in the mud. Back to the other two. To the brown mess of fur on her front. *Did she...*

MISH (O.S.)

Adie?? Where are you?

The reminder that her best friend is still on FaceTime sends her into a flurry of tears. She slumps into the mud and rocks back and forth. *What the hell is going on?*

Finally, she forces herself up. Crawls back to her phone.

MISH (CONT'D)

What happened??

ADIE

She... there wasn't...

She drags herself back up to the path, where she notices that same distinct CRACK in the asphalt beside the other two dead rabbits.

It's almost certain they're the same rabbits she saw earlier. Only before, there were three.

She glances down to the marsh again.

All things considered, it seems likely that yes: Adie just dragged a dead rabbit into the marsh and back out again.

She falls to her knees on the asphalt.

ADIE (CONT'D)

I want to go home.

MISH

Babe, I know. We're gonna get you out of there.

She looks back to the two dead rabbits, the familiar CRACK in the asphalt, the trees by the path. *She's been here before.*

ADIE

I did it again. I looped back.

She breaks down.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Maybe there *is* something wrong with me.

MISH

Adie, no--

She's up and walking now, somewhat less terrified. If the monster is just her own mind going mad, then that's objectively less scary and just... *fucked up.*

ADIE

Maybe this is a perfectly normal park with perfectly normal gate-locking times and I've just lost my mind.

MISH

It's *not* a normal park, you saw that article and you *saw the...*

She's not sure what to call it, so she stops there. Adie walks through more darkness, past more lackluster street lamps...

ADIE
I feel like I'm *losing it*.

MISH
I don't think you are--

ADIE
Maybe it's one drink too many. One
fuck too many.
(then)
Maybe I did ask for this.

MISH
No.

Past more dark forestry.

Bare feet slapping over wet ground.

Blood seeping into puddles.

She can't really feel it anymore.

Adie keeps walking through the depths of her certainty that *there's something wrong with her*. Until eventually, quietly--

MISH (CONT'D)
You haven't done anything wrong.

Adie shrugs.

ADIE
Maybe this is just what happens.

Drenched and over it, Adie stops and gazes ahead. What she sees is hardly a surprise; it's the pattern she now knows she's brought on herself. She FLIPS the camera, to show Mish--

She's back at the Franklin Stern memorial statue.

MISH
Listen--

ADIE
I think I'll just sit here and wait
for you.

MISH
No. You keep walking.

ADIE

I'm tired.

She plods over to the statue...

MISH

No.

And slumps cross-legged beneath it.

MISH (CONT'D)

Adie, get up.

She does not. She simply settles into a comfortable pile beneath the towering concrete man.

ADIE

I *can't* have seen her. Her clothes were old. I'm not talking Target 2010. *Turn of the century* old.

MISH

Like the girl in the article, right? That's what you said.

ADIE

Mmmhmm.

Adie's eyes are fluttering now. The idea that she might fall asleep is lovely to her, but mortifying to her best friend.

MISH

So--

(desperate)

So show me. Pull up the article.

Adie breathes in deep, and out. Finally a moment to relax.

MISH (CONT'D)

ADIE, stay with me! The article. *I want you to show me.*

ADIE

Mmmkay, okay.

She flicks lazily through her tabs until she finds the article.

She opens it.

Scrolls through. *Lackluster.*

She reaches the photo of the woman. And despite her defeated state, her heart *does* leap at the sight. There's truly no denying it--

ADIE (CONT'D)

Yup. It's the woman I saw. In my head, or. Whatever.

MISH

So, that can't be coincidence right?

Adie's eyes fall on the words as Mish reads aloud--

MISH (CONT'D)

"Her photo was posted in the newspaper of the time as a desperate plea by a woman who claimed she was her 'best friend'. If not for her, I wonder if her disappearance would've received as little focus as the other girls."

ADIE

(despondent)

Pretty fucked up. But yay for besties.

MISH

And then at the end, she writes, "every outlet I approached refused to publish this article. God forbid we vilify the saint who funded our city. So thank god for Medium, I guess."

Adie flicks aimlessly at the screen. The page scrolls, and happens to settle on the author's name:

Victoria Gomez.

Her eyes narrow. She had passed over it before, but for some reason, this time, it gives her pause.

ADIE

Victoria Gomez.

MISH

What?

Adie flicks through her tabs again and pulls up Instagram. She pulls up Nathan's (his handle is @natejamesthefirst). Clicks on "tagged photos".

She scrolls down, down until she finds one of Nathan (who really *is* leathery, by the way) and a woman with long, dark brown, curly hair.

She taps it. A tag for "torigee" appears.

ADIE

Shit.

Adie taps on her name, which takes her to her profile. It's a whole lot of nature and inspo quotes, and on it she lists her name as "*Victoria, but those in the know call me Tori.*"

ADIE (CONT'D)

Oh, *shit*.

MISH

What is it?

ADIE

The author. I think it's Nathan's ex, Tori. Victoria Gomez is Tori.

MISH

Crazy Tori? Lady Macbeth-on-crack Tori?

ADIE

She lived right there with Nath. That's how she knows about it.

Something compels Adie to click back to Nathan's profile. Her eyes dart through his photos, until she locates--

One of Nathan and two CUTE KIDS, all of them in dorky Christmas sweaters.

She opens the photo. The caption reads:

"Uncle Nathan on duty at the Stern Family Christmas!"

ADIE (CONT'D)

Fuck *ME!*

She GASPS. In the trees nearby, there's a dead/gross sounding GASP even louder, like a dying animal. It won't be long before the swollen man gets to her again...

ADIE (CONT'D)

Nathan's last name is Stern.

MISH

Dude, *what?*

ADIE
How did I not know that?

MISH
He's related to that motherfucker?

ADIE
He *lives* in one of the red Victorians, how did I not-- I assumed he bought and paid for it, but--

MISH
What does he even do?

ADIE
I don't know.

She thinks. Blinks.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Fuck. Maybe nothing.

MISH
He inherited it. Nathan is creepy old white dude money!

ADIE
I'll be back.

She throws Mish on hold and pulls up Nathan's number. Dials.

And once again, it goes straight to voicemail.

With Mish back on the line, Adie goes back to Instagram. Pulls up Tori's profile again.

MISH
What are you looking for?

ADIE
I don't know yet.

She hits "Message", which is where we learn why Adie's been wary about Tori. Their chat box features nothing from Adie, and a PILE of DM's from Tori. Adie winces as she recall--

TORI (INSTA DM)
I know he's texting you, I'm not stupid.
(then)
Will you tell me what he said? I know he drunk called you but he keeps denying it.
(MORE)

TORI (INSTA DM) (CONT'D)
 I feel like i'm going crazy!
 (then)
 I'm not saying u even did anything
 wrong, u probably didn't. I just
 need to know. Plz talk to me.
 (then)
 Adie I respect you as a woman, why
 can't u do the same for me??
 (then)
 Sorry. I know I sound batshit.
 (then)
 GOD HE MAKES ME FEEL COMPLETELY
 CRAZY SOMETIMES!!!
 (and finally)
 This isn't your problem. I will
 leave you alone.

She sucks in a heavy breath at the memory.

And then, she hits the tiny video camera in the top right
 corner. She's trying to call Tori.

She holds her breath as it rings...

And rings...

And *rings out*.

She brings Mish back onto FaceTime.

MISH
 Hey--

ADIE
 Maybe she wasn't.

MISH
 What?

ADIE
 Maybe Tori wasn't crazy. Maybe
 Nathan just made her out to be.

MISH
 Or *made her* to be.

Adie's only half-listening, because by now she's back on
 Tori's Medium article, scrolling for more clues.

Down, down, down to the bottom--

Past the CLICKBAIT-- great white sharks, a pimple with a worm
 in it, a botched boob job you'll "never be able to unsee".

Until finally, she's at the comments section.

Her eyes dart, eager to discover anything she may have missed. *A stark difference to the defeated Adie of only a few minutes ago.*

Those same eyes zero in on this one--

"this guy was seedy as faaaak" plus a REDDIT link.

Adie's shaky, determined fingers SMACK the screen and pull up the Reddit link. It says--

"check out Dead Girls & Misandry on YT!! We uncover ur worst nightmares!!"

Adie does two things: SENDS the link to Mish, then OPENS it and hits PLAY. We'll watch it in FULL SCREEN with our girls.

ON SCREEN: *Two NERDY TEEN GIRLS host a poor quality YouTube show called "dead girls & misandry", all lower case of course, and this "episode" is entitled THE LEGEND OF FRANKLIN STERN.*

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1

Do-do-do-dooooop!

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2

Annd we're back ladies and girls,
with more rumors and mysteries
about bad, shitty--

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1

Reeeal shitty--

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2

Men from *historyyyyyy*--

Adie drags the scrubber a little way in, fast-forwarding to--

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1

Some know he ran a brothel at the
edge of the park for businessmen
and politicians--

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2

Ie, the man was the true Epstein of
the early 1900s--

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1

But few know the legend of how
Stern died. Do you think they're
ready to hear this??

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2
Ooooh, I dunno--

Adie DRAGS the scrubber some more. Now--

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2 (CONT'D)
Night after night, sex workers
would try to escape, right, because
these were like, sweat-shop level
conditions.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1
Are we surprised?

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2
Every time they did, Stern would
chase them through the park,
capture them and drag them back to
the brothel. Or, if they kicked and
screamed, he *drowned them in the
marsh*, never to be seen again.

Adie's breath catches.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1
BUT! One of the women got wind that
Stern-face was allergic to dairy.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2
Badly allergic.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1
So one night, all the women got
together and tipped an entire tub
of cream into his stew.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2
Evil wenches! My god!

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1
Franklin Stern blew up like a
balloon. A swollen, purple balloon.

Adie gulps.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2
And died.

NERDY TEEN GIRL 1
Yay!

NERDY TEEN GIRL 2

BUT! So angered was the rich gentleman, that every night thereafter, his spirit roamed the park, vowing to catch the evil sluts that did this to him...

The girls ROAR with glee and utter faux evil giggles.

Adie SMACKS the pause button.

She sits there in silence for a moment, taking this in.

She listens to the CRICKETS, which she didn't really notice before.

She sees a SPARROW wiggling in its nest. She hadn't noticed that either.

Her hand wanders to her abdomen. She clutches it, and remembers. She absently rifles through her handbag until she locates that lone tampon.

She twists the plastic open.

Just a little bullet by the way, it's not one of those applicator tampons for girls that are afraid to touch their vaginas. Adie's never felt quite right about those.

Anyway. She brings her fingers down between her legs, and inserts the tampon. *Offscreen, don't stress.*

Wipes her fingers on her wet dress.

And breathes a deep breath in, a smile tugging at the corner of her lips. Vindication is a strange beast. Yes, there's most probably a freakin' evil ghost after her.

But it can be very nice to suddenly know you're not crazy.

ADIE

Well, fuck.

The blipping top left icon reminds Adie that Mish is still waiting on FaceTime.

She pulls her back up, but Mish's camera is off (because she has another tab open).

Adie waits, distinctly cool with it.

She stands, straightens her gaze, doesn't worry about how much of her butt is showing beneath her dress, and HITS THE PATH. Eyes forward, *certain now.*

Finally, Mish returns to the screen... just in time for us to see her careening through the aisles of a 7-Eleven.

ADIE (CONT'D)

Hi.

MISH

That *monster*. Fuck him to the end of the earth!

ADIE

What are you--

MISH

Getting supplies. Trust me.

A KA-JINGLE as Mish bowls out of the store and back into the street, and, her eyes dark--

MISH (CONT'D)

I'll be there soon.

Adie smiles. She drops her arms and lets Mish swing by her side now. There's a new level of coolness in her stride.

Because *now she knows*. She knows that--

ADIE

You're a monster.

Yes, she said that out loud. She's not sure she meant to, but here we are. And so she continues.

ADIE (CONT'D)

You're not a hot shit businessman, Franklin fucking Stern. You're nothing but a monster.

Adie makes her way barefoot down the same path she's been down three times now.

Past the trees.

The marsh.

The street lamps with bulbs that need changing.

Until she reaches--

The beginning of her Ice Breaker Sours trail. Where she last tried to thwart his wrath and trick her way out of here, but ended up going in circles.

ADIE (CONT'D)
I believe Tori.

Okay, so she's *yelling* now.

We catch a quick glimpse at Mish on the screen, swinging by Adie's side, and she's impressed.

ADIE (CONT'D)
How many girls are in this marsh?
Huh? Bet you never thought anybody
would know.

She passes beneath another of the dark patches where the street lamp has blown, and this time she's barely scared.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Well newsflash, asshole! You can't
bury your evil fucked up secrets
forever!

Realization rushes over her, again and again.

ADIE (CONT'D)
I believe all those women you
murdered! Do you hear me?

She looks behind her, glaring in the direction of Nathan's stupid inherited Victorian home. Almost to Nathan himself--

ADIE (CONT'D)
I said *I believe Tori!!!*

She's past the FORK in the path now, which is where the swollen man tried to mess her up last time.

ADIE (CONT'D)
Come on, you dead swollen *dick*, I'm
not scared of you! You're nothing!
Nothing!

Adie is *filled* with adrenalin. Her eyes are full. Her chest is rising and falling with her catharsis, as she realizes--

ADIE (CONT'D)
Mish.

She's whispering now.

ADIE (CONT'D)
I'm almost at the South Gate.

She pulls the phone to her face, almost daring a smile at her best friend.

MISH

Fuck yes. I'm almost there. I've ordered an Uber to meet us, it's not far off. It's a black Prius.

Adie nods. Then, back to the ether--

ADIE

You can't have me!!!!

And with that, she BREAKS INTO A RUN.

She rounds one last corner, and there, finally--

THE SOUTH GATE is in view! 100 more *steep uphill* feet and she's out of here!

Her bare, bloodied, numb feet run faster and faster towards safety and in her exhilaration she lets out a SCREAM!!!

And then...

Just as she thought she was done...

EEEEUUUUGGHHHHHHHHH!

LOUDER THAN EVER this time, Adie WHIPS her head behind to see IT'S BACK, and it's running at full speed no more than 20 FEET BEHIND HER.

Adie SCREAMS AGAIN, this time in deep terror, and it SCREAMS louder!!!

And then--

The swollen man COLLAPSES ONTO ALL FOURS and GALLOPS after her, horrifying, but oh so fast. Faster than Adie.

But the South Gate is in sight! That golden arch, the same as the North Gate, is mere seconds from her grasp.

Adie runs.

She runs like she's never run before up that damn hill.

And,

As if by some kind of miracle,

She MAKES IT THROUGH THE SOUTH GATE, to--

EXT. PARK PERIPHERY - 3:12AM

Adie FALLS to the ground on the other side of the South Gate golden arch, and throws herself backwards to see...

IT'S GONE.

The swollen man is nowhere to be seen.

Her eyes dart around the park down the hill below. Her breath jumps and catches.

MISH (O.S.)

Adie??

Adie remembers the phone in her hand. She picks it up, not taking her eyes off the park gate.

MISH (CONT'D)

Are you okay??

Adie blinks.

ADIE

I think I am.

MISH

I fucking *saw* that, Jesus Christ!
Fuck a thousand *ducks*--

ADIE

I think it's gone.

A half-smile floods Adie face as she stares deep into the dark park, from where she finally stands-- outside of it.

ADIE (CONT'D)

I think I made it go away.

She can't believe it. She really can't. Her soaked dress. Her dirty face and body. Her hair in a sopping knotted mat that no amount of conditioner can likely save.

MISH

I'm a couple of blocks away--

There's a SQUEAL behind Adie. A car is pulling up to the curb.

A black Prius. Praise the lord.

ADIE

Uber's here.

Adie scrambles to her feet, never more relieved to see one of those fuel efficient minion cars. She heads towards it.

MISH

Not yet, says it's still two blocks away--

ADIE

Ow!

She can suddenly feel her feet now that she's out of the park. They're a goddamn mess. She hobbles towards the welcoming sheen of the Prius, and OPENS THE DOOR, and without looking at the driver--

ADIE (CONT'D)

Hi!

MISH

Adie, it's not there yet--

ADIE

For Mish?

Still without looking at the driver, she FALLS into--

INT. BLACK PRIUS - SAME

--the back seat, moaning with delight at the warm, dry interior on her cold butt. The familiar scent of that curiously overused Christmas Tree car freshener.

MISH

There's no way that could possibly be our--

ADIE

Mind if we crank the heater? My best friend's three seconds away.

The driver turns around, and Adie's face drops further than ever before. Down to the deep, dark depths of hell and then further again.

It's the SWOLLEN MAN.

Adie SCREAMS. The swollen man SCREAMS LOUDER.

Adie HURLS herself backwards--

EXT. PARK PERIPHERY - SAME

--out of the car, SMACKING her head on the way out. Adie's butt lands with a THUD on the concrete gutter and she CRAB-WALKS backwards at top speed...

Not taking a second to think about what's behind her. The golden arch of the South Gate, the hill she just ran up.

And all within a few fated seconds--

Her left hand SLIPS on diagonal ground.

So does her right hand, which was, until now, clutching her phone. Her lifeline.

And now, Adie has FLIPPED over backwards. Her phone rests in the dewy dawn grass at the park's perimeter...

(here, we might catch a glimpse of the Uber driver, a beanie-clad man and unwitting product of Adie's PTSD, pumping the accelerator to flee the bizarre scene. Or we might not.)

As Adie tumbles, backflips, back into--

EXT. FRANKLIN STERN MEMORIAL PARK - SAME

--the park, where she HURTLES DOWN THE HILL.

Back down, down, down...

Until she LANDS. WITHOUT MERCY. ON THE EDGE OF THE MARSH, where her hands FLING out to stop her fall JUST before she hits the water.

Holy shit.

Adie's in shock, on her hands and knees, staring into the murky water just INCHES from her face.

She blinks at her reflection. Sucks in a long, stunned, but frankly *relieved* breath, until--

The water ripples.

Adie frowns.

Her reflection begins to wobble, and make way for a vague blobbish shape just beneath the surface.

The ripples clear. And there it is. **The swollen man is in the marsh**, mere inches from Adie's face.

She SCREAMS! Hustles to her feet! Goes to RUN, but her ANKLE ROLLS on a mossy rock, her leg flies out from under her, and--

SPLASH! Adie's in the marsh.

No time to scream. Just dead silence as she goes under.

So much silence it's uncomfortable.

Finally, Adie BURSTS UP out of the water, gasping for air. She chokes up a gutful of brown muck, and barely has time to take a full, mudless breath before she opens her eyes and comes face to face with--

The SWOLLEN MAN.

It's the fullest, clearest, most up-close-and-personal view we've had of it so far. Same with Adie.

It truly looks like a dead, rotten, evil as fuck Michelin Man and I promise you, you've never seen anything more horrifying in your life.

Adie SCREAMS!

It SCREAMS LOUDER.

She flings herself backwards, not realizing there's a jagged SHRUB behind her.

She HOWLS as a stick pokes up through her skin, the sharp leaves scraping the shit out of her bare arms.

The swollen man HOWLS louder, like a dead dead dead sheep.

Adie uses the shrub as a launch pad and, as best she can, HURLS herself forward, ripping the shit out of her skin.

But she makes it a couple of feet away from danger.

She THRASHES desperately in the water, her emergency freestyle less intact now that she's gripped by terror.

By her face, it seems like she thinks she's getting further than she really is.

Until--

A thick, bloated hand BELTS down on her head, SHOVING her under the water.

And then, just like before, the moment it touches her...

Our frame becomes PARALYZED.

Because Adie is paralyzed, just like before.

We follow her on a straight axis down, down, UNDER THE WATER until we meet her TERRIFIED, UNMOVING FACE.

She can't thrash, she can't move.

She can't even close her eyes to stop the mud from penetrating her eyeballs, or close her mouth to stop the water from pouring into her mouth and down her throat.

And with her eyes open, Adie sees something she'll never be able to unsee.

We pan around, again on a dead straight axis, to see her POV.

There, in the filthy water, are a collection of **FLOATING DEAD GIRLS**.

Long hair, lace, dresses *float* gently beneath the water, like they're flying. It's almost serene.

But their faces?

Rotten.

One of them has an eyeball hanging out.

Another's lips are rotting away from her mouth, skin flapping daintily around a row of white teeth.

Another has a school of fish nibbling at her nose.

And there, amid the peaceful, floating death, is the lavender dress Adie could swear she saw earlier. She was one of them.

Despite being underwater and paralyzed, you'd almost swear Adie's eyes fill with tears.

And then--

A PIERCING SCREECH breaks the serenity, and the dead girls' rotten faces suddenly DISSOLVE into a disgusting WHIRL OF SLUDGEY MUCK. As if someone ripped out the bath plug, the muck WHOOSHES at Adie's face, sucked into her still-paralyzed mouth like a SINKHOLE.

And there's not a thing she can do about it.

As the cloud of muck floats around Adie's face, her eyes begin to turn dull. *She's losing hope.* Giving up. Because there's a thick dead man's hand holding her under, and now she's about to become another dead girl, and--

There's a SPLASH somewhere above the surface. Bubbles appear around Adie's head, and suddenly--

She blinks. She can move! *He's let go of her.*

The frame loosens as Adie does, and she BURSTS out of the water, PALE as a ghost, coughing and spluttering up filth for the umpteenth time tonight, gasping for breath. She's DIZZY, her face is speckled with the muck of dead girls and she's DRY-HEAVING, when--

THWACK!

Adie spins around to see none other than Mish, IRL, standing on the banks of the marsh, furious, armed with Ben & Jerry's ice cream, Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough flavor.

She scoops out a handful, HURLS it, and this time we follow it as--

THWACK!!

The fistful of ice cream HITS the swollen man smack in the face, joining the other two fistfuls...

And call them crazy, but it seems to be having an impact! Because the damn thing is starting to keel over.

MISH

Get away from my best friend, you
dilated hunk of *shit!*

It HEAVES. TRIPS over a little. Is this *actually* going to work?

Mish hurls another handful, allowing Adie to catch her breath and survey her surroundings for an escape.

To her left is that shrub that slashed her up earlier. To her right, another of the same. Ahead is the swollen man of course, currently distracted and off balance.

And behind her...

A way out. POSSIBLY. But it's about 30 feet away, through seriously dark water, and *who knows* how deep it gets.

MISH (CONT'D)

Adie, MOVE!

Yeah, she knows.

She's OFF. She hurls herself through the water, which at this point is up to her chest. She DRY-HEAVES again, sick and dizzy, but nothing comes out so she soldiers on.

One, two, three steps. Four! Five! And--

WHOOOP-- a sandbank! Now it's only up to her thighs! She SHOVES her legs through the water, eyes fierce, tunnel-visioned, when--

Her shin HITS a rock and she HOWLS. DRY-HEAVES again, so close to vomiting.

The thing HOWLS louder.

Adie pulls her leg up to her chest; blood gushes out of a gash on her shin.

MISH (CONT'D)

Keep going! Faster!

Adie looks up, her dizziness worsening. Mish is still hurling the ice cream, but the effect seems to be wearing off.

It slowed the swollen man, but it didn't kill it.

I mean, of course. But hey, a best friend's gotta use everything in her artillery.

Adie takes another dizzy, discombobulated look at the escape she's heading towards. It's a *way out of the marsh*, sure, but it'll only take her further into the park.

The South Gate lies *behind the swollen man*, where she's just come from. And *something nags at Adie*.

MISH (CONT'D)

Why are you stopping?? I'm running out!

A beat. Adie thinks... only to DRY-HEAVE again, dizzier still. Something's really wrong in her gut.

ADIE

I can't go back in there.

MISH

What??

ADIE

The park. I can't go back.

It's dark over in the park, eerie, the street lamps seem even duller now.

MISH

Adie, it's messing with your head again. Don't let it.

Beat. Adie's thinking.

MISH (CONT'D)

Come on! I'm here now, I'll come around and meet you and we'll get the fuck out of there together!

But Adie isn't so sure, and nor is she healthy. She grips her gut.

MISH (CONT'D)

Are you still mad at me?

ADIE

No. You're the only one that hasn't scared it away.

Beat. She hasn't got much time. The thing's heaves are slowly turning into roars as it begins to regain strength...

ADIE (CONT'D)

Because it knows *you know*. It can't hide.

She thinks some more. *Dry-heaves* some more.

ADIE (CONT'D)

But the jogger. The cops. The thing disappeared when it was about to be confronted.

All of a sudden, it hits Adie. Maybe she's exhausted, maybe she's crazy, maybe there really is still some tequila in her system, but--

She stops. *Thinks*. Then--

She keels over and VOMITS, HARD. A GUSH of repulsive, murky, black SLUDGE CASCADES out of her throat and into the marsh.

Adie catches her breath, and--

ANOTHER GUSH of black vomit hits the water.

Finally a THIRD, which is the BIGGEST YET. Clumps of filthy gunk leave Adie's body and dissolve into the swampy water around her thighs. She watches as it dissipates around her, not disappearing but *transmuting* into the water, like a strange metamorphosis she can't take her eyes off.

MISH
Move, Adie!

She knows. She knows *everything* now. A purge can be magical like that.

MISH (CONT'D)
MOVE!

With new resolve, Adie turns in the swampy water...

And FACES the swollen man, head on.

It's around 20 feet away from her right now. She takes a deep breath.

MISH (CONT'D)
Dude, what the fuck are you doing?

Drenched, filthy and covered head to toe in mud, gashes and bumps...

Adie's gaze hardens.

She GLARES.

Then, she SCREAMS. It's more a mediocre timid squeal than a full on badass howl, but still.

It SCREAMS louder.

MISH (CONT'D)
Wait. Let's talk about this.

Adie takes another deep breath.

She squares off in *full power stance*.

And once more, she SCREAMS! This time with a little more oomph.

It SCREAMS with her.

MISH (CONT'D)
Adie--

Adie throws her hand towards Mish, shutting her up.

From head to toe, terror is pulsing through Adie's veins.

So is the sheer emotional rawness from her night here in the park.

The sadness, the uncertainty, the anger, the fear.

The shame.

The shame.

Mish stops shouting. Now she just watches her best friend, god damned hopeful that her god damned belief is going to pay off.

And as Adie stares at the veiny, angry, hateful monster in front of her... her eyes GLAZE a little.

It's not a sad tear. More like a tear of anger. Or frustration. Or that feeling when finally, everything you've felt but tried for so long to bury comes catapulting to the surface, ready to erupt like lava from a volcano.

It's *catharsis*. That's what it is.

So, she erupts. The tears PLUNGE down her cheeks as she opens her mouth and--

ADIE

Fuck you.

SCREAMS.

Adie screams for Tyler, she screams for the guys at the party, she screams for Nathan, she screams at every guy who has ever told her to smile or suck it up.

But it's not really for them.

She screams for herself.

And then, with the swollen man screaming it's putrid face off right back at her, Adie throws one leg in front of the other... and begins the journey BACK TOWARDS IT.

First through the thigh-deep patch, which feels easy now.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH. Two steps. Three. Then, the DROP--

The chest-deep water is colder, scarier, but she doesn't relent.

Instead, she HURLS her body through the deep. Left, right, left right, towards the thick, angry, swollen man.

And,

Remarkably,

It's not charging back at her. It's standing dead still.

It is also, however, GETTING BIGGER.

The swollen man is quite literally GROWING LARGER, WIDER, THICKER, MORE GROTESQUE, the closer Adie gets.

EEEEUUUGGGGHHHHHH!

It one-ups Adie's howls, as--

MAGGOTS begin to seep out of its eyes, its mouth, as it becomes more horrific, less palatable, with every HEAVE Adie takes through the marsh.

But she keeps her eyes open. *Furiously emotional.*

Over on the bank, Mish's jaw hangs.

Adie is mere feet from the thing now. There's no stopping her.

By two feet, the swollen man is TWICE ITS ORIGINAL SIZE. Growing, bulging, heaving...

And STRUGGLING.

The thing is STRUGGLING, and Adie knows it now. This empowers her even more as she--

SCREAMS BLOODY VICIOUS MURDER IN ITS FACE.

She's INCHES from it now, being careful not to touch it.

And the swollen man begins to... sort of... *vibrate.*

Adie jumps back, a moment of fear at the grotesqueness. It LURCHES towards her the second she retreats.

She notices.

She knows now.

As horrific as it is, Adie knows what she has to do.

She opens her mouth again and SCREAMS IN ITS FACE, TEARS streaming down her face, making herself the BIGGEST she's ever felt, both emotionally and physically.

And its own mimicking howls begin to falter... morphing into a lower, weaker growl...

The MAGGOTS are turning to black, rotten ash. They're the first to go.

Then, the swollen man's vibrating, now 12-ish foot bloated body begins to turn darker... like it's burning, rotting from the inside.

It's the hardest thing Adie's ever had to look at. But she can't look away. She won't.

And she won't pretend she's cool with it.

She keeps on HOWLING. It's not even an effort now. And the thing has *lost the will to howl back...*

And then, slowly, horrifically...

The swollen man begins to disintegrate into a thick, murky black mist.

First its hands, the top of its head, while the rest of it continues to seethe and rot.

Adie holds her howl.

Now its head is swirling, whirling into a deep, dark whirlpool of death. Its neck... its shoulders...

Over on the bank, Mish remembers her Canon around her neck. Her fingers grasp it. Fumble. Drop it. Pick it up again.

Now its chest is disappearing too...

SNAP! A FLASH goes off. Mish has taken a photo.

Adie keeps her eyes dead on the disintegrating swollen man, as it slowly continues to break down.

Its torso is gone now, and next its hips, legs...

Until finally, it's just a dark, hellish, swirling mist whirling around in the air above Adie's head.

And on her final, guttural howl--

It SWOOPS UP and DISAPPEARS... *back into the park.*

Adie finally stops screaming and HEAVES, out of breath, keeled over in the marsh.

In. Out. In. Out.

And as she slowly regains her life, on her face is the *deepest* satisfaction. The deepest catharsis. The deepest fury.

It's gone. We're pretty damn sure it's gone.

And then--

Adie feels something.

Beneath the water, something knocks gently against her ankles.

A beat. Then, she reaches her hands down under the water, until they hit something.

Her breath catches in her throat as she feels it.

Her other hand goes down, too.

And ever so gently, she pulls from the water--

A SKELETON. Teeming with marsh insects, grubs.

And dangling from the skeleton's neck is a GOLD HEART NECKLACE. The necklace is all tangled, full of knots and hanging by a thread. It's *just* about to slip off and disappear into the marsh, but Adie catches it.

The woman from the Medium article. The only one whose photo had appeared in the newspaper, thanks to her best friend.

Adie holds her gently in her arms, not afraid this time.

She sucks in a long, exhausted breath... and lets it out again on her own terms, for perhaps the first time tonight.

It's over.

INT. ADIE'S BEDROOM - 5:31AM

Over quiet calm for the first time in a while:

The hazy first signs of morning sun shine through a tiny apartment window, draped with a tie-dyed shawl that's been fashioned as a curtain.

A dreamcatcher filters the light and splatters it across the linen bed, where a crocheted blanket feels like a memory of somebody's grandma.

Half-burned candles dot the windowsill, along with crystals, a devil's ivy plant, a blue and yellow HRC banner.

Beside it on the wall, a tattered protest poster that screams *WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED!*

As we move across the room, a salt lamp throws a pink glaze over a stack of Law books--

Contract Law 101, Introduction to Torts, Criminal Procedure,
to name a few.

And beside it, a stack of other books, all with bookmarks
flopping out the side--

*The Power of Now, The New Jim Crow, Daring Greatly, Michelle
Obama's Becoming, We Should All Be Feminists,* and randomly,
the Twilight series, plus some trashy beach read.

A DOOR opens offscreen and we hear the sounds of two sets of
feet entering, as--

We continue down to the floor, where a HAMSTER trots around
in a cage, enlivened by whoever has just entered.

We pull back up past a yoga mat and weights, a bike helmet,
and finally--

We're up on a desk, piled high with study notes, and we move
across to--

A LAPTOP. A drunk photobooth pic of Adie and Mish is taped to
the side of it, and on the screen, someone's finger is
wagging the mouse pointer. It pulls up Spotify. And for the
first time, we see her name in full, at the top of the app--

Adie Hammer.

The mouse pointer hits PLAY on Janelle Monae's *Dirty
Computer*. It bursts gently to life, playing softly from an
older model Beats Pill.

Still on the laptop screen, we notice the owner has iMessage
open, where we can easily read the latest three messages.

As we hear the gentle, indecipherable chatter of TWO GIRLS in
the background, we read.

Working from the bottom up--

There's one from NATHAN:

NATHAN (TEXT)

Sorry lol was watching porn. Rude
to admit that after u fucked
someone?

Then, one from TYLER:

TYLER (TEXT)

oops guess i smoked a bunch. saw
that i called u? my bad, def ignore

And then, from TORI. But not just one-- a whole conversation that's only *just* happened in the last half hour or so. What we can see of the conversation reads:

ADIE (TEXT)

Hahaha honestly not surprised to hear that.

TORI (TEXT)

LOL. Hey it's really nice to connect.

ADIE (TEXT)

Same. Funnily enough he never mentioned you were cool.

TORI (TEXT)

;) Anyway, hope the article was useful for something.

ADIE (TEXT)

Immeasurably.
(then, next text)
Maybe we can grab coffee sometime?
I can tell you more about it.

A new text whooshes in as we read.

TORI (TEXT)

Love to. Tomorrow?

...we push away from the laptop, and back out into the cramped but cute little bedroom, where now we finally see--

Past newly discarded burger wrappers and two giant Slurpees--

Mish. She sets her Canon down on the bedside table and climbs under the sheets.

And then, *in climbs Adie*, in an oversized Astro Boy tshirt, her hair still damp but her face fresh and calm, and it might strike us that it's the most we've ever gotten to know about who she is.

Mish makes space, and Adie snuggles in beside her. And as Mish's eyes flutter shut--

Adie pulls out her phone one last time.

She opens her CNN app and navigates to LOCAL NEWS, where:

ON SCREEN: *A REPORTER is on the scene at Franklin Stern Memorial Park. Behind her, a flurry of COPS and FORENSICS.*

REPORTER

The remains are yet to be identified, but we are hearing the necklace, which was found neatly secured around the cervical spine, was the traditional jewel of the Stern family.

A smile tugs at Adie's lips.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

As for the decades of controversy swirling around the city's wealthiest founding family, well, perhaps this might be the straw that broke the camel's back. As for how the skeleton surfaced, authorities are unsure, and urge anybody with information to please contact the police.

She navigates to her RECENT CALLS. Taps TYLER. And with the ease of someone wouldn't go back if she was paid a million dollars, she BLOCKS his number.

She pulls up her TEXTS WITH NATHAN. With the same ease, she slides her thumb to the left, selects DELETE, and erases their text history.

Then she navigates to Instagram, which is flooded with notifications of comments and reposts of that same video.

She stares at the thumbnail of herself, in all her drunk glory.

She sighs. Only this time, there's no uncertainty. Only a sense of completion. You could almost call it confidence.

Then Adie hits the little plus sign to create a new post. She turns the camera on herself, capturing her exhausted face at its peak. It's unlikely that anyone will read from that exhaustion that she almost fucking died tonight.

There's even a little piece of pickle on her cheek.

She leaves it there, and gently, lazily breaks into a genuine, wild, fuck-you smile, and--

CLICK.

One take. No more.

She writes a caption: *"and to all the haters, goodnight"*

Hits POST.

Then she plugs her phone, which is now at 2%, into the neon yellow power cord beside her bed.

Rolls over to spoon her best friend.

And, with a satisfied sleepy smile, Adie shuts her eyes--

As *Dirty Computer* fades into *Crazy, Classic Life* to see us out to daybreak.

THE END.