

THE CREATURE

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INT./EXT. THOMAS SUNDAY'S CAR - DAY

A young couple, THOMAS SUNDAY (mid to late 20s) and KAELYN WEXLER (mid to late 20s), are driving on a two-lane expressway that swerves through extensive forestry.

The trees that surround them expand for miles. Thomas is driving while Kaelyn sits passenger-side. The two are awkwardly silent, as if avoiding any conversation.

The back two seats of the car hold stacks upon stacks of boxes, each marked with a different label: "BOOKS", "CLOTHES", "DISHES", etc.

On the surface they appear to be a married couple, but their refusal to make eye contact or speak with one another tells a different story.

Kaelyn looks out the window, then gives Thomas a side glance. But Thomas gives her nothing. "Maybe, though," Kaelyn thinks..."yes, I'll give it a shot."

KAELYN

It'll be nice. A nice change of things.

THOMAS

Hmm. Sure will.

KAELYN

This scenery's a big upgrade. The city gave me so much anxiety. There's no noise here, so few people.

She puts her hand on his knee.

KAELYN (CONT'D)

Now we can finally have some privacy. I can have you all to myself.

(beat after Thomas gives no response)

Maybe it was the constant stimulation, but living in that apartment made me feel so vulnerable. Or shameful. I don't know...

THOMAS

I wouldn't know either. I didn't get that at all. I usually felt embarrassment - for others, I mean.

KAELYN
(hurt, looking out
window)

Hmm.

Thomas sees that she's hurt and tries to pick up the conversation.

THOMAS
But this should still be nice. With all that noise pollution, it was hard to focus. I could never get a line of code down. And that in itself is enough to make the most stoic coder flee and isolate. But what I don't understand is your...

Thomas's phone RINGS in his pocket. Thomas drops the conversation and pulls the phone out, proceeding to text with one hand as he drives.

KAELYN
You know, I wish you wouldn't do that.

THOMAS
(texting)
A few of the Omega department heads are setting up a meeting this week.

KAELYN
(growing angry)
I don't care. You did this shit all the time back in Berkeley. I need at least three hands to count the close-calls we've had. The most recent time you almost hit a bicyclist. Out here, there's I-don't-know-what that can trek across the road. And there's no one here for miles, so if something did happen...

THOMAS
Kaelyn! Nothing's gonna happen!
(finishing his text)
Nothing. Okay?

Kaelyn looks back out the window, upset, hurt, and angry. Thomas notices her discomfort, giving it thought and consideration - though he says nothing.

They drive further down the road until they reach their destination: a house, constructed in the midst of the trees.

Thomas turns into the dirt pathway that branches off from the main road and he brakes in front of the house.

It's a fixer-upper, a bare wood two-story abode. The house itself doesn't look too expensive - but the land on which it was built...that's what put a dent in their bank accounts.

An ambient RUSH OF WATER is heard from the river behind the house. And the RUSTLING OF FALLING LEAVES from the towering trees above them comes from all directions. They're COMPLETELY SECLUDED.

Beneath the leaves' RUSTLING and the RUSH of water, something else can be heard...just barely...what is that?...LAUGHTER, CACKLING LAUGHTER, which quickly dissipates.

While in the parked car, there is a palpable discomfort between them, an unspoken wedge. They can't enjoy this moment together.

Thomas lifts the parking brake. It's RIPPING NOISE startles Kaelyn.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Sorry...

(beat)

I'm sorry I yelled.

KAELYN

What...? No...it's fine.

THOMAS

No, it isn't. You're right. Change is good. And you reminded me. I'll start using talk-to-text. Maybe I can make that my first project. Omega will have one that'll make you proud.

Kaelyn forces a smile. That's not quiet what she wanted...

KAELYN

I appreciate that, I do. But that's not quite the point...

THOMAS

Jesus, Kae, I'm trying here! You know what? Forget it. Never mind.

Thomas SIGHS and exits the car, leaving Kaelyn alone.

KAELYN

Okay...

She exits the car as well...

INT. NEW SUNDAY HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Thomas and Kaelyn are working on the house. But if Kaelyn enters the room that Thomas is in, Thomas quickly finds something else to do in another room:

Thomas organizes the furniture in the master bedroom, while Kaelyn fixes up the guest bedroom. But when Kaelyn moves to the master bedroom, Thomas makes his way to the living room downstairs.

If they have to be in the same room, though, Thomas makes sure they maintain their distance:

Thomas and Kaelyn paint the living room walls, each painting an opposite wall of the room. When Kaelyn sets up shop to paint an adjacent wall to Thomas, he moves, without acknowledgement, to start painting the opposite wall.

INT. NEW SUNDAY HOUSE/MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Both Kaelyn and Thomas are going through their nightly routine. He's brushing his teeth while she undresses for her shower.

She opens the shower door and turns the lever - but the water only dribbles out of the head. No water pressure.

KAELYN

Tom! There's something wrong with the shower.

Thomas spits out the toothpaste and saunters over. He flip the lever on and off, watching the water fall out of the head, then slow to a drip.

THOMAS

(frustrated)

The pressure's jacked. I'll have to do it tomorrow.

KAELYN

Tomorrow works. I'll take a drive tomorrow morning and find the nearest gym. I'll take a shower there. If you want, you can join me.

Thomas ignores her and heads back to the sink to continue brushing his teeth.

THOMAS

It's the pump or the tank. I'd have to check some other appliances, but since the sink works, it's probably the valve. I'll check the hose outside tomorrow. I'm not going out tonight.

Kaelyn rubs his back.

KAELYN

That's fine.

Thomas nods and shakes her off. He continues brushing his teeth and after a beat, when Kaelyn realizes Thomas has nothing more to say, she heads to bed, leaving him alone.

But behind him, up near the ceiling above the shower, we ZOOM IN to see a HOLE in the wall about 6 inches wide. Through it, we see the PIPES that line the inside of the walls. Something ominous lives here. A subtle, dry CLICKING can be heard echoing from inside it.

EXT. NEW SUNDAY HOUSE - NEXT DAY

We see a small well-house near the new Sunday house. Thomas emerges from it sweaty and dirty. The ground on which he walks is muddy, as if there's been seepage in the ground. He's been at work on the pump.

He wipes away the sweat from his brow as he walks to the hose by the side of the house.

He squeezes the trigger and the water comes out strong. The pressure is fixed. The water flows and he leans forward to take a drink.

Replenished, he heads inside the house.

INT. NEW SUNDAY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Thomas passes Kaelyn, who is hanging pictures on the walls.

KAELYN

How's it looking?

Thomas walks past her, barely giving her attention.

THOMAS

(dismissively)

Should be working now.

KAELYN

You should take a break with me.
Maybe after this....

THOMAS

There's a lot of prep for the new
gig. I'll be pretty busy. Sorry.

He continues up the stairs to the second story hallway and into the master bedroom. From there, he passes through to the

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

And straight to the shower. He flips the switch and water shoots beautifully to the shower floor. Above the RUSH of water is the hole in the wall.

Thomas tests the shower, turning the water on and off. The pipes in the wall shake as the water pulses through them.

The RUSH of the water, though, is soon MUTED and replaced by the growl of some creature inhabiting the hole. The CLICKING returns and the pipes continue to shake.

INT. NEW SUNDAY HOUSE/MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thomas and Kaelyn lay beside each other in bed. They're both on their phones, invested solely in their screens. But Kaelyn, realizing this distance, puts down her phone and stares at Thomas, who continues to be absorbed in his phone.

KAELYN

Thank you for fixing the shower.

THOMAS

(looking at his phone)
No problem.

Kaelyn then rolls over to lean against Thomas. She reaches her hand beneath the blanket and begins to fondle him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Please, Kae. I've had a long day.

He pushes her hand away and rolls on his side, putting down his phone on the bedside table. But Kaelyn moves her hand back to where she wants it. We see rustling beneath the blanket.

KAELYN

Tom? Do you know that I love you?
Do you know that you're mine?
(MORE)

KAELYN (CONT'D)

You're my big man. You know that,
right? That you're mine?

Thomas wants her to stop - but the bulge growing beneath the blanket says otherwise. He's able to let out a subtle MUTTER of agreement. Kaelyn's demeanor begins to change. She's more SEDUCTIVE, more FLIRTACIOUS.

KAELYN (CONT'D)

(still jerking him off)

And I'm yours, right? No one
else's? You gonna forgive me? I'm
sorry for what I did. I was bad and
I'm sorry. You gonna forgive me?
I'm sorry.

(whispering in Tom's ear)

You wanna fuck me? Please, fuck me.

Whatever unspoken sin that Kaelyn committed runs through Thomas's mind. She's asking for forgiveness...but fuck her. Yes, fuck her.

Thomas can't hold it any longer and flips over. Beneath the blankets, he takes action.

He penetrates before she's even wet and gives her full, hard thrusts as if trying to cause her pain. Kaelyn winces, but smiles. She's enjoying this tremendously.

Thomas's fucking is ANGRY, AGGRESSIVE, though it only takes a few thrusts before he's finished.

He gets up off her, winded and upset. He's now suffering the effect of his prematurity, his embarrassment at such a quick performance is potent.

He tosses the blanket aside and sits at the edge of the bed. Kaelyn tries her best to comfort him. She reaches over and kisses his shoulder.

KAELYN (CONT'D)

Tom? It's okay. It's been a while.

THOMAS

I know, I know.

KAELYN

Maybe that means we should be doing
it more?

THOMAS

Maybe. Yeah, of course.

(standing up, adjusting
his boxers)

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna take a quick shower then get to bed. I better get some sleep. Might be a while before hot water hits the shower. Yeah...

Thomas leaves Kaelyn naked in bed, walking into the master bathroom. Kaelyn is upset, disappointed that she couldn't comfort the man she loves. In the throes of her own insecurities, she picks up her phone again to take her mind off the situation.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

Thomas switches on the shower.

With the shower hot and steamy, he lets his skin soak up the water. He lets it fall in his hair, along his chest, across his face and in his mouth.

A bit of water, though, falls down his esophageal pipe. Thomas coughs and chokes to expel the water, and in the process he notices the hole in the wall above the shower.

Something lurks in there though he doesn't know what...and he is hypnotically attracted to it. He tries reaching up on his toes to see further inside.

Whatever is in there, seems to speak to him psychically. Thomas, still seeking to peer inside, hears the faint CLICKING. In response, as if in trance, he drops his jaw slightly and CLICKS his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

Something's not right. What we know of Thomas is slowly disappearing - his curiosity as to what's inside the hole is giving way to some kind of...doting expression, as if he's asking for more. But more of what?

Thomas sways far into the stream of water which hits his eye, knocking him out of the trance.

Thomas finishes his shower, while all the while keeping his eye on the hole that caused this strange disruption.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Both Thomas and Kaelyn are asleep, both curled up on their sides, facing opposite directions.

We PAN over into the

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

And we see the hole in the wall above the shower.

The CLICKING sound hits the forefront again. It takes over everything until...THE CREATURE crawls out of the hole.

First we see antennae, about the thickness of fingers. They almost look bone-like.

Then comes the rest...a large, foot-wide, 3 foot long "cockroach" (the only word close enough to describe this monstrosity). It appears both prosaic and alien, as if it's been alive for centuries but in some unknown, dark world.

The sclerites CREAK and CRACK while its thin legs CLICK against the tile.

It's crawling out of its hole...along the shower wall...and around the shower head.

Its antennae probe the dripping water from the shower head. An examination of the water is taking place, after which the Creature slithers around the shower head in such a way that the water drips on its belly.

Then it begins to thrust... What is it doing? Drinking? Reproducing?

It continues undisturbed until we hear the bathroom door OPEN and SHUT. The Creature is startled and quickly slinks away, back into the hole, just in time for us to see a half-asleep Thomas take a late night piss.

The Creature's CLICKING goes quiet in the hole.

EXT. BREAKFAST CAFÉ/PATIO - DAY

Kaelyn and Thomas sit on the patio of a small breakfast café enjoying a small brunch. Things seem better; Thomas is excited about something.

THOMAS

It's fairly new. Been around a couple years now, but people really seem to be latching on. It's supposed to be a hub where one can publish thoughts, ideas, opinions, feelings, whatever.

KAELYN

Mmhmm. But that doesn't sound too new.

THOMAS

Exactly. The difference is in how someone publishes and subscribes. I mean, this has everything. You can post pictures, short videos, updates by text - all blockchain encrypted, so the higher the quality of a post, the more access one gets to an expanded viewership. Different channels for different topics, ability to hyperlink your other updates on other sites. We'll even have a hookup app - we call it the Fire Branch. Omega will be the ultimate hub for all social media, the Google of social media.

KAELYN

Oh, the Fire Branch? Maybe I'll tell my friend, Susan, about it. She's been searching around.

THOMAS

Susan's the party-animal, yeah? Yeah, it might be good for her. It favors multiple first-time interactions - we want the app to remain relevant and downloaded. We're also trying to entice more influencers to join.

(chuckling)

You could say we're encouraging whore-ish behavior.

KAELYN

(offended)

Susan's not a whore.

THOMAS

Yeah, well...

A brief and awkward beat of SILENCE, after which Kaelyn tries to reignite the conversation.

KAELYN

So it won't be like previous projects, right? You're not just gonna be on the backend, right?

THOMAS

Not anymore. I'll know it and understand it, but not slave away at knuckle-cracking code.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

No management breathing down my neck, upset that I've used a Library.... All I'll deal with are tech variables and price points. How they fit together in the best way possible is up to me and me alone.

KAELYN

You really deserve this, Tom.

THOMAS

Yeah, well...maybe not for the right reasons - but yeah...I might even say I deserve more.

Thomas laughs nervously and Kaelyn grabs his hand.

KAELYN

You okay?

THOMAS

Don't worry about it. I'd rather you not even mention it - even indirectly. I know you're sorry and that's all I care to remember.

KAELYN

Okay. - So what's the first step in this new project?

THOMAS

Well, not many people post original content. They can if they choose to, but they rarely do. People are revealing their own opinions less and less, and more and more they edit their actions or thoughts into bite-sized pieces of cheap comedy. Purified irony. That is, if they do decide to post something at all. Those are the things people now want engraved online, while any opinions they do share are just that - they're shared, they're reposts.

KAELYN

So what does that mean? Less posting, more reposting?

THOMAS

Right. That means less writes and more reads in general.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

But, for a relatively small group of publishers - the ones with a major sub base - a separate but integrated architecture will have to support a tremendous amount of reads.

KAELYN

Why's that?

THOMAS

Because...

A pain in Thomas's belly interrupts him. He curls in his chair, his hand over his stomach.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Sorry. Something's not sitting right. - Anyway...if most people are reposting, they're reposting what a small portion has posted - and that group of publishers has large sub bases. They publish then that data needs to be written to the system on each home timeline of their sub base. Sometimes that sub base is up to 40 million. That's 40 million writes in a matter of seconds.

KAELYN

So that's a small amount of writers and a lot of readers.

THOMAS

Yeah. Luckily, those writers don't post often. From what we're seeing, the larger publishers don't post nearly as often as they used to.

KAELYN

Why is that?

Thomas holds his stomach in pain - but he continues.

THOMAS

Those sub-bases are getting bigger. Sooner or later everyone gets stage fright. Those readers may be reposting like mad, but they're quick to jump ship once one of these posters shows the slightest hint of bad intent.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
People don't trust authority
figures anymore - like, at all.

KAELYN
Who can blame them?

THOMAS
And most of those readers - they're
personal information's encrypted.
Anonymous and untrusting readers
reposting and recontextualizing the
content of a tiny, hyper-publicized
group of nervous influencers.

Thomas BURPS. It's loud and painful. Thomas hunches over
again. He GAGS slightly.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
That tasted awful.

KAELYN
You did have eggs. Maybe
something's wrong with them.

THOMAS
No, this is something else. - Or
maybe it is. It tastes like rotten
eggs.

Thomas BURPS again. It's more painful. He grabs his stomach
tightly.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I have to go. I'll be right back.

He runs into the restaurant, leaving Kaelyn. He runs into

INT. BREAKFAST CAFÉ/BATHROOM

Thomas bursts through a stall door to relieve himself.

INT. NEW SUNDAY HOUSE/MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Kaelyn is outside the master bathroom. The door is closed.
She speaks through the door.

KAELYN
Tom? Sweetheart? How're things in
there?