

INT. DARK VIRTUAL SPACE - EARLY EVENING

BLAKE appears on the full screen drinking a beer when his screen shrinks to half the space, VALERIE appearing next and leaning back from her PC monitor, smoking a cigarette.

BLAKE
(smiling)
Someone looks relaxed; who was he?

She shakes her head, blows smoke into the monitor.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Wait, she?! Oh please tell me you
got it on tape... I'll even take
muffled audio at this point.

Valerie purses her lips, laughs out a puff of smoke.

VALERIE
Dude, get a hold of yourself,
you're a stripper. Just call one of
your coworkers at the ole strip
club.

Blake bites his lower lip, leans forward, grabs another beer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Barely a week into quarantine and
you're already losing it... You're
as bad as Sierra... Guess you'll be
the next one flitting around to all
our places because you're anxious
about being locked down alone.

BLAKE
Speaking of, is she in your spare?

Valerie shakes her head no, surprised.

VALERIE
What, my spare bedroom? No, she
left an hour ago before that god
damn curfew.

Blake laughs loudly at that; the screen changing orientation with them on the bottom, NILES' home office on top. He's turned talking to a curvy athletic woman that can't be seen.

Blake's eyes go wide and Valerie looks irked. The woman walks away as Niles turns to his computer, clearing his throat. He adjusts his glasses and leans back.

NILES

Oh hey guys, how's it goin'?

VALERIE

(annoyed)

How's it goin'? You tell us.

BLAKE

Yeah man, both Valley Girl and I are all alone while you're clearly not... And dude, wow.

Niles looks confused a moment, looks behind himself and then back to the screen.

NILES

(genuine)

Oh, that was Veronica.

VALERIE

(sighs)

Because of course; but why Niles?

BLAKE

And dude, what was she wearing?

Niles takes a sip of his smoothie, waves it off.

NILES

Oh she just got a hot shower and didn't have a change of clothes, so she opted to temporarily wear one of my compression shirts.

BLAKE

(grinning)

Define temporary.

Valerie begins to shake her head, then hits her desk.

VALERIE

I haven't felt the stabby urge in almost a week. It was nice you know, but it's also kinda nice that it's back; weird.

BLAKE

What Val meant to say, or ask, is why is Veronica even there? Other than what I'm hoping for buddy.

Valerie throws Blake the middle finger.

NILES

I live close to her police barracks, so we're driving supplies there tomorrow... But it got late and we got busy and the like.

VALERIE

And now she's showering and strutting around in one of your shirts because why again?

NILES

Since we couldn't have movie night this week, and both VEE and I got really sweaty earlier...

Niles stops when Valerie begins to bang her head on her desk.

NILES (CONT'D)

What? We had gone hiking earlier and then came back here and had to stretch it out.

Valerie begins to move her head back and fourth on her desk.

VALERIE

(muffled)

Not fucking helping... Not fucking helping.

Niles is about to respond but stops, turns around.

NILES

Wait, what? Just one sec everyone.

He gets up and leaves, Valerie throwing herself back in her chair, fixing her disorganized hair.

VALERIE

(sarc)

Yep; we're all on lock-down alone while little miss perfect gets to stay with him and wear his shirt for some bull-shit reason.

BLAKE

(smoothly)

Oh I don't think there's much mystery surrounding the reason why.

Just then the screen orientation changes again, STC pops up on the bottom using his phone outside.

STC
 Hello friends well wishers and
 Val... Question; why aren't you
 happy for our bestie Niles?

About to answer, Valerie stops as the guy's lean in.

VALERIE
 (slowly)
 Like, I don't know, define happy.

Blake begins to laugh, Valerie shaking her head. Next there's
 some loud noises coming from STC's feed.

BLAKE
 Dude what's going on?

STC
 (proud)
 Oh that's just Sierra; she's really
 racking up the body count tonight.

Everyone looks puzzled, STC turns his phone to a makeshift
 boxing ring in a field. SIERRA is walking around the ring as
 people cheer. She then helps her opponent up and notices STC
 with his phone, smiles and waves at it enthusiastically.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK VIRTUAL SPACE - SAME TIME

BLAKE NILES and VALERIE look in various states of puzzlement
 or concern as STC turns the phone back to himself, smiling.

STC
 This girl's got moxxy... Or maybe
 it's Maybelline... Not sure; my E
 is starting to wear off and wow,
 that's not cool.

Before anyone can respond SIERRA gets into view on STC's
 phone, wearing head gear and looking sweaty.

SIERRA
 (excited)
 Hey guys! Val, I'm sorry we didn't
 finish our girl's night, but STC
 texted me about a boxing match
 under the stars and I couldn't just
 watch, so they let me join.

Valerie picks up a pen and begins to make a stabbing motion.

VALERIE

STC, I swear if you have Sierra involved with one of your bum fighting rings under a bridge somewhere in the city...

STC makes a face as Sierra takes off her head gear.

STC

Your tone indicates that would be a bad thing... But we're actually using a high school football field; it's all safe and above board, and when we're done everyone goes back to their homes with nary a problem... It's all for "charity."

BLAKE

But it sounds like you have a lot of people there.

STC

(assured)

No worries, the ref is an off duty LAPD cop with a gambling problem, so everything's going to be A okay.

Niles rolls his eyes, massages the bridge of his nose.

NILES

(sarc)

Yeah, that's not gonna be a problem.

There's some yelling in the background, Sierra smiling and putting her head gear back on.

SIERRA

Sorry, they need me again!

She runs off as STC looks back at his phone.

STC

(genuine)

They grow up so fast.

With that he ends his video feed, the other three stunned.

BLAKE

(serious)

Okay, that's not good.

NILES

I offered to give her my treadmill
to work off some of her nervous
energy, but she said she was fine.

VALERIE

Well clearly she's not, and will no
doubt either catch the friggin
virus or get arrested.

Just then Niles half turns, VERONICA entering the screen like
before. She puts her hand on Niles' shoulder, Blake pointing
that out to Valerie who curses under her breath. Veronica
then crouches down, fixes her long hair up.

VERONICA

(smiling)

Hey Blake... Valerie... I heard
what's going on; if you think this
is a good idea, maybe we can all
meet at the hiking trail Niles and
I found a couple months ago... It
leads to a beautiful secluded
forest and has this relaxing brook,
totally exclusive.

Blake nods his head yes and smiles, Valerie takes in a long
breath, lights another cigarette.

BLAKE

That's a great idea, for all of us.
Get us out and active, something to
do during the day so we're not
hunkered down the whole time.

VERONICA

(beautiful smile)

Awesome, we'll send you the
details... For now we've got some
homemade desserts to try and a
Voyager marathon to watch.

Veronica then gets up and leaves, Valerie rolls her eyes.

NILES

(half smiling)

We'll send you the coordinates and
send an away team out tomorrow...
Niles out.

He hops up and closes his laptop lid, the screen going back
to Blake and Valerie.

BLAKE
 (grinning)
 Uh oh, he's all hyper and using
Star Trek terminology again...
 Wait, who are you texting?

Valerie looks up a second, back down another moment, then turns off her cell screen and shrugs.

VALERIE
 Well, I'm sure a lot of people can benefit from some fresh air right? So, salt meet french fry.

BLAKE
 (making a face)
 Val come on, Veronica said this was totally exclusive.

VALERIE
 (sarc)
 Did she? I must have been distracted by her needlessly tight shirt and zero percent body fat; good night Blake.

Valerie leans forward and cuts off her video feed. Blake laughs, finishes his beer, stares at the screen a moment.

BLAKE
 (to himself)
 Eh, someone's bound to show up.

He leans back and puts his feet up on his desk.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUSTY TRAIL PARKING LOT - NEXT DAY - MID MORNING

VALERIE is leaning on her car smoking, scrolling through her phone. She stops and takes a drink from a flask. Another car pulls up and BLAKE and STEPHANIE, get out. They walk over to Valerie who nods at them.

VALERIE
 (to Blake)
 Which one's this now?

Blake makes a face as Stephanie smiles and holds out her fist to Valerie; the latter stares a second and then bumps it.

STEPHANIE
(thick accent)
My name is Stephanie Isabella
Avila; are you a stripper too?

Valerie stares at her deadpan, Blake clearing his throat.

BLAKE
Val was a world class choreographer
in New York City... She doesn't
quite cotton to what I do.
So are we the first one's here?

Valerie takes another drag from her cigarette, is about to answer but SIERRA pops up from the other side of the car, dusty and sweaty looking.

STEPHANIE
(startled)
De dónde demonios vino ella?

Sierra walks around to them, dusting herself off.

SIERRA
(excited)
I'd hug you Blake and you too
Stephanie Isabella Avila, but with
the virus and the fact I just did
fifty two pushups in two and a half
minutes, I probably shouldn't.

She fixes her hair and goes to the other side of Val's car.

VALERIE
(sarc)
So that's what I've been dealing
with since five this morning.

Valerie takes her flask out again, Blake smiling.

BLAKE
That for your electrolytes?

VALERIE
(sighing)
Nope, but it'll help me deal with
those two.

She gestures as NILES and VERONICA walk toward them. They're both laughing, Blake lifting his sunglasses and squinting.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
(sarc)
Problem Blakey?

BLAKE
(disappointed)
Oh no, nothing, it's nothing.

STEPHANIE
No, what is it babe?

Blake begins to stammer and just shrugs instead.

VALERIE
Your temp boyfriend here is letdown
Sporty Spice there isn't wearing a
"compression" shirt.

Stephanie makes a face, clears her throat fixing her own
shirt. She walks away, Blake shaking his head.

BLAKE
Damn dude, that's really stickin in
the ole craw huh?

VALERIE
(sarc)
Wait, what gave it away?

Blake mouths wow as Niles and Veronica finally join them.

BLAKE
Hey, where'd you guy's park?

Niles takes a long drink of his smoothie.

VERONICA
We parked at my police barracks to
transfer some medical supplies and
decided to get some extra exercise.

NILES
(nodding)
And wait till we get through our
hike to this forest, it's
practically other worldly and...

Niles trails off when Valerie blows her last puff of smoke
into the sky and walks away. Stephanie walks over and fist
bumps Veronica and Niles, smiling at the pair.

STEPHANIE
Aren't you two the cutest... Who
are you both again?

NILES

I'm with *TAIM* and Veronica is a media relations officer with the state police.

STEPHANIE

(smiling)

I just love couples that vibe without effort... Don't tell me, you've been together since school.

Niles clears his throat, attempts to clarify.

VERONICA

I can answer in a quicker and less awkward way than my friend, *Niles*, can... We're just that, friends.

Veronica looks down a moment, Niles nodding with a smile.

STEPHANIE

Oh wow, I mean I can read people pretty easily and it's clear...

Stephanie stops when a van pulls up *OUT OF NOWHERE*, loud music playing, the side door opening and *STC* and *STAN* jumping out as smoke billows into the air. Stan closes the door and *STC* bangs on the van to leave.

STC

(excited)

Hey guys, who's ready to embrace nature?!

Valerie joins the group again, staring at the new arrivals.

VALERIE

(sarc)

Well if I ever wanted to know what two assholes covered in pot smelled like, I just got my wish.

Stan begins to laugh at that, all high like.

STC

We didn't want to drive because of the virus, and those hippy's were kind enough to give us a lift.

Stan goes and stands next to Blake who just rolls his eyes.

STAN

Dude they had some top shelf gange; those steam-punks are the best.

Valerie shakes her head, walks over to Stan.

VALERIE
Fingers crossed it's laced with
some extra goodies.

She then walks away again, STC holding up his hand to Niles for a high five.

STC
Up top, Miles.

They all walk away, STC then turns to Stan who's lighting up a cigarette; he then notices and gets super excited, dives in for the high five knocking them both *OUT OF FRAME*.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - AFTERNOON - LATER ON

VERONICA is at the top of a hill, crouching and organizing her back pack supplies. VALERIE approaches slowly, Veronica noticing and looking back to her bag.

VERONICA
(quietly)
Niles isn't here.

VALERIE
No I know, I wanted to see you.

Veronica continues her organizing.

VERONICA
Now would that be so you could make
fun of me for my aesthetic choices,
or gloat that all kinds of people
know about the forest now?

VALERIE
Aesthetic choices; that's what
you're going with huh?

Veronica shakes her head, stands up brushing some dust off.

VERONICA
(annoyed)
Yes, not everything has to be a
thing, okay... And just so you
know, he's an eye guy by the way.

Valerie shakes her head, confused.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Niles, he's an eye guy... If you ever aligned with him in a meaningful way, you'd know that's what he notices first on a woman.

VALERIE

(hands raised)
Fine, look, maybe I haven't been that fair, and...

VERONICA

(interrupting)
And the worst part is because of your jealousy, you're about to spoil a really special thing... Which I didn't mind sharing with you guys because you're all so close with each other.

Valerie looks around, somewhat surprised.

VALERIE

Wait, this isn't it? This isn't the *special amazing forest clearing* you two kept going on about?

Veronica shakes her head no, nods around the corner.

VERONICA

No, it's kinda hard to get to and you can't see it at first... But guess we couldn't even have that.

BEAT

VALERIE

(sighing)
Okay detective, pump the breaks... Let's not pretend that in only six months, you two don't already have a lot together... Which now includes you quarantining at his place; I mean imagine the odds!

Veronica's about to object but stops; moves some of her long hair behind her ear, blushing a little.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Mhmm, exactly. Second, sure, maybe I am a little jealous...

(Veronica's head tilts)

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Okay more than a little, but I'm
also a grown up, and feel bad about
what I did with the mass text.

There's some noise and stirring from down the trail.

VERONICA

(dejected)

Guess that's the closest you'll get
to an apology; doesn't matter
anyway... Everyone's here now.

Valerie shakes her head no at that, Veronica noticing.

VALERIE

Yeah, well, maybe someone called
the cops and told them too many
people are around each other.

CAMERA PANS down the trail, a few police officers moving
everyone along. *QUICK TRANSITION BACK TO THEM.*

VERONICA

(surprised)

I'm not sure what to say.

VALERIE

(half smiling)

That'll be short lived no doubt.

She pauses, Veronica laughing a little. Valerie stares
another second, shakes her head to herself.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

And an eye guy huh? Funny, both of
ours are the same color, but your's
are "piercing" and mine "icy."

VERONICA

(genuine)

I can't help that that's how he
describes them; our frequencies are
just... Different.

Valerie nods, then points at Veronica's midsection.

VALERIE

(sarc)

Sure, like the frequency I notice
you both are always working out
together now; and I just love that
somehow even your *athletic* shirts
never quite fit right.

Veronica looks down and pulls her shirt lower.

VERONICA

(awkwardly)

I mean like, core work is important
you know, and it's better to let
your skin breathe right... And not
all athletic wear wicks away sweat
and ummm yeah, anyway...

She trails off, Valerie standing with her arms crossed,
feigning interest.

VALERIE

Yeah no, please, continue.

Veronica stares another moment, clears her throat, walks away
quietly, Valerie lighting another cigarette.

END SAMPLE