

CHILDREN OF SPECIES

Written by

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1. INT. - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A corporate office in midtown Manhattan. The work day is coming to a close and the rows of cubicles sit empty, framed solemnly against the clear glass backdrop of the city skyline. We hear the hustle and bustle of a few last minute employees saying goodbye. VERONICA sits at her cubicle. She is a young Latina in her late twenties. Focused and calculated, she gathers some last minute papers and various personal items, places them neatly in her bag, and strides towards the elevators, pulling her bag over her shoulder.

She reaches forward, pressing the elevator button. A pause. Another hand comes out from behind her, smashing the already clearly lit button again. VERONICA turns, gives a half smile to SIMON, a young man in his early twenties. Wearing a new suit and a smug look on his face, he crosses his arms. Silence.

SIMON

You're Vanessa, right?

VERONICA

It's Veronica actually.

SIMON

Word. Veronica. How long you been secretary here?

VERONICA

Executive assistant actually, and it'll be two years this November.

SIMON

Lit. I'm still getting used to names and titles and all that.

VERONICA

Oh, right, this is still just your first week?

SIMON

Yep. First week. First job, actually.

VERONICA

That's right, and you're in...sales?

SIMON

Yep!

SIMON puffs out his chest in self-importance.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Where are you from?

VERONICA

I grew up in Queens, but I live uptown.

SIMON

You're pretty cute for a girl from Queens-

The elevator dings and opens. VERONICA immediately steps in. SIMON follows. The door begins to shut.

VOICE

Hold the door!

A hand slips its way in between the elevator doors right before shutting. The doors reopen and JACK steps in, smug and baby faced.

JACK

I said hold the door, jackass!

SIMON

Dude, fuck you, you coulda just waited.

JACK

Nah bro, I said I'd meet Margaret for drinks over at O'Leary's.

VERONICA rolls her eyes. She stares forward, not saying a word to either of the boys. The doors shut. JACK looks at SIMON, then over at VERONICA for the first time. He leers.

2. INT. - SUBWAY PLATFORM - DAY

VERONICA sits on a bench, waiting for the train. She's flipping through *Scientific American*. She looks up briefly at the train countdown then back down at her magazine. A man walks by. He is unusually tall, his hair is long and in a ponytail, he wears no shirt, and his face and body are painted completely white. He stumbles past VERONICA who does not notice.

3. EXT. - UPPER WEST SIDE STREET - EARLY EVENING

VERONICA walks home down a tree-lined street. There's a slight chill in the air as evening sets in on the early fall day. Birds chirp. She stops in front of a building. ALEX is seated on the stoop. He looks up at her.

VERONICA

What are you doing out here again,
Alex?

ALEX

My fiancé kicked me out.

VERONICA

Oh, really?

ALEX

She changed the locks and told me
that my alcohol habit was putting a
strain on her career. She also
wants me to start chipping in with
the rent apparently?

She laughs.

VERONICA

Did you lose your keys again?

ALEX

Yes.

VERONICA

That's twice this month.

ALEX

Well they're not 'lost,' they're
just...not currently with me.

VERONICA

You know the cost of re-entry.

ALEX

Swedish fish and those salt and
pepper chips from Trader Joe's,
I've already got 'em.

ALEX holds up a bag of snacks.

VERONICA

Oh, thank god for you.

ALEX

Thank god for *you*, you're the
responsible one.

VERONICA opens the front door, the two head inside.

4. INT. - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

ALEX and VERONICA sit in the living room. Star Wars Monopoly is open on the table. ALEX stares at the game in strict concentration.

ALEX

Okay, so I roll a...seven, which takes me past Go - I'll collect my \$200 - and I land on the Ewok tree-village on Endor which I will purchase for a hundred and seventy-five credits.

VERONICA

Oh joy.

ALEX

That gives me a monopoly. Sorry.

VERONICA

You're really good at this game.

ALEX

We can switch to Scrabble anytime.

VERONICA

No, no, I just think it's important that you know what it's like to win every now and then.

ALEX

I'm sorry that I don't have as extensive and adaptable a vocabulary as you do.

VERONICA

Well, you only ever play 3 or 4 letter words-

ALEX

Yeah, while you dominate with words like chutzpah for 81 points.

VERONICA

You need to try and play every tile-

ALEX

You see, I don't even think that chutzpah is an English word, it's Yiddish, so you're technically cheating.

VERONICA
I'm not, it's in the Merriam
Webster dictionary.

ALEX
And I still don't believe that
emesis is actually a word either.

VERONICA
It's a word.

ALEX
And you don't mean *nemesis*.

VERONICA
Emesis. It's the act or process of
regurgitation or vomiting.

ALEX
Well I'm about to *emisate* all over
this board in about five seconds.

VERONICA
It's a noun, not a verb.

A short pause.

ALEX
Are we done sparring?

VERONICA
Who even says 'sparring'?

ALEX
It sounds better than arguing. It's
more playful and less aggressive.

VERONICA
Don't worry Alex, we're not
sparring.

ALEX
I just want to make sure that when
we bicker it's like...*old married
couple* bickering, as in, 'this is
our special way of communicating'
and not 'oh god our relationship is
built on negativity.'

The buzzer rings.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Ahh, food.

VERONICA
It's about damn time.

ALEX hits the buzzer.

5. INT. - BEDROOM - NIGHT

ALEX and VERONICA lie together in bed. Their room is tiny but they have a perfect view of the skyline. They lie facing the buildings ahead of them - their faces illuminated by the city lights. ALEX scrolls on his phone, VERONICA sits with a pile of papers in her lap.

VERONICA
We should hit the road by 8:45 at the absolute latest. That means teeth brushed, coffee brewed, and bags fully packed-

ALEX
You do realize that it is truly impossible to run late, right? We have literally nowhere to be at any set time. You need to relax.

VERONICA
Look, Alex, I'm just gonna have to go ahead and be that person, otherwise we don't wake up until 10, by the time we shower and eat breakfast it'll be noon, we'll leave at one, and all of a sudden after midday traffic and two pee breaks, we've lost two thirds of the day.

ALEX
Go ahead, be a time nazi.

VERONICA
Don't say that!

ALEX
Say what?

VERONICA
Nazi!

ALEX
I didn't say nazi, I said *time* nazi. I'm sleepy.

ALEX mumbles his last sentence through a stifled yawn. His phone begins to ring. He picks it up, glances at the caller ID, and groans.

VERONICA
Is it him?

ALEX
Yes.

VERONICA
You should take it-

ALEX
Fuck, I really don't want to.

VERONICA
Alex, take it!

The phone continues to ring. This is agonizing.

ALEX
Nooo-

VERONICA
Answer. It.

Alex picks up the phone right in time.

ALEX
Hello- Hey Jim, yes, how's it going? Veronica and I were just getting ready for bed but it's not too late. Uh-huh. Right. Sure, well, you can mail it to me here. Yeah, address is 327 West 84th Street...4D...D, D as in David, yeah...okay Jim, well, I'll talk to you later I guess. I'll be out of touch for the next few days so just shoot me an email if you need something. Okay. Will do. Bye.

ALEX hangs up the phone. He looks pained. He tosses the phone to the side and collapses his head back into the pillow. There is a long pause. Veronica breaks the silence cautiously.

VERONICA
What did he want?

ALEX
He just wanted an address to send me my check.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

Nothing he couldn't have said over text. Lousy prick probably wanted to see how I was doing.

VERONICA

Yeah, that's generally not a bad thing.

ALEX stews.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Hey- this is all momentary, okay-

ALEX

Yeah.

VERONICA

I mean it though. It's our biggest setbacks in life that open the doors to our greatest achievements. You just need to know when to walk through those doors. (A long pause)

ALEX

I don't know that we should be doing this (He motions to the pile in her lap).

VERONICA

What? Taking a trip? Absolutely we should. We need some time away from all this.

ALEX

Shouldn't this be the time to hunker down and figure out what the next move is? Look, I'm all for the self-care thing, but I feel like wherever I go these problems will follow me.

VERONICA

Only if you allow them to.

ALEX

And fuck nature anyway, you know going anywhere too rural makes me uneasy.

VERONICA

Oh come on-

ALEX
It's the quiet. I really hate the quiet.

VERONICA
Alex-

ALEX
Veronica-

VERONICA
You're doing that thing again-

ALEX
Right-

VERONICA
How about something to distract us.

ALEX
Like what?

VERONICA
Well, I read an article today in Scientific American that hypothesized global temperature increases to rise up to three degrees Celsius by 2040 - that's a new record for the timeline!

ALEX
Uhuh-

VERONICA
Basically the entire planet's ice sheets would vanish, the underwater coral reef ecosystem would disappear, and droughts would wipe out much of the Amazon rainforest, effectively eliminating one of our largest carbon offsets.

ALEX
So basically you're telling me that the inevitable breakdown of society is sooner than we think-

VERONICA
Exactly.

ALEX
How the hell is that supposed to make me feel better?

VERONICA

I never said I was going to make you feel better, I said that I was going to distract you.

ALEX smiles.

ALEX

You're cruel.

VERONICA

(Noticing the smile) See, there we go.

ALEX

Yep, you're right, ten points to Slytherin.

VERONICA

What? I'm a Gryffindor you bitch-!

ALEX

Like hell you are-

VERONICA takes her pillow and swings it at ALEX. He grunts, keels over, and begins to laugh. Taking his own pillow, he hits her back.

6. INT. - BEDROOM - MORNING

The next morning. The sun has just barely started to rise. VERONICA gets out of bed and pulls open the curtains. The morning sun sends slivers of light over the horizon, giving the city a golden hue. She looks out the window. The birds chirp in the park nearby. A car or two honk in the distance. Otherwise, silence. She glances out the window serenely. ALEX snaps awake. Gasping for air, he shouts, his body contorts, his limbs thrash into the walls, shaking the entire bedroom. VERONICA gasps as ALEX comes to, frightened and disoriented.

VERONICA

Jesus, Alex, what the fuck?

ALEX

I don't know, I don't know, I- I'm-

VERONICA

Alex? What happened?

ALEX

Huh?

ALEX seems to finally get a bearing of his surroundings. He looks around, at a loss for words, finally locking eyes with VERONICA whose mouth is agape.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Sorry- just...nightmare.

VERONICA
Again?

ALEX
What time is it?

VERONICA
It's 6:45.

CUT TO:

A toilet flushes, a shower curtain squeaks closed, and the water begins to fall.

Outside the bathroom, ALEX makes coffee. The morning is in full swing for both of them.

Shot: The bags are zipped, two thermoses are poured, and the front door of the apartment is shut behind them.

It's 8:45. Bags in hand, ALEX and VERONICA hit the morning air.

7. EXT. - SIDEWALK - DAY

They get in the car. The music starts. Typical upbeat road-trip playlist. ALEX and VERONICA begin to drive. First on the west side highway, then onto the NY Thruway heading upstate. They drive for several hours. For a while they sit in silence. ALEX watches the road, his mind wandering while VERONICA thumbs through foliage magazines and browses at hiking trails on her phone. ALEX picks up a ginormous cup of iced coffee - second cup. He gulps it down. VERONICA gives him side eye.

VERONICA
You're going to have to pee again,
you know.

ALEX
Nope. I won't. Bladder of steel.

8. EXT. - ROADSIDE REST STOP - DAY

ALEX slowly limps into a wide-shot frame. He desperately needs to pee. VERONICA follows him, exasperated. They reach the clear glass doors of the rest stop. A tall shaggy-haired man with large teeth opens the front door for them. He smiles as they pass. ALEX and VERONICA mutter words of thanks.

9. INT. - REST STOP DINING ROOM - DAY

Alex and VERONICA are seated opposite each other. They drink iced coffees and eat sandwiches.

ALEX

So what's this place called again?

VERONICA

It's the Cozy Inn Cottage.

ALEX

What a stupid fucking name.

VERONICA

Aww come on Alex, it's not that stupid.

ALEX

Well is it an inn or a cottage? It can't be both!

VERONICA

Yes it can. You can have an inn inside of a cottage.

ALEX

That just sounds like a very small inn.

VERONICA

That's why they call it a cottage.

ALEX

Then why not just say cottage!?

She scrolls on her phone.

VERONICA

Okay, here it is: 'The Cozy Inn Cottage is comprised of four individual cottages located on a fourteen acre property owned by us, Ted and Martha Faslin.

(MORE)

VERONICA (CONT'D)

The four cottages surround the inn, or main property, where we live alone with our familiars...' There now we have our answer, smartass. You done?

ALEX

Familiars. You think that means cats or dogs.

VERONICA

Cats, I'd say. Unless it's just a misspelling of *family*?

They scrunch up their garbage, grab their drinks, and head towards the exit. The man with the large teeth opens the door for them as they pass. He smiles. They walk back to the car.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

An hour and a half left, right?

ALEX

Yep.

VERONICA

Are you sure you don't have to pee?

ALEX

Nope.

10. INT - CAR - DAY

They continue to drive. The winding roads of upstate New York are green and full of foliage. The breeze whips through the expanse of open air. This part of the world is a complete contrast to city living. ALEX spots something on the road.

ALEX

Oh my god. Look, up ahead. You see, this is the shit that I live for.

VERONICA

What is it?

ALEX

Fresh fruit, fresh fruit, we need to stop!

ALEX points towards a sign on the highway that reads '*Fresh fruit: peaches, strawberries, apples, nuts*'

VERONICA

You are a child.

Alex signals, then veers off the highway onto a paved road lined with endless acres of land and farmhouses. Up ahead they see a single farm stand with a conservative supply of fruits and nuts. Next to the stand in a lawn chair, sits a pale MAN wearing a large rimmed summer hat, cardigan, sandals, and neatly manicured nails. ALEX pulls over onto the dirt road. He and VERONICA share a glance before getting out of the car. ALEX parks farther away from the stand than he needs to. They walk closer to the MAN who slowly comes into focus.

ALEX

Hi! We want to buy some of your fruit.

The MAN is facing the opposite direction. He is noisily munching on an unmarked can of pecans. He stares at his nails and acts as if he doesn't hear ALEX.

ALEX (CONT'D)

We saw your sign. We want to buy some of your fruit.

There is a long, uncomfortable silence. More munching.

VERONICA

Alex, let's just get back in the car-

ALEX

No way, this is exactly the kind of hokey shit that we came here to do, I'm not about to pass this up.

ALEX walks around to the other side of the man. They are now facing one another. The sun hat obscures half of his face.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I have cash. Can we buy some of your delicious produce?

ALEX over enunciates for clarity. Finally, the man looks up at him, and, choosing to notice him, holds out an oily nut covered hand.

MAN

Pecan'd to meet you, darling.

ALEX

(a pause) Huh?

MAN

Pecan'd to meet you.

Another pause. VERONICA gives ALEX a worried look who, after a moment, bursts into laughter.

ALEX
Pecan'd? Oh wow, that's good,
that's good. Pecan'd to meet you
too.

ALEX shakes the MAN's hand.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Can we- can we buy some fruit?

MAN
The apples are sweetest, they'll
drive you nutty!

ALEX
Let's do it then. We'll take...How
many do we want, babe?

VERONICA who has been several steps back, now hesitantly steps forward.

VERONICA
Whatever you want, Al.

MAN
Try one first-

VERONICA
Alex, we should really get going-

MAN
Try one-

ALEX
Umm, okay, yeah, sure!

The MAN motions towards the bin of fruit - a rather small amount for a farmer to be selling. ALEX reaches into the bin and pulls out an apple. He holds it in his hand, staring at it. The MAN smiles up at him. ALEX takes a massive bite of the apple. The skin caves in and a ton of sticky juice is released. ALEX slurps it up. The MAN giggles. ALEX laughs uncomfortably. He speaks through a mouthful of apple guts.

ALEX (CONT'D)
That's a good apple. Really fresh!

MAN
So fresh! So sweet!

ALEX continues to eat the apple. The man cackles, throwing his head back and swallowing a fistful of pecans. ALEX chews, his hands covered in juice. The MAN reaches forward.

MAN (CONT'D)

Your hand-

ALEX

(After a moment) Hmm?

MAN

Your hand.

VERONICA

Alex, no, let's just pay him and go.

Alex steps forward hesitantly, holding out his juice soaked hand. The MAN takes it. He runs his fingers across ALEX's palm.

MAN

Lined like a walnut, I see. Smart boy. But you're afraid and oh so delicate.

ALEX

What?

Slowly, deliberately, the MAN begins to tighten his grip on ALEX. His manicured fingernails bared, his knuckles white, the MAN sinks his nails deep into ALEX's hand. ALEX gives a cry of pain.

MAN

The children of species will be happy to have you.

The MAN presses his hand deeper. The skin breaks, blood starts to drip. ALEX screams as VERONICA tries to tug ALEX's hand away. After a few failed attempts, he rips his hand out of the MAN's grasp. It's too late. ALEX has been branded - deep painful gashes are now all over his hand. Without another word, ALEX turns and begins to speed-walk back towards the car. VERONICA is right behind him. The MAN cackles.

SHOT: ALEX's hand is red and bruised up against the steering wheel. He and VERONICA are silent.

11. EXT. - FASLIN'S LAWN - DAY

ALEX and VERONICA reach the Cozy Inn Cottage. They pull up to a dirt road. They turn, and as they make their way down the driveway, the road turns from dirt, to gravel, to paved cement. They ascend a large grassy hill atop which sits a modern, well lit, open concept country home framed by a neatly manicured front lawn. Several yards away in the distance sits a smaller cottage. Two floors and a stone chimney, it looks like something out of a Bob Ross painting. Two figures stand side by side, stoic, in front of the main home. As ALEX and VERONICA pull up, their straight posture, graying hair, and fixed smiles become clearer.

ALEX

Is that them?

VERONICA

I think so.

ALEX

Did you text them our ETA?

VERONICA

No.

ALEX

Then why the fuck are they standing out there waiting for us like that?

VERONICA

No idea.

ALEX pulls the car right in front of the couple, whose smiles fail to falter. ALEX and VERONICA exit the car.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Martha? Ted?

The couple remains stoic, smiles fixed. Shoulder to shoulder, they are in their mid to late sixties. With an air of old fashioned conservatism etched in their lined faces, their attire is ironically modern and youthful. Together, they look like a considerably updated adaptation of the couple from Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.

MARTHA

You must be Veronica. Pleased to meet you.

She opens her arms to encourage a hug. They embrace -
VERONICA, politely, MARTHA, as old friends.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

And you must be Alex-

ALEX

Yes! It's lovely to meet you.

MARTHA

This is my husband, Ted.

TED

Good to meet you! How was your
drive up?

TED makes no move to hug or to even offer a hand shake.
Instead, his hand is buried in a jar of nuts. He pops a
handful in his mouth. ALEX spots the jar, his eyes dart to
them, then away quickly.

ALEX

It was good, it was good.

VERONICA

We had a little bit of a
disagreement with a farmer up in
Nyak on our drive up.

MARTHA

What happened?

ALEX

I'm not really sure, to be honest,
he reached for my hand and kinda
just got me-

ALEX holds out his hand.

VERONICA

Totally unprovoked.

MARTHA

Oh, no!

TED

Remind me where you're coming from?

VERONICA

The city. We live together on the
west side of Manhattan.

TED

So what is that-? Two and half-three hours? Not too bad.

MARTHA

Not too bad at all.

TED

Say, Alex, why don't you show me that hand of yours? Let's see if there isn't something we can do to patch you up.

ALEX

Oh, right.

ALEX extends his hand. It is red, swollen, and the deep scratches appear dark and caked in dried blood.

TED

Ahh, not too bad.

The wound is in fact quite terrible. ALEX and VERONICA share a glance.

MARTHA

Come, let us take you over to the guest house.

TED

Yeah, you can always pull your car up closer to unpack a little later.

VERONICA

Sure, sure.

They reach the cottage. TED pulls a set of keys out of his pocket and unlocks the door. They all enter. The space is small and the living room is dominated by a large wood fired heating mechanism. The kitchen is modern and open. The living room is decorated with old fashioned rugs, large plush sofas and chairs, a mounted television, cases of old books, and stools.

TED

Well this here is your new home, for the next few days, anyway. The master bedroom is upstairs, kitchen, bathroom, both down here, and-

MARTHA

And everything was just cleaned.
Sheets, towels, all ready for you
to make a mess of it all.

VERONICA

You didn't need to go through the
trouble.

MARTHA

Oh, please it's all standard
procedure. Maria our cleaning lady
takes care of everything twice a
week and between each check in and
check out. (She glances at ALEX,
then VERONICA) She's Puerto Rican.

A pause.

ALEX

That's lovely.

12. EXT. - COTTAGE LAWN - DAY

VERONICA and MARTHA chat outside. TED and ALEX stand on the
porch outside the front door. The top of the hill overlooks
mountains and foliage. The view truly is quite stunning.

TED

So you see, from this here hill,
you and your girl got yourself a
five state view.

ALEX

Wow, really?

TED

Yessir. You've got New York,
obviously. That right there is
Vermont, there is New Hampshire,
Massachusetts, and Connecticut -
everyone always forgets about
Connecticut.

He points to the respective chunks of land.

ALEX

I don't think I've ever seen 5
states at once before.

TED

Where'd you grow up, Alex?

ALEX

New York

TED

And where are you from?

ALEX

Nassau county?

TED

I see...and your girl?

ALEX

My fiancé actually...born in Queens, college in San Antonio, and then she moved back home to the city where she met the love of her life.

TED

Ahh, I see. And what do you do?

ALEX

Well, I used to work for a startup that provided cheap office space to other startups

TED

Really, fascinating.

ALEX

It's sorta like We Work - but we were able to provide a higher caliber of service for the cost of our most basic package. We're their biggest competitor. And I was lucky enough to be one of the founding members.

TED

But it didn't work out, did it. (a pause) They bump you out?

TED suddenly hardens. ALEX gives him a bemused look.

ALEX

Im...Im sorry?

TED

They cut you lose? You not worth what you promised? Or did they use you as their diversity token then cut you out right as the going got good?

ALEX

I...um...

TED

What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?

TED lets out an uncharacteristically shrill wheeze of laughter. He holds up the key to the front door.

TED (CONT'D)

If you need anything, please don't hesitate to give us a knock - day or night, okay?

He reaches for ALEX's injured hand and roughly slaps the set of keys into his palm. The cold, dirty metal digs into ALEX's open wound. He lets out a sharp inhale and his eyes water. After a moment, Ted let's go and without a word, turns to walk towards MARTHA. ALEX lets out a gasp, his eyes wide with shock and pain.

13. INT. - COTTAGE - NIGHT

SHOT: Brown paper bags filled with fresh shopping and produce. A large bright red pepper is sliced on a chopping board. Then an onion. Garlic is tossed in a heated and oiled pan. It sizzles and steams. Veggies are tossed.

The sun begins to set behind the trees as the kitchen is illuminated with warm lamp light. Darkness begins to fall upon the cottage. Soft acoustic music begins to play. ALEX stands behind VERONICA as she handles the veggies in the pan. ALEX nibbles on her ear. She laughs, begins feeding him slices of the raw red peppers. He chews on her fingers, she laughs then turns to hit him. Raw peppers fly everywhere as they toss vegetables at one another. A large bottle of cheap wine is opened and two massive glasses are poured into mason jars. ALEX and VERONICA sit in the living room. The stars are shining in from the window behind them and they can hear the sounds of a trillion tiny animals.

VERONICA

I fucking hate my job, I hate it! I can't wait until I can quit the office full time and finally re-enroll. I'm so sick of making thirty-five thousand dollars a year to take corporate messages for some uptight dickwad.

ALEX

And some don't make half that much.

VERONICA

Alex, I'm twenty eight years old. Most women my age are already managing firms, or have been elected to congress, I only have a few solid good years left.

ALEX

You're doing just fine, Vero. You're going at your own pace.

VERONICA

Either way, I'm still a secretary.

ALEX

Executive Assistant.

VERONICA

Fuck that. Let's call it what it is. Secretary. Chore Girl. Copy-cunt. I'm a damn good one too, but it's not like I'd ever be considered for lateral movement over there. To them I'm just that young idiot-know-nothing hispanic girl that somehow scraped a bachelor's degree from some public college. Nevermind the fact that I could probably dance circles around half of them in their positions. You know what they did? Last week - they hired three kids that look straight out of undergrad. And where were they placed? Straight to sales. I shit you not. And all three of them are these smug, button-down wearing, Brock Turner looking fucks that can't seem to figure out how to put a stupid K-cup into a coffee machine. The first three days in a row one of them called me over to show him how to use it-

ALEX gives her a knowing look.

ALEX

I think he probably already knew how to work the coffee maker, Vero.

The realization dawns on VERONICA .

VERONICA

Ugh, I bet he just wanted to look at my tits! They creep me out. Here I was thinking that in life you get to opt out of interacting with certain groups of people once you got to a certain age...but nope, they're everywhere. (A pause) One of them made some comment.

ALEX

What kind of comment?

VERONICA

It was about me being from Queens. I don't know, it was quick. Probably nothing.

ALEX

What did he say?

VERONICA

It was a typical brainless asshole thing to say. He said I was pretty cute for a Queens girl.

ALEX

That racist asshole.

VERONICA

Not sure it had anything to do with race-

ALEX

Oh come ON. What else could he possibly mean by that? He probably spent all of fifteen minutes on the 7 train going to City Field, and now needs to justify his superiority over an entire class of people just to compensate for his own mediocrity.

VERONICA

Maybe. Goddammit! Three of them. All new. All in sales. All making twice my salary I bet.

ALEX

Do you want to do sales?

VERONICA

No-

ALEX

Did you ever want to do sales?

VERONICA

No-

ALEX

Then what's the competition? You're saving up money, you want to put yourself through grad-school. Would it have been nice to do it three years ago? Yes, but you couldn't. And you're twenty-eight fucking years old. Jesus Christ, we're young. You could do anything.

VERONICA

You should be saving some of that talk for yourself.

ALEX

Look, Vero, my defeatist attitude only applies to myself. I like to self-identify as a pessimistic optimist(a pause). You know, this is actually pretty relaxing. It might just be the wine talking.

VERONICA

See? I told you this wouldn't be terrible. Sometimes all it takes is a change of scene.

ALEX

Oh I never said I was relaxed, I said this was *relaxing*, as in-

VERONICA

-any normal person in this given predicament would be relaxed.

ALEX

Exactly.

VERONICA

You're hopeless.

ALEX

I'm glad to be here though, don't get me wrong. Who knows, by the end of these three days I may never want to leave.

VERONICA

Now you're going a little overboard.

ALEX

Let's stay forever- say fuck it to those three racist white dudes.

VERONICA

I told you, I don't know for sure if any of them were actually being racist. I gotta give everyone the benefit of the doubt otherwise we're abandoning all evidence-based inquiry.

ALEX

Stop talking like a scientist, Ms. Bio major. The one thing that science can't measure is human instinct. When you have that feeling in your gut there's always a reason-

VERONICA

Yes, but is my gut actually telling me that they've done something bad, or is it just my brain sending out warning signals because society has told me to expect something bad from them?

ALEX

I don't know, babe. I don't know-

ALEX moves a hand to VERONICA's leg, but winces, pulling his arm back in a flash of pain.

VERONICA

That doesn't look very good.

ALEX

It's fine, it's fine.

VERONICA

I think you may need a tetanus shot, Alex-

ALEX

I'll one hundred percent live.

VERONICA

Here, can you actually let me do something about that now that we've finally eaten?

ALEX

Okay, okay, fine-

VERONICA

There's a first aid kit in the bathroom drawer.

ALEX

Do your worst.

VERONICA gets up to retrieve the first aid kit. ALEX stares out the window.

14. EXT. - COTTAGE - NIGHT

The exterior of the cottage sits serenely at the top of the hill. It is fully in darkness except for the light from inside which shines out through the windows. The wind blows and crickets chirp. It's as if the world outside the cottage has violently come to life.

Several yards away from the house, the outer boundary of the lawn evolves from grass and bushes into a thicket of tall, narrow trees and foliage. A twig snaps.

Out of the ticket a figure slowly emerges, staring up at the cottage. Their focus holds steady, dutifully. Darkness masks their face completely. The thicket groans gently as another figure emerges from the darkness, then another. They form a line in the trees, a dozen strong, focused and unmoving.