FADE IN

INT. SIMULATED MASTER BATHROOM - UNKNOWN HOUSE - MIDNIGHT

Dim lighting illuminates the bathroom when NILES (EVAN) walks in. He's shirtless, stretching his back and neck, trying to look at visible scratches on his upper back in the mirror.

NILES
(to himself)
I really think she goes for the same spots every time.

VERONICA (EMERSON) leans on the door, silhouetted from the dim bedroom lights. Implied nude underneath a silk robe.

VERONICA
You say that like it's a bad thing.

Niles looks over at her and shakes his head, leans on the sink with his palms.

NILES
More like just stating a fact.

She walks in slowly, running her hand across his back as he closes his eyes. She looks at herself in the mirror, begins to play with her long hair, half smiling.

VERONICA
Well my love, do you have any other facts to state tonight?

Niles opens his eyes and looks at her, shakes his head.

NILES
That you really make things difficult for me sometimes.

VERONICA
(snickering)
And how's that?

He leans up, crosses his arms and sighs.

NILES
How am I supposed to get up in a few hours and go to work?
(struggles a second)
When the most astounding woman known to the human race is my wife.

Veronica laughs at that, fixes her hair up in a loose bun.

VERONICA
(smiling)
Lucky for you we work at the same university...
(sighs)
With all those “hot young girls” on campus.

Niles cracks his neck a second, nods seriously.

NILES
Huh... You didn’t tell me you went to the ‘Bait N Fish Depot’ today... I wonder if Jimmy was in; that guy has the best tackle stories.

Veronica begins to laugh, puts her hand over her mouth, Niles just shrugs.

NILES (CONT’D)
(innocent)
What? Clearly you’re interested in buying a new pole, for all the compliment fishing you’re doing right now.

She begins to laugh louder as Niles moves behind and wraps his arms around her. He kisses her head a moment.

VERONICA
Is it that obvious?

NILES
What, that I adore your laugh that is more beautiful than music?

Veronica turns around as Niles shakes his head, moves some of her long hair behind her ear.

NILES (CONT’D)
Or that you have smile creases that are the center of my day and night?

Her smile slowly fades as she begins to rub his back. He takes her one hand and breaths it in, kisses it.

VERONICA
Fine, we’re only in our 30’s, we’re not *that* old... Maybe we just need another vacation.

Niles shrugs, waves it off.

NILES
Come on; *I don't need no vacation, no fancy destination... Baby you're my great escape.*

Veronica tilts her head, a slow grin forming.

VERONICA
Wait, what?

NILES
Like; *we could stay at home, listen to the radio... Dance around the fireplace.*

She bites her lower lip a moment, shakes her head.

VERONICA
(thoughtful)
It's the summer, and last I checked you have two left feet anyway.

Niles looks down at his feet, shrugs as Veronica realizes what he's saying, begins to grin.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
Was that from *Die A Happy Man?*

He nods as he looks into her eyes.

NILES
It was either that or *Speechless...* Which isn't easy to make me in but like come on, Goddess is gonna Goddess, am I right?

Veronica's smile fades as he trails off; she puts her hands around his head.

VERONICA
Don't blame me when you're tired all day at work tomorrow.

She suddenly hoists herself up around Niles as they begin to kiss passionately. He walks them back to the bedroom slowly *OUT OF FRAME*, Veronica's robe falling to the floor.

INT. SIMULATED HOME OFFICE - SAME TIME - PLACE UNKNOWN

SLOW PAN around a darkly lit home office, pics of a sad looking BLAKE (JOHNNY) with a robust woman adorn the room. Blake is asleep on a couch holding a sleeping baby. BLANCH, the woman from the pics, enters quietly.

BLANCH
(whispering)
Honey bun, I'm done my bubble bath, you can start breakfast for the kids while I feed junior.

Blake awakens and looks down at the baby, sighs. He looks up and grimaces at Blanch, carefully handing her the baby.

BLAKE
(sincere)
I was having the most beautiful dream. The grim reaper, he was just so wonderful, so peaceful. He came over, put his skeletal hand on my shoulder, and said it was time. I began to cry, but they were tears of joy.

Blanch is slowly moving with the baby in her arms, making soothing sounds and waves Blake off.

BLANCH
Oh come on dumplin, then you wouldn't be able to see your own children grow up.

Just then clearly non-Caucasian kid's tumble into the room, fighting and yelling at each other. Blanch starts yelling at them as the baby begins to cry. She splits the two kids up and they run out.

BLANCH (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go feed junior.

She walks out as Blake shudders, standing and stretching. His tablet beeps breaking the silence. He goes over to it at his desk and a text conversation with him and DAKOTA pops up. He looks around to make sure he's alone and smiles.

DAKOTA
Good morning great looking:}

We see Blake respond as he blushes.

BLAKE
I wouldn't go that far:{

DAKOTA
About the morning being good or you being the cutest professor this side of Texas? (Heart)

Blake smiles and types quickly.

BLAKE
I bet you say that to all the underpaid overworked department heads at The University.

DAKOTA
Not usually; I just tell them to spend the night with me and I'll make em all better... Thing is you're the only one I've ever said that to.

Blake's eyes widen, he runs his hands through his hair.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Speaking of, when am I gonna get to break out my patented massage moves? (Naughty)

Blake runs his hand over his mouth, sighs.

BLAKE
I've only ever been with one woman, and by that I mean I hate my life. So trust me dreams of either death or running away with you help keep me going, so the sooner the better!

DAKOTA
It must be fate:} We've never even kissed and I still want you (Wink)

He but then jumps in his chair when the door to the garage opens and a tall Hispanic man walks in, MANUEL.

MANUEL
(surprised)
Ah, hello Mr. Johnny, you're not usually home at this time.

Blake quickly turns the screen to his tablet off, leans back in his chair awkwardly.

BLAKE
It's a long story. Funny, I didn't know pilates instructors made house calls this early... Or even made house calls to begin with.

Manuel shrugs at that, takes in a long breath.

MANUEL
Mr. Johnny, take a look around, I take my job very seriously.

Blake turns to the pictures on the wall, various examples of Blanch and Manuel clearly having a relationship, while Blake is off to the side looking forlorn and lost.

BLAKE
Yeah that's weird, Blanch is still waiting for her abs 'to pop.' How long have you been her teacher again?

MANUEL
A little longer than your oldest child.

They stare at each other a second quietly, Blake looking like he's about to get angry, but just shrugs and waves it off.

BLAKE
Sounds good to me; I know they're hard muscles to develop.

Manuel smiles and laughs, points at Blake.

MANUEL
That's why you're the man. When she's ready tell her I'll be in my car waiting.

BLAKE
(nodding)
Sure thing man... Wait, you're driving her to class?

MANUEL
(awkward)
Uh yeah, I'm really committed to my job and like, yeah.

Blake smiles as Manuel leaves, the kids tumbling back into the room, arguing with each other in Spanish. Blake splits them up and crosses his arms.

BLAKE
(to himself)
They grow up so quickly.

Blake laughs to himself, leaves his office room.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. SIMULATED UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE ROOM - EARLY MORNING

VALERIE (ALICE) is wearing a drab pantsuit typing on her phone at the head of a long conference table. Her phone then rings and she sighs loudly, answers it.

VALERIE
(annoyed)
Yeah great, I was just texting your partner at the law firm... How is it my prick husband, who barely earned a paupers wage, is trying to get more than fifty percent?

She tilts her head listening to her lawyer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Mhmm... He said I was cheating on him with Thomas R. Price? Because of financial records he found?

Just then familiar faces from the *TAIM* universe begin to filter in, Valerie standing up, annoyed.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
You can tell my dipshit soon to be ex husband he found statements from my T. Rowe Price account... Yes the asset management firm!

Everyone is chatting quietly as Valerie gets more annoyed.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Oh no, no no... He said I assaulted him!? It was a friggin prostate massage! And when he was flopping around like a god damn open mouth bass begging me not to stop...
(pauses)
Fine, you can counter with "aggressive" lover instead.

Valerie then hangs up her phone and cracks her neck, notices a few people at the table trying not to pay attention. STAN (ERIC) looks over and clears his throat awkwardly.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
(sarc)
Oh please Eric, just try to avoid being a dick for once and...

She stops when a rushed BLAKE (JOHNNY) and relaxed NILES (EVAN) walk in.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Oh, speaking of two walking examples of dicks; late as usual.

Valerie takes her seat, Blake begins to go through his bag hurriedly as Niles makes a sarcastic face.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Let me guess Johnny, your laptop bag is at Pre-K again?

BLAKE
That's twice this week! Wait, that means my kids have my tablet; shit.

VALERIE
Yeah sure, "your kids."

Blake doesn't respond, a few people laughing around the table

VALERIE (CONT'D)
And you; what Tantric hocus pocus was it this time with that wife of yours that made you forget your tablet?

Niles takes out a note pad, leans back and shrugs.

NILES
You know*... she looks great in cheap sunglasses, she looks great in anything...*

Valerie slaps the table, takes a pen and points it at him.

VALERIE
Keep working your god damn country music into conversation and this goes in your neck... Up to you.

BLAKE
(sighs)
Don't forget Emerson is a nurse and would use their metaphysical energy to heal him with love.

NILES
(genuine)
Dude I'm tellin you, the ecstasy alone; oh wait, Alice, you finally do that thing with your husband I suggested a while back?

She looks away with a sigh, cracking her neck.

BLAKE
(depressed)
Yep, must be nice. The only pleasure I get anymore is when Blanch is away on her twice daily pilates classes with Manuel... Gives me time to fantasize about my funeral.

VALERIE
How is it he's been instructing her on "pilates" for years now, and I still don't think she even knows what they are.

There's more snickering from around the table, Niles putting his hand on Blake's shoulder.

NILES
Aww Johnny, you'll find your twin flame one day soon and...

VALERIE
(interrupting)
I swear if you start quoting from the poetry you write for her, I'm gonna fire you both.

Everybody reacts to that, Blake upset and Niles laughing

BLAKE
I didn't do shit!

NILES
(waves it off)
And I've got tenure so whatever.

She leans back in her chair, takes in a long breath. A beautiful college age woman comes in, DAKOTA, and hands Valerie a file. She looks right at Blake and winks, his eyes following her out of the room.

BLAKE
So Alice, I should go back home and get my stuff, my tablet especially. That's where all my work is.

Valerie looks up from the file, irritated.

VALERIE
Are you serious? Use his thing then, I don't care.

Blake looks over at Niles, the latter surprised. He holds up his notebook, covered with pictures of him and his wife.

NILES
Wait, this? I mean, you already mentioned my poetry; so I thought may as well just work on that cause like, come on, she's a Goddess.

VALERIE
What does that even mean?

Niles attempts to explain when Dakota catches Blake's attention from outside the conference room.

BLAKE
Hey, so it looks you guys have this under control, I may as well just cut out early and...

VALERIE
Dude no, we have an hour of work to start, not the least of which is how you two keep missing your eye exams from the *University Collective*.

Blake rolls his eyes, Niles adjusts uncomfortably a second.

NILES
I told you, they keep giving me the worst headaches.

VALERIE
I'm sure that "piercing eyed" twin soul flame or whatever knows how to cure your headaches.

Niles smiles from ear to ear and nods his head positively, Blake looking at Dakota who is smiling back.

NILES
Dude, last night we were in yab yum for over an hour; totally connected on all levels. I did start to get a little numb though with my...

BLAKE
(interrupting)
Ass!

Everyone looks at him surprised, Niles shaking his head no.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
(awkwardly)
No, I mean I have to go to the bathroom, from that part of my body, because of the food I ate earlier... And such.

VALERIE
(incredulous)
Fine, then go do that; but get back here because we have work to do.

Blake leaves in a hurry, Stan leaning in toward Niles.

STAN
(smiling - teasing)
So, really walking on the wild side?

Niles grins with his eyes closed a moment.

NILES
Well you know how it goes... Wait, look who I'm talking to!

Stan starts laughing, moves closer to Niles.

STAN
(sensuously)
So, like, as long as you're open to trying different things and all...

Niles doesn't look at him.

NILES
Same answer as before dude.

Stan clears his throat, moves back over.

SMASH CUT

INT. SIMULATED UNIVERSITY CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

BLAKE (JOHNNY) leaves the conference room and looks down the hall, notices DAKOTA near the window.

BLAKE
I couldn't wait, I had to see you... And wait, you're her right?

Dakota nods, moves some of her hair behind her ear.

DAKOTA
I know you still wanted to wait, but you sounded even more depressed than usual earlier, so I wanted to risk it and at least say hello.

Blake stares at her, shakes his head.

BLAKE
Hello? I'm just glad you're real!

DAKOTA
(laughing)
I kept telling you I'm not AI but you still seemed skeptical.

BLAKE
I'm still skeptical now...
(looks over and back)
I'd love to get coffee or something, but I can tell this meeting is going to drag and...

Before he finishes the conference room doors open and everyone starts filing out. STAN (ERIC) walks by Blake making a face, shakes his head.

STAN
Alice got another call from her lawyer, it didn't go well; so Evan thought he'd start reading poetry he wrote for Emerson... That also didn't go well.

Stan walks away, Blake's eyes wide as he looks at Dakota who just smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. SIERRA'S CAR - MID AFTERNOON - DAY UNKNOWN

SIERRA is driving her car with STC in the passenger's seat. He's eating granola form his hands and drinking liquor.

SIERRA
...and how many times did I tell you, the point of this was not to raise the dead or create a zombie nature hybrid.

STC swallows his food and coughs a little.

STC
And I told you I totally got that; but when you hippies were doing your seance thing, I figured I'd be able to access the unearthly realm and you know, jimmy around a little.

Sierra just laughs at that, throws her one hand up.

SIERRA
It was a ceremony to honor Gaia, while also utilizing nature's sacred herb.

STC
(genuine)
That's why you were all high.

Sierra laughs to herself.

SIERRA
Again, not pot and not high.

They turn the corner to a small convention center, parking lot filled with cars.

SIERRA (CONT'D)
Honestly I was a little surprised you didn't take to that like a moth to a flame.

STC
Eh, nothing wrong with a little self control; am I right?

Sierra smirks and parks the car, looks around surprised.

STC (CONT'D)
Something wrong?

Sierra scrolls through her phone.

SIERRA
Val said for us to stop by and pick up some stuff they had for the ceremony yesterday... It looks like everyone's still here, but no one is responding to my texts or calls.

STC
(genuine)
Awww, her and Niles finally tied the knot... I knew those kids would be all right.

SIERRA
(smiling)
There's a lot wrong with what you just said.

STC finishes the bag of granola and dusts his hands off.

STC
Wait, what kind of ceremony then? And why weren't you there?

SIERRA
It was a last minute thing that one of our client's had... But with Earth Day and the weekend's events I wasn't able to get involved.

STC
(shrugs)
You think it was some kind of cosplay thing then? I hate missing those.

With that he hops right out of her car, Sierra following quickly, surprised.

SIERRA
Wait; you said my nature meeting in the woods where we made our own clothes was crazy, but you'd be cool with cosplay?

STC
Well yeah, I mean the ticks in the woods alone, and then lime disease... Come on, too risky.

They stop at a door and Sierra puts her phone away, opens it but stops before they walk in.

SIERRA
Hold on, didn't you say you got bit by an animal near the woods and have low level rabies or something.

STC
Oh no, it was near a dumpster behind the Wendy's;
(MORE)

STC (CONT'D)
and it was a baby raccoon instead of an adult, so it’ll work itself out.

Sierra makes a double take at STC, he just smiles and nods his head. She shakes hers and they both walk inside.

END SAMPLE

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