

# INITIATION

By Sheala Morrison



shealamorrison13@gmail.com

OVER BLACK:

SUPER: The following is inspired by documented accounts.

EXT. FISH LAKE - NIGHT

A still black lake before a ridge of sticky alpine forest.

DARK FIGURE emerges from the lake, vanishes into the trees.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

70s wood-paneled cozy apartment. CASS (34) a light-haired woman on the brink with under eye bags and a haphazard updo eats leftover pizza absentmindedly over the sink. A multicolored bruise on her neck peaks from beneath her hoodie. Behind her a familiar poster, UFO over trees declares I WANT TO BELIEVE.

From the distance, a STRANGE DISEMBODIED VOICE calls:

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
Is there anybody out there?

Cass inhales what's left of her slice.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cass walks past a table scattered with mail and bills. A gift basket with a note: WELCOME TO THE MT. PLEASANT APARTMENT COMMUNITY! A pink pamphlet declares "YOU ARE NOT ALONE - Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence".

We stay on the pink pamphlet a beat.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CASS' HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Cass sits on the couch in the middle of an upturned living room. The wall TV has a hole in it, frames hang crooked, shattered glass and splintered wood cover the floor. Two POLICE OFFICERS, one male, one female, stand before her. The FEMALE OFFICER takes photos of the bruise on her neck.

MALE OFFICER  
I've worked hundreds of cases like  
this, it only ends one of two ways.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A scarce living room cast in a strange GREEN GLOW lined with moving boxes and minimal personal effects. Cass sits on the floor before a TV and dual monitors in an OTHERWORLDLY GLOW.

On the floor a packet: "Mt. Pleasant Loneliness Prevention Hotline New Employee Handbook. REMEMBER: If you don't document it, it didn't happen."

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
Earth to Cass? Hello?

Her blue fingernails put earbuds in.

CASS  
Getting a bit needy in your old age.

INT. AUSTIN AND RICHIE'S RENTAL - NIGHT

AUSTIN (30s) tattooed and woolly bearded Park Ranger. Beside him, his younger and smaller brother RICHIE (late 20s) is attempting the same beard to much patchier effect. On the wall behind them, the same poster declares I WANT TO BELIEVE among other Sci-Fi posters and band memorabilia.

AUSTIN  
On my birthday?

CASS (V.O.)  
It's not your birthday. Everybody ready?

AUSTIN  
It's someone's birthday.

CASS (V.O.)  
Not yours, and you're early.

AUSTIN  
You know mine too? Aw.

RICHIE  
She knows it's not your birthday. Big difference.  
(To Cass)  
Been waiting on you, bud.

CASS (V.O.)  
Sorry, girl's gotta eat.

INT. DOM'S NONNA'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

DOM (30s) flowing locks, east coast accent, and a million-dollar grin with the personality to match, Nonna's boy. His bookshelves are full of paranormal lore and model spaceships. His t-shirt proclaims "Bigfoot Believes In Me."

DOM  
Never apologize, aight? What's for dinner?

CASS (V.O.)  
Cold pizza over the kitchen sink.

He's genuinely offended.

DOM  
Every night the divorcee special.

CASS (V.O.)  
That word is banned.

AUSTIN (V.O.)  
You gotta talk about it eventually.

CASS (V.O.)  
Says who?

Dom is nearing a crisis.

DOM  
Please just let my Nonna send you some real food, I'm beggin'.

CASS (V.O.)  
I like cold pizza.

DOM  
Sure Chief. Michael, what's good my guy?

INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - UK - DAY

Bundled in a tracksuit and NASA beanie, MICHAEL (30s) sits in plush chair, headphones in, playing on a handheld device. We hear the group in his headphones.

MICHAEL  
Alright there, lads?

DOM (V.O.)  
All these years we've been gaming  
together and I still, to this day, do  
not know what to say to that.

MICHAEL  
Alright.

DOM (V.O.)  
Alright? Just alright?

MICHAEL  
Alright.

DOM (V.O.)  
It makes absolutely no sense. First  
order of business when we all finally  
meet is to teach you how to greet  
people.

RICHIE (V.O.)  
Not much longer now.

INT. AUSTIN AND RICHIE'S RENTAL - NIGHT

Austin SMACKS Richie. Richie mouths, "SORRY".

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
You lot hear about the sighting in  
Vegas? Eight foot tall beings dropped  
into some family's backyard. Cop  
caught the light falling out the sky  
on his dash-cam while he was pulling  
over some poor sod down the street.

AUSTIN  
Like that farmer in Kentucky. Said  
these big tall guys just showed up.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Yeah, I remember that one. Mans said  
they took him to their ship while he  
slept and told him humans are just  
containers for souls.

RICHIE  
That's a bit unnerving.

CASS (V.O.)  
I mean yeah, that kind of tracks. We  
struggle and think it's meaningful  
but we're all just here to lose  
everything we love and then die.

DOM (V.O.)  
Jesus fuckin' Christ, kid. Are you  
alright?

CASS (V.O.)  
Yeah, sorry.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A beat, Cass stares off into the GREEN GLOW, shakes it off.

CASS  
Strong weed.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
It's synchronicity, too many  
similarities to be coincidence.

CASS  
I think we try to make meaning out of  
things just to make ourselves feel  
better, but it's all random.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
I want to believe in more than that,  
mate.

CASS  
Life on Earth is pointless, I fear.

DOM (V.O.)  
Yeah you sound like you're doin' just  
fine.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
On that cheerful note, one more and  
I'm off.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

We see the group on the monitors, game play on the TV.  
Offscreen their opponents are confident and vocal kids.

KID (V.O.)  
You suck, bitch!

CASS  
Is your mom in a church choir?

KID (V.O.)  
No. Why?

CASS  
Because she was singing to the  
heavens last night.

BATTLE SOUNDS, GUNS BLAST, AN OTHERWORLDLY SHRIEK.

KID (V.O.)  
Yeah, well, you sound like a girl!

The battle peaks, an epic clash, Cass is victorious.

CASS  
You really gotta get better trash  
talk. It's not an insult to call  
someone a girl.

MICHAEL  
Childish, bruv.

A beat.

CASS  
You're right though, I am a girl. A  
girl who just beat your ass.

Ribbing and raucous LAUGHTER as their opponents leave.

A PHONE RINGS, she mutes the TV, CLICKS over, and reads from  
the handbook.

CASS (cont'd)  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?

EXT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - NIGHT

A tiny tin trailer among a row of its twins perched against  
a sea of night sky littered with stars.

INT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

BETTY (70s female) one blue eye, one green, sits nervously  
in a nightgown. She COUGHS clearing cobwebs from her voice.

BETTY  
Hello Cass. I'm Betty.

CASS (V.O.)  
Well hi, Betty. One second please.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She CLICKS over.

CASS  
Gotta go, duty calls.

Cass exits the game, apartment QUIET, she CLICKS back.

CASS (cont'd)  
What brings you to the Loneliness  
Prevention Hotline this evening?

INTERCUT Cass/Betty.

BETTY  
They said I should call.

CASS  
Are you feeling lonely?

BETTY  
Are you married?

Caught off guard, Cass looks to her empty ring finger.

CASS  
Not anymore.

BETTY  
You wish he was dead?

Cass' hand travels to the bruise.

CASS  
Sorry?

BETTY  
They say death's easier than divorce.

CASS  
No. I don't know. I'm past it. It's  
completely fine. I'm completely fine,  
really. Better this way. Some people  
are better alone actually.

STATIC sounds for a second, cuts off.

BETTY  
Loneliness is dangerous. Your mind  
plays tricks on you when you let it  
alone too long. People need  
connection.



A beat. Cass has been put off-balance but rallies.

CASS  
Good there's a hotline.

BETTY  
I wasn't always lonely. Used to get  
visitors in my dreams. Little  
critters. But they stopped coming.

CASS  
Critters?

BETTY  
Tap on my glass at night. Mischievous  
little guys. Whispered the oddest  
things while I slept.

A glitching, WARBLLED ELECTRONICS sound.

BETTY (cont'd)  
(distorted)  
Called me a container.

END INTERCUT.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cass hits the earbuds with her hand, ELECTRONICS stop.

CASS  
A container?

BETTY (V.O.)  
I think it's meant to be comforting.

CASS  
That's weird-

She looks around at her sad apartment, the boxes stare back  
at her. The handbook still on the floor: "REMEMBER: If you  
don't document it, it didn't happen."

CASS (cont'd)  
-Seems like you could use a visitor.

BETTY (V.O.)  
That allowed?

INT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - NIGHT

A kettle WHISTLES. Betty pours hot water into a teacup.

BETTY  
I don't talk to many people. I just  
say whatever comes into my old head.

Cass' appearance is markedly improved. She sips tea across  
from Betty, fully tuned in and radiating empathy. Behind  
Betty a bookshelf chock full of knickknacks, photos, books.

BETTY (cont'd)  
Five years ago I woke up and my  
husband and his fishin' gear were  
gone.

Cass looks at her, empathy pouring from her eyes.

CASS  
People are complicated.

BETTY  
You know someone all those years and  
then one day-

SMACK rings out as she slaps her palm to the table.

BETTY (cont'd)  
-you never knew 'em at all. Can you  
imagine the shock?

CASS  
People rarely surprise me anymore.

Betty gives her a skeptical once-over. Scanning the shelf,  
Cass is struck when she sees Carl Jung's "Synchronicity"  
sticking out. She runs her finger over it.

The LIGHTS FLICKER. Betty looks around.

BETTY  
Wednesday.

She looks out the window.

BETTY (cont'd)  
You been out at the Lake yet?-

A cuckoo clock CHIMES from the wall startling them. Betty  
stares at it for a fleeting second.

BETTY (cont'd)  
It's late. Thanks for coming by.

She touches Cass' hand, an ENERGY exists between them as  
their eyes stay locked a moment longer.

CASS  
Call back any time.

BETTY  
I intend to.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We see the group in full BANTER on the screens. Cass rolls a joint while the game lobby counts down. She SPARKS it as the battle begins. The group talks into her earbuds.

CASS  
It was like a glimpse of the future.

AUSTIN  
We're never going to leave you alone.

RICHIE  
That's gonna make her even more depressed.

CASS  
I'm not depressed-

DOM  
-What you need is a good meal.

CASS  
Seriously, you guys, I'm fine.

AUSTIN  
You can talk to us, you know?

The PHONE RINGS she mutes and CLICKS over.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so glad you called, this is Cass, to whom am I speaking?

The line is DEAD. She CLICKS back, un-muting the group.

DOM  
-Well that's why I didn't bring her home.

RICHIE  
You couldn't bring her home because you live with your grandmother.

DOM  
It's a basement *apartment*, I have my  
own entrance. Basically my own place.

RICHIE  
What did you have for dinner?

DOM  
Nonna's meatballs

RICHIE  
Nonna's meatballs

DOM  
How'd you know?

RICHIE  
It's Wednesday my dude. Nonna makes  
meatballs on Wednesday.

DOM  
Okay, so I like my grandmother's  
cooking, is that a crime?

AUSTIN  
Cass, cover in the cave please.

Another PHONE RING. She mutes and CLICKS over, same hand not  
missing a beat snipes an enemy without a second glance.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?

The line is DEAD again.

A beat.

PHONE RINGING again.

She leaves the game entirely, setting down the controller.

INT./EXT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Cass gets up from the floor, opens the patio door. She tries  
to CLICK over, RINGING continues.

EXT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

She walks out to the patio. The sky is dark, the outlines of  
the mountains and trees darker. Stars scatter the sky.  
Haphazard Christmas lights cast STRANGE SHADOWS. She's hit  
with a RUSH of crisp mountain air. She CLICKS on.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass-

Deafening sounds of DIAL-UP screech in her ears. Then  
STATIC. She throws the earbuds, they disconnect. Speakers  
blast the STATIC full tilt inside. STATIC cuts off.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Various RADIO CHATTER as the radio scans on its own.

A distant VOICE barely above a whisper through the speaker:

VOICE (V.O.)  
Assignment at Fish Lake. Crash site.  
Two unidentified crafts of  
extraterrestrial origin for reverse  
engineering. Two technicians. Top  
Secret Clearance required. Zone two.

Warbled electronics CHIME. The call disconnects.

Cass walks in and stubs out the joint she was smoking,  
staring at it in disbelief.

CASS  
Too strong.

She reinserts her earbuds, a BEEP as she rejoins, her  
friends faces appear on the screens.

AUSTIN  
You left me hanging, there, buddy.

No response. The group stares at her.

RICHIE  
Hello? Is there anybody in there?

Cass stares off. The group exchange glances on the TV.

DOM  
Ya know, we've been kind of worried  
about you lately bud. I feel like a  
lot has happened recently that we  
haven't even talked about-

She snaps out of it.

CASS  
-Two UFO's crashed.

DOM

Okay, well, that's not helping.

CASS

I heard the call for technicians to Fish Lake, it's not far.

DOM

What are you talkin' about my guy?

RICHIE

As a completely unrelated follow up, how high are you?

CASS

Very. My headset must have picked up the frequency. I have to go there.

More concerned glances between the group.

DOM

Gonna go ahead and say I don't think that's a good idea, chief.

CASS

I have to. I can't explain it but it just feels like what I'm supposed to do. Like this might be the thing that fixes everything.

DOM

Okay, well, that is a lot to pin on one particular situation. Does anybody else want to chime in?

AUSTIN

You can't go out into the woods in a new town in the middle of the night alone. Be serious.

RICHIE

Have you ever even seen a horror movie?

DOM

It sounds like you need help.

CASS

I don't need help.

RICHIE

Everyone needs help sometimes, it's not a bad thing.

AUSTIN

Cass-

DOM

Ya gotta tell her, my guy.

A beat.

CASS

Tell me what?

Austin SIGHS heavily, he contemplates on the monitor.

CASS (cont'd)

What is it?

Everyone stares back at her, waiting.

AUSTIN

Cass. We're here.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

KNOCKING. Cass opens the door, Austin and Richie beam at her. Richie throws a crushing hug around her. Austin stands back, they stare at each other while she and Richie hug.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The trio sits around the table. Richie eats a muffin from the gift basket.

CASS

What the fuck are you guys doing here?

AUSTIN

First of all, that's rude.

CASS

I mean, how? Why? What?

RICHIE

You think we were going to let you turn into a spinster without a party? Austin planned the whole thing. Way to ruin it at the eleventh hour.

AUSTIN

We got here today. Michael and Dom tomorrow. I wanted to surprise you.

CASS  
I'm completely surprised. You planned all this?

AUSTIN  
You've been through a lot lately and I know you've been stressing on the big geriatric 3-5.

CASS  
Fuck whatever doctor came up with that, by the way.

They nod in agreement.

RICHIE  
Yeah even though we hardly heard from you while you were dating, marrying, and now divorcing this shitbag who seems to have turned out to be a real piece of shit which we probably could have told you if you didn't shut us out.

AUSTIN  
Rich-

CASS  
It's fine, he's right. Thank you.

He smiles. She tries not to but can't help herself.

RICHIE  
Well boys, shall we venture into the dark woods completely unprepared?

EXT. FISH LAKE - ALCOVE

Cass, Austin, and Richie stand outside the car looking out at the lake, earbuds in.

CASS  
I don't get it, we circled three times. There's nothing here.

DOM (V.O.)  
Well I can't imagine they'd really go broadcasting UFO crash sites.

CASS  
I know what I heard.



DOM (V.O.)  
I'm just sayin' it's possible someone  
was messing around on the radio.

A BEEP sounds indicating a caller has joined.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Oi, anybody on? I've got a few hours  
on my layover.

RICHIE  
We're here, Cass is trying to get us  
kidnapped in the middle of the woods.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Right, standard Wednesday then.

DOM (V.O.)  
Mike, can you please explain your  
nation's obsession with beans and why  
it is you put them on everything?

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
It's the perfect food. And I'll tell  
you why that is.

AUSTIN  
We're going to leave you guys to that  
while we set up camp.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Did you guys see the podcast I sent  
on hypnosis as a method for alien  
contact?

AUSTIN  
Really interesting stuff.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
I'll send you the protocol I found.  
Maybe you guys can tap into something  
out there.

RICHIE  
Might as well give it a shot if we're  
having a quiet night. See if we can  
channel anything leftover in the  
area.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Cheers.

DOM (V.O.)  
Happy alien huntin' kids!

Richie and Austin struggle to make something out of the incomplete tent set as Cass looks on.

RICHIE

Cass, I don't mean to be a dick, but have you ever been camping?

CASS

If you'll recall, I just lost half my stuff in a divorce.

RICHIE

He take half your survival skills?

CASS

He took half my will to survive, yes. Dickhead.

AUSTIN

We can make this work.

INT./EXT. FISH LAKE - CAMPSITE - TENT - NIGHT

Each huddled in jackets under a lone blanket looking out to the stars through the opening in their makeshift tent. Richie reads from his phone

RICHIE

Okay, first we go into a meditative trance, close to sleep so that we can access our subconscious.

RICHIE (cont'd)

Then the facilitator will instruct the subject to tap into the hidden energies around them. Step three, alien contact. Boom.

AUSTIN

Do it on me first.

CASS

Why you? I'm not a damsel in distress.

AUSTIN

I didn't mean anything by it. Some people also like adventure.

CASS

Right, sorry. My therapist says I need to work on my defensiveness.

RICHIE  
Videos on the internet don't count as  
going to therapy.

CASS  
But imagine if they did.

Austin lays on a sleeping bag on the ground. Cass and Richie  
arrange themselves around him.

RICHIE  
Headphones on.

Cass hands headphones to Austin, he puts them over his ears.

AUSTIN  
See you guys on the other side.

He puts an eye mask on and folds his hands over his stomach.

AUSTIN'S POV:

Everything is black. We hear INSTRUMENTAL COSMIC TRANCE  
MUSIC as the video starts.

MEDITATION NARRATOR (V.O.)  
You are the universe becoming  
conscious of itself. A bundle of  
galactic energy experiencing the  
spectrum of what it means to be alive  
as a human being on Planet Earth  
before returning to the source.  
Infinite, limitless, stardust.

MEDITATION NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Imagine a bright green light  
emanating from the sky straight  
through the core of your being.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

We see the group from across the lake.

BACK TO:

AUSTIN'S POV:

Everything is BLACK.

SILENCE.

SNORING.

INT. FISH LAKE - CAMPSITE - TENT - NIGHT

Austin, Cass, and Richie have been sleeping for some time. Cass slowly nods herself awake. The boys continue to SNORE.

EXT. CASS' CELICA - FISH LAKE - ALCOVE - NIGHT

Cass gets a headlamp from the car and puts it on. A CONE OF LIGHT illuminates before her.

EXT. FISH LAKE - THE WOODS - NIGHT

Cass breathes heavily as she climbs up a hill to get a higher vantage point on the lake. She listens to The Museum of the Strange Podcast as she walks.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

I think the best part about this job is that I get to do weird things with my friends and call it work.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

The weirder the better, I say!

MALE HOST (V.O.)

You need support. You need people that understand you. That won't judge you when you tell them about the weird shit you've seen.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

That's kind of profound, you know. It's true for paranormal investigation but it's also true for life. We all just want to be seen.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

Even aliens.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

Aw.

They CHUCKLE.

As Cass gets to the top, she's struck by the view. She takes her headphones out stopping the show.

The view from the lookout is treetops as far as can be seen. In the middle of it all, big beautiful black Fish Lake. Across the lake, Cass' car is parked at the alcove. Overhead the black sky is a tapestry of glowing stars, vast and all consuming. Cass begins to cry quietly.

CASS  
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Overwhelmed with emotion, it all bubbles over for the first time. She breaks down crying. Crying gives way to a YELL.

CASS (cont'd)  
FUCK!

She wipes the tears from her eyes, centers herself.

A MOVING FIGURE across the lake, by her car catches her eye.

CASS (cont'd)  
Hey!

The FIGURE stops, slowly turns to her. She freezes. SILENCE.  
STILLNESS.

Suddenly, the FIGURE disappears into the trees. Cass starts running down the hill. We hear her BREATHING, trees fly by, her shoes SLAP the ground as she runs farther, the CONE OF LIGHT illuminates her path.

She comes to a thick of brush she doesn't remember.

Clawing her way through, her foot gets stuck for a second. She frees it and stands up looking around.

We've been here before. The view from the lookout is treetops as far as can be seen. In the middle of it all, big beautiful black Fish Lake. Across the lake, Cass' car is parked at the alcove. Overhead the black sky is a tapestry of glowing stars, vast and all consuming.

CASS (cont'd)  
What the fuck?

She turns and runs again down the hill. We hear her BREATHING, trees fly by, her shoes SLAP the ground as she runs farther.

She emerges from a clearing in the trees at the edge of the lake. She sees her car parked in the alcove, nothing there.

EXT. FISH LAKE - ALCOVE - LATER

Cass sits in cold silence. She's tired now and it shows. As she looks around, her hand lifts to the bruise on her neck.

A STICK BREAKS across the lake. She strains her eyes. The DARK FIGURE stands among the trees, she can't make it out.

CASS

Hello?

Frozen in place, she tries to speak again but can't, she squints, the FIGURE disappears behind the trees. She COUGHS.

CASS (cont'd)

Who are you?

A BALL OF LIGHT where the figure stood, for a second the LIGHT is so bright it burns her eyes before disappearing.

Suddenly un-rooted, she takes off running towards the spot.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

OUT OF BREATH Cass stops, looking around. No signs.

She stands, the air fogging around her breath. SILENCE.

Looking at the ground around her, she sees an area stamped down where someone was standing, the leaves BURNT BLACK. She touches it getting BLACK SOOT all over her hand.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cass eats leftover pizza absentmindedly over the sink.

From the distance, a STRANGE DISEMBODIED VOICE calls:

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)

Is there anybody out there?

Cass looks at the pizza, confused. She looks around, almost recognizing something that's on the tip of her mind.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cass walks past a table scattered with mail and bills. A pink pamphlet declares "YOU ARE NOT ALONE - Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence". A gift basket with a note: WELCOME TO THE MT. PLEASANT APARTMENT COMMUNITY!

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A scarce living room cast in a strange GREEN GLOW lined with moving boxes and minimal personal effects. Cass sits on the floor before a TV and dual monitors in an OTHERWORLDLY GLOW.

On the floor a packet: "Mt. Pleasant Loneliness Prevention Hotline New Employee Handbook. REMEMBER: If you don't document it, it didn't happen."

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
Earth to Cass? Hello?

Her green fingernails put earbuds in.

CASS  
Getting a bit needy in your old age?

Confused, she looks around. The screens on the floor emit a GREEN GLOW. Cass sits in front of them looking OTHERWORLDLY.

On the screen, her friends stare back at her.

AUSTIN  
You wouldn't insult me on my  
birthday?

CASS  
It's not your birthday.

AUSTIN  
She knows my birthday everybody!

RICHIE  
She knows it's not your birthday.

CASS  
Big difference.

RICHIE  
Big difference.

RICHIE (cont'd)  
Jinx!

She's trying to get her bearings.

DOM  
You okay bud, we've been worried  
about you.

Cass looks at us, speaking directly.

CASS  
You can't do this alone.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - MORNING

Cass' is awakened by her CELL PHONE RINGING. On the phone she silences an incoming call from DA'S OFFICE. She sits up taking in her surroundings, the ground no longer stamped down. She looks at her hand, it's clean.

She stands and sees her car parked at the alcove across the lake, a clear view from where she's standing, the tent not far.

EXT. FISH LAKE - ALCOVE - MORNING

Sun rises on the MISTY lake. Red-eyed Cass sits on her hood staring at the clearing, face pink with a tinge of sunburn. Richie emerges from the tent rubbing his eyes.

RICHIE

I don't even remember falling asleep.

CASS

There's someone you have to meet.

EXT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - MORNING

Rubbing her red eyes, Cass KNOCKS on the door. Austin and Richie stand sentry behind her. Betty opens.

BETTY

You look like microwaved shit.

CASS

We spent the night at Fish Lake.

BETTY

You'll be needing tea.

INT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - MORNING

Cass, Austin, and Richie sit at the dining table, Betty stands at the stove.

CASS

After I left here, I picked up a transmission saying two UFO's crashed at Fish Lake.

BETTY

Mmm.

CASS

You're not surprised.

BETTY

See anything out there?



CASS

I don't know. I thought so. And then I got, lost. I'm having a hard time remembering. We all fell asleep in the tent and I woke up in the woods.

AUSTIN

In the what?

Austin looks to Cass, she and Betty ignore him. He looks to Richie who shakes his head in the negative.

BETTY

That's how it goes. It plays on your thoughts and feelings.

Betty gives Cass a bag of frozen peas for her face.

BETTY (cont'd)

After Jim left it was like it came on a schedule. Like they were looking after me, or maybe inviting me. It's hard to explain but it's like you just know the thoughts to think.

CASS

What would come?

BETTY

Lights, at first. They'd just hang in the sky, watching. Then it was the dreams and critters tappin' on the windows. Figures in the trees. It's different but it's all the same, you see? It's all connected.

CASS

Do you have pictures? Any proof?

BETTY

None that look like anything. I think it likes messing with us, gives it power when you get upset. Feeds off our negative emotions. It's like a beacon to 'it. I figure it has to be connected to Jim's absence.

CASS

You think he was abducted.

BETTY

Can't say for sure. Either he's an asshole or I am, ain't that always how it goes?

She looks to the boys, Richie nods in agreement, Austin is still confused.

BETTY (cont'd)  
Why'd you move here?

CASS  
Got an ad in my email, looked like a nice place. Remote. I needed to get away to a place like that in a hurry.

BETTY  
How convenient.

Betty looks to her, coming to an assessment.

BETTY (cont'd)  
You been broken. I can tell. It breaks us open. That's when the magic of the universe gets in. Something has been awakened to you.

CASS  
What do I do?

BETTY  
That's not for me to say. I suspect you'll just know.

CASS  
Not sure I trust myself to know.

BETTY  
Oh honey, if you can't trust yourself who can you even trust?

AUSTIN  
Mind if we use your bathroom, ma'am?

BETTY  
One at a time, I hope.

INT. CASS' CELICA - DAY

Cass sits in the car thinking. She grabs her cell phone from the bag and listens to her voicemail.

DA JONES  
Cass, this is District Attorney Jones. I've called you a few times. I wanted to give you an update about your case, give me a call as soon as you get this.

The Museum of the Strange Podcast plays.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

Sometimes I think people mistake their internal feelings and the meaning they're making about them to something otherworldly or something outside of themselves.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

Exactly. I can't tell you guys how many times someone has reached out to us about an object that's supposedly haunted when in reality everything can be explained by what's going on in their lives, it's projection.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

We have to be really careful about the human element when we're investigating the paranormal.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

People are unreliable narrators.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

Ironic, we know, that we're preaching this to you on our show but this is different.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

Yeah believe us, just be skeptical of everyone else.

They LAUGH. She turns it off and places a call, it RINGS.

DA JONES (V.O.)

Cass, you got my message?

CASS

You said you had an update?

DA JONES (V.O.)

Unfortunately we weren't able to get jail time. Despite the evidence, the judge was concerned about the impact of a prison sentence on a first time offender.

CASS

It was the first time the cops came. I still have bruises on my neck. What about the impact of that?

DA JONES (V.O.)  
I know it's not ideal. We made the best case we could. He did receive probation which will entail significant monitoring.

CASS  
That's not going to do anything if he decides to come after me.

DA JONES (V.O.)  
He's not allowed to contact you.

CASS  
Was he allowed to beat me up?

DA JONES (V.O.)  
The Restraining Order will remain in effect for one year. At that point you have the option of renewing it.

CASS  
Great.

DA JONES (V.O.)  
Listen, I'm sorry. I know it's not what you were hoping to hear. But it's over now. You can move on with your life.

CASS  
Sure.

DA JONES (V.O.)  
I know it doesn't seem like it, but you're going to get through this. Lean on the people that care about you, it will help.

A silent beat.

DA JONES (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Take care of yourself, Cass.

Cass hangs up and BANGS her hands against the wheel.  
Austin and Richie emerge with an armful of baked goods.  
Cass throws her phone back in her bag as they get in.

AUSTIN  
You okay?

CASS  
Gotta get back for my hotline shift.

AUSTIN  
We'll head to the Parks Department  
I'll work my contacts and see if we  
can get info on local sightings and  
reports.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

Cass sits at the table her laptop in front of her open to  
the Hotline Server. She changes her status to AVAILABLE.

Taking a sip of tea, she scoffs as she burns her mouth. The  
phone RINGS. She takes another careful sip and CLICKS over.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?

The line is QUIET, no response but RUSTLING sounds indicate  
that someone is on the other line.

CASS (cont'd)  
Community Cares Hotline-

Caller HANGS UP and the line goes DEAD.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Cass makes Mac and Cheese on the stove. Her computer on the  
counter plays the Museum of the Strange Podcast.

MALE HOST (V.O.)  
It's hard to explain, because these  
things seem to just find you.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)  
Right, like it sounds insane when you  
describe it to people.

MALE HOST (V.O.)  
Yeah, hi, I just got a message from  
another dimension via a balloon that  
keeps coming into my path so now I'm  
investigating aliens in the forest.  
I'd think I was insane if I was  
listening to me.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)  
You are, just not for that reason.

They LAUGH.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Just to clear that up.

MALE HOST (V.O.)  
Yeah, thanks.

Cass grabs the laptop.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cass sits on the floor with a bowl of pasta, laptop open,  
"The Mothman Prophecies" begins on the TV.

On the laptop she makes her Hotline status UNAVAILABLE. Her  
headphones BEEP as she joins the group chat.

CASS  
Anybody there?

There's nobody there. A BEEP as she signs off, disappointed.

She finishes eating mindlessly while watching the movie,  
slowly she drifts off to sleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. CASS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Cass sits on the couch holding her wrist, looking at it.  
There's a RED MARK on it.

CHRIS (O.S.)  
You're lucky I put up with you, few  
others would.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

PHONE RINGS waking Cass. She CLICKS over to answer it.  
RINGING continues. She CLICKS over again.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called. This is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?



He distributes pairs of crocheted mittens. They walk to the carousel, Dom puts his arms around Cass' shoulders.

DOM  
Good to finally fuckin' meet ya kid.

They hug.

INT. MT. PLEASANT AIRPORT - BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT

Scattered on the floor, the group in full BANTER as always.

DOM  
I think I met the love of my life on  
the flight.

AUSTIN  
What's her name?

RICHIE  
He has no idea.

DOM  
Okay, like, ye of little faith.

CASS  
He's right isn't he?

DOM  
I think that is beside the point.

The lone worker guides another plane, eventually its occupants begin filing in. Michael BOOMS into the building.

MICHAEL  
ALRIGHT LADS?!

We see the group together, they respond in a resounding and cheerful ALRIGHT! Another giant group hug.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
You lot are much uglier in person.

INT. SHERRY'S COUNTRY CAFE AND PIZZA - NIGHT

An old school pizza parlor, the group sits at a semi-circle booth raising red soda cups in toast. A pizza graveyard sits between them. In front of Cass, a brownie with a scoop of ice cream and an obscene amount of candles.



AUSTIN

Not to be too forward, I know we all just met. But I think I speak for everyone when I say we are so glad you were born.

They CLINK the plastic cups in toast. Cass BEAMS.

CASS

Thanks for the candles, nice touch.

RICHIE

It's a fire hazard, really.

Michael launches a straw wrapper at him.

DOM

What's your wish, kid?

CASS

I want my best friends to help me make alien contact so maybe we may solve a mystery and learn the true meaning of life.

DOM

Completely reasonable, per usual.

She blows out the candles.

RICHIE

Austin gets all the credit for tonight, except for our next destination.

EXT. MT. PLEASANT GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - NIGHT

A neon sign proclaiming this "The Most Pleasant Place in Town" with a pink mountain lion on it.

INT. MT. PLEASANT GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - NIGHT

Everyone piles into a booth, the boys making exaggerated effort to look down and avoid looking at any of the dancers.

CASS

What are you guys doing?

DOM

Being respectful.

CASS  
You're being really weird. Please  
look at them.

AUSTIN  
No thank you, don't want to be rude.

CASS  
It's objectively way worse, what  
you're doing.

A flirty, glitter adorned COCKTAIL WAITRESS approaches.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS  
Drinks?

CASS  
Hi, we'll have five root beers.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS  
Floats?

RICHIE  
Yes please!

He looks up at her, she smiles, he smiles back.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS  
You got it, cutie.

She leaves.

CASS  
First of all, she liked you. Second,  
you should ask her about the Lake,  
see if she knows anything about Jim.

The waitress delivers five root beer floats. She leans over  
Richie and smiles at him.

RICHIE  
Excuse me, miss?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS  
Brandy.

RICHIE  
Miss Brandy.

She GIGGLES.

RICHIE (cont'd)  
Have you seen or heard about anything  
strange out at Fish Lake?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

Bud down at the Cosmic Lanes took me down there once.

RICHIE

Bud?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

Ex-boyfriend.

He looks nervous.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS (cont'd)

Real dick.

RICHIE

Awesome.

She smiles.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

His friends used to go down there and throw rocks into the lake. Said it was some sort of fishing technique.

RICHIE

I don't think they know how to fish.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

One night they all said they saw a bunch of lights like the rocks turned into them. Then they heard noises coming from the hills. Bud swears something chased them through the woods. I think they were just trying to scare me.

Richie is staring at her with hearts in his eyes. Cass kicks his foot, gives him an urging look. He is too scared.

CASS

Do you know anything about Jim? Guy who disappeared from Fish Lake Trailer Park.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

No, sorry. Bud might though. He works at the Cosmic Lanes Bowling Alley. He's the manager so he thinks that makes him hot shit but he's more of a cold turd kind of guy if you know what I mean.

RICHIE

We do.

The cocktail waitress smiles at RICHIE. She writes her number on a napkin and slips it to him.

INT. COSMIC LANES BOWLING - NIGHT

A TEENAGE WORKER flips a switch and the MUSIC starts, STROBE LIGHTS FLASH, and a DISCO BALL shines as the place comes alive. The group approaches the counter.

RICHIE

Is Bud here?

He puffs out his chest, the teenager doesn't care.

TEENAGE WORKER

People here for you asshole!

A minute later BUD, Bowling Alley Manager and long time asshole, emerges from the back office.

BUD

What do you want?

RICHIE

We want to know what you know about Fish Lake asshole.

Cass steps in, the group looks at him in disbelief.

CASS

Sorry about my friend, he's not socialized.

Bud HUFFS, Richie continues to puff out his chest.

AUSTIN

We're looking into strange stories for our paranormal club.

BUD

Sounds fucking lame.

DOM

Wouldn't you know, King Fuckin' Lame.

The guys start to square up, Richie still puffing his chest.

CASS

Enough with the testosterone fest. Do you know anything about Jim, or not?

BUD  
What's in it for me?

CASS  
Buy you a beer.

He contemplates for a moment. Shrugs the affirmative.

BUD  
Go on, then.

INT. COSMIC LANES BOWLING - BAR - NIGHT

Cass pays for two pitchers and delivers them to the table as the boys sit around staring at each other not talking. Bud slams his beer as the group watches, slightly horrified.

RICHIE  
Start talking, swamp monster.

Bud looks at him with a snarl on his face.

CASS  
Beer for information, that's the deal.

BUD  
Cups empty.

Austin refills it.

BUD (cont'd)  
Me and my friends been going fishing out there for years. One time I took my girlfriend.

RICHIE  
Ex-girlfriend.

Bud stares. Cass widens her eyes at him in warning.

BUD  
She's always being theatrical, per usual. So we leave her at the alcove and go out on the lake.

RICHIE  
You don't deserve her.

Bud stares daggers at Richie. Cass smacks him.

CASS  
Please. Continue.

BUD

So we're out on the lake, we start to see these lights, like underneath the water. They were just darting around. All different colors. For a whole five minutes none of us said anything, we couldn't. Like those dreams where you try to scream and nothing comes out. And the feeling. It was something awful.

He trails off.

CASS

Dread.

They've seen the same thing. This scares him even more.

BUD

Yeah, dread. Felt like it went all the way down to my core. I could feel it vibrating. Like it was letting me know it could snap my bones at any moment if it wanted to. If it cared enough. Then they just disappeared.

He looks into his beer, drains the last of it. Austin refills it from the pitcher.

AUSTIN

What happened after that?

BUD

Saw a figure in the trees, and all the sudden there were these crying sounds coming from the hills. It was like they were inside the mountain. We thought it was a baby, so we went looking. Got lost in the woods for hours, never found anything.

He drains this beer too. Then signals to Austin to fill it again, finishing the pitcher himself.

BUD (cont'd)

I'll never forget that feeling.

CASS

And everyone else with you can confirm all this?

BUD

Joey died of an overdose not long after that and his brother moved away. I still don't think Brandy believes me. But I know what I felt.

They all look at him, humor sucked from the room.

CASS

Thank you, really. This is helpful.

BUD

You better be careful messing around with this stuff. Something's out there.

He grabs the second pitcher and leaves. Everyone sits in silent contemplation a beat.

DOM

Right, who wants to go home and watch movies?

Everyone raises their hands.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cass distributes popcorn to her eager friends on the floor lined with sleeping bags, everyone in their pajamas.

CASS

I think whatever we're looking for is at the lake. That seems to be the common factor in all these experiences. We need to be out there.

AUSTIN

You know if it's outdoors, I'm in.

MICHAEL

I found some videos about staging an abduction, I'll send them to everyone.

Cass sits in the middle, Austin notices the bruise on her neck. She feels him looking, turns and he smiles.

"The Twilight Zone" starts on the various monitors and TV screens pulling their attention toward it.

ROD SERLING

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man.

INT./EXT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - PATIO - LATER

The group long since fallen asleep inside unaware of the series of lights hovering in the sky outside.

Eleven different colored lights hover and move in a coordinated dance, creating colorful shapes in the sky.

The lights skitter in seemingly impossible maneuvers, cutting turns at ninety degree angles and zipping across the sky in a manner impossible to any known human aircraft.

They continue trading places, combining and separating in a kaleidoscope of colors until suddenly, they stop.

The colorful orbs hang in the sky surrounding Cass' apartment.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SNORES of varying degrees. LIGHTS outside barely visible merge into one BRILLIANT BRIGHT LIGHT shining into the apartment. Cass stirs awake but the light is already gone. She gets up, stretches, and goes to her room.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cass gets into bed and falls back asleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

We travel from Cass' bed to Fish Lake.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT - DREAM

Cass stands in the clearing in the woods, looking across the lake where she sees herself with her friends setting up a campsite. The group laughs, everyone is happy.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
This won't last, once they see the  
real you. You'll always be alone in  
the end.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.



INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Sleeping bags line the floor, everyone bundled up from the night. Cass emerges from her bedroom and takes in the group.

DOM  
Good morning creepy.

She startles.

CASS  
Jesus, you scared me.

DOM  
I scared you? You're standing here watching us sleep.

CASS  
I wasn't watching, I was taking it all in. I can't believe you're here, it's like you jumped out of the TV.

DOM  
You got coffee?

CASS  
Are most organized religions complicit in the systematic abuse of women and children?

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

The coffee maker BURBLES in the corner.

DOM  
So how ya doin' bud, really?

CASS  
I'm okay.

He gives her a look.

DOM  
We really have been worried.

CASS  
What's to worry about?

DOM  
You seem quite depressed. And with everything these last few months.

He gestures to her barren apartment and general state. Instinctively, her hand reaches to her neck, the bruise covered by her hair.

CASS  
I'm fine. Don't worry.

Austin enters followed by Michael and Richie.

AUSTIN  
We smelled coffee.

RICHIE  
I'm starving mom!

MICHAEL  
Could go for a fry up, to be fair.

DOM  
Don't be disgusting.

AUSTIN  
We want to cook for you. Just need to take a look at what you have.

Dom opens the fridge, it's empty save for the bare carcass of a very old rotisserie chicken.

MICHAEL  
That's grim, mate.

CASS  
I've been busy.

AUSTIN  
Right, first breakfast, then we shop.

INT. SHERRY'S COUNTRY CAFE AND PIZZA - DAY

Large hot breakfast plates fill the table as a WAITRESS refills their coffee.

WAITRESS  
You kids let me know if you need any extra toast.

Everyone thanks her then waits for her to leave.

MICHAEL  
Absolutely cannot believe you lot's government banned Bovril.

Cass gives him a look.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Right. Not the time.

CASS  
What if Jim didn't really leave? What  
if he was abducted.

RICHIE  
Are we sure these people are, ya  
know, all there?

The Waitress comes back and refills everyone's coffee. They  
sit quietly as they eat.

CASS  
We should keep trying the hypnosis  
protocol. With me this time. I think  
that's what it wants.

DOM  
Can I just say, it sounds kinda weird  
when you start talking about "it."

CASS  
The phenomenon.

AUSTIN  
We can just enjoy our time together.

CASS  
I have to do this. On my own if  
that's what it takes, but I have to.  
I'm not expecting you to understand.  
I know it doesn't make sense. But I  
have to listen to my gut on this.

A hint of emotion, the group is sympathetic but silent.

Out the window deep in the trees, the DARK FIGURE watches.

Instinctively, Cass' hand reaches and covers the bruise on  
her neck, the skin around it red and irritated. She looks  
out to the trees, there's nothing there.

Cass notices the time on her watch, 11:11 am.

CASS (cont'd)  
Shit! I have to get back, I'm on the  
midday shift. I'll catch up with you  
guys later?

AUSTIN  
I'm going to follow up with the Fish  
Lake Rangers today.  
(MORE)

AUSTIN (cont'd)  
We'll head to the store and grab some groceries after. We're cooking for you tonight.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

Cass sets her status to AVAILABLE, right away the PHONE RINGS. She CLICKS over.

The RINGING doesn't stop. She CLICKS over again.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so glad you called, this is Cass, to whom am I speaking?

CALLER  
Cass?

CASS  
This is Cass, to whom am I speaking?

CALLER  
It's really you? I've been trying to find you.

CASS  
Who is this?

CALLER  
You don't recognize my voice? Don't you love me anymore?

PHONE RINGING startles Cass awake at the dining room table. She looks at the clock 1:11 PM. She CLICKS over.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so glad you called, this is Cass, to whom am I speaking?

JANET  
My name is Janet.

CASS  
Hi Janet, what brings you to the hotline today?

JANET  
I'm feeling lonely. I think it's starting to get to me, I've been having really weird dreams and I'm afraid to go to sleep.

CASS

Is there something that's been keeping you up?

JANET

The house makes weird noises. Can't shake this feeling that I'm being watched. Like there's something outside.

CASS

Really? Do you need a home visit?

JANET

I- are you allowed to do that?

EXT. JANET'S HOUSE - DAY

Cass pulls up to an isolated house sitting at the base of a mine entrance. JANET (60's) sits on the front porch.

CASS

Janet?

JANET

Yes? Who are you?

CASS

I'm Cass, we just spoke on the hotline.

JANET

You didn't have to come here.

CASS

You said you've been hearing strange sounds at night?

JANET

No. Well, yes. But I'm sure it's just the pipes. At least in the daytime I'm sure. Ask me again tonight.

CASS

But it could be more than that?

JANET

I- I don't know. Like what?

CASS

Have you heard about strange happenings at the Lake?

JANET  
I've heard stories.

CASS  
And?

JANET  
Bunch of nonsense.

CASS  
What about Jim?

JANET  
Jim? Sweetie Jim ran out with his mistress.

CASS  
What? No, he went out to the lake. He took his fishing gear.

JANET  
Well maybe she liked fish. That man was no good.

CASS  
So you think he left?

JANET  
I know he did. Spent a week telling everyone at the bar he was going to.

JANET (cont'd)  
Sometimes it's easier to believe fantasy stories rather than allow ourselves to acknowledge what we know is true.

CASS  
So you haven't had any paranormal experiences?

JANET  
Paranormal? No, I have your plain ordinary, normal loneliness that comes from living in a small town and accepting that this is all there is.

CASS  
You're sure?

Janet looks to Cass with pity.

JANET  
Unfortunately, I am.

INT. CASS' CELICA - DAY

Cass drives as The Museum of the Strange Podcast plays.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

It's hard to accept that not every sighting or every experience is real. In fact, most of them aren't.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

Everyone wants to have an experience. And a lot of times we would rather chalk our struggles up to something bigger, so we don't have to stay in our own lives.

EXT. FISH LAKE - ALCOVE - NIGHT

Cass sits on the hood of her car watching the lake as the last of the daylight is replaced by night time.

CASS

This doesn't make any sense.

Her PHONE RINGS, she CLICKS over.

CASS (cont'd)

Community Cares Hotline, we're so glad you called, this is Cass, to whom am I speaking?

CASS' BOSS

Cass, we need to have a talk.

CASS

I'm out in the field right now, can it wait?

CASS' BOSS

No, it can't wait. That's actually what I want to talk to you about. I've heard through the grapevine that you've been making home visits but I don't see any in your log?

CASS

Oh, I, uh.

CASS' BOSS

Cass, home visits are supposed to be used in extreme cases only. They're not to be overused.

CASS  
I believe both were absolutely warranted.

CASS' BOSS  
Both?

CASS  
Um. What?

CASS' BOSS  
Listen, we're happy to have you on the team. But only if you're going to stick to the rules provided, not make your own. Consider this your one and final warning.

CASS  
I understand, it won't happen again.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cass arrives home to find the boys gaming on the TV.

CASS  
You guys won't believe the day I've had.

RICHIE  
Well look who decided to show up.

CASS  
What?

AUSTIN  
I told you we were going to cook dinner. Don't you remember?

CASS  
Of course, that's why I'm here.

DOM  
Little late, bud.

CASS  
What are you talking about, what time is it?

She checks her watch, it's stopped working.

MICHAEL  
It's nearly midnight mate.



CASS  
That's not possible. I had one home  
visit.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cass looks to the microwave clock, it reads 11:11.

CASS  
That can't be right.

She looks around to the mountain of food packed into plastic  
ware, dinner long since over.

CASS (cont'd)  
Sorry, I think the day just got away  
from me.

DOM  
Cass, we've been trying. We really  
have, but you keep shutting us out.

CASS  
Shutting you out? I'm not shutting  
you out.

DOM  
Austin's really hurt, he's put a lot  
into this and to be honest it seems  
like you don't even care.

CASS  
Of course I care! I've had a lot  
going on lately, you know.

Austin and the rest of the group has entered.

AUSTIN  
We wouldn't know, because you won't  
let us in.

CASS  
That's not true.

RICHIE  
Usually I think he's being dramatic,  
but I gotta agree with them on this  
one.

DOM  
You haven't told us anything about  
what you've been through lately.

CASS

Oh so because I didn't tell you one little thing now I'm a bad friend?

AUSTIN

One thing? What's with the giant bruise on your neck? You think that's just one little thing?

MICHAEL

It's a pretty big thing, getting married and divorced. We're supposed to be mates.

CASS

We're not even that close.

DOM

What's weird is that we thought we've been best friends for years, Cass.

RICHIE

We know you've been going through a lot and we've been trying to be there for you.

AUSTIN

I was stupid enough to rearrange my entire life to try and be there for you.

CASS

What are you talking about, rearrange your life?

AUSTIN

Fish Lake was willing to give me their reports because they've been needing a ranger for a long time. I accepted a transfer here. I was going to tell you at dinner, thought you'd be excited. Which apparently was stupid.

CASS

You're moving here?

RICHIE

Already did. Why do you think we drove? Got an apartment across the complex.

AUSTIN  
We've been doing all this and you  
didn't even notice.

CASS  
We're just gaming buddies!

MICHAEL  
We thought it was more than that,  
mate.

Pain and disappointment hang on their faces.

AUSTIN  
We'll leave you to it.

MICHAEL  
Not cool, mate.

Dom stacks up the boxes of food and takes them with him. The boys exit. Last to the door, Austin turns back to her.

AUSTIN  
Those walls you've built don't keep  
you safe, they keep you alone.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Cass sits at the table. Her status shows as UNAVAILABLE but the PHONE RINGS anyway. She CLICKS over to answer.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?

The phone continues RINGING. Cass CLICKS over.

CASS (cont'd)  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?

RINGING continues.

INT./EXT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Cass walks outside, CLICKS over.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so  
glad you called, this is Cass, to  
whom am I speaking?

JANET  
My dog is gone.

CASS  
Sorry?

JANET  
My dog, she's gone. Can you come  
back? I think something took her.

CASS  
I'm not supposed to.

JANET  
Please, I don't have anyone else.

INT. JANET'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cass arrives, Janet lets her in.

CASS  
Why do you think something took her?

JANET  
She wouldn't leave. I know her.

CASS  
That's exactly what Betty said, and  
you said Betty was lying to herself.

JANET  
Jim left, I was telling the truth  
about that. But the things she saw,  
I've seen em too.

CASS  
Why didn't you tell me? You acted  
like you had no idea.

JANET  
They told me to mislead you.

CASS  
Who told you that?

JANET  
The critters. They whisper things to  
me at night.

(MORE)

JANET (cont'd)  
They're messing with you. I just wanted to stay out of it but my little Trixie is all I have left. I need her back!

CASS  
Where do you think they took her?

JANET  
There's an old mine shaft at the edge of my property. They say there's dozens of tunnels in and out of the mountain. This one used to go straight through the middle of it and back down to Fish Lake, but it's been closed off for a long time. Until last night, I saw a light coming out of there. It disappeared when I called out to Trixie and I swear I heard her voice. In those tunnels, that's where you're going to find your answers.

INT. CASS' CELICA - NIGHT

Cass drives as the phone RINGS. She CLICKS over to answer.

CASS  
Community Cares Hotline, we're so glad you called, this is Cass, to whom am I speaking?

CASS' BOSS  
Was there something I said that was unclear this afternoon?

CASS  
No, I understood you loud and clear.

CASS' BOSS  
Then why did you just go on yet another home visit to Janet's house?

CASS  
How did you know?

Cass' boss lets out a deep SIGH.

CASS (cont'd)  
I'm sorry. She asked me to come. It was by the book, I swear.

CASS' BOSS

People like you, and I hate to do it.  
But we can't have employees making  
their own rules. Without structure  
we'd have chaos. I have to fire you.

CASS

Please, I need this job.

CASS' BOSS

I'm sorry.

INT. SHERRY'S COUNTRY CAFE - NIGHT

The boys are all playing at the arcade machines a pizza  
graveyard on the table behind them.

MICHAEL

Oi, watch where you're shooting. You  
Americans and your friendly fire.

DOM

Enough America slander, at least we  
have flavored food.

A BELL RINGS as Cass enters. They all look up.

CASS

Hey.

RICHIE

Hey Cass.

Nobody else responds, Michael and Dom keep playing, Austin  
watches.

A beat as Cass builds the courage, this is new territory for  
her.

CASS

I'm sorry.

They stop playing and listen.

CASS (cont'd)

It's not easy for me to open up to  
people. I've made it a habit of  
keeping people at a distance. It's a  
pattern.

AUSTIN

We thought we were really close.

CASS

We are, I've let you guys in more than anyone.

DOM

Except the guy you married.

CASS

And look how that worked out for me.

She pulls her hoodie off revealing the fading bruise.

DOM

My God, Cass.

RICHIE

What the fuck happened?

CASS

He was so nice at first. Until he wasn't. And I feel so fucking stupid for not seeing it.

Austin gets up and hugs her, holding onto her as she tries to break away. Dom joins the hug first, then Richie and Michael pile on. Cass cries.

CASS (cont'd)

I feel like I can't trust myself anymore.

AUSTIN

You're one of the strongest people I know. I'd trust you with my life.

MICHAEL

Despite your cultural handicap, I agree.

DOM

I'd take you over any one of these clowns.

RICHIE

Still number one pick in my draft.

She smiles in relief. They've rallied.

CASS

And also-

A beat.

CASS (cont'd)  
I love you guys.

AUSTIN  
We love you too.

DOM  
Big time.

RICHIE  
Obviously.

MICHAEL  
Yeah yeah, what they said.

CASS  
Alright then. Once more into the  
breach, dear friends.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Cass lays on a pile of blankets surrounded by the boys.

MICHAEL  
Right, it's very important that you  
set an intention and stick to it.  
You're opening yourself up to  
experience but you're also being  
purposeful.

CASS  
My intention is to be abducted by  
aliens.

DOM  
After all that, you're just gonna  
leave us here.

RICHIE  
I don't think that's going to solve  
any of this.

CASS  
Okay fine, another time. What do you  
guys suggest?

AUSTIN  
I think it needs to be more  
purposeful than that. We need to ask  
for guidance.



CASS

My intention is to receive the answers I seek. I am open to the guidance of the energies in this place. And I want to know where Janet's dog went.

DOM

That's what I'm talkin' about.

MICHAEL

We'll count you down and start the protocol.

CASS

Okay, I'm trusting you guys.

She puts the mask over her eyes and headphones over her ears, lays down.

CASS' POV:

Everything is BLACK. We hear INSTRUMENTAL TRANCE MUSIC.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

We see the group from across the lake.

BACK TO:

CASS' POV:

Everything is BLACK. We hear The Museum of the Strange Podcast.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

The human element, that's the trickiest part of all this.

We alternate between CASS' POV in the dark and the other vantage points.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Still watching the group across the lake we're traveling backwards towards the mountain ridge. Again we hear the podcast.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

Can people ever be trustworthy narrators?

CASS POV: Everything is black. Slowly a scene comes into focus.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

From the front door, we're taking in the empty apartment. We look down to see the boots of a man walking forward into the apartment.

CASS (V.O.)  
I'm in my apartment. I'm touching my  
stuff, but I don't feel like me. I  
feel, weird.

We walk past the table scattered with mail and bills. A man's hand picks up the pink pamphlet declaring "YOU ARE NOT ALONE - Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence".

CASS (V.O.) (cont'd)  
They're in the body of a man. And it  
seems like they're angry. I think  
they're angry at me.

Cass POV goes dark again.

CASS (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I don't get it.

INT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Betty sits at her dining room table in full fishing gear staring out the window.

CASS (V.O.)  
Betty?

CASS (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I'm at Betty's but she can't see me.

The scene disappears. CASS POV is dark again.

AUSTIN (V.O.)  
What are you seeing?

CASS (V.O.)  
It's gone. There's nothing anymore.  
It's just dark.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
You know we're not really going to  
stick around, right?

DOM (V.O.)  
Don't tell her that. She doesn't need  
to know that yet.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
Cass. You can't trust anyone but  
yourself. You know better than to  
open up like this. The only person  
you can rely on, is you. People will  
always let you down.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Cass sits up, throwing off the headphones and pulling the  
mask off. The boys sitting around her all look at her. She  
stares back.

DOM  
Well?

AUSTIN  
What did you see?

CASS  
What are you talking about? I was  
narrating the whole thing.

DOM  
Nice try, kid. You fell asleep  
instantly.

CASS  
No I didn't, I was talking to you  
guys the whole time. I could hear  
you.

MICHAEL  
We made sure to be silent, mate.

RICHIE  
We didn't want to disturb your  
trance.

She stands and looks across the lake towards the clearing.  
Nothing there.

CASS  
I swear I was talking to you guys.  
And I heard you talking about me.

DOM  
You need something to eat.

INT. SHERRY'S COUNTRY CAFE - NIGHT

The group sits around the table eating.

CASS

Everything has been so strange lately. I'm losing time. I'm starting to think I can't tell the difference between dreams and reality.

EXT. SHERRY'S COUNTRY CAFE - NIGHT

The boys pile into Austin's truck. Cass gets into her car.

DOM

Are you sure you don't want me to go with you?

CASS

I'm good, I'm just going to stop by Betty's to check up on her and then I'll be home. I'll meet you there.

INT. CASS' CELICA - NIGHT

The Museum of the Strange Podcast plays on her speaker.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

I think sometimes we get so wrapped up in the story that we forget to pay attention to the signs.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

I know what you mean. We get so focused on the why or trying to figure out the fine details that we don't realize we're making it overcomplicated.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

Right, you don't always have to know why it's happening. Sometimes it's just meant to be a nudge.

MALE HOST (V.O.)

A confirmation that you're on the right track.

FEMALE HOST (V.O.)

Or, even more important sometimes, a nudge away from the wrong track.

INT./EXT. CASS' APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The boys approach the apartment and see the front door ajar. They look to each other before proceeding with caution.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Immediately as they walk in they notice multiple giant bouquets of flowers on the counter with a card.

Austin runs forward and opens the card: "I'm sorry Love, C."

AUSTIN  
That piece of shit.

He throws the card at Richie before storming out.

RICHIE  
Austin, wait.

AUSTIN  
He's been here, we have to find her.

DOM  
Hold on man, let me call her.

He's out the door.

INT./EXT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER

Cass parks and gets out of the car, leaving her phone.

She KNOCKS at Betty's front door.

INT. CASS' CELICA - CONTINUOUS

Cass' phone RINGS from the cup holder before shorting out.

EXT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

No answer. Cass KNOCKS again.

CASS  
Betty?

She tries the door, it opens.

CASS (cont'd)  
Betty?

INT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Cass enters Betty's trailer, it looks exactly as it did when she saw Betty sitting in her fishing gear. On the table a note: DOG IS WITH ME. GONE FISHIN' - B.

EXT. FISH LAKE - ALCOVE - NIGHT

Cass headlights lead her to the alcove as she parks. She gets out and looks around, finding nobody.

CASS

Betty?

She looks to the middle of the lake, sees a lone empty boat.

A DARK FIGURE watches from across the lake, she spots it.

CASS (cont'd)

HEY!

The FIGURE doesn't move.

CASS (cont'd)

HEY! YOU!

The FIGURE retreats into the trees. Cass starts running. We hear her BREATHING as she makes her way towards the clearing, her feet SLAP against the cold wet ground.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Cass reaches the clearing to find it completely empty, the ground tamped down and scorched in a pattern looks like a path. She reaches down and touches it, retracts a soot-covered hand. She smells her hand.

CASS

Burnt electronics.

She follows the path towards the mountain ridge.

EXT. FISH LAKE - THE WOODS - NIGHT

Cass continues following the scorched ground until it reaches the mountain ridge. She finds Betty standing in front of it, a leashed dog BARKS at her heels.

CASS

Betty? What are you doing out here?

Betty turns to her, her brown eyes look to Cass pleading.

BETTY

I've been trying to call you! These huge beings showed up at my house and told me they were unhappy with you. Said they went to yours and found your new guy there, they were mad so they took him instead. It's you they wanted. I couldn't stop them!

CASS

New guy? What new guy?

BETTY

The handsome park ranger.

CASS

Austin? Where did they take him?

BETTY

To their base, in there.

She points to the ridge.

BETTY (cont'd)

There's some way to open it. I just don't know how. Help me figure it out!

Cass leans up against the ridge, a distant HUMMING sound emanates from the rocks.

CASS

Let us in.

She runs her hands across the ridge searching.

CASS (cont'd)

Please, we mean no harm.

From behind Betty a BALL OF LIGHT emerges from the water. The HUMMING crescendos into a HIGH-PITCHED ELECTRONIC SOUND.

Betty covers her ears in pain, letting go of the dog's leash. The dog runs away. Cass is unaffected.

The BALL OF LIGHT moves through the trees growing BRIGHTER.

The light disappears revealing the DARK FIGURE. The figure steps out of the tree cover, a severe looking man in a police uniform, the badge reads DEPUTY ALAN RESSION.

CASS (cont'd)  
Who are you? Why are you doing this?

He holds up his hand showing a tattoo of the Solar System on his palm as he looks to Cass. Without words he communicates.

DEPUTY RESSION (V.O.)  
You must understand that all of this has been for you. It was designed for you. This is the journey you needed.

CASS  
You've been messing with my mind, confusing me. Making it hard to trust myself.

DEPUTY RESSION  
This is my function. To guide you towards what is needed. It is because you pushed through that you made it here. You must continue forward, it is your path.

CASS  
I don't know if I can.

DEPUTY RESSION  
You must.

He walks away into the clearing, approaching the hills.

He places his tattooed hand on the ground in front of the ridge. A wall of rocks falls revealing an opening, without a sound, the light disappears and so does Deputy Ression. As strange and mysteriously as he arrived, so he goes.

As Cass stands stunned, Betty pushes past her, running into the ridge.

CASS  
Wait!

INT. MOUNTAIN CAVE - NIGHT

Cass WHEEZES as she runs, her neck and face turning RED.

CASS  
AUSTIN!

She staggers in pain, clawing her way forward.



CASS (cont'd)  
I'm sorry, please! Don't take him,  
take me!

She tramples through the mud, the brush getting less thick as she goes. The tunnel weaves and winds, getting darker.

CASS (cont'd)  
It's my fault.

She comes around the corner, runs SMACK into a thick wall.

CASS (cont'd)  
No.

She's crying now. The door is closed.

CASS (cont'd)  
Take me instead, please!

SILENCE.

Until.

A WHOOSH as the door opens. She GROANS as she stands on her wounded leg. She crawls through the barrier limping. A WHOOSH as the door closes behind her.

INT. ALIEN CAVE BASE - NIGHT

Cass looks around at what appears to be a control room. There are dozens of monitors in front of her displaying various scenes, her Apartment, Sherry's pizza cafe, the Cosmic Bowling Lounge. On a monitor she sees AUSTIN huddled in a small room.

CASS  
Austin!

She limps towards a control panel with no buttons. It's just a plain slate table.

CASS (cont'd)  
What the fuck is going on?!

She runs her hands over the panel, nothing appears. She's desperate, she's crying.

A WHOOSH as the door opens behind her, she turns.

CASS (cont'd)  
Help me!

Betty walks in, a WHOOSH as the door closes.

CASS (cont'd)  
Betty help me!

Betty stares at her with a blank expression. Says nothing.

CASS (cont'd)  
What is this?

Betty WHIMPERS.

BETTY  
I'm so sorry honey.

CASS  
Sorry?

Cass looks around, frantic. On the screen a door opens to Austin's room and two BEINGS enter. The screen goes dark.

CASS (cont'd)  
No! Austin!

Betty cries. Cass runs to her and starts shaking her.

CASS (cont'd)  
What are they going to do to him?

Betty sits in stunned silence.

CASS (cont'd)  
TELL ME!

BETTY  
They need containers. I thought if I gave them your friend they might give me Jim back.

CASS  
ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME? GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF. JIM FUCKING LEFT YOU!

BETTY  
No! He wouldn't!

CASS  
He did! There's nothing you can do to change that. Lying to yourself isn't going to change it.

Betty WAILS.

CASS (cont'd)  
Where are they taking him?

BETTY  
You're too late.

CASS  
WHERE?

BETTY  
The lake.

Cass runs out the room.

INT./EXT. ALIEN CAVE BASE - NIGHT

Cass limps out the cave into the SILENT night. Her PHONE RINGS, she pulls it out showing DON'T ANSWER (84 MISSED CALLS 237 UNREAD MESSAGES).

The RINGING PHONE in her hand echoes with the sound of a placed call on speaker phone coming from the trees.

CASS  
Hello?

Cass is hit over the head with a SMACK.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cass vision blurs into consciousness as the picture slowly becomes clear. She's being dragged through the clearing by a DARK FIGURE.

CASS  
No- but you said-

THUD. The figure drops her legs and turns around.

CHRIS  
You fucking bitch.

He stands over her. She's panicked BREATHING HARD.

CASS  
How did you find me?

CHRIS  
You left your email logged in on the laptop.

CASS  
It was in pieces. You smashed it.

CHRIS  
I had the hard drive recovered.

The world swirls around her as the severity sets in. Chris stands over her, seething, his eyes black with void.

CHRIS (cont'd)  
I have a fucking probation officer because of you. Lost my job. Lost the house. Everything. And you think you can just run away?

CASS  
I just want to be left alone.

CHRIS  
You don't get to leave me.

A low WHIRRING from the woods. The ground begins to TREMBLE.

INT. FISH LAKE TRAILER PARK - BETTY'S TRAILER - FLASHBACK

Cass sits at the dining table, Betty stands at the stove.

BETTY  
That's how it goes. They play on your thoughts and feelings... They feed off of our negative emotions. It's like a beacon to 'em.

BACK TO:

EXT. FISH LAKE - CLEARING IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cass lays on the ground as Chris stands over her, seething.

CASS  
I did leave you. And I found someone better. He's bigger too.

CHRIS  
You're really stupid, aren't you?

CASS  
I see why your ex cheated on you. I forgot what it was like to be with a real man.

CHRIS

Shut up.

CASS

You've always been small. In more ways than one.

She looks him up and down.

CASS (cont'd)

Small mind.

CASS (cont'd)

Small personality.

CASS (cont'd)

Small everything.

CHRIS

Shut up!

He KICKS her in the ribs knocking the wind out. She GROANS.

CASS

You'll never be enough for me. You'll never be enough for anyone. That's why your dad left.

He SCREAMS and lunges towards her, wrapping his hands around her neck. She stares into his black eyes as he SPITS and RAGES. They STRUGGLE. She KICKS and WRITHES. Her face is turning as she runs out of air.

The ground TREMBLES and WHIRRING increases. The trees begin to SHAKE, pebbles DANCE up from the ground.

From behind Chris is STRUCK in the head by a big log. He releases Cass who CHOKES and SPITS catching her breath. Chris falls to the side, Betty stands behind him.

BETTY

Grab his legs!

Betty grabs an unconscious Chris by the arms as Cass grabs his legs. She WHEEZES and they GRUNT as they pull Chris out of the clearing towards the lake. The entire forest is BUZZING.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CONTINUOUS

The water VIBRATES as tiny beads shoot up like backwards rain. Cass and Betty pull Chris to the water and drop him.

BETTY  
We have a container!

CASS  
Please! Take him instead!

Cass shoves Chris further into the Lake.

CASS (cont'd)  
Please! Take this one instead!  
Please!

She's SOBBING. She pushes Chris into the water, as he starts to sink he comes to, his eyes OPEN instantly enraged at the sight of Cass he tries to swim towards her, clawing at her he grabs her hair and pulls her into the water. A struggle.

CASS (cont'd)  
Please! Take him!

CASS'POV:

Chris shoves her head under the water, she continues to struggle. They THRASH bobbing on the surface. Chris shoves her down under the water, BUBBLES escape her mouth as she looks around in terror.

Suddenly the bottom of the lake RUMBLES sending a CLOUD of dirt through the water obscuring her view. Chris's grip on her is released suddenly as he's SUCKED up out of the water and out of view.

EXT. FISH LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Cass breaks through the surface of the water. She bobs alone in the center of the lake as it VIBRATES around her.

Above her, Chris is suspended in the air completely still. A WAVE rises in the lake like a tsunami sending Cass tumbling through the water depositing her on the shore. On the other side of the lake another person is deposited on the shore.

Chris SCREAMS as he's suddenly dropped from the air into the center of the lake. The WHIRRING builds into a crescendo shaking the entire mountain.

Cass sits on the ground, STEAM misting before her in the cold air. Across the lake, a DARK FIGURE moves from the trees, it stops a moment before disappearing into the lake.

Cass is rooted to the spot. She tries to move, her body doesn't obey. She tries to call out, all that escapes is LOW GROANING as her eyes and mouth stand wide open.

The figure disappears, Cass sits frozen, stares forward.

A forty foot, perfectly smooth cylindrical 'tic tac' shaped object with no defining marks emerges from the lake.

The black lake reflects on the belly of the machine. Slowly she leans forward and raises her hand in the air toward it. It HUMS in response.

A beat. The air thick between Cass and the object.

Suddenly, it shoots into the sky without warning or a sound to accompany it, disappearing as quickly as it came, leaving an oval hole in the clouds.

CASS

Austin.

EXT. FISH LAKE - ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

Cass leans on Betty as they approach the body on the ground to find Austin, barely conscious. He stares at them in horror.

AUSTIN

Cass.

She runs and throws herself on top of him in a crushing hug. He GROANS in pain.

INT. MT. PLEASANT HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Austin lays in the bed, Cass sits in a chair next to the bed. Dom and Michael enter followed by Richie and Brandy the Cocktail Waitress holding hands.

DOM

Buddy!

AUSTIN

Hey buddies.

RICHIE

Had to run off and try to be the hero.

He looks to Cass and smiles.

AUSTIN

That's what friends do. Or I guess I should say, 'gaming buddies'.

CASS  
I was an asshole.

A KNOCK at the door announces Betty's arrival.

BETTY  
Can I come in, please.

Everyone looks to Austin.

AUSTIN  
Of course, Betty.

BETTY  
I'm so sorry. I've just been so  
lonely. I didn't want to admit what  
I've known. I just wanted to stay in  
my delusion that maybe Jim didn't run  
out on me. I thought he loved me.

Cass looks to her with empathy.

CASS  
People are complicated. And so is  
love. Lately these guys have given me  
a lot of grace, so I've got plenty to  
spare for you.

BETTY  
Thank you sweet girl.

EXT. CASS' APARTMENT - POOL - DAY

An alien themed BBQ in full swing. Betty and Janet arrive  
with an alien themed charcuterie and fruit board  
respectively. They approach Cass warily.

BETTY  
We heard there was a theme party,  
hope that's okay.

Cass hugs them both.

CASS  
Friends are always welcome.

Austin mans the BBQ as Michael and Dom take turns jumping  
off the waterfall into the pool. Richie and Brandy swim.  
Cass sits in the sun smiling. All is good, finally.

FADE TO CREDITS



POST SCENE:

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

70's wood-paneled cozy apartment. Dark-haired Cass walks into the room and stops.

CASS  
What did I come in here for?

She looks around, clocks the pizza.

CASS (cont'd)  
Ah. Pizza.

She grabs a slice, eats it absentmindedly over the sink. Behind her a familiar poster of a UFO over trees declares, I WANT TO BELIEVE.

Cass looks around for a second, confused. Something vaguely familiar about this.

From the distance, a STRANGE DISEMBODIED VOICE calls:

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
Is there anybody out there?

She inhales what's left of her slice, grabs the box.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cass walks past a table scattered with mail and bills.

INT. CASS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The living room is cast in a strange GREEN GLOW lined with new furniture, framed photos of her and her friends line the walls. In the middle, an epic gaming center with a TV and dual monitors in an OTHERWORLDLY GLOW.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)  
Earth to Cass? Hello?

Her pink fingernails grab the chair and turn it around.

CASS  
Getting a bit needy in your old age.

DOM  
I'm having the weirdest deja vu right now.

She hands him the pizza box, sits on the couch next to Austin and Richie. Michael sits on the floor.

CASS

Thanks for being there for me, guys.

The game lobby counts down.

FADE OUT