

KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT

Screenplay by
Laurence Rosier Staines

202 Malton Rd
North Epping 2121
Sydney, Australia

+61409491861

Black screen.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Ended it with Doug.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - AFTERNOON

STEPH (27, earnest but sardonic) lies next to KARLEE (25, icy, gorgeous, THAT girl) on a futon in a dingy share-house, their phones forgotten in their hands. Steph turns to Karlee.

STEPH
He was just here ... you both
seemed happy!?

KARLEE
Yeah but when we're alone he's got -

STEPH
Another side to him?

KARLEE (CONT'D)
Another side to him.

Karlee sits up: exactly.

STEPH
The little half-looks, a
microsecond after the smile fades?

Steph mimics it - a smile then an empty hostile look.

KARLEE
(impressed)
You only met him like once. Why
didn't I -

STEPH
His face, it is pretty. Debrief.

KARLEE
I was whingeing about the salon - I
still don't get my shifts until the
day of - and he goes: 'I don't
understand why you have to work
there'.

Steph stares.

STEPH
Yeah and I'm at the bottle shop out
of passion. He's a what?

KARLEE
Music producer.

STEPH
Rich parents?

KARLEE
(nodding)
Aries. Leo rising.

Steph rolls her eyes.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
Am I being premature? Again?

STEPH
I mean, if it feels wrong after
three weeks?

KARLEE
How did you know about the looks?
It's exactly that.

Steph smiles. They return to their phones.

STEPH
'Doug'.

They laugh. Steph accidentally drops her phone on her face.

INT. GYM - DAY

Steph and Karlee are in a kickboxing class. Neither of them are very good. Karlee's hair is different and her sports getup is fancier than Steph's. Between bouts of obedience to shouted exercises:

KARLEE
It's really over this time.

STEPH
Doug??

KARLEE
After he got me these shorts and everything. I swear he has some kind of hold over me. I'm such a stupid bitch.

STEPH
Negative talk! You're on a journey.

Steph pants, gestures for Karlee to elaborate.

KARLEE

He was texting Janelle someone on
instagram - a singer, but I didn't
see her singing on her fuckin'
profile. "Ohh, we're
'collaborating'".

STEPH

God.

KARLEE

I saw red. Too jealous for that
shit.

STEPH

"Collaborating". On what? He
doesn't even do anything. Any guy
who looks at anyone but you is ...

Steph makes 'insane' gestures.

STEPH (CONT'D)

It's just like that video. 'Ten
signs you're -

STEPH AND KARLEE

- dating a narcissist'.

KARLEE

You know he also said he didn't
like you.

STEPH

Me? Why?

Steph stops her routine. Karlee shrugs.

KARLEE

That you're moralistic?

Steph scowls. Karlee stops too, feeling adrift. Steph
comforts her.

STEPH

Well what we're gonna do is stalk
Janelle someone on instagram, find
where she is, and you can just -

Steph kicks into the air. Karlee snort-laughes.

STEPH (CONT'D)

'Moralistic'.

EXT. BEER GARDEN - NIGHT

A courtyard table at a bar. Both of them have different hair. Steph has a beer. A moment of gravity:

STEPH
(restrained horror)
You're moving in with him.

But Karlee shakes her head. Steph knows what it means. She hugs Karlee. We stay on Steph's face, unseen by Karlee: angels could be singing.

KARLEE (O.S.)
(despair)
He asked me, but it seems way too fast - I got on this train of thought like 'if you wanted this you'd want it now, and you don't want it now ...'

Karlee ends the hug. Steph leans back, resetting her expression to concern. She hides her satisfaction in a beer sip.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
And what sort of guy asks someone to move in after -

STEPH
(too quick)
Four months.

KARLEE
- then he goes "you don't want this enough!" and like, maybe I don't?

Steph's sip turns into a skol. She necks the beer, stands and leaves. Karlee turns to watch her go, suddenly uncomfortable.

Steph returns with two champagne flutes, puts one in Karlee's hand and clinks it. She sits and pantomimes huge applause for Karlee. Karlee's distress increases.

STEPH
No no. This is painful but good. You're in the 'I'm going to be alone forever' phase. Best way out? Look in the mirror. You, Karlee, baddest bitch, fucking goddess, will never be alone. And there's no way I'm letting you get back with him again. It's not working. He's not right.

BEEP BEEP. Karlee's phone. Karlee seizes it but Steph grabs it from her.

It's a message from Doug. It reads: 'U there?'

STEPH (CONT'D)
Do not text back!

Karlee looks at Steph like she's crazy and tries to take the phone back. Steph keeps it out of her reach.

KARLEE
Steph he's so sweet. I know you hate the macho thing but when we're by ourselves -

STEPH
You said that was worse! Remember everything you told me? That insta slut? His wandering eye? Being too rich to understand work?

KARLEE
I was just bitching!

Karlee reaches for the phone. Steph holds onto it.

STEPH
(frustrated)
Rrgh! He's got bad vibes Karlee.

Karlee stops. Steph motions 'I shouldn't'. Karlee motions 'say it'.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Predator vibes.

KARLEE
(quieter)
Did you hear something?

STEPH
(VERY quiet)
If he hasn't done anything already, it's just a matter of time.

Karlee blinks.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Plus his music? So weird. It's so weird.

Karlee stares into her champagne flute as Steph drinks hers. Weird pause.

KARLEE

... How did you know he asked me to move in?

Steph puts down her glass.

STEPH

He messaged me about it.

KARLEE

He messaged you.

Steph returns the phone to Karlee.

STEPH

Wanted me to, like, strategize with him about how to get you to say yes? I told him was a bad idea.

KARLEE

... Why?

STEPH

WAY too soon! Plus the vibes thing, everything else? I was right, by the way - it was too soon to move in, he asked you anyway, and look what happened.

A beat. Karlee stares. Steph loses patience.

STEPH (CONT'D)

For fuck's sake Karlee, it's everything you've said constantly for months: nightmare boyfriend living off daddy's paycheck, never gonna make it as a producer, narcissistic, controlling, bad bad bad. You've broken up with him three times. He's a loser and he's toxic. Are you this desperate to date a rich guy? Just ... boundaries, Karlee! Self respect!

Karlee's silent. Steph makes a self-righteous gesture. Karlee pauses, lifts her glass and drinks, looking at Steph.

KARLEE

Yeah.

Steph wonders if she went too far. She smiles to try and defuse it. Karlee smiles too, barely. Their smiles fade.

CUT TO:

TITLE: "KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT"

EXT. BEER GARDEN - NIGHT

A slightly older Steph sits in the same place drinking a soda water. Across from her sits nobody.

CUT TO BLACK.

Sound of an electric treadmill and running at fast pace.

STEPH (V.O.)
Siri set a reminder for next Sunday
at 10 AM - 'Pap smear fun time'.

SIRI (V.O.)
Okay Special Princess. Your
reminder is set.

STEPH (V.O.)
Thank you Siri.

A phone vibrates.

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Steph's hand smashes the STOP button on her crappy decades-old home treadmill. In her other hand she's holding her phone - on the screen is a message from an unknown contact.

"Hey call me? - Karlee"

Steph, still panting, stares at it in shock.

She sits on her couch. She stands up and paces. She takes off her sweat-stained tracksuit top.

She finally calls the number.

It answers.

STEPH
Karlee, holy shit, what's wrong?

KARLEE (V.O. ETC)
(light)
What? Everything's fine!

STEPH
... Why are you calling me?

KARLEE

Can't I call you? It's been ages!

STEPH

I mean, yeah, I don't even have
this number saved ...

KARLEE

Ohh, yeah, I lost my old one.
What's your address? I want to send
you something.

A beat.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

Text it to me. Is that okay? I've
gotta run, but -

STEPH

Me too. That's what the panting is -

KARLEE

Are you doing OK?

STEPH

Yeah great. The panting is from
running.

KARLEE

So good to hear your voice Steph.

Steph tries to breathe slower.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

K, byeee - bye.

Steph lowers the phone. She looks at her treadmill.

LEV (V.O.)

How long?

INT. GYM - DAY

Steph is in the same kickboxing class as before. Next to her,
in what was once Karlee's place, is LEV (24).

STEPH

A year.

LEV

To the day?

STEPH
No? That would be nuts.

LEV
You said she was nuts.

Steph winces from exertion and redoubles her efforts as the INSTRUCTOR comes by. Her kicks are good. Lev is struggling to keep up.

STEPH
Well we've known each other fifteen years then she just dropped me. That's nuts isn't it?

LEV
I don't think you can say 'nuts' anymore, by the way. Or 'crazy'. Find another way - 'outrageous' or 'unbelievable'.

STEPH
Wait, really?

Steph stops kicking. Lev shrugs 'just what I hear'.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I mean I don't want to upset anyone.

LEV
Who's that going to upset? People who are nuts? I cut people out all the time. Like that French guy? If they're crazy enough you've just gotta let go.

STEPH
So you think I was crazy.

LEV
No: Antoine. Fucking bonkers.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Later, Lev points his phone camera at Steph on the street. They're both still panting.

LEV
I don't get what this is.

Steph holds a bundle of clothes near a clothing bin.

STEPH

It starts as that thing where you post yourself donating but then I call out that lecturer who fucked that first year student.

LEV

Why?

STEPH

To get her fired, cancelled. It's so fucked up.

Lev lowers his phone.

LEV

'Her'?

STEPH

Yeah, women do that shit too it turns out.

LEV

... Girlboss.

STEPH

See, wrong attitude.

LEV

Didn't you already speak to HR?

STEPH

That's local! This is global.

LEV

But it's a local scandal. You're going from this -
(gesturing big then small)
- to this. Too focused on 'this'.

Steph realises it won't work.

LEV (CONT'D)

Cancelling is mean. Leave it to the youth.

STEPH

Can't I care?

Lev shakes his head. Steph deflates. She shoves her bundle into the clothing bin.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Steph, ensconced in street noise, approaches her apartment complex. She pats her pockets for keys, finds nothing, checks her bag, sighs - THIS again. She backs up and raises her head, surveying the front of the building.

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Steph opens her window with effort and then hooks her leg skillfully up over the sill. She clambers in, shuts the window (which doesn't limit the traffic noise at all) and slumps back on the couch, stretching her leg. She eyes her keys within reach on the end-table - grabs them.

Outside, someone YELLS. Steph opens the window, leans out.

STEPH

Sorry! Sorry! It won't happen again!

The downstairs NEIGHBOR keeps yelling. Steph shuts the window and gets her breath back.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Siri, what do I have on tonight?

SIRI

Hello Special Princess. Your calendar is empty.

STEPH

(sarcastic)

Oh good! Nothing.

Steph sighs. Feels alone.

STEPH (CONT'D)

(sincere)

Thanks for helping Siri.

SIRI

You're welcome!

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Later, Steph is slumped on her shitty couch illuminated by her phone. After swiping listlessly through guys and girls on a dating app, she swipes to look at the call she received earlier.

She starts to skim Karlee's social media - photo after photo of Karlee frolicking on gorgeous beaches, making eyes with the camera over mojitos. The photographer is never seen. Captions read 'Life is but a dream', 'Carpe diem baby' 'from where you'd rather be', 'til next time, Amalfi Coast' etc.

Steph zooms in on a glimpsed hand on the table: boyfriend soft launch.

Her finger hovers over the 'FOLLOW' button. She doesn't press it.

Later still, on the couch in a new position, Steph watches a TikTok list video narrated by a female AI voice: "Ten Signs You're Dating A Narcissist". Steph chuckles depressively, crunching some gluten-free vegetable crisps.

Dark morning: Steph's looking at pictures of herself and Karlee together over the years - nightclubs, bars, parties, joint selfies. She's suddenly sad. She brushes away a tear with her palm, annoyed at herself for crying.

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Asleep on the couch with her phone still in the air, Steph drops the phone on her face and wakes up. She rubs her eyes.

She sees something on the floor near the front door - a single piece of embroidered card.

She stands, stumbles, approaches it, picks it up.

It reads:

Steph <3
You are cordially invited to dinner
at 20 Reservoir St
This Friday, 7pm.
RSVP? (Please!)
xoxo Karlee & Doug

She looks over it.

Karlee ... & Doug.

She shuts her eyes.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Steph and Lev sit on a brick wall with wine in plastic cups. Lev has just finished pouring.

LEV
What's his name? I'll stalk him.

STEPH
Doooooug Palmer.

LEV
Like that producer?

Steph slows right down.

STEPH
What producer?

They survey each other.

LEV
Is he a producer?

Steph doesn't want to say yes. Lev clicks his fingers at her.

LEV (CONT'D)
Spotify.

STEPH
No reception.

Lev jumps onto his phone and after a moment plays a music track. Electro beats, skittering inventiveness and a sultry female vocal. Steph refuses to react as Lev shows her the Spotify page.

LEV
It's him! Isn't it? Doug Palmer
feat J-Janelle?

STEPH
(to herself)
Huh, they were collaborating.

LEV
Stephhhh! "Take My Love Away" was
my winter anthem.

STEPH
I guarantee he's a homophobe.

LEV
Don't even care.

They listen. Steph hates that she doesn't mind it.

LEV (CONT'D)

Your best friend's going out with
Doug Palmer? This dude won a
Grammy. I bet his house is amazing.
You're going.

(new idea)

And you're taking me with you.

STEPH

(unsure which part to
object to first)

Lev: first of all, this is my
thing. You don't know these people.
Second, 'Doug' is the reason I
haven't heard from her in a year.
He isolated her. Classic psycho
shit.

LEV

I thought you said it was because
you savaged him at drinks.

Steph hesitates.

LEV (CONT'D)

Look what I'm proposing. I'll be
there, I'll have your back.

STEPH

(unconvinced)

Hmm.

LEV

- so you won't have to talk to
them alone all night -

Steph considers, warming up.

LEV (CONT'D)

Then I'll go to my date so you have
an out if you hate it.

Steph starts nodding.

LEV (CONT'D)

And if he is a psycho, you can get
your friend out of there. And if
not, then I can at least stop you
from revealing what a trainwreck
your life has become.

Steph stares. He's right.

STEPH
So whatever I wear has to say 'I'm
here to save you' - but also 'I'm
sorry' ... ?

LEV
(clicking at her)
Tell them yes!

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steph looks again at the invitation, uncertain.

After a moment she dials her MOTHER on speakerphone. Loud
samba music arrives as she answers.

STEPH
Ma? Ma?

MOTHER (V.O.)
(shouting)
Hamish! Volume!

Steph sighs, saying "Hamish" under her breath.

STEPH
I'm meant to have dinner with
Karlee tomorrow, ma -

MOTHER (V.O.)
Oh Karleeee! How is she, the
sweetie?

STEPH
(astonished)
We fell out a year ago! Over her
boyfriend! Who will be there!

MOTHER (V.O.)
Always very precious, that girl ...
oh well, people need to make their
own mistakes, don't they? Best not
interfere - I know how you like to
interfere. I wouldn't even go if I
were you.

Steph tenses up.

MOTHER (V.O.)
Speaking of, I'll be at my silent
retreat from tomorrow, so -

No calls. STEPH - no calls. MOTHER

Steph hangs up, screwing her eyes shut. That was a bad idea.

STEPH
(to herself, muttering)
"People have to make their own
mistakes!" Yeah well let's do it.

Moments later, she paces and speaks into her phone.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Karlee? Hey. I got the invitation.
I'd love to come. Should I bring
anything? Text me back, or call.
Anyway I'm in. Okay. It'll be great
to see you again. Bye. Bye.

She hangs up, goes to her bathroom, opens the medicine cabinet and takes a Lexapro. She looks at herself in the mirror, adjusts her hair and smiles. The smile doesn't fade. Does it?

INT. BOTTLE-SHOP - LATER

Steph's hand slides along a wine rack. Picks one up.

LEV
I didn't see nothin'.

STEPH
No no - paying for this one.

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - EVENING

Steph checks herself in the cabinet mirror. She finesses her make-up.

STEPH
Siri what time is it?

SIRI
Hello Special Princess. It's 6.45.

She cranes her head to see her outfit in the mirror. BUZZ. Another BUZZ. She picks up her phone.

STEPH
Yes. I'm coming down. I just have
to - yes okay.

She hangs up, has one last look in the mirror.

INT. STEPH'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The wine bottle in brown paper. Steph grabs it, makes absolutely sure she has her keys and exits.

INT. BUS - EVENING

Steph and Lev hang from the hand-holds on a crowded bus. Lev looks good. Steph sniffs him.

STEPH
Cologne?

LEV
(lying)
No?

Steph's phone buzzes. She checks: a voice message from Karlee.

She presses play and immediately seethes. It's him.

DOUG (V.O.)
Steph Steph Steph. Long time.
Karlee's in the shower, so -
thanking you for the RSVP.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

Steph and Lev sit on a less-crowded train, the phone clutched between them, listening to the rest of the message.

DOUG (V.O.)
If you're driving - I bet you
aren't driving - that's easier.
Otherwise it's a fair walk from the
freeway. We dropped a pin. Ciao.

Steph lowers her phone.

LEV
He knows you don't have a car?

INT. UBER - EVENING

Steph sits next to Lev in the back of the Uber. She fiddles with her phone, energised.

STEPH
Sent from Karlee's phone. Why was he using her phone?

LEV
Couples do that.

STEPH
(shaking her head)
Psycho. Karlee's not dumb - well not really. She just wants everyone to love her, and in the process got dazzled by him.

LEV
I mean, me too ...

Steph presses 'record' on her own phone and plays some of the resulting voice recording back chaotically throughout.

STEPH
So: you, or me, or both of us have our phones recording? So she can hear what he's actually like?

LEV
They're a couple. She already knows what he's like.

STEPH
She doesn't! He walks all over her! He's snide, he's controlling, he pretends not to be - and she doesn't notice any of it!

LEV
She doesn't notice his faults? Steph, that's good. Is this another you-versus-relationships thing?

Steph is chastened, resists self-analysis.

STEPH
(lying)
No ...?

LEV
Do you want to just make sure you aren't re-sabotaging your best friend?

STEPH
... The moment she lets me back in her life.

Steph falls into a self-hating slump.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I just wreck everything.

LEV
This whole night is an olive
branch.
(beat)
But hey, I'll do whatever you want.
If you take my shift tomorrow.

They lock eyes. Lev smiles.

EXT. RESERVOIR ST - EVENING

Wide of an extremely modern housing precinct dotted with
unique architect-designed mansions and beautifully curated
patches of lawn. Steph and Lev walk down the road.

STEPH
That pin was wrong. Where is
everybody? There's nobody.

LEV
This is lush. Guess it's that new.
Look at that one!

STEPH
Suburban bliss.

LEV
But no people?

STEPH
Even better. What time is it?

LEV
Seveeeeen -

STEPH
Good.

LEV
- thirty. Seven thirty.

STEPH
(now hurrying)
Shit.

LEV
I told you! But you look perfect.

STEPH

Thanks.

LEV

What about me?

Steph makes an irritated noise. Lev stops, faux-grumpy.

STEPH

Perfect.

EXT. THE HOUSE - EVENING

They approach a gorgeous three-storey house - chrome mixed with wood, both futuristic and rustic, tastefully flanked by trees which conceal its true size. It goes back forever into the block.

As they walk up the steps, a previously-unseen water feature on each side of the path gently springs to life, like motion-sensor lights. Steph jumps.

LEV

This rules.

STEPH

(shh)

They can hear you, it's embarrassing.

LEV

People want compliments for this kinda shit. I won't embarrass you.

As they near the front door it swings open -

- revealing Karlee, glamorous in a well-cut body-skimming midi-dress of white silk, with fancy yellow nails. She smiles widely at Steph.

KARLEE

Steph! And -

Karlee's eyes go to Lev, her face frozen in the smile. Awkward pause.

LEV

(smiling dumbly)

It's a pleasure to meet you Karlee. I've heard a lot about you.

STEPH

This is Lev ...

Suddenly DOUG PALMER (32) is in the doorway.

DOUG
We can accommodate!

Steph takes him in - handsome in a blue-linen shirt and suit pants, clean-shaven, white teeth, short hair with a couple of artful long strands in front, holding a bottle of Cristal. She hates him.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(big grin)
Hello Stephanie - so good to see you again.

STEPH
Hi Doug.
(glancing at Lev)
I thought -

LEV
Plus ones?

Lev and Doug laugh amiably.

KARLEE
We didn't say, but - it's completely OK, is it babe?

DOUG
Completely. We have more than enough. I'll add a place. Just one?

He pretends to look for other guests, grinning a little too hard.

LEV
As long as we eat by 9. I have a date. I'm kidding. It's true, but I'm kidding.

A beat.

STEPH
Karlee I'm really sorry -

LEV
Um, how about "Lev I'm really sorry"?

All laugh but Steph.

DOUG
Well, come in! No, wait. I'll do
this here.

Doug pops the champagne. It bubbles and runs over the steps.
General appreciation. Lev and Doug head inside.

Steph meets Karlee on the landing and they hug gingerly.

KARLEE
You look so well Steph!

STEPH
You too. Your nails! This is ...

KARLEE
Oh -

Steph presents the wine. Karlee doesn't take it.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
You really didn't have to bring
anything. Didn't I say?

STEPH
This should be special. You know?
Karlee! Steph! Together again!

Steph improvises a spirited friendship gesture. Karlee smiles, not quite on Steph's frequency, takes the wine and loops Steph's arm. Steph steps inside, almost slipping on the champagne.

INT. THE HOUSE - FOYER - EVENING

Lev's examining a bonsai. Steph moves next to him, anxiety in full force.

STEPH
Abandon the plan.

LEV
What plan?

Steph looks around at the wooden and marble interior. Glimpses of an opulent dining room, a sitting area -

DOUG (O.S.)
Only thing we insist on ...

Doug is right next to her with his hand outstretched. Steph almost jumps again.

KARLEE (O.S.)
Can you do it Steph? No phones
tonight? Live in the moment hey?

Steph hesitates then gives hers phone to Doug. Lev surrenders
his to Karlee.

LEV
(to Steph)
No one messages you apart from me
anyway.

STEPH
You don't know that.

LEV
Yeah I do.

Doug hands Steph's phone to Karlee, who puts it in a basket
with the others. Steph watches her phone as Karlee carries
the basket into a hallway and puts it down out of sight.

DOUG
Speaking of -

KARLEE
Who'd like a tour?

LEV
Yes.

In response to eye contact, Steph smiles.

STEPH
I'd love that.

Karlee brightens. They all move through slowly as a retinue.

Steph glances at her phone on the hallway sideboard, getting
further and further away as she's urged along.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

LEV
What's that scent? It's really
fresh.

KARLEE
The water feature carries, um, pear
and freesia during the day and
sandlewood at night. On weekends we
mix it up.

STEPH
Different days?

KARLEE
Mm-hmm.

Karlee and Lev both revel in the scent. Doug smiles. Steph screws up her face. She sees she's the only one to hate it and tries not to show it.

LEV
Does it run all through the house?

DOUG
The bloodstream. We wanted our home to be an extension of us. We're above the water table, by the way - hence the street name.

STEPH
Is that structurally sound?

Doug chuckles instead of answering. Lev leans in, sniffing Karlee's perfume.

LEV
(impressed)
Oh, and your perfume - that's - ?

KARLEE
Secret. No, I'm kidding, I don't even remember. Haha.

LEV
It's gorgeous Karlee, you're gorgeous.

Lev mimes to Steph: "she's gorgeous!" then "great skin!", gesturing to both of them.

They move along. We linger for a moment on an unnoticed, unmentioned metal door.

Further down the stairs an automatic door swishes open, revealing a mahogany room with a billiard table, a dart board, an ornate Chinese chess set, some ferns and some modern art. Steph takes it in.

STEPH
Karlee, this is wild!

DOUG
More my domain.

KARLEE

I think chess is just the best game. Doug's teaching me.

STEPH

Oh wow! I was good when I was a kid, but ...

KARLEE

I didn't know you played! I guess we never really did that sort of thing together?

INT. WINE CELLAR - EVENING

Doug flicks a light on, revealing a stony expanse filled with neatly arranged wine bottles. Steph and Lev are amazed.

STEPH

This is ...

KARLEE

An alcoholic's dream. Not judging!

LEV

How did you do this?

DOUG

I know an excavator. This was overseen by a total wine freak from Bordeaux. Good guy if you, I dunno, wanna replicate this.

LEV

Steph and I work at the Wine Room in town.

DOUG

Ohh, the place we go by! Never been in there - never had to.

Karlee presents a short saber that she picks off the wall.

KARLEE

This is how they open champagne in Europe.

She mimes the 'sabrage' move.

Steph examines some bottles at knee-height: the label is the same as the wine she brought. They have a whole row of it.

INT. THE STUDIO - EVENING

A wide, soundproofed studio with an engineering console behind glass, black carpeting, speakers, screens - very swish. Steph surveys it from left to right. Lev swings into the space.

LEV
(fucking wow)
Where the magic happens?

DOUG
Dunno about that. One day someone's gonna get hold of my offcuts and my reputation will be shot, I swear. Did you hear "Take My Love Away"?

LEV
Dude. My jam.

DOUG
So I didn't do that here but it's all the same equipment. That's an old Decca console that used to launch missiles in the forties. Check this out.

Doug heads to the console. Steph feigns interest.

DOUG (CONT'D)
The 'record' button still says 'launch'. I feel like that sometimes, when I lay down a track.

STEPH
Launching a missile?

Doug nods sincerely. Steph glances at Lev for confirmation of how pretentious this is, but Lev is rapt.

KARLEE
What do you call it babe?

DOUG
A self sufficient media node. The whole house is wired and soundproofed - I can put down whatever I need wherever I am. It's semi-hydraulic, too, so if society collapses we can do emergency broadcasts from here.

LEV

We must be closer than ever to that
by now.

DOUG

No question.

LEV

You know I do a bit of bedroom
stuff too -

DOUG

Yeah?

Doug and Lev fist-bump. Steph's smile flickers.

An AUTOMATIC DOOR opening -

INT. SELF-CARE ROOM - EVENING

An airy room of white and mauve with a yoga mat, throw pillows, an exercise ball and a cosmetic station. Rays from the setting sun light up the space through glass windows. The water feature bubbles into a zen rock pool. On the wall an automatic mister creates mist.

KARLEE

My happy place. The mist promotes
growth, clarity and balance. You
know, allegedly.

Steph examines a minimalist treadmill built into the polished concrete floor. Her capacity for awe is flagging.

STEPH

Gee whiz.

KARLEE

(opening a glass door)
And this leads into this ...

INT. AVIARY - EVENING

An enormous aviary made of glass and steel stretches out behind the house. Dozens of birds, big and small, dot through the foliage and silhouette themselves against the sky. The air is thick with exotic birdcalls. Steph stands near a sandstone bench, desultory and expressionless. Of course they have this.

KARLEE

Birds of prey are kept over there.

Karlee gestures to a strange stone and metal enclosure on the right. Steph peers at it.

DOUG

Captivity turns them into scavengers but they're still majestic. As close to natural as you can get.

KARLEE

(about Doug)

Earth mother right here.

DOUG

I always wonder why they're called birds of prey when they're predators ...

(looking around)

Well, that's it - apart from the bedrooms upstairs. Invitation only!

(laughs, then sees

Karlee's look. To Lev:)

You said you compose a bit?

LEV

Oh I'm a total schmuck.

DOUG

Want to hear it through the speakers?

LEV

Yes, again. Yes to everything.

(to Steph)

You good?

Steph nods. Doug takes Lev back into the house, leaving Karlee and Steph alone. Sparrows and finches crawling over her, Steph smiles depressively.

KARLEE

Doug's a bird hobbyist.

Steph reacts: 'I can tell'.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

Can we talk?

Steph nods. Karlee shoos away some of the birds.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

I got you something.

Karlee shows her a bundle in her hand.

Steph takes it - a necklace with a METAL PENDANT that has a smiling photo of the two of them.

STEPH

Oh Karlee - I don't know what to say.

KARLEE

I want to apologise, Steph.

STEPH

Me too.

KARLEE

Can I go first? For the last ... I don't even know how long. Has it been a year?

Steph nods.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

When I saw how much you hated Doug, I just - I didn't know how to tell you that I got back with him.

STEPH

Karlee ...

KARLEE

Not just back with him. But like things are just so much bigger, and deeper, than I imagined. Remember how hard it was for me to find someone? It's like I manifested him.

STEPH

And everything's ... OK?

Karlee nods. Steph sighs.

STEPH (CONT'D)

I didn't know him! I was just going off what you said, and when you stopped talking to me I thought - power imbalance? Like it was his influence or something? I don't know. Never mind. I'm so happy for you Karlee!

KARLEE

He's so good, Steph.

STEPH
(nodding)
I've grown a lot, too.

KARLEE
Guess we both fucked up, huh?

Karlee hugs Steph. Steph hugs her back. We see Steph's face, unseen by Karlee, over her shoulder: nervously anticipating.

KARLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I want to do a full reset. Clean slate. What do you say?

Steph smiles, awash with emotion.

STEPH
Of course! I want that too.

We see Karlee's face - blissful (is it?). Then Karlee GASPS. She ends the hug and approaches a BRIGHT YELLOW MACAW that has alighted nearby. Steph turns.

KARLEE
Doug's favourite. Imported from South America. He won't even tell me how much it cost. One of the most intelligent animals you can train.

STEPH
What's he called?

KARLEE
She.
(glancing nervously)
Um this might seem a bit weird.

The bird suddenly starts saying 'SHUT UP! SHUT UP!'

KARLEE (CONT'D)
Her name is 'Steph'. Named after you. I'm so glad you two can meet!

Steph smiles, trying to be touched.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
... Doug didn't name her by the way
- I did.

STEPH
(uncertain)
Oh wow! You named her Steph.

MACAW

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

Steph, trying to suppress her pained expression, reaches for the bird to stroke it. The bird bristles, shuffles away along the branch and flies off. Steph watches it go, conflicted.

KARLEE (O.S.)

... oh well. Let's get to the champagne.

CUT TO:

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Steph and Lev are opposite Doug and Karlee in an oak-filled sitting room, all with champagne flutes. Steph is very upright. Lev is relaxed.

LEV

So what's in the pipeline? Doug Palmer feat anyone is huge in the gay clubs.

KARLEE

Good demographic to hit, Dougie.

DOUG

Oh, no question. The truth is -
(clears throat)
I've done a lot over the last year. "Take My Love Away" was the synthesis of everything I was heading towards. But the pressure for a follow-up has been a lot, and maybe starting to affect -

He gestures to himself and Karlee.

KARLEE

Don't put this on me!

DOUG

No, she's right. It was my decision. The award was a nice postscript.

He looks down humbly.

STEPH

You're quitting?

DOUG
Not quitting. Just parking the
producing for a while.

Steph blinks, incredulous.

STEPH
You became a successful producer,
and now you're ... stepping away
from it.

Doug nods, then he and Karlee make eye contact: 'should we
tell them?'

DOUG
You're sitting in my first foray
into developing. This is the
training ground. What do they say?
'Pivoting'?

LEV
Holy shit.

STEPH
Yeah, congratulations.

LEV
The whole area is so choice, but
this house ...

KARLEE
Doug actually owns the precinct.

Steph blinks.

DOUG
I mean, yeah. Used to be a nature
reserve but it was being
mismanaged. I like to think we keep
a bit of the original spirit - the
birds, the sustainability ...

KARLEE
Nothing goes to waste in this
house.

Karlee looks to Steph for recognition of their altruism.
Steph obliges with forced awe. Karlee seems to notice it's
forced.

DOUG
Just had to get the music out of my
system. I'll go back to it.

LEV
 You better. On behalf of gays
 everywhere.

Doug laughs. Steph drinks her champagne.

DOUG
 There is one thing though.

Karlee drinks. A pause. Doug relishes the drama, winks at Lev.

DOUG (CONT'D)
 Check this out.
 (to a device)
 'Play'.

A previously unseen streaming device lights up. So do speakers on either side of the mantelpiece. Steph raises her eyebrows.

A dream-pop synthesizer plays moody, spacious chords. Electro beats arrive. It's a slow jam reminiscent of the last Doug track but deeper, fuller ... a little stranger.

MALE VOICE
Complete me, baby

FEMALE VOICE
You're the rest of me

BOTH
Now we are whole.

Steph recognizes the voice.

STEPH
 Karlee, is that -

FEMALE VOICE
This love has saved me.

MALE VOICE
We are destiny

BOTH
Our double soul ...

Lev leans in.

LEV
 That's you?

Karlee nods, thrilled but self-conscious.

DOUG
 (testing Steph)
 Did you know this? That she sings?

STEPH
 (raising the ante)
 You're singing again! That's so
 good. Remember the Christmas album
 we made in high school?

Karlee laughs. Steph tries to enlist Karlee in a glance.

Instead of jousting with Steph, Doug simply touches Karlee's
 knee. Steph bristles.

KARLEE
 It's been a good way to rediscover
 my voice.

LEV
 (shrugging)
 Dating a producer, that'll do it!

The pre-chorus:

BOTH
*Forever in time
 Together we're mine
 I'm made for you
 I'd destroy anything to stay here
 with you*

Steph winces almost imperceptibly, glancing at Lev - "that's
 weird, right?". She sees Doug watching her and clears her
 throat.

STEPH
 (forced)
 You sound great Karlee, sort of -

LEV
 Otherworldly.

KARLEE
 No, I'm so embarrassed.

Doug takes Karlee in her arms.

DOUG
 You've gotta get over that. You're
 fucking ...

Doug kisses Karlee on the mouth. Steph looks around, sees her phone in the basket in the hallway. She wishes she was recording this.

The chorus. Doug and Karlee both air-drum along with it, in perfect sync - Karlee mimes the words, her eyes closed.

BOTH

*Glide above the twilight
Their suffering is our delight
Oceans of light, vistas of plenty
open up ...
Love is love is (love is love is)
Love is love is (love is love is)
Ours, the longest longest love.*

Steph's eyes go from Karlee to Doug, then to the middle distance.

Doug sees Steph frowning at the words.

DOUG

Alright, 'off'.

The music stops. Steph looks back at them. Steph and Doug make eye contact. Steph feels like she's seen into his soul and she does not like it.

LEV

So raw.

KARLEE

I want to do my parts again.

LEV

It's a total gear shift. But still,
like, danceable?

KARLEE

Yeah, a slow dance maybe.

(smiling)

A dance at the end of time.

Doug squeezes Karlee's hand.

Steph tries to drink her champagne but it's finished.

She looks up - Karlee's watching her.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The previously-glimpsed amazing dining room. Fancy hors-d'oeuvres are in front of all four of them. Lev snaps up what's on his plate in one bite. Steph examines hers.

STEPH

Does this ... gluten?

LEV

(to Karlee and Doug)

So how did you two meet? Steph never told me.

Karlee smiles. Steph smiles too, ignoring the minor slight. The smile vanishes when she looks at her plate again.

DOUG

Mutual friends, for once.

KARLEE

Not the apps.

Steph reacts subtly throughout, picking apart her amuse-bouche. She nibbles the side then puts it down, almost retching.

DOUG

From the moment I saw her - Karlee - I knew there was something. As if we had met before? Nothing like these two week flings I used to have with literally whoever.

Steph looks at Karlee for any kind of micro-reaction.

DOUG (CONT'D)

This felt old.

KARLEE

You grow up with an idea that love will just, like, work out, but life isn't always like that. You have to work on it. Constantly. Compromise and adjustment.

DOUG

The rough is how you know the smooth is smooth.

STEPH

(fake)

So true.

DOUG
(to Karlee)
I mean, case in point: you broke up
with me -

Steph reacts. A beat.

Karlee eats her hors-d'oeuvre, nodding.

DOUG (CONT'D)
You broke up with me, twice -

STEPH
(too quick)
Three times.

She regrets it straight away.

DOUG
I'm sure you'd remember, Steph.
(to Karlee)
- I almost hated you for that.
Almost.

Karlee and Doug laugh. Steph holds her breath.

KARLEE
Worst week of my life.

DOUG
You don't really know how lucky you
are ...
(looking at Steph)
... until it's almost snatched away
from you.

Steph stares, his meaning unavoidable.

KARLEE
It's so real now.

DOUG
I mean, it was real then, but it's
real ... now.
(to Lev)
And I could completely understand
if anyone was jealous of it, you
know?

Steph, still smiling, swallows a flare of full hatred.

Doug tousles Karlee's hair. Karlee touches Doug's cheek.
Steph looks to Lev, who is unhelpfully still swept up.

Steph looks to her left - her wine is still in its brown paper bag. She unscrews it.

KARLEE
(to Steph)
Oh babe, we've got wine.

Steph gestures 'this one's fine' and fills her glass.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
(clapping hands together)
Mains?

LEV
Please!

Karlee springs up and takes everyone's plates. She exits.
Steph tries to make eye contact urgently with Lev - no luck.

Doug drinks his wine, then settles his attention on Lev.

DOUG
So: how about you? You two.

Steph and Lev look at each other.

STEPH
Uh ... how did we "meet"?

LEV
Work. The Wine Room. I'm the manager.

DOUG
Manager! How old are you?

LEV
How old do I look?

Doug laughs.

LEV (CONT'D)
... 22.

DOUG
Good hustle! Steph, you're - what, thirty?

STEPH
I'm 27.

DOUG
And which of you made the first move?

A beat.

LEV
No, no, God no. Do you have a
gaydar?

DOUG
Oh, I thought -

STEPH
I'm single, Doug.

DOUG
Ohhh! Oh. Well don't worry, you'll
find someone.

Steph smiles joylessly.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(to Lev)
But then ... what are you?

STEPH LEV
Friends. Employee-employer?

Steph stares at him, mortified. Lev realises his mistake.

LEV (CONT'D)
I mean, it's a work friendship.
That's how we - we wouldn't have -

Doug sits back.

LEV (CONT'D)
Look, I'm just happy to be invited!

DOUG
I mean, you weren't.

Doug smiles. Lev downs his champagne awkwardly. He coughs.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Just teasing.

LEV
Is there a bathroom?

DOUG
Upstairs, second door on the right.

Lev nods 'thanks'. As he leaves he tries to make eye contact with Steph. She avoids it, finishing her wine, then relents. Lev apologizes wordlessly, stands, walks out.

He checks something on his phone in the hallway, puts it back into the basket and is gone.

Doug looks at Steph, smiling. Steph smiles back.

DOUG (CONT'D)
I'm just teasing.

Steph gestures 'all good', but it isn't.

DOUG (CONT'D)
You're a fine young woman, Steph.
And a good friend to Karlee.
(softer)
I'm so glad we have this new
opportunity to get to know each
other better.

Steph makes eye contact with him. Was that what she thought it was? She studies Doug's face, suppresses contempt and smiles harder at him. At a loss, she refills her wine from her bottle.

Karlee comes back with four plates - tiny roast morsels with vinaigrette and croutons.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(explaining Lev's absence)
Bathroom.

Steph looks at her plate, notes the croutons.

Karlee raises her glass. Doug does too, then Steph, trying to keep up.

KARLEE
Now that it's just the three of us:
to us.

STEPH
To us!

DOUG
All friends again.

KARLEE
(correcting him)
Never not friends!

Doug and Karlee clink glasses. As they do, Steph sees two glints of light on their fingers. Steph gasps.

Karlee sees Steph staring.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

Oh, and ... yeah, that was going to be - oops.

She and Doug laugh. They brandish their engagement rings.

DOUG

Surprise! Can you believe she said yes?

Karlee laughs. The blood drains out of Steph's face. She smiles, her eyes glassy. She's mortified.

STEPH

Con - congratulations guys! Wow. Oh Karlee.

Steph's emotions are at war with themselves, careening from feigned support to irrepressible horror. She reaches and grips Karlee's hands across the table.

DOUG

Storybook stuff, isn't it?

Steph nods, winces, swallows. She can't contain it.

STEPH

Karlee, can I talk to you for a moment?

KARLEE

Huh? Of course.

Steph pulls away from the table.

Karlee doesn't. She just stares at her.

Steph gestures.

Karlee glances at Doug.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

Oh, that's okay. Anything you say to me you can say to him too.

STEPH

... okay.

Steph is silent. Doug is very still.

DOUG

You really don't like me, do you, Steph?

He smiles and shakes his head.

STEPH

(sunny)

I do, Doug. I'm just wondering ...
might this be a bit quick?

KARLEE

We've been going out fifteen
months.

STEPH

Not counting the ... breakups?

DOUG

No, they were part of it.

KARLEE

Do you 'disapprove', Steph?

STEPH

(trying to be tactful)

No! No. How could I? I haven't seen
you in a year! And Doug, this is
the longest I've spent with you.

DOUG

So far.

STEPH

(regretting the agreement)

So far. I'm just wondering - Never
mind. This is great. Sorry.

KARLEE

No, Steph. Go on.

A beat. Steph restrains herself. Another beat.

STEPH

Those breakups - they were about
specific things, right?

Karlee looks at Steph. She hesitates, then goes to answer -

DOUG

Karlee was afraid of her feelings.

Steph shoots a glance at Doug.

STEPH

Are you speaking for her?

Stare-off between Steph and Doug.

DOUG
I knew the answer.

KARLEE
(glancing between them)
He's right. I was afraid of my feelings, because it had never happened so fast before. I didn't know how I felt yet. I used to be so picky, you know this Steph!

STEPH
Karlee, honestly? It might seem like nothing but I just asked you a question and he answered it for you.

Steph keeps staring at Doug.

DOUG
(shrugging with his hands)
I knew the answer.
(a beat)
If you know the answer, are you just meant to stay quiet? I'm really asking.

Karlee scoffs at Steph.

KARLEE
This is so typical.
(slowly)
You just know everything about relationships, don't you ... even though you're never in one.

Steph looks to the hallway.

STEPH
(calling)
Lev?

Doug puts up his hands.

DOUG
If I may - remember, Karlee, how you once thought maybe I was going to cheat on you with Janelle, and you broke up with me over it?

KARLEE
Yes.

DOUG
I wasn't, was I?

KARLEE
No.

DOUG
What was I doing?

KARLEE
Collaborating, like you said.

DOUG
On what?

KARLEE
On what became your biggest hit.

Steph blinks, feeling drunk. Doug makes a 'case closed' gesture.

DOUG
So. It sort of feels like ... in
the long run ... some things that
people might think are bad are
actually - fine?

Karlee drums her nails on the table.

KARLEE
And maybe some people's judgement
isn't so good?

DOUG
About things that have nothing to
do with them.

KARLEE
And they should've just kept their
mouth shut.

A BEAT. Steph inhales, processing what's happening.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
(sounding kinder)
I'm telling you as a friend, Steph,
the things you say have
consequences for people. I'm your
friend and what you say matters.
But just because the rest of the
world is crazy with opinions and
moralising -

DOUG
(excusing)
It's the zeitgeist.

KARLEE
We've known each other for years,
and it's like you're not able to be
happy for others anymore? Is it a
cycle thing?

Steph, increasingly distressed, tries to refill her glass
from her wine bottle. The bottle is empty.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
I'm not kidding. I think the pill
fucks you up, to say nothing of
SSRIs or whatever.

Steph looks to the hall again.

STEPH
(quiet, desperate)
Lev.

KARLEE
I'm just asking if it's chemical.
Are you chemically able to
experience happiness anymore? I am.
Or is it a moral high-ground thing?
Always knowing exactly who's best
and who's worst. Everything's about
power. Wealthy people are bad. I
know you think that. What kind of
attitude is that? Psychologically?

Karlee spears a crouton angrily, brings it to her mouth and
crunches it.

DOUG
(sighing)
It's not that complex. I just think
... maybe ... she's jealous?

Doug shrugs and returns to his dinner. Steph is silent, still
resisting this wound being torn open.

KARLEE
Jealous Steph. Now why could that
be? Could it be maybe because ...

Karlee's eyes go glassy. She gestures at the house.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

Because you didn't want me to have any of this? Because everyone should just stay at the same level as you forever? Because you've always resented when I get attention. Because you've always had a sort of a ... crush on me, and hated all of my boyfriends, hated whenever I've been with anyone other than you.

Karlee brushes a tear from her eye but keeps staring at Steph.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

And that's why you said Doug was a 'loser'. With 'predator vibes'.

Doug shakes his head sadly - "what a world".

Steph stares back, deeply hurt. She blinks it away. She reaches for another wine bottle, fills her glass then stands up facing them, poised with the glass in the air.

STEPH

Thanks for dinner. Think I'm done.

KARLEE

Sit down, Steph.

STEPH

(suddenly sloshed)

No. You don't get to say that and have me sit down. You don't get to say that to your oldest friend and have her just suck it up, the same way she's had to suck everything up. Because what? Because I had the wisdom to question your boyfriend? Who came onto me when you were broken up, by the way -

Doug reacts, incredulous. Karlee looks at him then back at Steph.

STEPH (CONT'D)

- and again, just now while you were in the kitchen. Ding ding!

From the hallway:

SIRI
Hello Special Princess. At 10 AM
you have -

STEPH
No -

SIRI
- 'pap smear fun time' -

STEPH
Shut up Siri!
(back to Karlee)
So good luck together. Here's to
the happy couple. Sorry to ever get
in the way, or to think anything
untoward, because you clearly
actually deserve each other more
than anyone has ever deserved
anything. Where's Lev?

Steph finishes her wine in one gulp.

STEPH (CONT'D)
'Ciao'.

Steph makes a single throat-sound - and collapses.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. NOWHERE - NIGHT

A flash of half-conscious impressions. Steph is groggy. Above her are Doug and Karlee. They carry her. Steph groans.

A metallic sound. A hiss of air. Doug shakes his head in response to some sensation, and exhales.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Steph's head against a pillow. She turns a little. Vision fades as she falls back asleep.

Steph blinks, eyelids heavy. Someone puts a damp towel on her forehead: Karlee. Karlee undoes Steph's top shirt button. Steph stretches her neck and mutters something.

Above, Karlee smiles dreamily.

CUT TO:

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steph's eyes snap open.

She's in a bedroom with dark purple walls. A soft yellow lamp is on next to her. Very nice if mildly unusual decor. It's the upstairs - previously off-limits. It's lush.

She turns her head.

Sitting a couple of metres away on a futon is Doug. He smiles.

DOUG

She wakes.

STEPH

What's going on?

Speaking makes her head hurt. She screws her eyes shut.

DOUG

Think you might've drunk a bit too much in one go.

Steph shakes her head. Doug shrugs kindly - 'don't know what to tell you'.

STEPH

Where's Lev?

DOUG

Went to his date. You've been out an hour, kiddo.

(sighs)

I'm sorry about Karlee's outburst. I don't think it was helpful. It certainly wasn't very nice.

Steph looks at him.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Want me to get her?

STEPH

No. It doesn't matter. I should go.

DOUG

Honestly, I get it more than you might think. You two go back a long way - that gets complicated in any friendship. She really cares about you, Steph.

STEPH

I just want to go if that's OK.

Doug inhales.

DOUG

I think maybe you should take a moment. Just to make sure. I'll leave you be, you don't have to do anything. I'll run you a bath, get in it if you like. But take a moment. And maybe talk to Karlee after. Does that sound alright?

Steph says nothing. Doug stands, heads to the en-suite and steps out of view. The sound of running water. Doug reappears.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Towels in there.

He smiles and exits.

Steph is alone. She lies motionless, hearing the water run into the bath, reflective. She sighs.

She looks to her left.

On the mattress is the pendant that Karlee gave her.

INT. EN-SUITE - NIGHT

Steph slips into the bath. It's very hot - perfect. She shuts her eyes, smiles at the heat, frowns as she remembers how she got here.

She opens her eyes and takes in the wallpaper - black and white hieroglyphs.

She looks closer. They are human figures, two and sometimes three, all engaged in different levels of sexual activity.

STEPH

Yeesh.

Steph notices for the first time a small gilded cage on the bathroom counter - a juvenile yellow PARAKEET flits around inside.

A soft knock at the door. Steph looks.

A manicured hand eases the door open.

KARLEE

You OK?

STEPH

Yeah, I'm OK. Sorry.

KARLEE

I'm sorry. Can I come in?

Steph pauses and nods. She breathes.

Karlee enters, now wearing a blue silk kimono. She crouches by the side of the bath, her face near Steph's.

Karlee looks away.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

I - I just wanted you and Doug to get along, you know? ... but when we sat down to dinner - I didn't realize I was bitter? ... like you didn't want me to have Doug, thought it was unfair or something ... so I kinda wanted to say my piece, and for you to just fuck off out of this stage of my life? Like I had to get over you, break up with you for good ...

(softer)

As a friend. But now ... I don't really want to.

Steph breathes.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

I'm more confused than ever.

Karlee leans in and kisses Steph lightly on the lips. Steph is bewildered.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

(pulling away)

Fuck.

Karlee turns back immediately. She touches Steph's cheek and they make out again. Karlee's hand ventures downward.

STEPH

Karlee, what -

KARLEE

Shh. Shh.

Steph REACTS as Karlee's hand goes under the water. They lock eye contact. Karlee keeps kissing her. Steph flexes, convulses slightly, starts breathing heavily in pleasure and confusion. It doesn't take long.

Karlee, almost panting too, touches Steph's hair with her hand. They stare at each other, flustered, sitting with what just happened. Karlee seems to have a pang of guilt.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

I think ...

STEPH

What?

KARLEE

Can you come down the hall after you're done? Please.

Steph nods, vulnerable.

Karlee dries her hand on a towel. She stands, clears her throat, looks back at Steph and slips out.

Steph doesn't know what to do. She rinses her face in the water.

Across from her, the PARAKEET titters and flaps, pressing itself against the bars in agitation.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steph exits the spare bedroom, in her clothes again, mostly dry but with wet hair. She pads down the hall.

Karlee is outside the master bedroom, leaning through the door. Steph hears quiet conversation and approaches slower.

STEPH

Hey -

Karlee turns.

KARLEE

One sec.

STEPH

Look, I'm just going to go. I can't with all of this. I just think it's best if -

KARLEE

Hang on a sec, please Steph.

STEPH
I'm gonna get my phone and go. We
can talk later.

KARLEE
Just wait.

Karlee turns back to the bedroom. Steph makes unseen goodbye gestures and heads downstairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steph approaches the sideboard. Her hand reaches for her phone in the basket. She stops.

Lev's phone is still there.

Steph picks it up, looks at it.

On the screen are messages from an unknown number: "Where r u?" "Gonna wait 10 more mins" "?????" - & three missed calls.

Steph scrolls through them.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steph returns to Karlee outside the bedroom. The door is more open now - Doug is inside, sitting on the bed. He sees Steph as she arrives.

Steph holds Lev's phone.

STEPH
Why is Lev's phone here?

Karlee turns.

STEPH (CONT'D)
He didn't take it?

KARLEE
Steph, I think we need to do something.

STEPH
Where's Lev.

KARLEE

There's something unspoken between
the three of us, and we need to
address it. Openly, and honestly.

Steph shakes her head. Doug is standing now.

STEPH

(rising dread)

You have to tell me what happened
to Lev and why his phone is -

DOUG

She's right, Steph.
(to Karlee)
Let's do it. Now.

She turns and walks away, breaking into a run. She sprints
downstairs into the hallway.

KARLEE

Steph!

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Steph slams into the front door and turns the handle. It's
locked.

STEPH

Fuck. What the fuck!

She races to a window. It's dark outside. She tries to open
it - locked. She slams her hands on the window. Double
glazing. It doesn't move.

STEPH (CONT'D)

(shouting into the closed
window)

Hey! Help!

Suddenly Doug is behind her.

KARLEE (O.S.)

What's she doing!

Doug seizes Steph around the shoulders. Steph breaks free.
Karlee stops her from the other side.

STEPH

No! No! What the fuck!

KARLEE

Calm! Calm! No one can hear, right?

Doug and Karlee wrestle her into submission. Doug carries her arms, Karlee her legs. Steph thrashes.

DOUG
Studio ... grade ... soundproofing.

KARLEE
You're sure?

DOUG
Positive, babe.

KARLEE
Just relax, Steph!

STEPH
WHAT THE FUCK??

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Doug and Karlee carry Steph, still thrashing and shouting, down the stairs and to the closed door that wasn't on the tour.

DOUG
Open up.

The door opens at his command. They take Steph inside.

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

It's a sterile white chamber - three metal chairs are arranged in a circle facing each other. One of the chairs has a small electrical control console as an arm-rest.

DOUG
Close up.

The door shuts. Steph is placed on one of the chairs, initially sideways then the couple thrust her upright. Doug restrains Steph while Karlee straps her feet into a seat-belt at the base of the chair to keep her in place. Steph's arms are thrust vertically by her sides; Karlee ties them into harnesses and tightens it.

Steph and Lev's phones, one in each of Steph's hands, clatter to the ground. Karlee picks them up and puts them on a metal shelf in another basket.

Karlee sits daintily on the chair next to Steph, without restraints.

Doug sits in the third chair with the control console.

Steph thrashes.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Steph. Settle down.

KARLEE
It works better if we aren't
agitated.

STEPH
Who's agitated?

Silence.

DOUG
You'll speak when spoken to.

STEPH
You are speaking to me, Doug.

KARLEE
When asked a question. Otherwise it
becomes a whole thing.

STEPH
You know my mother knows where I
am, right? And if I don't call her
she'll send the police.

Karlee looks at Steph, eyebrows raised. Steph sighs - didn't even work as a bluff.

Doug clears his throat. He puts his hand on the console.

DOUG
(to Steph)
Tell us your name. For calibration.

STEPH
Fuck you.

Doug flicks a switch. A mild electrical current is sent into Steph's chair. She flinches in surprise.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Aah!

Doug turns to Karlee, smiling. He gestures for her to answer the same question.

KARLEE
(cheerily)
Karlee Jane Reyes ... for now.

Doug playfully goes 'shh'.

DOUG
Well done Karlee.

He turns back to Steph.

DOUG (CONT'D)
When were you born, Steph?

KARLEE
Time and date.

DOUG
Time and date.

Steph is silent. She stares at them.

Doug flicks a switch.

Steph is zapped again - stronger this time. She cries in pain.

Doug turns to Karlee.

KARLEE
2pm, November seventh ...

DOUG AND KARLEE
Scorpio.

They smile at each other.

DOUG
Good, Karlee.
(to Steph)
It's easy, Steph. Just do what's
easy.

Steph stares, still recovering from the last shock.

KARLEE
(quiet)
She's a Gemini.

DOUG
(to Karlee)
Want a try?

KARLEE

(to Steph)

At high school one day, soon after you came out ... what was the profession you said you had a crush on?

Steph is silent.

KARLEE (CONT'D)

C'mon Steph. I need you to get along with Doug. I'm engaged now and I want both of you in my life. You really matter to me. I deserve it.

Steph says nothing.

Doug zaps Steph. Steph groans, tears springing into her eyes.

DOUG

Okay, higher level. You and I have had our differences. But people are complex - there are, truthfully, things you must like about me. What are they?

Steph is silent.

DOUG (CONT'D)

What do you like about me, Steph?

Steph is silent. Doug turns to Karlee, breathing through his nose.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Karlee?

KARLEE

I like your energy. Your resourcefulness. I like how you take charge, but also how you don't have to - it's not about ego, it's just about what's needed. You know that. I like that you're fucking handsome and I love your eyes and your mind. Your energy, Doug, your whole energy, it's all of what you are.

Doug smiles.

He turns back to Steph, pauses, then casually flicks the switch again.

Steph is electric-shocked. She screams again, clenching her teeth. It's gut-wrenching.

DOUG
Want a re-try on that one?

Steph pants, her face red.

STEPH
(clenched teeth)
I'm drawing a blank, Doug.

Karlee gestures 'can I try?' Doug gestures 'by all means'.

KARLEE
(to Steph)
It's not a trick. What do you like
about him? And how do you feel
about me? Steph? Honestly?
(to Doug)
She can answer both together?

Doug nods. Looks at Steph.

Steph is silent.

Doug's hand creeps to the switch.

STEPH
NO! NO!

Doug lifts his hand.

STEPH (CONT'D)
(to Karlee)
How do I feel about you? I'm having
a real hard time deciding that,
Karlee. But I can answer. What I
don't have an answer for is what I
'like' ... about DOUG. Because LOOK
WHAT HE'S DOING TO ME. RIGHT NOW.
LOOK WHERE I AM.

Doug pointedly moves his hands away from the controls,
waiting.

Steph exhales in disbelief and faces Karlee.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Somehow, after more than a decade, a year ago you became a fucking ghost and it really didn't take a brain genius to note the timing - and yeah, I did, I did want to break you up. I'm nearly thirty and my gorgeous best friend hooks up with a rich fuckhead? You remember 'ten signs you're dating a narcissist'? That was me. That was something I made for you -

(to Doug)

- about you.

(back to Karlee)

TikTok saw it clear as day but for some reason you fucking couldn't - so it was goodbye wingwoman, goodbye single and sassy Steph and Karlee! Suddenly you were better, which you've believed all along but now you had proof. You haven't asked once -

Steph resists emotion.

STEPH (CONT'D)

You haven't asked once what happened when you dropped me without a word. I ran myself down trying to get in touch with you, or find someone to care that you might be in a really bad situation, but I didn't really know anyone who knew you anymore, and everyone you knew now didn't know me. So I just had to live with this - uncertainty? Wondering what the fuck happened to my friend?

Karlee stares, a flicker of concern. Steph sees it.

STEPH (CONT'D)

And after all that, you come back out of nowhere just to finger me in the bath upstairs?

Karlee glances at Doug. Doug swallows.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Like, you're engaged, so hey, a 'kiss your best friend', 'all bets are off' kinda thing?

Steph collects herself.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Or punishing me.
(she shakes her head,
crying silently)
Let me go. Let me out of this. If
that's what you want to hear, then
there it is, just let me go. Just
let me go Karlee.
(weary)
And it was a paramedic. A hot
professional who could also save
me.

Karlee looks sincerely at Steph. Doug looks at Karlee.

DOUG
(quiet)
Good.

KARLEE
That's honesty. That's what we
need. That's how you feel, Steph!

Karlee smiles, reaches to touch Steph's hand. Steph turns away from them, blinking off another tear.

DOUG
Now we're up and running. What else
is in there? That mind of yours. Do
you have any ... kinks?

Steph blinks, not looking at him.

KARLEE
I think we should stay on me? The
emotion?

DOUG
You're bi, aren't you? What else do
you like? Are you a voyeur, Steph?
Are you a watcher, not a doer?
Working in a bottleshop, probably
not a doer. Do you like to watch?

Karlee reacts, blindsided.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Have you ever had a threesome? I
guess that's a few questions.
Answer any of them. We're all ears.

Doug's hand creeps to the switch. Steph sees it.

STEPH
 (pained, trying to give
 him what he wants)
 Yes, all of it. I've done all of
 it. I'm a voyeur, a big voyeur. I
 love threesomes, I love the ... the
 crossed lines, the blurring -

DOUG
Yes -

KARLEE
 Wait -

STEPH
 The multiple people, like one is
 never enough, is it? - not for me,
 it needs to be confusing, and, and
 fucked, fucked and bad - just don't
 shock me, don't -

KARLEE
 Doug - what the hell?

A pause.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
 A threesome?

DOUG
 ... This is pertinent.

KARLEE
 Is that what you want?

Pause.

DOUG
No.

Karlee looks from one to the other. She leans toward Doug.

KARLEE
 Is that what's in there, Dougie?
 What you're angling for -

DOUG
 It's the process!

KARLEE
Fuck the fucking - are you serious?
 Do you like her?

Doug half-scoffs. A pause.

DOUG
(hissed)
You like her.

Steph looks from one to the other. She twists her wrists in the harness.

Karlee glares at Doug, her eyes fiery. Doug holds her gaze, then loses nerve and looks away.

Karlee reacts and stands.

KARLEE
Okay.

She paces slowly to the door.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
(angry)
Open up!

The door opens and she exits.

Steph and Doug are alone. Doug makes exasperated noises. He looks to Steph for understanding. Steph shrugs: "hey man, I know".

Doug goes after Karlee. The door shuts after him.

Steph moves her legs and her arms, checking all her restraints. She looks around the room. Her phone on the metal shelf. The control chair. She contorts herself, hurts herself against the chair, returns to neutral, breathing heavily.

She looks to her right and stops. Doug is back. He paces.

STEPH
Doug. Doug.

Doug stops.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I know her really well. Doug. I do.

DOUG
Mm.

STEPH
And I know she wants it too.

Doug frowns, breathing.

STEPH (CONT'D)
We just need to - I think we need
to start, just the two of us.

Doug looks at her, trying to gauge her seriousness. Steph nods. She smiles seductively.

Doug looks at her slowly. He turns, checking if Karlee is there. He steps toward Steph.

DOUG
... Yeah?

He touches the side of Steph's head. Steph feigns sexual thrill.

STEPH
You've never touched me like this.

DOUG
I carried you in here.

STEPH
Not the same, not the same ...

Doug steps against her, his pants near her head. He rubs her shoulder.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Yes. Yes.

Doug makes erotic noises. Steph sways into it. She jostles her right hand. Doug immediately reaches down and frees Steph's hand from the harness. Steph flexes her hand and opens his zipper.

DOUG
Oh fuuck.

Steph shuts her eyes and grits her teeth, reaching in. She REACTS to fabric noise.

She touches him, then starts massaging.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Awh.

Steph kicks her head towards her other arm, hoping he'll free it. He doesn't.

She keeps going, visibly dissociating. She hates this.

Footsteps.

Steph stops for a second and pulls one of her leg restraints free. She masks the pause with a kiss, then returns her hand. She winces.

More footsteps.

Steph's alert to the sound. She keeps going.

She twists her foot out of the belt.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Yesssss ...

Footsteps closer. Steph continues. Doug is close.

KARLEE (O.S.)
Alright! I've got some questions!

Karlee returns. She's holding the prized MACAW and the champagne saber.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
How much do you really -

Karlee sees what's happening. Karlee SCREAMS.

Doug spins around.

Steph, staring at Karlee, keeps hold of him. Doug's erection breaks in her hand as he spins. Doug grunts in pain.

MACAW
Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

The macaw starts flapping wildly. Karlee is still screaming, the bird losing control on her arm. She drops the saber.

Steph pulls her other leg out of the seat belt. She half-stands and frees her left hand from the harness.

DOUG
I -

Karlee, overcome with rage, claws at the bird with both hands, screaming in bloodcurdling anger. The bird is destroyed in a burst of feathers and blood.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(horror)
Steeephhh!

Steph pulls away from the chair and kicks Doug in the face. His jaw CRUNCHES.

She seizes her and Lev's phones and runs to the door past Doug.

KARLEE
(screams)

Karlee picks up the saber and raises it at Steph - with her backswing she hits Doug with the blade. Doug falls.

Karlee strikes at Steph but she dodges it, fleeing out the door.

INT. HALLWAYS ETC. - CONTINUOUS

Steph races down the hallway then upstairs. She senses right away this is a mistake, but has to keep going.

STEPH
Fuck! Fuck!

Behind her, Karlee pursues. Steph is faster.

KARLEE
Steph, come back! Steph!

Steph keeps running.

STEPH
Help me Siri!

SIRI
I don't know where you are.

Steph tries to call the police on her phone. No signal.

She finds herself in the music studio. She looks around for some way to defend herself. A mic-stand - she brandishes it as a club. No good. A guitar string - she tries it as a garrote.

She drops it and enters the engineer's area.

KARLEE (O.S.)
I just want to talk, Steph! We're still talking!

Steph spins, spins back. There's another space behind the engineering area she didn't see before. She runs to it.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

It's a surveillance room with three large screens, a console and an engineer's chair. Steph faces the door.

STEPH
Shut! Close up!

Nothing happens. There's a button on the wall - she hits it. The door closes and locks.

Steph sighs in relief. She looks around. The console has a microphone on it.

KARLEE (O.S.)
(distant)
Stephhhh where are you?

Steph sits in the chair. She looks at the screens - surveillance cameras show vision from throughout the house. One of them is the guest bedroom she woke up in. One of them is the ensuite bathroom. Another is the auditing room she just fled from.

Karlee's voice comes through the speakers, closer, almost intimate.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Steph you're being really toxic ...
Come out Steph, I've calmed down.
(unhinged)
Nobody's jerking me off - but I've calmed down.

STEPH
(to herself)
No you haven't.

Steph sees a VOICE button on the console. She hits it and leans toward the microphone.

STEPH (CONT'D)
No you haven't!

Steph stares at the speakers as Karlee's voice dances out of them.

KARLEE (V.O.)
I forgive you. I ... I fucking
forgive you Steph. We're best
friends, I always forgive you. This
isn't even the first time we've had
the same guy, is it?
(muttering)

KARLEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I thought you were more gay than bi
these days ...

Steph hits the button.

STEPH
You've been brainwashed, Karlee.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Wow. Loser with predator vibes,
brainwashing ... I'm good re: your
advice, actually.

STEPH
You were ... you were so kind to me
outside.
(emotional)
And upstairs before - but when Doug
is there ...

Silence.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Are you in the command centre?

Steph holds her breath.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Upstairs or downstairs?

Pause.

KARLEE (V.O.)
(vulnerable, sniffing)
You always said I should cut toxic
people out of my life. I haven't
done that. I ignored your advice on
that for now. What I mean is ... we
can fix it. Okay? Which command
centre?

Steph thinks. She hits the button.

STEPH
Upstairs. Come and talk.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Nice try. I saw you on the stairs.
(pause)
"Lock command centre one". ... Hmm.
"Lock command centre two".

A mechanical SOUND. Steph looks toward the door. She hits the
button on the wall. Nothing happens - the door doesn't open.

KARLEE (V.O.)
Stay put til we debrief, okay?

Steph looks at the screens. She sees Doug on the floor in the auditing room. Steph presses the button.

STEPH
Check on Doug, Karlee. We hit him
pretty bad.

No response.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Karlee he's not moving. You hit him
with the sword - I'd hate for you
to be a murderer, Karlee!
(releasing the button)
"I'd have to cancel you!"

A pause. Steph looks at her right hand, rubs it on her clothes in disdain.

In front of her she sees a torn piece of paper - she unfolds it: a promo image of DOUG PALMER, ripped down the middle - the ripped off piece is nearby. It's J-JANELLE, glam and mildly reminiscent of Karlee. Steph frowns and discards it.

She looks across the screens for a sign of Karlee. Steph sees the aviary, the master bedroom, the game room ... she double takes. One of them is a camera set in a place she hasn't seen - a strange stone area. She peers at it -

Suddenly Karlee appears in the auditing room. Steph watches:

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Karlee approaches Doug on the floor. She grabs Doug's shoulders.

KARLEE
You okay? Babe.

She pulls him up. She STARTS in horror.

DOUG
(grunts in pain)

Doug's jaw is broken, bones loose. His face is disfigured with swelling. He tests his own jaw. Karlee is horrified.

KARLEE
(almost impressed)
Steph what did you do.

She examines the rest of him. There's a gash under his collarbone from the saber. The blood is mostly dry but Doug is badly hurt.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
I went rogue. I think I blacked out.
(hitting his chest)
Why did you do that?!?

DOUG
(zipping himself up)
It was her, it was all her.

(In the command centre, Steph glares.)

KARLEE
Don't talk. You're gonna be alright. Oh God -

Doug's blood drips onto the floor. Karlee is frozen in horror.

Doug coughs. He pulls his belt out of his pants, flexes it, tries to tie it vertically around his head, holding his jaw in place. He groans in agony and pulls out a single tooth. He tries to shove it back in. It doesn't work.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
It's living tissue ...

DOUG
(blood in his mouth)
I'll get an appointment with Makropolis in the morning. World's best. You'll never know anything happened.

Doug swallows, clutches his head from the pain. He faces Karlee.

KARLEE
I love you so much.

DOUG
I love you too.

KARLEE
(tearful)
That just really rocked me, Doug - you with my best friend -

DOUG
Never again.

KARLEE
Are we good?

DOUG
Rock solid babe.

KARLEE
(needy)
Shall we - I need to, Doug. I think
I need to, now.

Doug is silent. He acknowledges her, steely - and HITS a panel on the wall.

The lights change in the room - mood lighting. A mechanical whirring starts up.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Steph sees the lights change in the auditing room on the screen. She looks around - the lights are changing in the command centre too, dimming with a hint of purple.

A text box on the console screen says SONG MODE.

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug takes Karlee's hand like a dancer. Behind them the three auditing chairs recede into the floor and are replaced by a circular stage rising beneath them.

Electronic drums start laying down a beat.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Steph hears the drums too. Synth chords arrive, gentle and ethereal.

Two more screens on the walls snap ON, depicting what now resembles a moody, professionally-produced video clip.

She sees Karlee and Doug facing each other, one camera on each of them.

Steph looks from left to right.

She tries the exit button on the wall ten times.

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Karlee stares into Doug's eyes.

KARLEE
(singing)
Complete me baby -

DOUG
(singing)
You're the best of me -

Doug swallows blood.

BOTH
Now we are whole.

DOUG
(advising)
Vibrato.

KARLEE
Oh yes.

DOUG
This love has saved me -

KARLEE
We are destiny -

LIGHTS change. They are lit in stark darkness and shadow, not touching each other.

BOTH
Our double souuuul.

They break apart. Stage smoke pours into the room. Suddenly Doug seems like he's levitating.

Karlee stares at him, smiling and moving gracefully in the smoke. Doug rises like a god. They sing to each other.

BOTH (CONT'D)
*Forever in time
Together we're mine
I'm made for you
I'd destroy everything to stay here
with you.*

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Steph is transfixed. She watches as Karlee, lit in gold, carefully picks up a dark object from outside the frame.

Across from Karlee, Doug smiles, lit darkly and mysteriously. He flinches in pain then tightens the belt around his jaw.

KARLEE

Glide above the twilight

DOUG

Their suffering is our delight

The lighting changes again, presenting them both in silhouette.

BOTH

*Oceans of light, vistas of plenty
open up ...*

Steph notes the line. She looks slowly toward the door.

ONSCREEN: Karlee affixes the object - a strap-on dildo - to her hips. She pushes it down.

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Karlee and Doug crawl over each other, almost weightless, with the lights punctuating them in silhouette as they enter a variety of sexual positions with each other: kissing - missionary - cowgirl - sixty nine - another configuration of sixty nine - anal - both versions of oral sex - a dual silhouette that is like an Egyptian rendering of the Kama Sutra - Doug slaps the wall.

BOTH

Love is love is -

The music track supplies backing vocals:

TRACK

(love is love is love)

BOTH

*Love is love is ours, the longest
longest love.*

They continue to turn, weightless, in a circle, as the synth backing washes through the space.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Steph turns from the screens, exploring the rest of the room. In doing so she is faced with MORE SCREENS of Karlee and Doug performing the song. Steph grimaces. She tries to turn them off - no luck. A synth riff fills the instrumental break.

Steph sees another button that says STOP. She pushes it. A mechanism somewhere seems to shut down, but the song continues.

She looks above the button. A label says 'HYDRAULICS'. Uh oh?

ONSCREEN: Karlee and Doug KISS, pull apart from each other, feign a dramatic physical fight, then reconnect.

Steph takes in the spectacle, the dildo, the whole extravagant display.

STEPH
(remembering)
Lev.

She looks on the console screens: in the stone room she hadn't seen, an indistinct shape is visible above.

Steph brings up her phone with renewed urgency. She records a second of the song, listens to it, looks to the door. She watches the screens.

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Karlee, on the floor and shrouded in smoke and neon light, pulls herself across the circular stage. Her hand grips Doug's foot, and she lasciviously pulls herself up him, sensuously grabbing his thighs, his hips, his chest ... his blood drips over her hair.

BOTH
*Glide above the twilight
Their suffering is our delight
Oceans of light -*

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Steph snaps her eyes from the screen to her phone. She presses record.

BOTH
- vistas of plenty open up ...

Steph stops recording, adjusts the length of the file. She holds it near the door and plays it.

RECORDING
'Open up ...'

Nothing happens. Steph curses herself then tries playing it again, this time speaking softly at the same time, trying to mimic Karlee's voice for presence.

STEPH
'Open up ...'

The automatic door clicks and slides open.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steph flees down the hall, finally giving into the frenzied horror of her situation.

STEPH
Holy shit, fucking maniacs - what
the fucking, Jesus fuck -

INT. LOWER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Steph, checking for pursuit behind her, a nervous wreck, paces along the hall, half falling against the walls.

STEPH
"You'll find someone"!? Oh but why
bother when you guys are one in a
million!

She looks down the hallway. The front door. Escape.

She feels a weight in her pocket. Lev's phone. She looks at it.

She gulps ... then turns away from the front door.

She approaches an automatic door. She looks for a button then brandishes her phone and presses play.

STEPH & RECORDING
Open up.

The door opens.

Steph steps inside. She pushes a button on the wall - the door closes.

INT. CHANCEL - NIGHT

Limestone and sandstone walls and floor. This is weird. Steph moves along a hand-chiseled stone hallway - not unlike the wine cellar - towards a candle-lit alcove.

She looks up. A camera - the one through which she saw this room upstairs - is pointed in the direction she's heading.

STEPH

(quiet)

... Lev?

Her voice reverberates closely. Muffled from another room, Doug & Karlee's song continues.

Steph approaches the alcove. Her eyes go wide.

Ahead of her, on stone steps cut out of the rock, are half a dozen candles illuminating paraphernalia around them, and shapes on the walls ...

Steph moves closer. She gasps.

It's an ENORMOUS SHRINE to Doug and Karlee.

Close-up professional vanity shots of Doug and Karlee - photos of them together on beaches, boats, mountains - a deed to the nature reserve in a glass cabinet nailed into the rock wall - a gold record ("Take My Love Away") mounted on a gold nail - two vials of dark blood and one empty vial next to them. Steph looks across all of it.

The couple's initials - DP and KR - are embossed on the wall above, coupled with their dates of birth, at the centre of a web of numerological equations - lines stretching across the wall, arcane symbols, astrological terms and calculations. Some of it is not filled in yet - a conspicuous absence, areas circled that contain nothing.

She leans over the steps. On them are three tailor-made tarot cards facing upright. Steph looks at them.

One of them is THE EMPEROR - it's Doug, styled as a supernatural lord of space and time.

The next one is THE EMPRESS - it's Karlee, styled the same - godly, fantastical, with yellow eyes that match her nails.

Steph sees that Karlee and Doug seem to stare at each other from their cards. One each of their arms reaches out to the other - but Doug's other arm reaches below, palm outstretched ... while Karlee's other hand contains a dagger, which also points below ...

Steph looks down.

The third card is hand-drawn and says 'S'. A Janus-like two-faced woman, one side of her head with horns and the other wearing a gag.

Steph turns over the card and reads the back.

STEPH (CONT'D)
"Satan who will destroy us ... or
... the Servant who will complete
us ..."

Steph realises something with horror:

INT. SITTING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Hours earlier, Karlee smiles subtly at Steph as the song plays.

KARLEE (V.O.)
(singing)
Complete me baby ...

Moments later: Doug subtly smiles at Steph too.

DOUG (V.O.)
(singing)
Now we are whole.

INT. EN-SUITE - FLASHBACK

Karlee leaning toward Steph in the bath, the words taking on a new resonance:

KARLEE
(whispering)
... and like break up with you, for
good ...

INT. CHANCEL - NIGHT

Steph picks up the empty vial. It has an 'S' on it.

Steph looks back at the wall in a frenzy. The same 'S' is written above some of the gaps in the writing. A heading without a chapter. And, something she didn't see before ...

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug and Karlee's performance reaches crescendo.

KARLEE & DOUG
(in harmony)
I'll wipe out everyone -

KARLEE
(with vibrato)
Everyone -

DOUG
(to Karlee)
Yes!

Karlee nods with delight. Doug smiles, blood through his teeth.

INT. CHANCEL - NIGHT

Steph grapples on the step and picks up one of the candles to get more light.

She GASPS at what she sees.

On the wall, amid the chaos of lines and pictures, is a smiling photo of her - Steph - with horns and a gag etched onto it.

A question mark is beneath.

Steph mouths 'what the fuck'.

INT. AUDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Karlee and Doug face each other, each of them reflected in endless symmetrical infinity mirrors.

BOTH
Love, is love, is love, is ours -

The synth symphony dies dramatically around them. Wind machines blow their hair one last time.

BOTH (CONT'D)
(a cappella)
The longest, longest ... love.

They brush their lips against each other.

Karlee smiles. Doug coughs. Karlee looks into his eyes, and lowers hers.

KARLEE
I'm sick of fighting, Doug.

DOUG
We won't anymore.

KARLEE
You can't know that.

DOUG
I can. The only person who's ever
come between us ...

Karlee nods icily.

KARLEE
... is right up there.

INT. CHANCEL - NIGHT

Steph is still processing what she's seen on the chiseled altar wall. She grabs the photo of herself instinctively.

STEPH
What the fucking -

Suddenly, a GROAN. She looks up.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Oh my God!

Above her, in a dark silhouette, LEV is strung up like a human chandelier - black ropes suspending him just above a glass tray, in a passageway that seems to lead up to the aviary - separated by a rusty metal grille. Along with the ropes holding him up are tubes which carry his blood into the walls.

LEV
Steph? Your friends are a bit
intense for me.

STEPH
Lev!

LEV
I so thought they wanted an orgy.
Did you see the wallpaper in the
bathroom?

STEPH
Are you alright??

LEV
I don't even hate him for this. On
the fence about some of these birds
though.

Above him, in the aviary, birds of prey sit waiting on the metal grille - horned eagles and scavengers. They flap threateningly.

STEPH
Doug did this??

Lev nods.

LEV
Harvesting my blood for a sex
potency thing. It'll probably work.
My blood rules.

Steph looks around for an implement. Only candles and trash.

LEV (CONT'D)
If you kill him, will the spell
like be lifted? I mean Karlee's no
summer fling herself. By the way
... ?

Steph looks up.

LEV (CONT'D)
Do you think Karlee might be the
reason you're single?

STEPH
What?

Lev makes 'just a theory' gestures.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get you down, Lev!

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Karlee, brandishing the champagne saber, enters the upstairs command centre. Doug stays at the door. Karlee sees it's empty and despairs.

DOUG
She can't be far.

KARLEE
I knew we should've changed that
line!

DOUG
The line? The line is perfect. You
should've changed the voice
command.

Karlee exits, annoyed. Doug adjusts the belt around his head. Doug begins to go after Karlee, then pauses. He looks at the screens again and leans in.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Steph Steph Steph. Found you.

INT. CHANCEL - NIGHT

Steph jumps, and jumps again.

STEPH
I can't reach you - I'm going to
try to climb -

She stretches her feet between the walls, tries to scramble up. The sandstone crumbles slightly. She keeps trying.

LEV
I'm sewn in pretty tight here. I
think that's it for me. If you need
a picture for the funeral I took an
amazing selfie today.

STEPH
Don't be an idiot Lev!

LEV
6699 to unlock my phone.

Steph tries to claw upward with her hands - one of her fingernails buckles and she shrieks.

LEV (CONT'D)
Sorry I put my foot in it at
dinner, Steph. You're not just a
work friend. You're so much more.
Though I'd be lying if I said I'm
glad I came with you to this.

STEPH
You'll be okay!

LEV
(unconvinced, watching his
blood flow through the
tubes)
Hmmm.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Doug is peering at the screen. Karlee hovers near the door - 'are you coming?' Doug gestures 'just a sec'. Karlee realises.

DOUG
She's about to get him down.

KARLEE
I just hate when you do this.

Doug hits a button on the console. He winks at Karlee. She rolls her eyes.

INT. CHANCEL - NIGHT

Mechanical whirring ends Steph and Lev's conversation.

STEPH
What's that??

Lev and the glass tray beneath him both shudder upward.

LEV
It's not good.

They rise further, approaching the metal grille above. Steph is further and further away below.

STEPH
Lev I'm so sorry!

LEV
Don't mention it. And hey: if you get out of this, don't replace me as manager. You should just quit.

The grille OPENS.

The birds of prey descend on Lev. He screams as he is torn to pieces.

Steph averts her eyes, hyperventilating.

The glass tray beneath Lev TILTS ...

Lev's blood drains onto the tray and pours sideways into a chute. Some stray blood runs down the walls and puts out the candles in the shrine.

Steph screws her eyes shut.

INT. WATER FEATURE - NIGHT

We follow Lev's blood as it drains into the water feature, colouring it a deep red.

It flows into the zen rock pool - into a bird bath in the aviary - down the manicured streams flanking the path in front of the house.

INT. SELF-CARE ROOM - NIGHT

In the self care room, pink mist puffs out of the mister.

Doug and Karlee march through the room towards the aviary.

DOUG

I mean it's courtesy. You turn up
somewhere, you need to be invited.

Karlee pauses to take in the mist.

KARLEE

Oh it's nice.

Doug does too. They both waft it over their skin.

INT. AVIARY - NIGHT

Doug and Karlee peer over the edge of the feeding pit for the birds of prey. Lev is unrecognisable - very dead.

Karlee looks closer - no one is visible in the chancel passage beneath. Steph's gone. Karlee makes an irritated noise.

Doug turns around just in time to see a light on the second floor SWITCH OFF. It's their master bedroom.

DOUG

There.

He winks at Karlee. Karlee makes a 'let's go' move.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Hang on. Think I need a booster,
babe. Get for me?

They share a glance.

KARLEE

Don't hurt her.

Doug just smirks. Karlee runs inside. Doug looks up at the window - he flexes his neck and adjusts his jaw.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steph - war-torn and determined - throws Doug and Karlee's king-sized mattress against the door of their master bedroom and moves a huge oak cabinet to prop it up.

She upturns Karlee's cosmetics drawer and tests some of the perfume as mace. This doesn't work.

She scans the room furtively, comes across a small monitor by the bed with a live feed of the guest en-suite bathroom. Ew. She discards it.

She rummages beneath the bed and finds a large hard-plastic dildo named 'THE CHALLENGER'. She brandishes it. Maybe.

She looks through her pockets. Her own phone - no reception.

Then: other pocket: Lev's phone. One bar.

She unlocks it with Lev's code and dials.

STEPH

Hello? Emergency! Yes, 20 Reservoir
Street -

Suddenly Doug's VOICE comes through on the intercom.

DOUG (V.O.)

Bedroom's invitation only, Steph.
Weren't you paying attention?

Steph lowers the phone, galvanized.

STEPH

You were angling for me pretty hard
back there, you son of a bitch.
(into phone, quietly)
No, not you.

She hangs up.

DOUG (V.O.)

You wanted it, Steph. You still do.

Steph finds Karlee's exfoliating mitts in the ransacked room.

STEPH

Breaking your jaw didn't clarify
that?

DOUG (V.O.)
 Love, hate, tension, release, it's
 all part of it. If Karlee hadn't
 come back ...

STEPH
 Why are you obsessed with me??

She puts on the mitts then SMASHES Karlee's vanity mirror.

DOUG (V.O.)
 Get over yourself. I'm not
obsessed. I'm rich, talented,
 handsome ... I've always had a
 path, and here you are ... Here you
 are constantly fucking things up
 for me.
 (horny)
 Nobody does that. Do you have any
 idea what that's like? You've never
had anything to fuck up.

STEPH
 What about Karlee?

Steph grabs the biggest shard of glass she can find, her
 hands safely in the mitts. This is good.

DOUG (V.O.)
 This is not to the exclusion of
 Karlee. But you -
 (breathes)
 You need to finish what we started
 back there.

Reflected in the shard of glass, Steph sees an object on the
 mantle behind her.

STEPH
 You want me to 'finish you off',
 Doug?

She turns - it's Doug's Grammy award.

Steph picks it up and tests its weight.

DOUG
 You should want to! Why don't you
like me?? You don't seem to realize
 I've been nice to you so far - and
 I don't have to be.
 (louder)
 Because who are you to not like me?
 That's not how this works.

DOUG (CONT'D)
You were meant to be the servant!
Our servant! My servant!

That sounded different. Not from the speakers.

Steph looks out the window.

Doug IS THERE, rising up outside the window as if levitating - or maybe he just has a good grip and powerful forearms - while in the background, silhouetted in the moonlight, BIRDS are massing, flying this way and that.

Steph blinks in disbelief.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(despotic)
I will take what's due to me and
you will pay what is owed, before
sunrise. I, Douglas Palmer, emperor
of all space and time, will deliver
my seed unto both the empress and
the servant - and after The
Collapse I will deliver that seed
unto the world itself, and it shall
become pregnant and my sons and
daughters will walk forever in the
endless light -

STEPH
You just have rich parents Doug!

Doug opens the window. Steph stares, clearing her throat.

STEPH (CONT'D)
(lasciviously)
I'm ready for you!

Doug steps through the window and closes it after him.

He turns back lustily and heads toward Steph.

Steph swoons toward him, then pulls the Grammy from behind her back and CLOBBERS him with it. More of his bones crunch.

Doug stumbles, staring, back towards the window.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I'm not a servant.

Steph looms up and CLOBBERS him again.

Doug falls against the window, smashing the top half of the glass. He hangs awkwardly on the partially-broken pane for a moment, bones adrift in his skull.

DOUG

Urghh ...

Steph grips the back of Doug's pants with one hand and grabs the belt around his head with the other.

STEPH

I'm Satan.

SHE THROWS HIM THROUGH THE WINDOW. It smashes completely.

Doug rockets to the ground. CRASH.

Steph breathes, almost nicking herself on the glass. She leans out.

Below, Doug is dead, mercifully face-down in a pool of blood.

Steph takes off Karlee's bloody exfoliating mitts and throws them to the floor. She turns.

The mattress falls forward in the doorway -

- Karlee is there.

She and Steph lock eyes.

Karlee stares, still as a statue.

Steph braces herself, holding the Grammy slick with Doug's blood.

Karlee blinks. A beat. She approaches - one step, then another.

Steph tightens her grip on the award statue ...

Karlee runs to the window. She looks down through it.

Doug's body is still there, now with birds alighted on him.

Karlee sheds a single tear, her face muted and inscrutable. She's silent.

STEPH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

A long pause as the tear runs down Karlee's whole face.

KARLEE

(a whisper)

Me too.

Steph watches her.

Karlee slides to the ground, her elbows over her knees and her head slumped. She's crying.

Steph takes a step toward Karlee. Is this real?

STEPH
Help is coming.

KARLEE
Steph. I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Steph has a flash of relief.

STEPH
It'll take a while to understand
what's happened.

Karlee sobs and clutches onto Steph's pants.

KARLEE
I wasn't myself, I haven't been ...

STEPH
He had a hold over you, Karlee.

Steph crouches and they hug. Karlee nods.

STEPH (CONT'D)
That cosmic stuff - emperor and
empress ... I submit to you or you
wipe me out?

KARLEE
It was so insane, Steph, so insane!
You got me back ...

STEPH
It's okay. It's okay. I'm here.

We see Steph's face awash with emotion as she hugs Karlee,
still sobbing.

We see Karlee's ... then:

BEEP BEEP.

Steph opens her eyes at the sound. Karlee stops sobbing. They
disengage and look at each other, uncertain. Karlee checks
her phone.

KARLEE
Oh fuck.

Karlee snaps her eyes to Steph's, brandishing a message.

Steph looks: it's from Doug.

It reads 'U there?'

STEPH
Do not text back!

Steph lunges to her feet and looks down through the window.

Doug is gone. Just a pool of blood and some birds.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Oh fuck!

EXT. AVIARY - CONTINUOUS

Steph and Karlee run onto the patio. Just blood. No Doug.

STEPH
Fuck!

KARLEE
He's alive, he's alive?

Karlee is strangely stricken, moving her arms and eyes around her. Steph faces her, grips her shoulders.

STEPH
Don't do anything, don't think
about anything, stay here, I'll ...

She tightens her grip on the statue and runs into the house, leaving the glass doors open.

KARLEE
At least you're not a murderer,
Steph!

Steph flinches as she runs.

INT. HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Terrified but determined, Steph searches the house for Doug - recoiling from behind doorways, jumping at shadows - like an arachnophobe determined to kill a spider.

EXT. AVIARY - NIGHT

Karlee turns back from watching Steph run inside. She rubs her eyes with her fingers, exhales.

A soft SOUND from nearby. Karlee looks up dreamily.

A previously-unnoticed trail of deep red blood leads off to the right, towards the bird of prey enclosure. Karlee steps along it.

INT. THE HOUSE - MONTAGE

Steph, brandishing the award statue and screaming each time, jumps into the doorways to:

- The game room
- The self-care room
- The foyer

No Doug.

- Steph sees a pipette and a douser full of liquid near the water feature: "DP pheromones". She gags.

- In the wine cellar, Steph touches the wall. Moisture is seeping through it. She looks down. Six inches of water underfoot. Steph remembers: the hydraulics button. Uh oh. She backs out of the door.

- She throws open the door to the ensuite bathroom and instantly opens the cage for the pale yellow parakeet. It's free.

EXT. AVIARY - NIGHT

Karlee's P.O.V. as she steps around a hedge.

In front of her, on the ground, Doug is there, coughing and breathing deeply, pulling himself along with his arms. Each exertion leaves more blood on the ground behind him. It's remarkable he's alive.

KARLEE

... babe?

DOUG

(spluttering)

Oh, babe ... help me to the shrine.

You got that booster for me?

Karlee surveys him. She steps closer.

KARLEE

(shouting)

STEPH!

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steph turns at Karlee's call, eyes like saucers.

EXT. AVIARY - NIGHT

KARLEE
(shouting)
He's here!

Doug turns himself upward. His face is completely destroyed.

DOUG
Babe, the booster. I need the
blood, or the pheromones.
(thinking)
Maybe the blood. Lev's should be
good.

Karlee regards him dispassionately. She starts to crouch next to him.

INT. HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Steph charges through the hallways, adrenaline at peak.

STEPH
Shit shit shit.
(calling)
Karlee! Stay where you are!

She emerges into the master bedroom -

EXT. AVIARY - NIGHT

Karlee crouches next to Doug. Doug coughs up more blood.

KARLEE
Babe. Sweet boy.
(whispering)
I heard you. Again.

DOUG
What?

KARLEE
(quiet, sing-song)
You tried to fuck Steph. Again.

She stares into his eyes. Doug smiles, shaking his head.

DOUG
Babe, my queen ... what?

Karlee doesn't react.

DOUG (CONT'D)
I ... I just want what you want ...
I thought you could join in
afterwards ...

Karlee nods. She leans down to him, face to face.

KARLEE
Did you come onto her when we were
broken up?
(slowly)
Did you?

Doug hesitates, strategizes. He did.

DOUG
Why would it even matter? You and
me? We're untouchable, babe. My
empress.

Karlee kisses him lightly, seductively. His blood goes over her lips.

Above them, at the window, Steph suddenly appears, coming to a dead halt from her sprint. She sees them kiss.

STEPH
(shouts)
No!

Karlee, still smiling, puts her hands around Doug's head.

KARLEE
(to Doug)
My emperor.

She twists his neck. It breaks.

Steph GASPS.

Doug exhales and dies. His eyes roll up into his head.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
Steph?

Karlee stands up, facing away. She wipes the blood off her lips.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
Looks like you were right. It
wasn't working.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Watching from above, Steph shudders in fear, crouches behind the wall. She rubs her face with her hands, trying to calm herself.

A beat as she is hit by the full force of what just happened.

Steph looks out the window again. Karlee's gone.

Footsteps below running into the house. Steph looks to the doorway. The lights change as a shadow moves outside. No time.

Steph sees the drainpipe outside the window. She swings out on the drainpipe, trying to be as silent as possible. She prepares to climb down.

KARLEE (O.S.)
You could never let me have
anything of my own, could you, you
sanctimonious fucking cunt?

Karlee appears and swipes at Steph with the champagne saber, slicing through the drainpipe. Steph only just grabs onto the top, above the break - she climbs up. Karlee swipes at her again, but can't reach her, and can't reach the drainpipe above.

Emotion-tears in her eyes, Steph hooks her leg onto a previously-unseen attic window sill. This hurts.

Steph pulls herself into the attic with her powerful legs. It's darkened; expensive-looking paintings lean on the walls, waiting to join the circulation of art downstairs.

Below, Karlee moves into the hall. In the background is the sound of GUSHING WATER.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
You just can't help wrecking
everything. You still haven't let
go of high school. Me being the
first to have sex, me getting that
stalker - now me the first to get
married.

Upstairs, Steph stops.

Downstairs, Karlee hears the sudden cessation of movement:

KARLEE (CONT'D)
Yeah, that's right. It was
yesterday. I'm Mrs Doug Palmer.

Karlee heaves her saber above her.

Upstairs, the blade stabs through the floor near Steph. Steph jumps sideways, overbalances and slams bodily into the floor.

STEPH
(yelling)
Congrats Karlee!

KARLEE (O.S.)
(matter-of-fact)
Or he's Mr Karlee Reyes ... I don't
know, we took each other's names,
thought we'd try that out -

Karlee pulls out the blade and plunges it into the ceiling again.

Above, Steph twists away but the blade slices into her side. She screams in agony.

She scrambles to her feet again, wincing, her shirt bloody.

KARLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You never learned to compromise -
that's why you're alone and working
in a bottle-shop - standing in
judgement of others but never
looking at yourself - while I got
married, I have property, I
manifested the future. I wanted to
see if you'd changed, Steph, but
you're still dead weight - a person
of the past keeping everyone around
you in the past ...

Steph looks along her floor. Ahead she sees a trap door leading down into the house. Above, she sees a ceiling panel leading onto the roof. In the wall, another door -

She races to the door, opens it. She's confused - not a room or passageway - what is this?

It's a one-person portable wooden sauna room.

There's a shape inside.

KARLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I dreamed up a whole thing, a whole
cosmic thing to keep him on track
... no more sleeping around, no
more fucking the singers ... and
you had to wreck that too.

Steph steps sideways, out of the light, and looks in.

She SCREAMS.

The shape is a long-dead, mummified J-JANELLE, a broken vinyl
record of 'Take My Love Away' in her mouth.

KARLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pretty smart though, huh? Not just
a pretty face? I never liked being
put in your boxes, Steph - it's
like being buried alive.

Steph slams the door shut.

She looks up, reaches for the ball on the string to pull the
ceiling panel down, can't reach it - double-takes. She pushes
an in-retrospect obvious button on the wall. Mechanical
whirring. The panel opens and becomes a set of stairs.

Steph ASCENDS just as Karlee opens the trap door.

EXT. THE ROOF - NIGHT

Steph runs across the ultra-modern tiled roof clutching her
side.

Karlee emerges onto the roof behind her. She holds the pale
yellow parakeet.

KARLEE
- but one look at all this and you
just had to teeeaar me down. You
killed him, my darling idiot
husband!

Karlee throws the parakeet. It strikes Steph on her back then
flies off.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
You did all of this, to make me
just like you again.

Steph sees one of the roof tiles is loose and seizes it.

STEPH
 (quietly)
 Fuck that.
 (shouting)
 Fuck that! My life, is fine, and
 I'm not the one who has to be an
object to someone -

Steph throws the tile at Karlee. It misses but Karlee is rattled.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 (picking up another tile)
 - who has to yoke herself to anyone
 other than herself, because there's
 fucking -

Steph hurls a second tile.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 - nothing inside her.

The tile strikes Karlee on the side of her head.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 (realizing)
 Oh my God. That's our whole
 relationship. That's what I've been
 doing with you.

On the cusp of a revelation, Steph sees Karlee stumble. Karlee drops to her knees, blood flowing from the side of her head.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 (aghast)
 Sorry!

KARLEE
 Harsh.

Steph stares, alert. Karlee looks at herself in her blade.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
 They loved that you were bi, didn't
 they. But with me ... they never
 even asked.

Karlee's eyes are glassy. She stops, her mood totally different now. Steph swallows.

Karlee lowers the saber, touches the sides of her head.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
 Steph ... do you love me?

Steph, blindsided again, is transfixed, emotions again at war on her face.

She steps closer.

Karlee continues, feeling her way through it, wiping away tears -

KARLEE (CONT'D)
 Now that Doug's gone - Steph, all of this is mine. It can be ours. You'll never have to work again. We can live here, you and I - the way we always should've -

Karlee paws at Steph. Steph stares, listening.

KARLEE (CONT'D)
 Waiting for the end together. I can make it up to you. Give me that chance. You thought you could replace me with Lev, I thought I could replace you with Doug, but we couldn't. You and I, we're different than all of them. I love you so much.

Steph looks at Karlee.

Karlee looks at Steph - torn apart, vulnerable, desperate -

Gorgeous, still gorgeous. Karlee's eyes shine in the moonlight.

Steph almost crumbles.

STEPH
 I love you too, Karlee ...

Karlee smiles gently, inhaling with excitement. She laughs and smiles.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 But -

As Steph moves her mouth to say something else -

Karlee's eyes change. Her smile contorts -

- she STABS Steph in the chest.

The blade enters under Steph's collar bone. Steph is winded.

Steph and Karlee lock eyes. Steph grabs Karlee's hands, around the saber handle.

A RUMBLING in the building beneath them. The light appears to be leaving Steph's eyes. Then Karlee sees something is wrong.

Karlee looks down.

The saber has shattered the pendant around Steph's neck, the one with the picture of the two of them. The blade barely grazed Steph herself.

Steph sees this too, stunned. Karlee exclaims in despair.

Steph looks at Karlee.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I just think we're going in
different directions.

Karlee absorbs this.

KARLEE
Moralist.

Steph releases the saber handle and scrambles away from Karlee just as a fissure tears through the roof beneath them.

Steph looks back at Karlee, seeing if she's giving chase.

Karlee is just staring at her.

A wall of water explodes between them.

Steph jumps off the roof into one of the trees.

EXT. RESERVOIR ST - NIGHT

Karlee & Doug's house crumbles and implodes, each collapsing room creating another pillar of water. The metal frame of the aviary twists, buckles and tumbles into the water table beneath, freeing dozens of birds into the night sky.

Falling out of the lower branches of the tallest tree, her jeans soaked, is Steph.

She crawls down the path as SIRENS SOUND, blue and red lights illuminating her. She collapses and rolls over.

She feels something: she still has Lev's phone in her pocket. She pulls it out, holds it above her head.

A red bar runs along on the top of the screen. It's a voice recording. Lev must have started it.

Steph smiles. She stops the recording and breathes, shutting her eyes. In the moment of calm, she drops the phone on her face by accident.

She remembers something else. She reaches into her other pocket, and pulls out -

- the picture of herself with devil horns and a gag around the mouth - also soaked through.

Steph looks at it.

She turns to look behind her.

She looks at the deluge of destruction in her wake - the house splitting in two, imploding into the earth, water cascading out.

She turns back to the picture. She adjusts her grip on it and it disintegrates. She seems to realise something.

Above her, a gorgeous PARAMEDIC races to her side.

PARAMEDIC

Are you okay? What happened? What's
your name? Is there anyone else
inside?

Steph blinks and stares into their eyes.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)

Can you say anything?

Steph starts shaking her head, flooded with a strange relief. She mouths the word 'no'. She shuts her eyes, smiling.

CUT TO BLACK.