

Feral

written by

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BLACK SCREEN

Opening credits roll. We hear the sounds of a forest: birds chirping, leaves rustling and crunching underfoot. We hear the sound of a person throwing a stick and a dog's paws running on a dirt path. After a few moments, the visuals begin.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

We see a serene forest with a wide path winding between the trees. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a warm, inviting atmosphere. A scruffy Irish Wolfhound-Labrador mix, FINCH, walks and wags his tail happily, glancing expectantly at us. From the dog owner's POV, we see the owner throw a stick. FINCH eagerly chases it, tail wagging, grabs it, and trots back. The owner takes the stick and throws it again. This sequence continues to repeat, showing the bond between the dog and owner, as the opening credits continue to run. The scene continues until the final credit fades.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

FINCH and his owner, a man in his mid-40s, only known as MAN, relax on the couch in a cozy room. Framed pictures cover the walls: MAN in the army training dogs, MAN with his sister DESI, and many of MAN, DESI, and FINCH together. The TV is on, and MAN pets FINCH while holding a glass of wine.

MAN
(to FINCH)
What a stupid movie, huh boy?

FINCH wags his tail in happy confirmation. The dumber the better.

MAN (CONT'D)
I swear, if one more of these teenagers go into a dark room while yelling "Billy?" again, I'm turning this thing right the fuck off.
Deal?

FINCH puts his paw in protest on MAN.

MAN (CONT'D)
Deal. We can just watch Wheel of Fortune or something instead.

FINCH barks a low woof and scratches at MAN gently with his paw.

MAN (CONT'D)
 (laughing)
 Okay, okay! I'll leave it on.

They watch TV for a while.

MAN (CONT'D)
 (To Finch)
 You know, you're the only one that likes these dumb horror movies? Why can't I pick for once?

FINCH gets up and licks MAN's face, then lays back down, putting his head on MAN's lap.

MAN (CONT'D)
 (smiling)
 Fiiiineeee. I can't say no to you. You have special powers. We watch what you want.

MAN rests his hand on FINCH's head. Suddenly, distant yelling and laughing are heard from outside. FINCH perks up his ears, and MAN straightens, listening intently as the sounds approach the front door.

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
 Shh, shh, shh.

There is a soft knocking at the door. FINCH growls in a low tone.

MAN
 (sternly)
 Who is it?

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
 The infinite unknown. I've come to take you.

MAN
 (sternly)
 Get the fuck out of here before I call the police.

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
 (laughing)
 This IS the police!

MAN
 You need to leave.

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
 (faking a child's voice)
 Trick or treat. We just want some
 candy, mister.

The group outside laughs like it's the funniest thing on the planet. FINCH's growl rises in intensity. He gets ready to bark.

MAN
 (to Finch, putting his
 finger on his lips)
 Shhhhh.

FINCH doesn't bark, but is still very alert.

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
 Little pig, little pig, let me come
 in.

The doorknob rattles. FINCH wants to bark again, but MAN puts his finger to his lips again, making FINCH reconsider.

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 If you open--
 (yelling)
 THIS GODDAMN DOOR--
 (normal tone)
 I swear to Voss I'll be a good boy
 (yelling)
 AND WON'T GUT YOU LIKE THE LITTLE
 PIG YOU ARE!

The doorknob rattles again, while whoever is outside bangs violently enough on the door that it moves. MAN's expression changes to one of urgency, as he grabs FINCH by the collar and leads him into the bedroom closet.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOSET - EVENING

MAN puts FINCH in the closet. FINCH tries to push past him.

MAN
 No no. You have to be safe. Stay
 here and be quiet.

FINCH obeys.

MAN (CONT'D)
 Stay. Be quiet. I love you.

MAN closes the closet door. After a second we also hear the bedroom door close. It's dark and the only light is coming from under the door and a small glow in the dark ball. FINCH shuffles around uncomfortably and perks his ear up. Banging and yelling continue from the front door.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Get the fuck out of here! I'm
calling the police right now!

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
Hello? Police? I can't call you
because my signal is all scrambled
like so many eggs.

MAN (O.S.)
(under breath)
Shit.
(yelling)
I have a gun!

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.)
(sarcastically)
Sure you do.

We hear a gun cocking outside of the closet. The banging dies down.

VOICES OUTSIDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Chill, man. We were just fucking
around! Don't shoot!

MAN (O.S.)
You better believe I'll shoot if
you don't get the fuck--

Suddenly, there is a sound of glass breaking.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What--

We hear a scuffle and a gunshot. FINCH is alarmed but remains quiet, obeying the command. More gunshots are fired, and FINCH shifts nervously. A loud thud is heard outside.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oof--

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
(yelling)
STAY DOWN!

Another scuffle ensues. There is the noise of the assailants trying to bring the front door down.

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(yelling)
GET THE FUCK IN HERE ALREADY!

There is another large thud and a series of small thuds.
FINCH continues to shuffle around nervously.

MAN (O.S.)
(while kicking UNKNOWN
MALE VOICE)
Now you stay down, motherfucker!

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE is begging for MAN to stop and suddenly we hear the sound of the main door bursting open. There is a sound of many people entering and subduing MAN. The TV volume turns all the way up.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Why are you doing this? What do you want?

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Break his foot.

The room falls silent. FINCH presses his nose to the closet door. There is a tense pause. We hear a crunch and a piercing scream. FINCH can't sit still anymore. He begins trying to push the door open in a panic. Nothing works. We hear muffled dialogue and the continued attack outside. Finch is now trying the doorknob, scratching at the door and flinging his body at the door, but the door doesn't budge. We hear more muffled dialogue and a pained scream. FINCH backs up, and looks around the closet. He walks all around it, but there is no way out. The sounds of the attack continue outside. FINCH notices that the drywall in the corner of the closet is damaged. He starts to desperately dig at the damaged part. He digs violently, taking out chunks of drywall. He digs as the shelves and clothes rod shake from the sheer force of the digging. The attack continues outside. Finally, the clothes rod gives in and a pile of clothes fall on FINCH. He grumbles. He lifts his head and thinks. This seems somehow familiar.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

MAN is sleeping firmly in his bed, his face covered by his arms. FINCH is standing above MAN, looking at him. He decides to wake him up and tries to push his nose between MAN's arms to reach his face.

MAN
FINCH! It's too early.

FINCH wags his tail and jumps on MAN.

MAN (CONT'D)
No! It's a monster!

MAN starts scuffling FINCH's fur and FINCH rolls on his back.

MAN (CONT'D)
That's how it is, huh?

MAN throws the covers over FINCH. He grumbles, gets up and starts shaking until the covers come off. MAN is now standing next to the bed.

MAN (CONT'D)
You'll never get me alive!

MAN starts running and FINCH gives chase.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. CLOSET - EVENING

FINCH, buried under the clothes, momentarily hesitates. He then starts shaking himself vigorously, just like in the flashback, until he is free from the clothes. He stands looking around, unsure what to do next.

There is a tense silence.

Suddenly, MAN screams loudly and then there is a gurgle. FINCH perks his ears. He knows something is wrong. He quickly walks to the closet door and takes a deep whiff at the crack between the door and the wall.

QUICK FLASHES:

INT. MAN'S KITCHEN - DAY

MAN chops vegetables. His knife slips, cutting his finger. MAN winces and blood starts trickling.

EXT. MAN'S BACKYARD - DAY

MAN trims a tree, as the shears clip his thumb.

INT. MAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

MAN is sitting at a bench, working on something. A boxcutter falls on his foot cutting him, blood quickly soaking his sock.

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

MAN is picking up broken glass on the floor and cuts his hand, blood drips on the floor.

EXT. MAN'S DRIVEWAY - EVENING

MAN falls carrying a big picture frame. It shatters, cutting up his hands and knees.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. CLOSET - EVENING

FINCH whimpers, his ears drooping. FINCH inhales deeply once more.

FINCH'S SMELL VISION:

The door gradually becomes encased by a red mist. FINCH steps back, his tail between his legs. A ghostly vision of MAN steps through the misty closet door. MAN looks at FINCH and begins to bleed from his mouth, ears, nose, hands, and feet. The blood spreads on the floor towards FINCH. He whimpers stepping back, trying to avoid the ghostly blood. The air begins to fill with a red mist and blood spreads everywhere. FINCH yelps loudly, and the vision disperses.

FINCH desperately throws himself at the door a few times again, but to no avail. He lays down, exhausted, and rests his head on his paws, whimpering quietly.

INT. CLOSET - MORNING

FINCH is lying down in the closet and weakly scratching at the door occasionally. The door suddenly bursts open. A police officer, gun drawn, stands in the doorway. Finch sits up. The police officer lowers his weapon and kneels.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY

Hey. Hey, you're alright. Whatcha doing in here? Are you a good boy or do I need to call someone else?

FINCH whimpers and lowers his head.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY (CONT'D)

I knew you were a good boy. I can tell. Here. Let's get you outta here.

(into walkie talkie)

I'm gonna need animal control here too. There's a dog in the closet. Friendly.

DISPATCHER

(through walkie talkie)

Roger. Animal control en-route.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY

(to Finch)

It's gonna be okay, boy.

FINCH tries to push past him and through the door.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY (CONT'D)

Whoa there. Steady. It's better you wait here.

FINCH barks and pushes by the police officer, as the police officer stumbles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The living room is in chaos. It is an active crime scene; forensics haven't yet arrived. POLICE OFFICER NO. 2 stands at the open front door. MAN's dead body lies in the middle of the living room floor, face up, his eyes missing, his throat cut, with a pool of blood surrounding his head like a halo. He has been staged to look like a martyr. There is a small note paper which reads "PIGGY" adhered to MAN's forehead with a thumbtack. The room has been completely cleaned with almost no signs of struggle remaining, except for a cracked TV still playing something distorted. There are symbols spray painted on the walls: a cross, a double cross, an upside-down cross, a pentagram, an ichthys, a crescent moon and star, the om, a yin-yang, a Buddhist swastika, and an ankh. They all surround the biggest and most prominent symbol, which is an upward-pointing triangle with a radiant sun at its center, all encased within a roughly drawn circle. An inscription on the wall reads: "Purified" seemingly written in blood.

FINCH runs through the room to MAN. He wags his tail at first, but then smells him, sensing that something is wrong. POLICE OFFICER HENRY approaches quickly but stops when he sees what's happening, watching with a heavy heart. FINCH nudges MAN with his nose, and gently paws him.

MAN doesn't wake up. The realization dawns on FINCH; he whimpers, then lies down beside him, resting his head gently on MAN's chest, eyes filled with sorrow.

FINCH'S POV:

The vibrant colors of the room fade, replaced by dull, muted tones. The once cozy living room now appears dark and oppressive. This is how the world stays: dark, oppressive, and ugly. MAN is gone and the world is a horrible place for it.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY snaps out of his daze, remembering his duty.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY
No! No! You're disturbing the crime
scene! Come with me, we'll go
outside.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY tries to grab FINCH by the collar, but FINCH growls at him. POLICE OFFICER NO. 2 watches from the front door.

POLICE OFFICER NO. 2
Leave 'em. It's not worth gettin'
bit over. Animal control is like 5
minutes out.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY
But, he shouldn't be seeing this.

POLICE OFFICER NO. 2
It's a dog, Henry. He don't know.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY
They know, man. They know.

FINCH looks up at POLICE OFFICER HENRY, then back at MAN's face, noticing his missing eyes. He listens intently, looks around, and smells the air.

His ears perk up as colorful neon figures materialize, overlaid on the present scene. The only figure with a face is MAN.

FINCH'S SMELL VISION:

A translucent, ghostly image of MAN struggling with neon figures appears. The assailants are vague, faceless blobs, six in total, each a different color; ORANGE, YELLOW, BLUE, PINK, GREEN, and RED.

Sounds of the struggle echo faintly, blending with the present quiet of the room.

FINCH watches as the attackers restrain MAN while he struggles to break free. A RED NEON BLOB speaks to him, and we hear the echoes of their conversation.

MAN
(muffled)
H-- You-- Why are you here?

RED NEON BLOB
(muffled)
To be free.

MAN
(muffled)
What are you talking about? Just--
Go home. I won't tell anyone you
were here. Just leave.

RED NEON BLOB
(muffled)
But then I'll never be free.

Suddenly a forensic investigator walks through the front door. The blobs dissolve as FINCH looks at the new person entering the scene.

BACK TO SCENE

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR
Are you for real, Henry? Get that
dog out of here! He's contaminating
the scene!

POLICE OFFICER HENRY
I can't, he--

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR
I literally couldn't care less.
Just get him out!

POLICE OFFICER HENRY
Animal control is--

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR
I don't give a damn about animal
control or your excuses, just get
him outta here!
(looks at POLICE OFFICER
HENRY's shoes)
And put some booties on for fuck's
sake! Now I have to log your boot
print too? Is this your first
rodeo?

POLICE OFFICER HENRY

I had to secure the perimeter and--

POLICE OFFICER NO. 2

All due respect, ma'am, but that's not our job. WE did our job. Perimeter is secure, and we're guarding the door until y'all show up. But if you wanna get your finger bit clean off, go right ahead lady.

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR huffs and puffs, but says nothing. Two animal control officers walk through the door.

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR

Thank the good Lord almighty. He's over there.

POLICE OFFICER HENRY

He's nice, just scared.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1

We've got this, don't worry.

(To Finch)

Hey boy! Let's get you out of here and get you something to eat, huh?

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 and ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 2 approach FINCH slowly. FINCH looks at them. This is trouble.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 (CONT'D)

I know this is hard on you, but we'll take care of you, okay? Everything is gonna be okay.

FINCH growls a low growl. Suddenly he jumps up and sprints right past the officers, straight through the front door.

EXT. MAN'S HOUSE IN SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 2

Stop him!

The animal control officers and POLICE OFFICER HENRY run after him, but FINCH is too fast. He pushes past a DETECTIVE that just arrived on scene. A news truck rolls up.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1

Grab him!

It's too late. He's gone.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

The city is hustling and bustling, chaos personified. A purse is snatched from a woman. A distant car crash is heard. A street performer pretends to choke himself in front of a crowd. Through FINCH's lens, everything seems scary and chaotic. It's loud, filthy, and uninviting. FINCH navigates through people in a hurry. He arrives at a traffic light and looks up at the changing lights.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAME TRAFFIC LIGHT

FINCH, younger and more eager, is looking up at MAN. He is smiling. The world is bright, beautiful, clean, and full of possibilities.

MAN

Remember, bud. Always wait for the signal. Beep is good. Beep save life.

(laughs)

Oh God, I sound like an idiot.

Anyway, always wait for the beep.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

The world is once again a filthy, awful and dark place. The traffic light beeps, indicating that it's safe to cross. FINCH crosses the road safely. We hear the sound of a clicker.

MAN (V.O.)

Good boy!

FINCH continues to make his way through the crowds, looking confused and disoriented. Suddenly, he smells something. He follows the scent to a park.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The park is big and beautiful, but to FINCH, it feels sad and cold. People sit around, enjoying their morning. Someone is relieving themselves next to a tree. A man observes a woman creepily from a corner. In the distance, someone scolds their dog. A woman yells at her child to shut up while the child wails loudly.

FINCH smells around and makes his way to a big, old tree. He lies down under it.

EXT. OLD TREE - DAY

The world is bright and beautiful again. MAN sits under the tree with FINCH, looking relaxed. MAN reads something out loud to FINCH.

MAN

--is as bad as a long. So why in Heaven (before we are there), Should we give our hearts to a dog to tear?

MAN scrunches up his face and looks at FINCH.

MAN (CONT'D)

You know, I don't think that's right. Ol' Rudyard barked up the wrong tree with that one. I'm glad I gave you my heart. You deserve all the love in the world, bud.

FINCH wags his tail, his eyes bright and attentive.

MAN (CONT'D)

ALL the love, you hear me?

FINCH listens to every word MAN is saying very carefully and tilts his head once in a while.

MAN (CONT'D)

It's not your fault we'll have to say goodbye someday. We all have to go sometime. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't love with everything we've got. I mean, you do. Why shouldn't we?

MAN thinks for a moment.

MAN (CONT'D)

Unconditionally. Unwavering. You never question it. You never think about being hurt. How couldn't Kipling see that? See that it's so worth it?

(shrugs)

Maybe I misunderstood. Let me read it again to you. Tell me what you think, okay?

(MORE)

MAN (CONT'D)
(smiling warmly and
looking back in book)
There is sorrow enough in the
natural way, From m--

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. OLD TREE - DAY

The world is bleak again. FINCH lies under the tree, whimpering quietly. The once vibrant life here is now a heavy, oppressive silence.

GIRL
(to Finch)
Hey, are you alone? Where's your--

GIRL looks around.

GIRL (CONT'D)
Are you lost?

FINCH quickly gets up and runs away.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

FINCH runs fast, narrowly avoiding a car. Horns blare. He weaves through feet and narrowly dodges a bicycle, quickly turning into an alleyway.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

The alley is narrow and dark, littered with garbage and graffitied walls. FINCH slows, ears pricked. From behind a dumpster, a low chuckle echoes. FINCH freezes. The laugh turns louder and more sinister. The whir of a power drill pierces the air, followed by maniacal laughter. He cautiously steps forward, eyes darting.

The drill whirs again, accompanied by a grotesque squishing sound and a laugh filled with delight. FINCH's pace quickens, panic setting in. The laughter grows, almost chasing him. He bolts, sprinting out of the alley and back into the street.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Back on the bustling street, a pedestrian bumps into him.

PEDESTRIAN
Eh, sorry?

FINCH doesn't stop, weaving through the crowd, his fear driving him. He finally arrives at a plaza, panting.

EXT. PLAZA - DAY

The plaza is bustling with people, cafes, and boutiques. Street performers and knick-knack stands line the square. FINCH slows his pace, recognizing this familiar place he's visited with MAN. A musician plays an acoustic song with her guitar case open, surrounded by listeners. She sings beautifully.

In the background, a bizarre clown performs for a different crowd. He wears a black and white outfit, but his face is colorful. The colors are somehow off. He is smiling, but it is a smile of someone who doesn't understand how smiles work.

He juggles knives and tells inappropriate jokes, accompanied by distorted music from a small speaker. Several children cry, clinging to their parents, who wonder why their kids are scared. Don't kids love clowns? They don't seem to be aware that there's something off with this clown.

FINCH sits across from the musician, listening intently as she finishes her song. She fiddles with her guitar and smiles when she notices FINCH.

MUSICIAN

I guess I have a very special audience member today.

FINCH wags his tail. He likes her.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

Well, I hope you like this next one.

MUSICIAN starts playing a lovely heartfelt song. FINCH knows this song.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The world is bright and beautiful again. MAN and a woman in her late 30s, EMMA, sit on the couch. EMMA smiles as she tunes an acoustic guitar. A 10-year-old boy sits on the floor, glued to the TV, with FINCH beside him, equally attentive to the cartoon. The boy occasionally pets FINCH.

EMMA

Okay, so here goes.

MAN

I don't know how you talked me into this.

EMMA

Hey. No backsies. You promised.

MAN

But I really can't sing.

EMMA

That's for me to judge.

MAN

I know what will happen if I do this.

EMMA

Oh, yeah? What?

MAN

First you'll run out screaming. After a few days, you know, when you regain your hearing, you'll dump me for fear of me singing anything to you ever again. But, that won't stop the nightmares. Cue years of therapy and medication, after which you'll finally believe that you can, maybe have some sort of semblance of normal life again.

EMMA

Uh-huh. Anything else or are you all babbled out?

MAN sighs. There's no getting out of this.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Good! Now, let's start.

She begins playing the same song as the street musician. MAN starts to sing. He wasn't lying. He really can't carry a tune to save his life. The little boy covers his ears and looks at his mom and MAN angrily. FINCH quickly gets up, runs to MAN and starts howling to save his best bud the embarrassment of singing. EMMA and MAN burst out laughing.

MAN

See, even Finch knows what's up.

BOY
Thank you Finch.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. PLAZA - DAY

The world is back to being bleak. MUSICIAN sings, FINCH begins howling. The clown in the background stops juggling. MUSICIAN continues to play, but stops singing. She laughs.

MUSICIAN
Ladies and Gentlemen, Jack White.

There is laughter coming from the crowd. More people gather. Some audience members throw money into the guitar case. MUSICIAN smiles a wide smile and continues singing while FINCH howls. The clown in the background is glaring at the MUSICIAN for a few moments, before he yells.

CLOWN
Stop that racket!

MUSICIAN stops playing, and FINCH stops howling. She turns around and sees a disgruntled clown. She yells back at him, while laughing.

MUSICIAN
Hey, just trying to make a living.

She turns back around.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)
Sorry, folks, just minor clown
difficulties. You all know how that
is.

The crowd laughs. MUSICIAN points at a crowd member.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)
Especially you, sir. I see you, I
know what's what.

The crowd member shrugs and laughs. She begins to play the same song again, FINCH begins howling. Meanwhile, CLOWN angrily makes his way towards MUSICIAN. As he stands behind her, FINCH stops howling, stands, and is now on full alert.

CLOWN
Stop. That. Noise.

MUSICIAN turns around, and quickly stands as she realizes that there is a giant, angry clown behind her.

MUSICIAN

Look, man. I'm just playing my music.

CLOWN

Not you. The mutt. He's scaring away my customers.

This is clearly ridiculous. If anyone's scaring his customers, it's the CLOWN himself.

MUSICIAN

Oh, HE is?

CLOWN

Yeah! He is. If you don't get rid of 'em, I will.

MUSICIAN

Look, man. Nobody's trying to bother you, okay? Just go back to your spot, and I'll stay here. We both go back about our business, make some money. Everyone's happy.

CLOWN

Fine. I guess, I have to take care of it myself.

CLOWN pushes MUSICIAN out of the way. FINCH barks loudly at CLOWN as he does this. CLOWN approaches FINCH and attempts to kick him. FINCH dodges and grabs his pants, ripping a bit of cloth off. He spits it out and growls at CLOWN.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

You wanna dance, huh?

Some people in the crowd gasp, some cheer.

MUSICIAN

Bro, you need to stop.

CLOWN

Nobody asked you.

MUSICIAN

Just go, I'll take care of it.

CLOWN

Too late. We have beef now, me and this dog.

MUSICIAN

Dude, I'm calling the police if you don't leave.

This irritates CLOWN to no extent. He turns and threateningly approaches MUSICIAN. The crowd watching has gotten bigger. Some crowd members seem to be entertained by this.

CLOWN

What did you say?

MUSICIAN knows that if CLOWN wanted to, he could hurt her badly. FINCH growls.

MUSICIAN

Look, man, I don't want trouble. I think you should just leave.

CLOWN

No! You repeat what you just said, cunt!

There is some laughter from the audience, while others scowl. Nobody intervenes. Someone mentions calling the police, but another stops them, wanting to see what happens. Some people film with their cellphones. FINCH growls louder, ready to pounce.

MUSICIAN

Hey, there's no need for--

CLOWN

Yes! There is! There is need! What are you gonna do, huh? Little lady? What?

Someone suggests calling the police, but another dismisses it, saying to just enjoy the show. CLOWN gets much too close to MUSICIAN's face. He inhales deeply, taking in her smell. She shivers in fear, but he grins. He speaks quietly enough, so only she can hear.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

You smell like peaches. I'd tear you apart from the inside.

She gasps. FINCH has had just about enough of this. He jumps on CLOWN, who falls over in surprise. FINCH stands on him, growling low with his face close to CLOWN's. CLOWN is terrified, unsure if FINCH will maul him.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

Please, don't.

FINCH continues to growl.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

Please.

CLOWN closes his eyes in fear. A tear runs down his cheek. FINCH puts his face even closer to CLOWN's face and growls. There is deathly silence from the crowd.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

I'm s-- I'm so sorry.

FINCH steps off CLOWN and stands by the flabbergasted MUSICIAN. CLOWN picks himself up, noticing everyone staring and filming. Trying to save face, he aggressively tries approaching MUSICIAN again.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

I'll get--

FINCH barks and growls. CLOWN jumps back, deciding not to take any more chances. He quickly walks back to his spot, putting away his things. He yells from a distance.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

You're both a menace!

MUSICIAN

Yeah? Then call the police!

FINCH barks in confirmation. CLOWN doesn't know what to respond, so he angrily takes his things and walks off. It's very obvious he doesn't want the police there. MUSICIAN pets FINCH, whose demeanor is now calm. She kneels to be eyelevel with him.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

Thanks, little buddy. I owe you one.

FINCH wags his tail in reply. He pushes his nose on her hand. She pets him again.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

You make a great wingman.

They look at each for a brief moment, while the crowd starts dispersing.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

Are you hungry? I have a sandwich in my bag. It's the least I can do.

She gets up, turns and digs through her bag. She talks while she digs.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)
 Maybe you can come with me? I think
 I had enough for the day anyway,
 and my mom loves dogs, so--

She turns around to offer the sandwich to FINCH, but he is gone.

EXT. PLAZA CAFE - EARLY EVENING

FINCH walks to a café. He fixates on a certain table in the cafe's outdoor seating area, which is currently empty. He approaches the table and lies down on the floor next to a chair. A waitress passes the table, and does a double take. She backs up.

WAITRESS
 Finch?

FINCH raises his head.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 What are you doing here?

She kneels and pets him. FINCH whimpers.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 It'll be okay, boy. I know it's
 horrible, but it'll be okay. Hold
 on.

She gets up and leaves, while FINCH looks in her direction. She very quickly returns with a bowl of water, and some deli meats on a plate.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 Not the healthiest option, I know.
 Your dad would kill me if he saw me
 giving you this. But I swear, it's
 all the low sodium stuff.

She smiles sadly.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 We'll all miss him. It'll be okay,
 Finch. I'll make sure.

She gets up again, while Finch eats and drinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAZA CAFE - LATER

FINCH remains lying by the empty table. The waitress speaks to ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 inside the café, inaudible from outside. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER 1 exits and approaches FINCH slowly. FINCH looks up, exhausted and without options.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1
Hey, Finch. You have some good
friends here.

FINCH gets up and backs up a bit.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 (CONT'D)
Please don't run, sweetie. We'll
take care of you. Find you a
family. Everything will be okay.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 approaches FINCH very carefully, with a catch pole.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 (CONT'D)
I know this thing looks scary, but
it's just so you don't run again,
okay?

FINCH wants none of this. He turns and runs as fast as he can in the other direction. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 2 is waiting in that direction, but FINCH avoids him easily.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER NO. 1 (CONT'D)
Goddammit.

EXT. MAN'S HOUSE IN SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

FINCH approaches the cordoned-off house slowly, tired and longing for home. He heads to the back door and uses the automatic doggie door, which opens for his chip. He enters the house.

INT. MAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is a mess, and the window is broken. FINCH passes through the kitchen, towards the living room.

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FINCH stops and observes. The living room is still as he left it, with the exception of the dead body. Crime scene tape marks the spot where MAN was killed. FINCH lies down there, quietly crying for a while before he starts sniffing around.

FINCH'S SMELL VISION:

A ghostly image of MAN lying dead on the floor appears. A green neon light guides FINCH back into the kitchen.

INT. MAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

FINCH stops at the door. A GREEN NEON BLOB breaks a ghostly window and sprints into the living room. All sounds are muffled, as if coming from another room. FINCH follows.

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

FINCH sees a ghostly vision of MAN standing holding a gun pointed at the front door.

MAN

What--

GREEN NEON BLOB lunges at MAN. They wrestle for the gun; A gunshot fires. More shots echo as they struggle. FINCH watches, tense. GREEN NEON BLOB kicks MAN, seizing gun. MAN collapses.

MAN (CONT'D)

Oof--

GREEN NEON BLOB

STAY DOWN!

MAN springs up, attacking GREEN NEON BLOB. The assailants from outside batter the front door.

GREEN NEON BLOB (CONT'D)

(yelling)

GET THE FUCK IN HERE ALREADY!

MAN kicks the feet from beneath GREEN NEON BLOB, and he hits the floor. MAN starts kicking GREEN NEON BLOB.

MAN

Now you stay down, motherfucker!

GREEN NEON BLOB

Stop! Stop! Please! Stop!

The front door bursts open. YELLOW, PINK, ORANGE, and BLUE NEON BLOBS rush in, wielding tools. They violently subdue and pin MAN down. BLUE NEON BLOB grabs the remote and turns the TV's volume way up.

GREEN NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
Break his foot.

PINK NEON BLOB smashes MAN's foot with a hammer three times in rapid succession and chuckles quietly. MAN screams.

GREEN NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
Try kicking me now.

MAN
I'll fucking kill you.

GREEN NEON BLOB laughs, grabbing the gun on the floor.

GREEN NEON BLOB
Posie! Did you hear that? He'll
kill me.

PINK NEON BLOB
That's hot.

The neon blobs laugh as MAN grunts in frustration. PINK NEON BLOB signals GREEN NEON BLOB to pick up the gun, which he does. He points it at MAN, and the other blobs let him go

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
C'mon big man. Kill him. If you get
up--

The blobs laugh, interrupting PINK NEON BLOB.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
(to Man)
I'm so funny, don't you think so
big man?

MAN
Look, if you leave now, I swear I
won't call the police.

PINK NEON BLOB
I ASKED YOU A QUESTION!

PINK NEON BLOB kicks MAN in the head. She kneels and gets in MAN's face.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
AIN'T. I. FUNNY?!?

MAN
(wiping blood off his
mouth)
NO! YOU'RE A CRAZY PIECE OF SHIT!

MAN slaps PINK NEON BLOB across the face. FINCH barks triumphantly as PINK NEON BLOB stumbles back. GREEN NEON BLOB points the gun closer to MAN. MAN raises his hands, and ORANGE NEON BLOB smashes his foot onto MAN's shoulder. A slight crack is heard.

PINK NEON BLOB
 (to Green Neon Blob)
 What are you doing? You let him
 slap me? Now hold him down!

GREEN NEON BLOB
 Sorry! Sorry.

GREEN NEON BLOB hands the gun to ORANGE NEON BLOB and holds down MAN's arms. MAN winces as PINK NEON BLOB places her foot on his neck.

PINK NEON BLOB
 Get it together, Brett!

GREEN NEON BLOB
 My name is Bane.

PINK NEON BLOB
 (scoffs)
 You didn't earn that name yet.
 Brett.
 (sing-songy)
 You're just an Echo.

PINK NEON BLOB drops the hammer on MAN's stomach, bends down and pulls a knife out of her boot.

GREEN NEON BLOB
 I--

PINK NEON BLOB
 (giggles)
 Don't disrespect me, son. I outrank
 you.

YELLOW NEON BLOB
 Guys, stop fighting.

PINK NEON BLOB
 You outrank him too, Connie. In
 fact. Slap him. It's only fair.

YELLOW NEON BLOB
 I don't want to.

PINK NEON BLOB
 It's only fair,
 (to Man)
 don't you think?
 (to YELLOW NEON BLOB)
 Do it!

YELLOW NEON BLOB shifts nervously from foot to foot.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 DO IT!

YELLOW NEON BLOB slaps GREEN NEON BLOB hard.

YELLOW NEON BLOB
 I'm sorry.

GREEN NEON BLOB
 It's okay. It was only fair.

PINK NEON BLOB
 Now that that's out of the way.

PINK NEON BLOB quickly grabs MAN's ear and slices it off. FINCH cries out. MAN lets out a bloodcurdling scream. PINK NEON BLOB stands and looks at the severed ear from both sides.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 As I thought. Broken.

PINK NEON BLOB throws the ear at MAN as FINCH growls at her.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 I knew there was a reason he didn't
 laugh.

All the blobs laugh, while MAN grunts in pain.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 As I was saying, before I was so
 rudely interrupted. If you get up
 right now--

PINK NEON BLOB lifts her hand in a stop gesture to stop any more incoming laughter.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 --and kill me, like you promised,
 these other chuckleheads will let
 you go. Deal?

MAN
 Deal, you crazy bitch.

GREEN NEON BLOB releases MAN's arms. MAN stumbles toward PINK NEON BLOB and swings at her. GREEN NEON BLOB and YELLOW NEON BLOB restrain MAN, pinning his arms behind his back. MAN winces and growls angrily. PINK NEON BLOB laughs and slashes MAN across the face with her knife. At the same time ORANGE NEON BLOB punches him in the stomach and points the gun back at him. MAN screams in pain.

PINK NEON BLOB
 What? I never said I won't fight back.
 (to Green Neon Blob)
 Hold him tight.

MAN
 Let's go, one on one, asshole. Come on!

PINK NEON BLOB
 I'm bored.
 (to Blue Neon Blob)
 Faith!

BLUE NEON BLOB
 Yes, ma'am?

PINK NEON BLOB
 Start getting things ready, I think the Lecturer is almost here.

BLUE NEON BLOB nods and begins setting up incense, candles and other cult paraphernalia around the room.

PINK NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 (to Man)
 And as for you.

MAN
 Fuck you.

PINK NEON BLOB
 I know you wish you could. But no. No time for fun tonight. I mean for you. I'm having a blast.

MAN
 I'm gonna--

ORANGE NEON BLOB presses the gun to MAN's face.

ORANGE NEON BLOB
 You're gonna what, smartass? Shut up!

ORANGE NEON BLOB hits MAN with the butt of the gun, and points the gun back at him. MAN yells out in pain. A RED NEON BLOB enters through the door.

RED NEON BLOB
What are you doing? Leave him
alone!

PINK NEON BLOB
I-- I'm sorry, I thought--

RED NEON BLOB
You thought?

PINK NEON BLOB hangs her head in shame.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
Posie, you don't think.

PINK NEON BLOB
Yes, Lecturer.

RED NEON BLOB
That was for me to do. Not you.

PINK NEON BLOB nods shamefully. RED NEON BLOB approaches MAN, who, now, sees her for the first time. An expression of recognition dawns on his face.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
Well, hello there.

MAN
H-- You-- Why are you here?

RED NEON BLOB
To be free.

MAN
What are you talking about? Just--
Go home. I won't tell anyone you
were here. Just leave.

RED NEON BLOB
But then I'll never be free.

MAN
You're being-- Look, if you leave
now--

RED NEON BLOB
I'll never reach my full potential.

MAN

(exasperated, sighs)
Please. You don't need to do this.
You can still stop.

RED NEON BLOB

I know you don't understand. You
can't. You never will. You're just
an echo in the void.

MAN

(pleading desperately)
Please. Desi--

RED NEON BLOB

You don't need to worry about her
anymore. She's right where she
needs to be. But YOU. You I can't
save. I'm sorry.

MAN

Please.

RED NEON BLOB

I promise. This is for the best.
For both of us. Have I ever lied to
you?

MAN

You fucking piece of--

RED NEON BLOB

Now now, no need for vulgarities.

MAN struggles to break free, despite the gun pointed at him.
YELLOW and ORANGE NEON BLOBS punch him repeatedly. MAN grunts
and yells in pain. FINCH growls at the blobs.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)

You have to calm down. I have just
the thing.

MAN

What are you g--

RED NEON BLOB produces a taser and shocks MAN. He falls to
the ground shaking.

RED NEON BLOB

Shh, shh. There there. See. I need
you to be nice and still, while I
do

(nods at the others)
what needs to be done.

YELLOW NEON BLOB takes duct tape and rope out of his backpack.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
Don't worry, though. I'll make it quick.

MAN
(weakly)
Help.

RED NEON BLOB
(to others)
Tie him up. Play the music.

BLUE NEON BLOB turns on the music. MAN tries to get up and fight, stumbling. The neon blobs hum in a low cadence. A scuffle ensues, and while the blobs hit and kick MAN, the humming rises in intensity. RED NEON BLOB quickly steps closer tasing MAN again until he collapses, peeing himself. MAN shakes and weakly grunts in pain. FINCH is visibly upset. The humming grows louder as the blobs kneel next to MAN in a semi-circle and continuously put hands on him and raise them to the sky. MAN tries to get up again.

ORANGE NEON BLOB
He won't stop!

RED NEON BLOB
Break his other leg.

PINK NEON BLOB quickly reaches for the hammer, and lifts it towards MAN's knee.

MAN
No! No! Stop! I'll stop!

PINK NEON BLOB seems to think about this proposition for a moment and then brings the hammer down on MAN's crotch area. He yells out in pain.

PINK NEON BLOB
Just bustin' your balls, son.

RED NEON BLOB
Posie. If you don't start behaving more appropriately I'll have to talk to Voss about your current status in our organization. You're here to do a job, not a tight 10 at The Comedy Store.

PINK NEON BLOB

I'm sorry, Lecturer.

(to Man)

But if you don't stay like a good boy, I WILL start breaking your bones and won't stop until you're just so much soup on the floor. Got it?

MAN

Yes. Please.

PINK NEON BLOB sets the hammer aside and buries her finger into MAN's face wound. MAN yells out in pain and rolls over. The blobs continue humming. FINCH wants to comfort MAN, but he cannot.

RED NEON BLOB

Good. It's time. Call him.

The blobs stop humming. BLUE NEON BLOB props up a phone, angling it to capture everyone, while YELLOW NEON BLOB ties MAN up. BLUE NEON BLOB presses a button; a ringback tone sounds. Someone picks up, but the screen remains blank.

FINCH cannot smell this person.

ELIAS VOSS

Hey there, beautiful Vesta. Don't tell me you're already done and I missed all the marvelous work you're doing.

RED NEON BLOB

(giddy)

Voss! You know I wouldn't start without you.

ELIAS VOSS

Good. I'm glad. This will only bring us closer.

RED NEON BLOB giggles and fixes her hair.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

It's time to unlock your true potential. Show me what you can do. Show me how what a powerful entity you can be!

The blobs hum again, louder than ever. MAN grunts weakly. They put hands on him and raise them to the sky. Everyone but RED NEON BLOB. RED NEON BLOB stands above MAN.

RED NEON BLOB
 I, Vesta, the booming voice of
 Light, Mother of all echoes,
 whisperers and speakers, offer this
 sacrifice.

RED NEON BLOB kneels and takes MAN's eye out with a small
 tool. MAN lets out a bloodcurdling scream, but he is too weak
 to move. RED NEON BLOB holds the eye above her head.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 (rising in volume)
 Supreme leader, Voice of Reason,
 Elias Voss! Hear me bloom!

RED NEON BLOB brings down the eye and swallows it whole.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 I am not nothing! Pain makes me
 visible!

RED NEON BLOB draws a ceremonial knife and draws a sigil in
 the air with it.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 THIS IS ME! THIS IS MY WILL!

RED NEON BLOB cuts her upper thigh with the ceremonial knife
 and smears her own blood up her torso.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
 (yelling in ecstasy)
 I AM THAT I AM!

ALL NEON BLOBS
 (chanting)
 WE ARE THAT WE ARE!

RED NEON BLOB takes out the MAN's other eye. MAN screams,
 then falls silent. He is unconscious. RED NEON BLOB eats this
 eye too, but this time she chews and breathes heavily.

ELIAS VOSS
 You are THAT you are. It is done.

ALL NEON BLOBS
 (unanimously)
 It is done.

ELIAS VOSS
 (cheerful)
 Everyone! I am extremely proud of
 you all, but especially you Vesta.
 (MORE)

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

I am warmly anticipating your return at The Lighthouse after clean up.

BLUE NEON BLOB picks up the phone and puts it away.

ORANGE NEON BLOB

You heard the man, people! Let's set up and ship out.

RED NEON BLOB

Wait. Wake him up.

YELLOW NEON BLOB

But, it's supposed to be over. Shouldn't we just kill him now?

PINK NEON BLOB

You question a Booming Voice, Connie?

YELLOW NEON BLOB

I'm sorry, Speaker.

YELLOW NEON BLOB and PINK NEON BLOB slap the unconscious MAN. BLUE NEON BLOB runs up to him and throws a glass of clear liquid in his face. MAN wakes up screaming in agony, confused, and gurgling. PINK NEON BLOB smells the air.

PINK NEON BLOB

Is that vinegar?

BLUE NEON BLOB

Yeah, I thought--

PINK NEON BLOB

(impressed)

Nice.

(to Red Neon Blob)

Go ahead, Lecturer. He's awake.

RED NEON BLOB

Thank you.

(to Man)

It's okay. Listen. Listen to my voice. It's me.

MAN turns his head weakly towards RED NEON BLOB.

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)

Good. Believe it or not, this is what's best for both of us. You don't have to worry anymore. Just one more thing and you'll be pure.

(MORE)

RED NEON BLOB (CONT'D)
I'm not supposed to do this, but do
you want to say anything before we
say goodbye?

MAN
De-- De--

RED NEON BLOB
Desi? She'll be pure soon too.

MAN
(sobbing weakly)
You promised.

RED NEON BLOB
You ruined my life. I lied.

MAN screams in horror and frustration. PINK NEON BLOB holds
MAN's head, his chin towards the sky. RED NEON BLOB slashes
his throat with one swift motion. He gurgles. FINCH watches
helplessly.

ORANGE NEON BLOB
That's it?

RED NEON BLOB
That's it.

RED NEON BLOB starts to walk away as the other blobs begin
cleaning. In a brief moment, they all disperse into thin air.

BACK TO SCENE

FINCH has now seen everything. He whimpers loudly and runs
back out where he came from.

EXT. MAN'S HOUSE IN SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

FINCH runs around the corner and lies down on the porch,
desperately crying and whimpering. Neon lights (red, blue,
yellow, green, pink, and orange) appear, swiftly traveling
down the street, leaving a neon trail. FINCH raises his head,
ears perked. He stands and follows the trail.

EXT. TOWN STREET - NIGHT

FINCH sprints, following the lights.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

FINCH runs across a bridge, chasing the neon lights.

EXT. FIELD - VERY EARLY MORNING

FINCH runs through a field in the early morning light, following the neon trail.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

FINCH weaves through the forest, keeping pace with the neon lights.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE OUTSIDE FENCE - MORNING

FINCH follows the neon lights to a fence on the forest's outskirts. He sits, watching as the lights enter the commune.

People in brown linen trousers and tops, with a triangular logo, garden and chat. In a gazebo, others in white outfits with the same logo meditate.

At benches and tables, people in red outfits eat, while those in white robes and triangular headgear chant nearby. The diners apologize and thank the chanters before each bite.

FINCH lets out a low growl.

He watches for a few moments, then circles the fence. He passes an entry ramp with a guard in an olive outfit labeled "security" beneath the cult logo. There is a big sign above the entrance reading: Welcome to The Light Collective. Embrace the divinity within you.

A vehicle approaches, and they talk inaudibly. Finch moves on. He sees neighborhoods of dwellings. One side resembles a campground with rows of tents. A sign at the entrance reads "Whispering Voices."

On the other side, it looks like a trailer park with small trailers. The entrance sign reads "Resonant Voices."

Another neighborhood lies adjacent.

Nearest to the forest is a well-organized area with small cabins, each with a yard. The entrance sign reads "Booming Voices."

Far removed is a big hangar-like building labeled "Soft Echoes." Inside are military-style bunk beds in rows. People in uncomfortable outfits walk in and out, chatting and laughing.

There is a slight shuffling in the forest behind FINCH. He's too focused on the compound to notice.

He continues on.

He arrives at a big, clean, white building with many wings. Guards in olive uniforms are posted at the entrance. A man in oversized sunglasses and a robe walks out. This is ELIAS VOSS. He is followed by a row of young girls and women in white dresses, holding hands.

FINCH continues his scouting.

On the far end of the commune, screams and shouts of "Thank you!" can be heard. FINCH investigates.

He finds a small patch of land reserved for punishment, with rows of mostly empty animal cages, stockades, and a sign reading "Through suffering we find purity."

A woman is buried neck-deep in the ground, while a cult member in a ceremonial robe intermittently throws dirt in her face.

BURIED CULT MEMBER
(weakly)
Thank you!

Four cult members in ceremonial robes lower a coffin into the ground. Screams come from inside. When it is fully lowered, they begin throwing dirt on the coffin, humming loudly. Each time the dirt hits, the voice inside yells "Thank you!" in panic. A cult member in a red ceremonial robe reads from a list.

RED ROBE CULT MEMBER
--You have sinned in the eyes of
Voss. For that you must purify. You
were not truthful. For that you
must purify. You were vain. For
that you must purify. You disobeyed
the wise teachings of Voss. For
that you must purify--

FINCH decides he has seen enough and returns to the original spot to observe the gardeners.

Suddenly, someone sneaks up behind him, throws a potato sack over FINCH, and picks him up in one swift motion.

INT. BURLAP SACK - DAY

FINCH fidgets violently, the burlap rough against his fur. He whines softly, realizing escape is futile.

FOREST DWELLER

Quiet!

FINCH grumbles and settles down, the sack constricting his movements.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - DAY

FINCH is placed in an animal cage with the door facing up. The sack is removed, revealing his tense body. A shaggy, filthy, and unpleasant-looking man in his 50s, the FOREST DWELLER, stares down at him and closes the cage door shut. FINCH growls aggressively, a deep guttural sound.

FOREST DWELLER

You either gon' calm down and work,
or you gon' be supper. Your choice,
dog.

He walks away. FINCH looks around, noting the shabby cabin in the middle of the woods. There is a chopping log with an axe stuck in it. A shotgun leans against the front door. The FOREST DWELLER returns with a post and hammers it into the ground. He leaves and quickly returns with a rope sporting a hangman's noose.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

Tied it up jus' fer you. You gon'
be good?

FINCH growls low, his eyes locked on the man.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

If the carrot don' work, maybe the
stick will.

He leaves and quickly returns with a stick, showing it to FINCH.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

(shows the noose)
Carrot?
(shows the stick)
Or stick?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. NONDESCRIPT ALLEY - DAY

FINCH is a puppy, about 6 months old. He runs frantically through the alley. A teenager chases him, holding a stick. The teenager corners young FINCH.

SHITTY TEEN
Whatcha gonna do now, fleabag?

FINCH cowers. The teen slams the stick on the floor next to FINCH with a loud bang. FINCH flinches.

SHITTY TEEN (CONT'D)
Next one's gonna smash your brain
all over the floor.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Hey! Bobby, I swear to Christ, I'm
gonna call your mother if you don't
fuck right off with that stick!

SHITTY TEEN turns and looks at the woman.

SHITTY TEEN
Err-- I wasn't doin' nothin' Mrs.
H!

ELDERLY WOMAN
Yeah? What's the stick for?

SHITTY TEEN looks down at the stick and tosses it away like
it was on fire.

SHITTY TEEN
No stick!

ELDERLY WOMAN
Don't lie to me, Bobby, you
dumbass!

SHITTY TEEN
Err, err-- He was gonna bite me!

ELDERLY WOMAN
I'm calling your mother, you little
prick!

SHITTY TEEN
No! Don't or I'll--

ELDERLY WOMAN steps closer to SHITTY TEEN.

ELDERLY WOMAN
You'll what?

SHITTY TEEN
I'll hit you with the stick
instead.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You think I'm scared of you?

She pulls a gun out of her apron pocket.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

I was in the army. I don't miss.
Now get the fuck outta here, and
tell your mother to expect a call
from me. You understand?

SHITTY TEEN

Yes, ma'am.

SHITTY TEEN runs away. The woman puts the gun back in her apron pocket and pets FINCH.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You'll be okay, hon. We'll go to a
shelter. They'll take care of your
cute little fluffy butt.

She picks him up and walks away.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'd take you myself, but my cats
would murder me, you know.

FINCH licks ELDERLY WOMAN's nose, and lets out a small whimper, snuggling into her arms.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - DAY

FINCH, now fully grown, stops growling and lets out a similar whimper. His eyes reflect a mix of fear and determination. He looks up at FOREST DWELLER, and lies down.

FOREST DWELLER

Smart choice.

FOREST DWELLER opens the cage and puts the noose around FINCH's neck. He starts walking and stops a bit further from the cage.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

Go on.

FINCH jumps out. FOREST DWELLER ties him up to the post.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)
 Now you guard this house. You guard
 it good. Or in you go with the
 beans.

FINCH looks at FOREST DWELLER with disdain and lies down.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - EVENING

FINCH is still lying down in the same position. FOREST DWELLER comes out of the cabin and throws some food in front of him.

FOREST DWELLER
 You din't earnt it yet. But I'll
 let it slide on yer first day.

He walks away. FINCH puts his head back down for a moment, then looks around and begins chewing on the rope.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - MORNING

FOREST DWELLER leaves the cabin and heads into the forest. He momentarily comes back.

FOREST DWELLER
 No breakfast. You din't earnt it.

FINCH growls.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)
 Whatcha say?

FINCH lowers his head.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)
 I thought so.

He leaves to the forest. FINCH continues chewing on the rope.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - EARLY EVENING

FOREST DWELLER returns, entering the cabin without paying attention to FINCH. He comes back shortly with a plate of bread soaked in milk, which he throws in front of FINCH. Then, he notices the nearly chewed-through rope.

FOREST DWELLER
 Ya think you so smart, in't you?

FOREST DWELLER leaves and returns with a chain and a stick.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)
Which'll it be?

FINCH looks away. FOREST DWELLER puts the chain around FINCH's neck and is chaining the other end to the post.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)
I ain't gon' hold it against ya.
Not this time. I give ya one more
chance. But nex time, dog. Nex time
I won' be so kind.

FOREST DWELLER takes FINCH's food and walks away. FINCH lets out a quiet frustrated cry.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - EARLY MORNING

Rustling sounds come from the forest. FINCH perks up his ears and stands. More noise follows. A black bear emerges from the forest. FINCH takes a few steps back as the bear approaches slowly. FINCH growls, but the bear isn't deterred and continues approaching. FINCH starts barking. The bear growls and stands on its hind legs. FINCH looks around, noticing a large stack of wood within reach. He climbs on top and begins barking and howling, his haunches raised. The bear, intimidated, turns around and leaves. FINCH jumps down from the stack of wood, continuing to bark after the bear. FOREST DWELLER emerges from the cabin.

FOREST DWELLER
Well, look at you! I saw the whole
thing! You're a tough son of a
bitch, arentcha?

FOREST DWELLER laughs at his own joke.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)
I knew you're not a good fer
nothin'! I have a nose fer these
things!

For the first time, he approaches FINCH with a friendly demeanor. He taps FINCH on the head, and FINCH lets him.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - LATE EVENING

FOREST DWELLER returns from the woods, carrying a rifle and sits on the floor next to FINCH. He rests his rifle in his lap and pets FINCH.

FOREST DWELLER

I was thinkin'. Ya been here a few days. Ya proved you won't bite me, you scared off that bear, and you're doin' a fine job keepin' my property safe. How'd ya like to try and go huntin' with me tomorrow?

He looks at FINCH as if expecting an answer.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

Ah, ya can't talk. I know that.

FINCH barks.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

Ya would? Good. Ain't had no luck lately. It's those foofoo weirdo freaks. Their hollerin' is scarin' all the animals away.

FINCH growls.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

You don' like 'em either, huh? Figures. You an' me. We think alike. We smart sunnabitches.

He taps FINCH on the head.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

See ya in the mornin' then.

FOREST DWELLER walks into the cabin and closes the door behind him. FINCH watches the door as it closes, and lets out a very low, angry growl.

EXT. FOREST DWELLER'S CABIN - EARLY MORNING

FOREST DWELLER exits the cabin, putting a rope around FINCH's neck before removing the chain.

FOREST DWELLER

Le's go.

They walk into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - EARLY MORNING

They walk for a few moments. FINCH keeps a close pace with the FOREST DWELLER to avoid tightening the noose. Suddenly, a noise stops them. The FOREST DWELLER listens intently.

Seizing the moment, FINCH slips the rope off his neck with the help of his paw and bolts.

FOREST DWELLER

Hey!

FOREST DWELLER immediately gives chase, sprinting with surprising speed.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

Stop! Stop or I'll shootcha!

FINCH trips over a rock, slowing down. FOREST DWELLER gains on him. FINCH looks back, seeing the dweller close. Approaching a creek, FINCH slows deliberately, allowing FOREST DWELLER to catch up.

FOREST DWELLER (CONT'D)

Tired, huh? I gotcha now.

As FOREST DWELLER gets close, FINCH abruptly stops and lies down in front of his feet. FOREST DWELLER trips over FINCH falling face-first into the creek. There is an audible crack as his head hits a rock. He doesn't move. FINCH approaches, seeing the dweller's head split open, blood painting the water red. He growls defiantly and walks away.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE OUTSIDE FENCE - MORNING

FINCH returns to his vantage point and continues observing the cult.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE OUTSIDE FENCE - MORNING TO EVENING

FINCH continues observing.

TIME LAPSE:

The sky changes from blue to orange to dark.

-- MORNING--

Cult members in brown garden and chat. Cult members in white meditate in the gazebo. Cult members in red eat, while those in robes chant. Cult members in red finish and leave, returning dressed in white to join the meditation. Chanters leave.

-- NOON --

Cult members in brown leave and return dressed in red. They sit. Chanters return with food and chant.

Cult members in red eat. Meanwhile, cult members in white exercise. Cult members in red finish eating, leave, and return shortly dressed in white to meditate beside the exercisers. Some cult members in white leave. In the background, someone is being dug up from a grave in the punishing ground. FINCH lies down, still observing.

-- AFTERNOON --

Cult members in gray peel potatoes in the yard. Some clean. Some are building a new cabin. In the punishing grounds, someone is being put in a cage while pleading. ELIAS VOSS relaxes in the shade with several girls kneeling around him. One woman stands beside him. One girl massages his neck. Another reads aloud from a book. Kids in bright orange run around a playground near the gazebo, with several people in muted orange playing with them.

-- EVENING --

Cult members prepare a stage and seats. Many cult members arrive, sitting. ELIAS VOSS gives a speech. Cult members in white listen, seated. People in robes stand, surrounding the listeners. The audience claps and laughs occasionally. ELIAS VOSS gets up and gestures, announcing someone. Everyone claps.

END OF TIMELAPSE

EXT. TLC COMMUNE OUTSIDE FENCE - EVENING

A scrawny man with dirty blonde hair in his mid 20s, CONSTANTINE, walks up to ELIAS VOSS. FINCH sits up, ears perked. CONSTANTINE glows with a yellow neon glow. A bright yellow neon ray quickly travels to FINCH and hits him on the nose.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CONSTANTINE ties up MAN, glancing at his face before quickly looking down in shame.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. TLC COMMUNE OUTSIDE FENCE - EVENING

FINCH's growls deeply, ears pinned back. We hear CONSTANTINE speaking from far away.

CONSTANTINE

Thank you, thank you. Honestly, I don't know how I'm so lucky to get to speak to you all tonight.

ELIAS VOSS

Come now, Constantine. You know why you're here.

ELIAS VOSS gestures to his followers prompting applause and a standing ovation. They chant: "Connie, Connie, Connie" in unison. CONSTANTINE blushes as ELIAS VOSS gestures them to sit down.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

Continue, dear Constantine.

CONSTANTINE

Thank you so much everyone. This is such a high honor. To be in your presence tonight. To know everything that I can become with all of your help. And you, teacher. Master. Supreme Leader. Our Voice of Reason. Elias Voss. I wouldn't be here tonight if it weren't for you. In fact, I'm pretty sure I would have jumped off the bridge you found me under sooner or later. But thanks to the grace of Voss, I get to stand here tonight before you. Thank you.

ELIAS VOSS

I remember the wretch under that bridge. I remember him well. But I knew there was a light in him so bright that it would eventually blind us all with its purity. In front of you stands a new man! Look at you now, Constantine.

Cult members holler and clap.

CONSTANTINE

Yes! Now I am here to take the next step in my journey.

(tears up)

I finally got to receive the power of presence. I finally get to say I AM FULLY PRESENT.

ELIAS VOSS

And remember, it's called the
present--

(to audience)

-- why?

CULT MEMBERS

(in unison)

Because it's a gift!

Everyone claps, hollers and celebrates. Girls in long flowing dresses surround CONSTANTINE and place a flower garland around his neck. He bows to them. They place hands on him, bow, then leave clapping.

ELIAS VOSS

See, everybody! Anything is possible! Young Constantine was but a lost soul when we first met him, and today he's fully present. He followed the path I laid out for him faithfully and without question. Now he's well on his way to becoming a Resonant Voice, and unlocking the true power that lies within him. That lies within each and every one of you. Because we all know wherein lies the true God.

CULT MEMBERS

(in unison)

Within me!

ELIAS VOSS

That's right. Now go! Dance,
celebrate!

There is much rejoicing in the crowd, music starts to play, and cult members dressed in gray bring out drinks, and food. ELIAS VOSS speaks to CONSTANTINE inaudibly. FINCH watches the scene angrily, then gets up and walks away.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE OUTSIDE FENCE - ENTRY RAMP - EVENING

There is a GUARD posted at the entrance. He stands outside the guard cabin, pacing back and forth in front of the ramp. FINCH approaches slowly. He looks at the guard, sizing him up. The guard notices FINCH.

GUARD

Oh, hey! Are you all alone out
here?

The guard looks around for an owner, a slight frown of suspicion crossing his face. FINCH wags his tail and approaches the guard, behaving overly friendly. He comes up to him, jumps on him and starts to lick his face.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 (laughing)
 Hey hey!

He pets FINCH. FINCH sits next to GUARD.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 Oh, you're gonna help me guard the place? Well, I could use some company.

FINCH looks up at GUARD with a very friendly expression.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 You're so cute. Maybe they'll let me keep you! I mean, Gaia has a cat. I'm sure the Supreme Leader won't mind a dog either.

FINCH barks.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 Yeah!

The guard notices FINCH's collar and looks at the tag.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 You belong to someone. Finch!

FINCH barks and wags his tail, but his ears twitch at a distant sound from the commune.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 Nah, I'll call you--
 (thinks for a moment)
 --Lucky! 'Cause you're all alone and you're lucky to meet me! Your new owner!

FINCH jumps on GUARD again, GUARD stumbles and falls. FINCH licks his face again.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 You like that, huh? Yeah, we'll be best friends! Hold on, I think I have some food in the guard cabin. Just a second.

The GUARD gets up and disappears into the little house adjoining the ramp. FINCH quickly goes through the ramp and into the commune. GUARD returns with a burrito, and looks around, now a bit more anxious.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Lucky! Here boy! Where'd ya go?

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - NIGHT

FINCH approaches the cult's celebration, scanning for CONSTANTINE, but doesn't see him. He sniffs the ground, and many white neon trails appear, but only one yellow one. He follows it.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - GARDEN - NIGHT

The well-kept garden has rows of vegetables and a separate flower garden, with trellises and decorations. An old functioning well stands beside the vegetable garden. FINCH sees CONSTANTINE digging a hole. A big box lies next to him. CONSTANTINE lays down the shovel and picks up the box.

CONSTANTINE
I donate to you my sins, Mother
Earth. May you take them and
transform them into something good.

He puts the box in the ground. FINCH approaches CONSTANTINE slowly. CONSTANTINE notices FINCH as he's picking up the shovel.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Hi there. What are you doing here?
Are you lost?

He puts down the shovel and approaches FINCH. FINCH stands very still. CONSTANTINE tries to touch him, but FINCH recoils.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Oh, okay. You're scared?

He goes up to the garden and takes out a carrot. He then offers it to FINCH.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
See? I'm not a bad guy. Come.

FINCH growls.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Whoa there!

(raising his hands)

It's just a carrot. I won't hurt you.

FINCH growls and barks aggressively. CONSTANTINE begins to back up. He tries to reach for the shovel, but FINCH snaps at the air next to it and CONSTANTINE recoils.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Easy.

FINCH growls and walks toward CONSTANTINE, who backs off. FINCH guides him toward the well, correcting his course anytime he veers. Near the well, FINCH barks and lunges. CONSTANTINE panics, jumps back, and falls into the well with a scream and a splash. FINCH watches from the edge, his growl echoing down.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Help!

CONSTANTINE tries to climb the slippery walls. FINCH walks away, returns with a watering can, and drops it into the well, hitting CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

You're crazy!

FINCH returns to the hole and looks at the box. He smells it.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

The world is beautiful and bright. MAN is folding laundry. FINCH is lying on the bed watching him.

MAN

Gonna help me there, lazybones?

FINCH wags his tail.

MAN (CONT'D)

No?

FINCH pushes his head into the pile of unfolded laundry on the bed.

MAN (CONT'D)

(laughing)

That's better.

FINCH raises his head, bringing up some laundry with him. He looks happily at MAN.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - GARDEN - NIGHT

FINCH approaches the box and pushes the lid open with his nose. He paws at it, overturning it. MAN's bloodied shirt, a rope, and a picture of MAN, DESI, and FINCH fall out. FINCH whines and lies next to the shirt. Growling angrily, he picks up the shirt, carries it to the well, and throws it at CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE

What are you doing!?! Go get help!

FINCH growls, leaves, and returns with the rope, throwing it down the well. He then throws the picture at CONSTANTINE and barks angrily.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

What?

He looks at the picture and finally recognizes the dog.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

How--

FINCH growls aggressively.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry! I'm so so sorry! I didn't want to do it! They said I had to!

FINCH just stares down.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to be special. I never wanted to hurt anyone.

FINCH looks at CONSTANTINE. He then pushes the bucket with the rope down.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Oh, thank you! Thank you! Voss bless you, dog! I'm so sorry!

CONSTANTINE starts climbing the rope. FINCH disappears briefly, then returns to watch. When CONSTANTINE is halfway up, FINCH vanishes again momentarily, picks up the shovel beside him, and reappears with it in his mouth.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Wait. What are you doing?

FINCH drops the shovel directly on CONSTANTINE's face, point down, leaving a deep gash. It nicked an artery on his neck, so blood spurts everywhere, as he gurgles and falls back into the well, splashing and screaming. After a few moments, he goes silent, face down in the water. FINCH observes until there are no more bubbles, then leaves. As he walks away, he hears a noise. He hides in some nearby bushes. A man in his mid 40's, JETHRO, enters the garden looking for someone. A faint orange aura surrounds him.

JETHRO

Connie? Are you here?

An orange neon light slithers from JETHRO to FINCH.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

JETHRO smashes his foot onto MAN's shoulder, his face grimaced in contempt for MAN. A slight crack is heard.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - GARDEN - NIGHT

FINCH has a look of determination on his face, but does not move a muscle.

JETHRO

Connie! For fuck's sake.

JETHRO walks around, searching.

JETHRO (CONT'D)

Hello?

(under his breath)

Stupid fuckin' kid.

He walks away in a huff. FINCH stealthily follows.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - WHISPERING VOICES CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

JETHRO walks to his tent and sits in front. FINCH observes from behind a building. JETHRO fiddles with his phone, then raises it up to his ear.

JETHRO

(on phone, annoyed)

Yeah. No. No. I don't know where he is! Yes, I looked there! You said he was there. Besides, this is your goddamn problem, not mine. Oh yeah? Well, fuck you too.

He hangs up and puts his hands on his face. He then shakes his head, gets up and leaves.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - BOOMING VOICES NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

JETHRO knocks at a cabin door angrily. A woman in her mid 30's, wearing a silk robe, ELYSIA, opens.

ELYSIA

You think you can talk to me like that, and then just walk on by and I'll spread my legs and everything will be honkey dorey?

JETHRO

No, no. I'm sorry. I'm just so stressed. I didn't mean it. Look, he's younger, and I thought maybe--

ELYSIA laughs.

ELYSIA

THAT'S what was worrying you?

JETHRO

Yeah, and he's rising in ranks faster than me, and then this whole Vesta debacle. I mean, I did my job and he was being a whiny bitch the whole time and it's still HIM speaking to everyone tonight. HE gets to be present, HE gets lauded by the Supreme Leader. So, then I thought--

ELYSIA

You thought what?

JETHRO

That he gets the girl too.

ELYSIA

You are just ridiculous.

JETHRO

Then why was it so urgent I find him?

ELYSIA

Supreme Leader told me he has to lead the meditation tomorrow morning instead of me, because they're thinking of promoting him.

JETHRO

Oh, for fuck's sake.

ELYSIA

Yeah. But he doesn't get the girl.

JETHRO gazes at ELYSIA, then leans in to kiss her. They retreat into the cabin, leaving the front door slightly ajar. FINCH cautiously approaches the door, peeks inside, and observes JETHRO and ELYSIA moving into a room. As they close the bedroom door behind them, FINCH slips into the cabin and nudges the front door closed behind him with a soft click.

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - NIGHT

The cabin is cozy, with a small, comfortable living room that opens directly from the front door. An open-plan kitchen is adjacent, separated by a decorative screen. FINCH moves through the living room toward the door where the couple went. He hears muffled whispers and the sounds of their lovemaking. Continuing past, he notices the bathroom door slightly open and slips inside.

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - BATHROOM - NIGHT

FINCH looks around.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S BATHROOM - DAY

The world is a beautiful and bright place once again. MAN is fixing the shower while FINCH sits beside the toilet, watching. MAN accidentally nudges a roll of toilet paper into the toilet. He turns his head.

MAN

Shit.

As he turns, he slips and accidentally flushes the toilet while trying to steady himself. The toilet overflows.

MAN (CONT'D)
No no no no no no no no.

FINCH backs away from the spreading water and barks.

MAN (CONT'D)
It's not funny.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The world is a dark and gritty place once more. FINCH searches the bathroom, and finds some toilet paper. He throws a few rolls into the toilet and flushes. The water begins to rise and trickle over the edge, forming a small pool next to the toilet. He waits, then flushes again. This time, the water gushes out, causing the toilet to overflow and flood the room. FINCH leaves the bathroom.

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - NIGHT

He backtracks to the living room, and lies down behind the decorative screen. He waits.

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - NIGHT - LATER

ELYSIA exits the bedroom and goes into the bathroom.

ELYSIA (O.S.)
Shit! Shit shit shit shit! Jethro!

JETHRO runs to the bathroom.

JETHRO (O.S.)
What happened?

ELYSIA (O.S.)
I don't know! There's water everywhere! Toilet water!

JETHRO (O.S.)
Well, let's get some towels and we can deal with this tomorrow, right?

ELYSIA (O.S.)
Are you kidding me? I don't have 20 bathrooms, Jet! Voss almighty. This is a fucking disaster. How did this even happen?

ELYSIA walks into the bedroom, and returns fully dressed, heading towards the front door. JETHRO runs after her.

JETHRO
Hold on, where are you going?

ELYSIA
I'm gonna go and see if Ruben is up.

JETHRO
Are you serious?

ELYSIA
Do you know another plumber around here? Fucks' sake. Just go to bed. You know he'll talk my ear off before he even picks up a goddamn wrench.

JETHRO
I'll go.

ELYSIA
Are you nuts? It's none of his damn business who's spending the night in my house. You just go to bed, and I'll be back soon. I hope.

She walks out of the door, but immediately returns.

ELYSIA (CONT'D)
Don't come out of the bedroom when he's here.

JETHRO
I know. You should just tell him already.

ELYSIA
I can't. You know how he is.

JETHRO
He's your dad. He'll live.

ELYSIA
No. No, he won't. You're just a Whisperer. Just go to bed. Bye. I love you.

JETHRO
You too.

She leaves, and JETHRO returns to the bedroom. FINCH slowly follows. As JETHRO lies down, FINCH carefully enters the bedroom and climbs under the bed.

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - BEDROOM - LATER

JETHRO snores. FINCH emerges from under the bed and carefully climbs onto it, standing over JETHRO. He lets out a low, simmering growl and nudges JETHRO with his nose. JETHRO groggily wakes up to see the angry dog looming above him. He is instantly fully alert.

JETHRO
(trying to stay calm)
Easy. Easy boy.

JETHRO slowly reaches for the lamp on the bedside table. FINCH growls louder and moves closer to JETHRO's face. JETHRO's hand stops mid-reach.

JETHRO (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Easy.

They stay like this for a few moments, JETHRO sweating profusely. FINCH then jumps off the bed and leaves the room. JETHRO gets up, grabs the lamp, and carefully follows.

JETHRO (CONT'D)
What the fuck is happening?

INT. ELYSIA'S CABIN - NIGHT

FINCH enters the living room and hides behind the decorative screen. JETHRO comes in, searching for FINCH.

JETHRO
(calling out)
Here boy.

He scans the room, but finds nothing.

JETHRO (CONT'D)
How did he even get in here?

He moves to the large window and peers outside. Suddenly, FINCH bursts from behind the screen. JETHRO turns just in time to see FINCH lunging at him. FINCH leaps and pushes JETHRO with all his weight.

JETHRO (CONT'D)
 (crying out)
 Fuck!

JETHRO crashes through the window, shattering it and impaling himself on sharp shards of glass. He moans in agony and tries to stand, but as he does, he inadvertently pulls out the glass, causing blood to gush from his wounds. He attempts to crawl after FINCH but stumbles and collapses to the floor.

JETHRO (CONT'D)
 (weakly)
 Fucking--

FINCH returns and sits next to JETHRO, observing him as he bleeds out.

JETHRO (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 Fucking dog--

JETHRO's attempts to speak further fail. FINCH steps back to avoid the spreading pool of blood. After a moment, JETHRO stops breathing. FINCH jumps through the broken window. We linger on the scene for a while. It is dead silent. Unintelligible voices drift in from outside, followed by the sound of a door unlocking.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - BOOMING VOICES NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE NIGHT

FINCH walks toward the neighborhood exit. ELYSIA's bloodcurdling scream echoes in the distance. FINCH glances back briefly but then resumes his pace, sniffing the ground. A faint blue neon trail guides him toward the punishing grounds.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - PUNISHING GROUNDS - NIGHT

The punishing grounds are eerily silent. FINCH moves through the large field, passing rows of empty animal cages, freshly dug graves, and a line of low stockades designed for kneeling captives.

The stockades have two parts: one section for the head and hands that locks them close to the ground, and an elevated middle piece of wood that keeps the person kneeling in an extremely uncomfortable position.

Almost everything is deserted, except for one stockade. An exhausted woman is trapped, her stomach, head and hands secured in the device. FINCH walks past her as she breathes heavily.

STOCKADE WOMAN

(weakly)

Water. Please.

FINCH stops in his tracks and looks at the woman. She lifts her head weakly, staring at him with a mix of confusion and disbelief.

STOCKADE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Are you real?

FINCH approaches her and nudges her hand. She touches him gently and starts crying.

STOCKADE WOMAN (CONT'D)

I miss my dog. And my mom. I'm so sorry. I just want to go home.

FINCH looks around and spots a bucket under a spigot next to a small shed just outside the punishing grounds. He runs to it, grabs the bucket, and returns to the woman. She tries to drink but can't reach. FINCH nudges the bucket closer and tilts it toward her head. She drinks eagerly, gulping down the water while crying. After she's finished, FINCH sets the bucket back upright.

STOCKADE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Thank you. You must be an angel. I thought I didn't believe in that anymore, but here you are.

FINCH looks at her with a deep, contemplative gaze, then turns and begins to walk away.

STOCKADE WOMAN (CONT'D)

I will die here, Angel. When they see I drank, they'll bury me. Tell my mom I love her. Tell her I'm sorry.

FINCH turns back, his tail wagging slightly, as if offering a reassuring gesture. He grabs the bucket and returns it to its place beside the shed. He begins to walk away, but notices a faint blue glow from the door. FINCH jumps up, turns the knob with his paws, and pushes the door open to enter the shed.

INT. SHED - LATE NIGHT

The shed is small and musty, filled with various supplies and tools. He smells the air. There is a faint blue neon glow on the floor. The glow leads into the corner behind some shelves.

FINCH follows it and finds a blanket on the floor in the corner with a scruffy, well-worn stuffed llama and a book resting on top of it. FINCH settles down in the adjacent corner of the small shed, still behind the shelves. His body sinks with exhaustion. His eyes grow heavy, and he drifts off to sleep.

INT. SHED - MORNING

The door of the shed creaks open and slams shut. A young girl of about 12, FAITH, wearing a disheveled white dress runs into the corner. She collapses on the floor, hugs the stuffed llama and starts crying.

FINCH, awoken by all the noise, looks at the girl, who is enveloped in a blue neon aura. It hits his nose like a ton of bricks.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FAITH throws a glass of clear liquid into the unconscious battered MAN's eyeless face. Her expression is one of fear and distress.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. SHED - MORNING

FAITH sobs uncontrollably, her body shaking as she clings tightly to the stuffed llama. FINCH approaches slowly, emitting a low angry growl. FAITH looks up, and gasps at the sight of him. As FINCH moves closer, his growl grows louder. A ray of light filters through a crack in the wooden wall, casting a glow on FINCH and reflecting off his nametag. FAITH examines him more closely, her fear mixing with recognition.

FAITH

It's you! You were in all the pictures!

FAITH springs up suddenly, startling FINCH, who instinctively steps back. Without hesitation, she throws her arms around the dog, hugging him tightly.

FAITH (CONT'D)

(sobbing)

I'm so sorry! I'm sorry!

FINCH stands frozen, his body stiff as he processes the unexpected embrace.

FAITH (CONT'D)

(wailing)

We took him from you, you have nobody now. I'm so sorry. I have nightmares every night. I can't live like this anymore.

FINCH fidgets around and wriggles free from the child's grip. FAITH collapses in front of him, her face to the ground.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Please, forgive me. I know I don't deserve it. We all deserve to die for what we did. Please please please please please--

FINCH places his paw gently on FAITH's shoulder. She looks up, her face swollen and red from crying. Slowly, she sits up, facing the confused dog.

FAITH (CONT'D)

It was you. You came here-- You came here for us.

FINCH lets out a silent, low bark.

FAITH (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I heard about those two. You're doing the right thing. Can you end it quickly? Can you understand me?

FINCH takes a step back.

FAITH (CONT'D)

(voice breaking)

I know I don't deserve it. I made him hurt too. I made him scream. I still hear it in my head. Every day.

She closes her eyes and a tear runs down her cheek.

FAITH (CONT'D)

There's no excuse for what I did. I just thought if I try harder, they'd stop hurting me. Anything. So they'd leave me alone.

FINCH perks up his ears.

FAITH (CONT'D)

You understand? He-- My husband--
The Supreme Leader. He hurts me
almost every night. My mom says
it's just how it is and that I'm
lucky. But I know it's wrong.
Because if it wasn't wrong, I
wouldn't feel so bad.

FINCH steps closer to FAITH.

FAITH (CONT'D)

And the other wives-- They don't
like me. They put my head in the
toilet sometimes. They say that
then he won't want to kiss me
anymore. That I won't be his
favorite anymore. I wish they were
right and he'd leave me alone. I
could tell him. But I don't want
to, because honestly I deserve it.
I'm such a bad person. I'm dirt.

FAITH looks at FINCH carefully.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Do you understand?

FINCH whines softly.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I know you do. I want you to. I
want to explain. I want you to
understand so badly.

FAITH looks FINCH in the eye, her trembling hand reaching out
in a desperate plea for reassurance. FINCH steps back.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I won't touch you.

She pauses.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Posie helps them. She's horrible.
She thinks that's how she'll get
into the inner circle, but she
doesn't know that's not how it
works.

She starts welling up again.

FAITH (CONT'D)

She's so cruel. She says horrible things. And I thought-- I thought if I'm useful-- If I impress them, they'll stop. I tried so hard! But they're never happy.

She sobs silently.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I thought I was doing the right thing, but it can't be right. If it was right the noise in my head would stop.

(sobbing loudly)

But it never stops. He just keeps screaming.

She looks at FINCH for solace.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I don't have anybody. I don't have anywhere to go. I can't run. I can't do anything. I can just come here to cry. But you-- It's my fault you're alone. It's my fault you're hurt! Mine!

FAITH cries into her stuffed llama. FINCH approaches her slowly, closing the distance. When FAITH looks up, they are face to face.

FAITH (CONT'D)

(sobbing, barely above a whisper)

Please. Just make it quick. I don't want to live anymore. I'm so scared.

FINCH stares at her for a moment, then licks her nose. He then turns and heads for the door, pushing it open. FAITH watches, stunned, as FINCH exits.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - OUTSIDE OF SHED - MORNING

FINCH exits the shed, and FAITH rushes after him, calling out.

FAITH

Finch!

FINCH stops, turns, and looks at her.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Wait!

She runs to him.

FAITH (CONT'D)

If you want to find them, you have to go into The Lighthouse. And you can't do that alone. But I'm allowed there. I'll bring you with me.

FINCH begins to walk away.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Finch, please. I know I can't ever fix it. But let me help you. Let me try. Please.

He stops and looks at her.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - THE LIGHTHOUSE - MORNING

FAITH approaches the main door of the compound, holding a rope tied around FINCH's collar. Two guards, ORIN and NERO, stand watch by the door.

FAITH

(smiling widely)

Hi Orin.

ORIN

Hey, Faith.

ORIN looks at FINCH with apprehension.

ORIN (CONT'D)

(stammers)

You can come in, but I don't know if we can let a dog in there.

FAITH makes a disappointed face.

FAITH

But Elias said I can have a pet if I can find one on my own, and I did. He's so nice too. See?

FINCH raises his paw. The guards exchange glances.

ORIN

(to Faith)

That's very cute and all, but I don't know. We might be in big trouble if we do that.

FAITH

(annoyed)

I just want to go home, and show my husband my new dog. Can I do that, Orin? Can I, or do I have to wait for Elias here, and tell him you didn't let me go to my own home, just because you felt like it?

ORIN

(hesitantly)

No, but--

FAITH

Then let me and Chronos pass, please. I want to get some breakfast.

NERO

Chronos? Oh, he's gonna love that.

FAITH

I know.

(to Orin)

Now, if you could just scooch a bit?

FAITH flashes ORIN her most convincing smile. ORIN's expression shifts, and he returns a hesitant but genuine smile.

ORIN

Look, it's not that I don't like Chronos, and I know that you're just trying to go home, but we never had any pets in here, and I think I should ask my--

FAITH

(cutting him off)

Fine. I guess, I'll just wait here and starve to death.

NERO

Just let her in. He told her it's fine. Faith doesn't lie.

ORIN's expression softens in defeat, his shoulders dropping in acceptance.

ORIN
 Fine.
 (to Finch)
 Welcome home, Chronos.

FINCH wags his tail happily.

FAITH
 (laughing)
 He likes you better now.

FAITH and FINCH enter The Lighthouse. ORIN looks at NERO.

ORIN
 If this goes south, I'm throwing
 you right under the bus, just so
 you know.

NERO
 (dismissively)
 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - MORNING

The reception area of The Lighthouse is sleek and modern, bustling with activity. People move about with trays, cleaning supplies, and paperwork. Multiple staircases, lifts, and corridors branch off in various directions. FAITH guides FINCH through the corridor, exchanging greetings with those they pass.

FAITH
 (to Finch)
 It's not this busy usually, but
 something's going on today. We're
 having a big celebration in the
 evening, but I don't really know
 what it's about. They'll tell us
 then.

She smiles and nods to a woman pushing a vacuum cleaner.

CLEANER
 Hi Faith! You got a dog?

FAITH
 Yeah!

The cleaner kneels and pets FINCH.

CLEANER
That's a really good boy.

FAITH
Yeah he is!

FAITH waves goodbye to the CLEANER and walks down the corridor.

FAITH (CONT'D)
(pointing)
If you take those stairs, there's
my room. I'd show you, but I don't
think you have time for that.

They stop at an elevator. FAITH, clearly nervous, presses the button. FINCH looks up at her, expectant.

FAITH (CONT'D)
I'm okay. I just don't like going
down there.

The elevator door opens. As FAITH and FINCH step inside, LYRA, a woman in her 30s wearing an identical white dress, comes running toward them.

FAITH (CONT'D)
(under breath)
Oh no.

LYRA stops the elevator from closing.

LYRA
Where do you think you're going?
And what's this?

LYRA makes a dismissive gesture towards FINCH.

FAITH
I have to go down to see Elias.

LYRA
He's busy.

FAITH
He told me to go and find him in
the security office, because they
need to update my access card. I'm
getting the blue one today.

LYRA
You are, are you?

FAITH
Yeah. I am.

LYRA smirks.

LYRA
(nods towards Finch)
What about that? Does he know about that?

FINCH lets out a silent growl.

FAITH
(to Finch)
It's okay.
(to Lyra)
You're just jealous, because he won't let you get that snake you wanted.

LYRA
I can't wait until you grow old.

LYRA leaves in a huff. FAITH presses the "close door" button.

FAITH
(under her breath)
I can't wait until you croak.

The door closes.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE ELEVATOR - MORNING

FINCH looks up at FAITH.

FAITH
What? She's so mean.

FINCH barks in agreement. The elevator descends to the lowest floor and opens.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE LOWER LEVEL - MORNING

The corridor resembles an office building, with plaques on the office doors lining the walls. FAITH and FINCH walk down the corridor and turn left. At the end, another elevator awaits. FAITH kneels and unties the rope from FINCH's collar.

FAITH
(whispering)
This one will take you underground.
They're all there today.
(MORE)

FAITH (CONT'D)

All of them. The guilty ones. Voss too. Except for me. I'm not allowed down there.

She hesitates.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Well, he took me there once. But I was blindfolded. I only saw--

She drifts off in thought.

FAITH (CONT'D)

One room.

She looks down in shame. FINCH steps closer and rests his head on her shoulder. She hugs him tightly but briefly before continuing.

FAITH (CONT'D)

When he took me back, he took my blindfold off as soon as we went into the elevator. I saw the code. I don't know if it still works, but we can try.

FAITH stands up and presses the elevator call button. The door opens shortly, and FINCH steps inside.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I can't come. If they see me down there, they'll send me to the punishing grounds.

She leans into the lift and types in 1875.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Don't let them get you, Finch.

The elevator doors close.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND ELEVATOR - MORNING

FINCH sits patiently until the door opens. As he steps out, he surveys the corridor. It's dimly lit with neon lights and painted black, giving it a shadowy appearance. There are several decorative curtains draped sporadically throughout the corridors.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - MORNING

FINCH cautiously makes his way down the corridor, each step echoing in the silence. At the end, the hallway splits. He sniffs the air, detecting a faint red, pink, and green neon mist drifting from the right. He turns in that direction.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - LATER

FINCH navigates the maze-like hallways, passing several rooms—some closed, some open. He glimpses an open room bathed in bright pink, a stark contrast to the dark corridor. The room features a bed covered with soft toys, shackles affixed to it, and a gimp mask with the cult's logo on its forehead hanging on the wall. Next door, the room is closed.

Chanting and the sound of male grunting echo down the corridor. FINCH follows the scent, turning a corner.

Sudden footsteps and muffled voices approach rapidly. FINCH halts and listens. Quickly considering his options, he spots an open, dark room, and he slips inside. Two cult members in bright red tunics rush past. FINCH steps back but accidentally steps on an old toy telephone on wheels, which squeaks. The cult members stop.

CULT MEMBER 1

What was that?

CULT MEMBER 2

I don't know, bro. Who cares. We have things to do.

CULT MEMBER 1

I care.

CULT MEMBER 1 cautiously opens the door wider, revealing a children's room. The space is filled with toys, a cot, and a changing table. The walls are painted with rolling hills, and the ceiling mimics the sky. A row of large soft toys lines the far wall. FINCH sits motionless among the toys, blending in as one of them.

CULT MEMBER 1 (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Hello?

Something in the cot stirs.

CULT MEMBER 2

(whispering)

You'll wake the baby, dumbass.
Let's go.

They both back away slowly, and close the door.

CULT MEMBER 2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't close it all the way! Nanny
will freak out if you do.

CULT MEMBER 1 (O.S.)
Right.

The door slightly opens, and the cult members walk away. FINCH walks to the cot and stands on his hind legs, his front paws resting on the edge of the cot. There is a baby peacefully sleeping inside. FINCH gently tugs the blanket over the sleeping baby with his teeth, then quietly exits the room

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - CONTINUED

FINCH peers down the corridor to ensure it's clear, then proceeds cautiously. A neon light flickers overhead.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - LATER

FINCH turns a corner into a dungeon-like chamber with cells lining one side. It appears to be a dead end. In the distance, a baby cries. FINCH cautiously makes his way through the dungeon. Green, pink and red neon lights slither along the far wall, intertwining. As FINCH reaches the end, the lights slide up the wall, stop midway, and begin blinking alternately: pink, green, red, pink, green, red. FINCH watches intently, the lights casting shifting colors on his face.

DESI
(whispering)
Finch.

FINCH jolts at the sudden voice, tensing as he turns. A hand reaches through the bars toward him.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S KITCHEN - DAY

The world is bright and cheerful. MAN stirs a pot in the kitchen. DESI, a woman in her mid-20s, leans on the counter with a glass of wine. A plate of cooked meatballs sits next to her, while FINCH sits on the floor, watching them happily. MAN leans toward DESI, offering a wooden spoon full of sauce.

MAN

Try.

DESI

Sure it's safe?

MAN

(deadpan)

Ha. Ha. C'mon.

DESI

I don't know, man. Far as I remember, the best you could muster when I was a kid was instant mash potatoes. And you even managed to burn those--

MAN

That was ONE time! I didn't know you're just supposed to boil the water!

DESI

Well, that's what package instructions are for.

MAN

I've been watching Julia Child and The Barefoot Contessa. AND I took a class. Finch will attest to that.

MAN looks at FINCH. FINCH barks and wags his tail.

DESI

We both know he'd lie for you.

MAN

Just try it, asshat.

DESI

Okay, jerkface.

DESI scrunches up her face and carefully tries a bit of the sauce.

DESI (CONT'D)

Ewww! What did you put in that?
Liquid farts?

MAN

(surprised)

What? It's not good?

DESI

God no!

MAN turns around, facing away from DESI and FINCH, and starts fiddling with his phone.

MAN

But I followed the recipe-- Lemme just see--

MAN trails off, absorbed in his phone. DESI smiles and quietly laughs. She winks at FINCH, gives a playful chef's kiss, and gestures a "shhh" with her finger. She grabs a meatball and tosses it to FINCH, who catches it mid-air and wags his tail.

DESI

(quietly)
Good boy.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - CONTINUED

The world snaps back to the bleak, cold reality of the compound.

DESI

Here. Good boy.

FINCH walks to the cell, tail wagging. DESI sits on the floor, reaching out to him, looking exhausted and disheveled.

DESI (CONT'D)

What are you doing here, Finch?

FINCH licks her face, trying to squeeze through the bars but finding them too narrow.

DESI (CONT'D)

I'm so happy to see you too, boy, but this isn't safe. How are you even here?

DESI's eyes widen in a realization.

DESI (CONT'D)

He's here? Is he? Did they take him too?

FINCH whines quietly.

DESI (CONT'D)

Shit.

(urgently to Finch)

You need to be brave and go find him. Maybe they took him to one of the interrogation rooms. Look.

She points to the far wall that FINCH was observing earlier.

DESI (CONT'D)

You push that wall, Finch. You push it as hard as you can. It'll open. He's in one of the rooms. Go find him!

FINCH whines, lies down, and pushes himself as close as he can to the bars. DESI puts her hand on him.

DESI (CONT'D)

Please, Finch. This is important. They're gonna kill him. Please, don't let them kill him.

DESI starts sobbing. FINCH presses himself to the bars even tighter, and looks up at DESI sadly.

DESI (CONT'D)

(whispering desperately)

Please, Finch.

Suddenly, the far wall begins to creak open. FINCH turns to look at it.

DESI (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Hide!

FINCH quickly gets up and hides in a dark corner. The wall opens all the way, and two cult members wearing dark red tunics enter.

CULT MEMBER 3

(harshly)

Get up.

DESI gets up.

CULT MEMBER 3 (CONT'D)

We're gonna unlock this door now, and you'll come with us. If you don't start trouble, you won't get trouble, understand?

CULT MEMBER 4 lifts a cattle prod and presses a button, which buzzes loudly. DESI steps back. CULT MEMBER 3 inserts a key into the lock.

DESI

Where are we going?

CULT MEMBER 3

Will you start trouble?

DESI

Just-- Where are you taking me? Is my brother here? Please. Can I talk to him?

CULT MEMBER 3

Are you gonna be trouble or not?

DESI

Can I talk to my mom?

CULT MEMBER 3

Trouble. Or not?

DESI

(angrily)

Yes, I'll be trouble if you don't get me my mom here right now!

CULT MEMBER 3

We're taking you to see her right now.

DESI

Oh. Well, good.

CULT MEMBER 3

Her and The Supreme Leader.

DESI

(fearfully)

No no no, you can't do that. Bring me my mom, right now.

CULT MEMBER 3

She's waiting.

DESI

Yeah, with Voss. I'm not going. That motherfucker--

CULT MEMBER 4

HEY! Show some respect!

CULT MEMBER 4 strikes the bars with the cattle prod, creating a loud, echoing clang.

DESI

Respect? RESPECT?!? No! I won't show respect to a fucking child molester.

CULT MEMBER 3

So, trouble it is, huh? Vesta would prefer you walk in the sacrificial chamber, but I guess we'll just have to carry you.

DESI

Her name is Sharon.

CULT MEMBER 4

Show some res--

DESI

No. And if you think for one second I'm going there, you have another thing coming.

FINCH is nervously fidgeting in the dark corner.

CULT MEMBER 4 zaps DESI with the cattle prod, and she collapses. FINCH has had enough. He lunges at CULT MEMBER 4, biting his arm. CULT MEMBER 4 drops the cattle prod, screaming, collapsing to the floor. Amid the chaos, FINCH uses his hind leg to push the cattle prod into DESI's cell.

CULT MEMBER 4

GET HIM OFF ME!

CULT MEMBER 3 panics and tries to pull FINCH off CULT MEMBER 4, but FINCH growls and refuses to let go. CULT MEMBER 3, desperate, pulls out an ornate knife and approaches FINCH. As he raises the knife, he is suddenly zapped with the cattle prod. CULT MEMBER 3 collapses.

CULT MEMBER 4 (CONT'D)

LET ME GO! LET ME GO!

DESI reaches through the bars and unlocks the cell. She steps out and, seeing CULT MEMBER 3 struggling to rise, gives him a prolonged zap. He falls unconscious.

DESI

Finch! Release!

FINCH releases CULT MEMBER 4 and sits by DESI. CULT MEMBER 4 clutches his bleeding arm, wincing in pain.

DESI (CONT'D)
 (to cult member 4)
 Now, motherfucker, it's just you
 and me.

CULT MEMBER 4
 Look--

DESI
 Shut up, pick up your buddy and
 drag him into the cell.

CULT MEMBER 4
 Just zap me, bitch, because I'm not
 doing that.

DESI
 Finch. Ready.

FINCH rises, growling and adopting an aggressive stance.

CULT MEMBER 4
 Christ! No! Call him off. I'll do
 it!

DESI
 Stand by.

FINCH sits, his gaze still fixed intently on CULT MEMBER 4.

CULT MEMBER 4 drags CULT MEMBER 3 into the cell. DESI shuts
 and locks the door, then pockets the key.

DESI (CONT'D)
 Now, dipshit. Where's my brother?

CULT MEMBER 4
 How the fuck am I supposed to know
 that? They tell me what to do, I do
 it.

DESI
 I'll tell you what. I know that
 you're at least a Resonant Voice,
 based on that piece of shit trinket
 you're wearing around your neck.

CULT MEMBER 4 looks displeased as he puts a pendant in the
 shape of a triangle in his shirt.

CULT MEMBER 4
 You seem to know lots of shit.

DESI

Yeah. I do. But what I don't know
is where you put my brother.

CULT MEMBER 3 wakes up and jumps up to his feet, screaming.

DESI (CONT'D)

Calm down, princess. It's over.
Maybe you can tell me where my
brother is? Or, you know.

She lifts the cattle prod, shaking it slightly.

CULT MEMBER 3

Ask Vesta. We don't know. It's her
journey.

DESI

You mean Sharon. And I'm sure she
isn't travelling alone on that
journey, so, spill it jackass!

CULT MEMBER 4

Look, we weren't there, we don't
know. They're supposed to finish
the ceremony today, and that's all
I know. You're wasting your time.
Jesus Christ.

DESI

(laughs tauntingly)
Oh, there he goes again. I thought
you're not supposed to say that.
And you did it twice!

CULT MEMBER 4

(worried)
Fuck.

DESI

What will your daddy say? Don't
worry, I'll tell Voss all about it.
Right before I tear his dick off.

CULT MEMBER 4

Yeah. Sure you will. Killing a God
isn't that easy, honey.
(nods towards Finch)
Psycho dog and all.

DESI

Wait. A God? I thought you're all
Gods?
(imitating Oprah)
(MORE)

DESI (CONT'D)
 You get divinity, and you get
 divinity, and you get divinity.

CULT MEMBER 4
 Almost.

DESI
 Then use your powers and let
 yourself out. Come Finch.

DESI heads toward the open wall, with FINCH trailing closely behind. They quickly exit the room.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - LATER

FINCH and DESI navigate the labyrinthine corridors in silence. DESI cautiously opens doors, checking for MAN.

DESI
 (to Finch)
 I don't know where he is. Not in
 any of the interrogation rooms.
 What if we're too late, Finch?

FINCH looks up at DESI, then continues down the corridor. They turn a corner and spot a fire escape.

DESI (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 That's good to know.

FINCH looks at the fire escape sign.

FLASHBACK:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR - DAY

The world is bright and cheerful once more. MAN and FINCH stand next to a fire exit in a well-lit apartment building corridor. FINCH watches MAN intently.

MAN
 So, while we stay here, you gotta
 know--

FINCH wags his tail.

MAN (CONT'D)
 Pay attention now. Look.

He points at the emergency exit sign.

MAN (CONT'D)

Important.

MAN walks to the other side of the corridor, with FINCH happily following him. He stops, looks back at FINCH, and then flails his arms dramatically.

MAN (CONT'D)

Fire!

MAN runs down the corridor toward the emergency exit, with FINCH right behind him. At the exit, MAN places his hands on the emergency bar and gestures for FINCH to do the same. FINCH puts his front paws on the bar, and MAN pushes it open. He then clicks the clicker and rewards FINCH with a treat.

MAN (CONT'D)

Good boy.

He pets FINCH on the head.

MAN (CONT'D)

Now, all we gotta do is repeat this a hundred more times.

FINCH barks.

MAN (CONT'D)

Not everything today, silly.

MAN laughs and starts walking down the corridor again with FINCH following.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

The world is dark and gritty again. FINCH barks under his breath and heads straight for the emergency exit, with DESI following closely.

DESI

We can't leave, we have to find him first.

FINCH smells the door, then scratches at it. He whines.

DESI (CONT'D)

You think he went through here?

FINCH quietly barks.

DESI (CONT'D)
He wouldn't leave without you,
Finch.

FINCH scratches at the door.

DESI (CONT'D)
Maybe he doesn't know you're here.

FINCH puts his front paws on the emergency bar on the door.

DESI (CONT'D)
Wait! What if it triggers an alarm?

She hesitates and thinks for a moment.

DESI (CONT'D)
Fuck it. We have to find him.

She opens the door and no alarms go off.

DESI (CONT'D)
That's lucky. Come, let's go.

DESI goes up the stairs, and the door closes behind her, leaving FINCH in the corridor. Realizing what just happened, DESI rushes back down and tries to open the door, but it doesn't budge.

DESI (CONT'D)
Finch! No! Why didn't you come!

Her eyes fill with tears.

DESI (CONT'D)
Please! Why?

FINCH raises his paw and whines before turning and walking further down the corridor, guided by a green and pink neon mist. DESI, in frustration and despair, slams her hands against the door.

DESI (CONT'D)
FUUUUUUUUUUCK!

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

The pink and green neon trail lead FINCH to a curtain. He goes through it to find a small room, with another curtain. He peeks through.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND CEREMONIAL CHAMBER -
LATE AFTERNOON

FINCH observes a large, well-lit room painted in red and white. There is a table with many different foods and drinks near the entrance. There is saran wrap covering the whole table. In the center of the room stands an altar, surrounded by ornate candle holders and several singing bowls.

BRETT, a muscly man in his late 20s, is attaching shackles to the altar - two for the hands and two for the feet. POSIE, a woman in her late 20s, carefully arranges razor wire in the center of the cult's logo (a triangle within a circle) drawn on the floor in front of the altar. The razor wire is long, but coiled, with handles on each end. She smiles to herself as she works.

POSIE
(under breath)
I hope they tie her tighter than a hog.

BRETT
What?

POSIE
(happily)
Oh, nothing. Just saying I hope I get to pull one end when they're through.
(snickers)
It's gonna hurt so bad.

POSIE can't contain herself.

POSIE (CONT'D)
(giggles gleefully)
Bologna slices! But instead of salami--
(Squeals)
It's bitch!

BRETT screws the final shackle onto the altar, rolling his eyes at POSIE's comment. FINCH inhales deeply, and both of them begin to glow with neon light- BRETT in a vivid green, and POSIE in a bright pink. The neon glow intensifies and rapidly expands, filling the room with an otherworldly light.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BRETT is restraining MAN's arms. POSIE quickly grabs MAN's ear and slices it off. MAN lets out a bloodcurdling scream, while POSIE stands and looks at the severed ear from both sides.

POSIE
As I thought. Broken.

BRETT smiles, amused, while MAN screams.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND CEREMONIAL CHAMBER -
LATE AFTERNOON

BRETT pulls on the shackles to ensure they are secure.

POSIE
Hurry. It's supposed to start in
like--
(checks time)
--half an hour.

BRETT
I am! Stop riding my ass.

POSIE
You wish.

BRETT
Yeah, Posie. Sure. Everyone does.

POSIE turns to look at BRETT.

POSIE
What? You wouldn't?

BRETT looks at her surprised.

BRETT
Um--

POSIE
So, if I asked you right now to
test drive those shackles with me,
you'd be all like: "Gee Posie, that
sounds swell, but naaaaaah."

BRETT
Exactly.

She walks to BRETT slowly and deliberately.

POSIE
Okay. Let me put it this way.
Brett--

BRETT
Bane.

POSIE stops and rolls her eyes.

POSIE
You didn't --
(exhales)
Fine. Bane.

BRETT seems to like that she didn't argue.

BRETT
Yeah, that's right.

She reaches BRETT and stands very close to his face.

POSIE
Bane, would you like to test drive
these shackles with me?

BRETT tries to kiss her, and she moves away.

POSIE (CONT'D)
Nuh-uh. Nobody said anything about
kissing.

POSIE gently presses BRETT against the altar and removes his shirt. She signals for him to lie down, and as he complies, she secures one shackle around his wrist. POSIE then bites his ear playfully, causing BRETT to display clear signs of excitement.

POSIE (CONT'D)
So? Would you?

BRETT nods, and she locks the other shackle around his other wrist. She then unzips his pants, takes them off, and proceeds with securing the shackles on his legs. She leans in closely and presses her chest against his.

POSIE (CONT'D)
I knew you would.

BRETT
I've wanted this for so long.

POSIE swiftly grabs BRETT's pants from the floor, pulls out the keys to the shackles from his pocket, and laughs cruelly.

POSIE
But you won't. Hah!

BRETT
Hey. What--

POSIE
You've always been a dumbshit,
Brett.

BRETT
Bane!

POSIE
You. Didn't. Earn. That. Name.
Brett.
(she slaps her butt)
Or this.

She looks him up and down, while he stares at her in disbelief.

POSIE (CONT'D)
Ew.

She starts walking away.

BRETT
You bitch! Let me out of here!

She turns and angrily walks back towards him. She twists his nipple as hard as she can. BRETT winces in pain.

POSIE
You don't speak to your superior
that way. Understood?

BRETT nods, and POSIE lets go.

POSIE (CONT'D)
I'll let you out when I'm good and
ready.

She walks away, laughing.

POSIE (CONT'D)
Poor little Brett. All high and
dry. And so so very teeny tiny.

FINCH darts out from behind the curtain, just before POSIE can slip through it. BRETT yanks at the shackles in a futile effort to free himself, his frustration mounting as he yells.

BRETT
 Fucking cocktease bitch. I'll
 fucking get her alone. I'll
 fucking--

FINCH stealthily approaches BRETT, who remains oblivious to the impending danger.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 --destroy her. I'll--

FINCH slowly approaches, and BRETT finally notices.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Whoa. How did you get in here?

FINCH growls and continues his approach.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Hey. HEY!

BRETT panics.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Fuck! Posie! Posie!

BRETT struggles against the shackles but can't free himself.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Help! There's a rabid dog!

FINCH grabs the handle of the razor wire on the floor and carries it towards BRETT.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 What are you doing?

FINCH jumps on BRETT. He exhales sharply from the weight of the dog.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Oof! What's happening? What are you
 doing, dog? Help!

FINCH glares at BRETT, then drapes the razor wire over his neck, leaving the handle dangling at the side.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 What-- Stop! Stop it!
 (panicked screaming)
 Help!

FINCH jumps off and grips one handle of the wire. He pulls it slowly and deliberately, the razor wire slicing through BRETT's neck. Blood begins to trickle from the wound as BRETT screams in agony.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Stop! Good dog! I have treats!

FINCH keeps pulling the razor wire, slicing deeper into BRETT's throat. BRETT tries to move but only makes it worse. He stops struggling and lies as still as he can, but the pain is clear.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Please! Posie! Dog! Please! I'll
 give you anything!

BRETT tries to reach the wire with his hands, but the shackles keep him from moving. FINCH stops pulling.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Good dog! Good dog! Now, please.
 Please, get this off me!

FINCH releases the handle.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 Oh thank God.

FINCH barks, then grabs the handle again and sprints. The razor wire slices through BRETT's throat rapidly. Blood gushes out.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 (through gurgles)
 No no no no no!

The other handle hits the altar. FINCH drops the handle, and walks around the altar, then grabs the other handle.

BRETT (CONT'D)
 (gurgly)
 Please.

FINCH starts running in the opposite direction with the handle in his mouth. The razor wire slices through BRETT's throat, cutting all the way to the bone. FINCH stops when the other handle hits BRETT's face.

He drops the handle and walks over to BRETT's lifeless body, jumping on him and growling. POSIE walks back into the room, dangling the keys.

POSIE
 Alright, Brett. Enough of your
 crazy shenanigans, they'll be here
 any mi--

She notices the bloody scene, and her face drops. FINCH turns to face her.

POSIE (CONT'D)
 (stunned)
 --nute.

FINCH starts sprinting towards her.

POSIE (CONT'D)
 Fuck!

POSIE explodes into a sprint, panic on her face, and disappears behind the curtain, with FINCH hot on her heels.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - CONTINUED

POSIE runs down the corridor, with FINCH closely behind her, growling and barking. POSIE is running as fast as she can, navigating the corridors. She throws the keys in her hand at FINCH, which he dodges. He's snarling and barking as he chases her.

Turning a corner, POSIE slows down, quickly removes her shoes, and runs with them, one in each hand. FINCH follows, rounding the corner.

POSIE
 SHIIIIIT!

POSIE throws a shoe at FINCH, but seeing it has no effect, she throws the other shoe as well. Ahead, a few cult members are moving down the corridor with various paraphernalia. POSIE shoves them aside, grabs a singing bowl from one of them, and knocks another cult member to the floor.

CULT MEMBER 5
 Excuse you!

The other cult members rush to help their fallen friend. FINCH dashes into the scene, deftly avoiding the fallen member and causing him to fall again. FINCH weaves through the legs of the other cult members, swiftly closing the distance to POSIE.

CULT MEMBER 6

Isn't that Faith's new dog?

POSIE turns another corner. She tries a door, but it's locked. She glances back and throws the singing bowl at FINCH, narrowly missing his head. Realizing he's not slowing down, she sprints faster, but FINCH continues to gain on her.

As she rounds the next corner, she spots a fire extinguisher on the wall. She grabs it and points it at FINCH. He skids to a halt as she aims the extinguisher at him.

POSIE

(out of breath)

You little fucker.

POSIE releases a cloud of dust toward FINCH. He lunges through the cloud and tackles POSIE to the ground. The fire extinguisher falls, its nozzle breaking and releasing more dust. The room becomes obscured, with visibility dropping sharply. POSIE crawls on all fours, struggling to navigate the now slippery floor. She slips occasionally, her movements erratic. FINCH struggles behind her, also slipping, which significantly slows his pursuit.

POSIE struggles to navigate out of the dust, but slips and hits her face, blood gushing from her nose. FINCH slides towards her, his movements unsteady. POSIE screams in frustration and rage. She forces herself up, limping and slipping as she moves. Glancing back frequently, she gauges how close FINCH is. FINCH advances slowly, wiping his paws with each step. POSIE picks up the pace, running as best she can despite the slippery floor.

POSIE (CONT'D)

What do you want?!?

FINCH barks angrily and speeds up. POSIE breaks into a desperate sprint. Suddenly, a door swings open directly in front of her, striking her in the face and sending her sprawling to the floor. JANITOR, a cult member, emerges from the maintenance closet, looking surprised. POSIE looks up at him, panic in her eyes.

POSIE (CONT'D)

(screaming)

Get help!

JANITOR sees FINCH, angry and snarling, rapidly approaching, and he bolts down the corridor. POSIE scrambles on all fours toward the maintenance closet. She attempts to close the door behind her, but it's too late— FINCH is already in the doorway.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - MAINTENANCE CLOSET
- CONTINUED

The maintenance closet is dark and cramped, filled with shelves stocked with various cleaning and repair supplies. At the far end sits a mop bucket with a mop. POSIE crawls backward toward the wall, her eyes fixed on FINCH. FINCH, standing in the doorway, pants heavily and growls deeply. POSIE's breath comes in desperate gasps as she begins to cry in frustration.

POSIE
Just leave me alone.

FINCH advances toward POSIE. She weakly reaches for a shelf to grab something for defense but can't quite reach. Desperately pressing against the mop bucket, she stretches for anything that might be on the shelf nearby. FINCH snaps at her hand, causing her to recoil. She tries for the mop behind her, but FINCH snaps at her once more.

POSIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry!

She starts sobbing quietly.

POSIE (CONT'D)
Why are you doing this to me?

FINCH stares at POSIE with a burning intensity, his mind flooded with disjointed, echoing voices.

POSIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(echoing)
I'm so funny, don't you think so
big man?

POSIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(echoing)
What? I never said I won't fight
back.

POSIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(echoing)
I'm bored.

POSIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(echoing)
Just bustin' your balls, son.

The echo of POSIE's maniacal laughter from the night of the attack reverberates through the air. Then, silence.

MAN (O.S.)

I love you, Finch. More than anything. Don't you ever forget that.

FINCH snaps out of it, and angrily attacks POSIE. He bites her ear and tears it off. She screams, and tries to get up. FINCH bites her leg, and she screams again. She leans on the shelves, desperately reaching for a screwdriver. FINCH snaps at her arm, but she puts all her weight on the shelf and finally grabs the screwdriver.

POSIE

You'll regret ever fucking with m--

Before she can finish her thought, the shelves collapse with a loud crash, burying both POSIE and FINCH. Silence follows, broken only by the occasional sound of bubbles. FINCH crawls out from under the debris and sees POSIE lying face down in the dirty mop water, with only an occasional bubble surfacing. He huffs and pees on her. The bubbles seem to gradually stop. FINCH walks away.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - CORRIDORS -
CONTINUED

FINCH's POV: We follow a rapidly slithering red neon light as it flickers and snakes around corners. We pass a room where cult members stand in a circle whispering indecipherably. The neon light leads FINCH rapidly through a series of arches before turning into an unlit corridor. The only illumination comes from the eerie red trail FINCH is following. The corridor echoes with voices of an unidentified origin.

UNKNOWN WOMAN (O.S.)

I AM GOD!

There is thud. A bloodcurdling scream echoes.

UNKNOWN WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Worship me!

Another thud, the sound of pouring water followed by a scream.

UNKNOWN WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

WORSHIP YOUR GOD!

UNKNOWN WOMAN 2 (O.S.)

(crying)

Noooooooooo!

Another thud and the sound of water pouring.

UNKNOWN WOMAN 2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Please stop.

FINCH quickly races down the corridor, following the flickering red neon light. As he rounds a corner at full speed, he almost collides with two cult members. One is clutching a large garbage bag, while the other wields a pool skimmer, their momentarily confused expressions illuminated by the erratic light.

CULT MEMBER 7

There he is!

FINCH takes a few steps back. The cult members speak in hushed voices.

CULT MEMBER 7 (CONT'D)

Alright. You get behind him, and coax him into the bag with your stick.

CULT MEMBER 8

It's a pool skimmer.

CULT MEMBER 7

I don't care if it's the Gorgon himself, just go do it.

CULT MEMBER 8

Okay, okay.

CULT MEMBER 8 maneuvers carefully to position himself behind FINCH, while CULT MEMBER 7 holds the giant garbage bag wide open, ready to trap him.

CULT MEMBER 7

Easy there, fella.

FINCH whines and sits.

CULT MEMBER 7 (CONT'D)

You be a good boy now, and nobody will get hurt.

FINCH raises his front paws in a "please" gesture, his tail wagging slightly as he makes the motion with practiced ease.

CULT MEMBER 7 (CONT'D)

Well, lookit here.

He slightly drops the bag.

CULT MEMBER 7 (CONT'D)
 You're a good boy. I don't know
 what they were on about.

CULT MEMBER 8
 Watch--

CULT MEMBER 7 is zapped by a cattle prod, collapsing and
 convulsing. As he falls, he reveals DESI and FAITH behind
 him.

CULT MEMBER 8 is stunned.

FAITH
 Leave.

CULT MEMBER 8
 But--

FAITH
 This is my dog. You're trying to
 hurt him. He's a good boy, you saw
 yourself. Now leave, before I tell
 my husband.

CULT MEMBER 8
 But they told us--

FAITH
 Did Voss tell you?

CULT MEMBER 8
 No.

FAITH
 That's right. Now I'M telling you,
 I was allowed this dog by Voss.
 Someone took him and brought him
 here, and he reacted like a scared
 dog would. I have permission to
 take him back. Not that I have to
 explain to you.

CULT MEMBER 8
 But Cato--

FAITH
 He disrespected my dog, so he
 disrespected me, and for that he
 was punished. I'm not gonna ask you
 again.

CULT MEMBER 8 gives a little nod and a tiny bow as he leaves.
 DESI kneels and pets FINCH.

DESI

I'm not leaving without you or your dad. No matter how hard you try, Finch.

FAITH fidgets nervously.

FAITH

Um... I'm actually not supposed to be here, so if we could get out of the way before Eamon figures out that I just lied through my teeth?

DESI

Oh, yeah, of course.

DESI stands up. FINCH barks silently and resumes following the trail. DESI and FAITH follow him.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND CEREMONIAL CHAMBER - LATE AFTERNOON

FINCH, DESI, and FAITH peer through the curtain at ELIAS VOSS and VESTA, a striking woman in her early 60s who clearly takes great care in her appearance. The neon red snake-like trail rapidly hits VESTA and she glows bright red for a moment. FINCH's eyes widen.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

VESTA kneels over a bloodied and battered MAN. She holds one of his eyes in the air, staring at it with a deranged expression, her mouth open in a psychotic grin.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND CEREMONIAL CHAMBER - CONTINUED

FINCH growls and moves toward VESTA. DESI swiftly grabs his collar, and he looks up at her. DESI signals him to stay silent by placing a finger to her lips.

DESI

(quietly)
Shhhh.

FINCH grumbles but turns his attention back to VESTA, who looks visibly distressed.

VESTA

How? How am I going to earn my divine place, if I can't finish the task you gave me?

ELIAS VOSS

Calm down. I know it seems bleak right now, but it's not over yet.

VESTA

Bleak? Look at that!

VESTA gestures towards BRETT's dead body.

VESTA (CONT'D)

That's beyond bleak!

ELIAS VOSS

We'll have someone clean that up. He wasn't crucial to your plan anyway.

VESTA

But Desdemona was!

ELIAS VOSS

Don't worry, we'll find her.

VESTA

(desperate)

But how do you know that?

ELIAS VOSS gives her a knowing look.

ELIAS VOSS

C'mon.

VESTA

Yeah, I know. God and all. But that's the point. I want to be able to do that too.

ELIAS VOSS

And you will. They will find Desdemona, and bring her here. I do my magic, then you complete the ritual, and join me in my inner circle. You'll finally be free.

VESTA

Finally.

ELIAS VOSS

They were impeding your potential.
Once you stop worrying about them,
and give us your undivided
attention, then rising through the
levels will be a breeze for you.

He grabs her shoulders. She gazes at him adoringly.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

Because you're Vesta. The sacred
fire burns in your heart. You are
the embodiment of home. The caring
mother of all. Not just some brats
that gave you nothing but
heartache. You gave them love,
kindness, patience. Everything a
good mother would give. They paid
you back with ungratefulness.
Abandonment. You gave Desdemona an
opportunity to join you. She could
have been in an elite club by now.

VESTA

(bitterly)
Your wife.

ELIAS VOSS

Yes. But so could you.

This makes VESTA blush.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

Instead, she held you back. Years
of work, gone. With one selfish
gesture.

VESTA's face contorts in anger.

VESTA

It was such a slap in the face. I
don't know why she ran. On her
wedding day of all days!

ELIAS VOSS lets go of VESTA and walks around the chamber.

ELIAS VOSS

Youth? Stupidity? Vanity? Who
knows. It's unimportant now. She
chose her fate. So, don't worry.
They'll find her shortly. She was
seen on the upper floors last.
There's nowhere to run for her.

VESTA
As always, you're right.

ELIAS VOSS
Then I'll take what was stolen from me. Order must be restored, she must receive my holy seed before she can leave this plane.

VESTA nods in understanding.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)
After that, we perform the cleansing ritual. She will finally be pure, and you, my dear?

He lightly touches her cheek.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)
Free.

DESI is clearly very angry at this point. She can barely contain herself. She gestures for FAITH to hide.

DESI
(whispering very silently)
Don't come out no matter what.

DESI holds up her hand in a "stop" gesture to FINCH.

DESI (CONT'D)
(mouthing)
Stay.

FINCH gives DESI a disgruntled look. Without hesitation, DESI darts from behind the curtain, brandishing the cattle prod towards ELIAS VOSS.

DESI (CONT'D)
The fuck you will when I fry that holy seed right out of your balls!

ELIAS VOSS and VESTA step back in shock.

VESTA
Desdemona--

DESI points the cattle prod at VESTA.

DESI
Shut up!

ELIAS VOSS
Now, if we would all just calm--

DESI
I said shut up!

ELIAS VOSS swiftly draws a gun from behind his back and aims it at DESI. She raises her arms in the air.

ELIAS VOSS
Drop it.

DESI drops the cattle prod.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)
I guess, you're still not all that smart Desi.

DESI glares daggers at ELIAS VOSS, her silence heavy with anger.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)
Now. Go to the altar, and unlock that unfortunate soul.

DESI hesitates.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)
NOW!

DESI slowly goes towards BRETT's dead body, still locked on the altar. VESTA looks upon them with a self satisfied smirk and throws the keys at DESI. The keys hit her on the back, and she picks them up angrily but carefully. In the background FINCH approaches stealthily behind VESTA and ELIAS VOSS. DESI notices FINCH, and deliberately takes her time going to the altar and beginning to unlock the shackles.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)
Hurry!

DESI
I'm trying! It's slippery, okay!

VESTA
Don't talk back to the Supreme Leader!

ELIAS VOSS seems to like that, but DESI rolls her eyes. She continues to fiddle with the shackles, buying time. FINCH is almost right behind ELIAS VOSS.

ELIAS VOSS
Vesta, you should go get the bleach. We need to cleanse the altar. Then get the others, so we can begin.

VESTA

Of course.

Before VESTA can react, FINCH leaps onto ELIAS VOSS' back. The pistol discharges accidentally as they fall, but no one is hit. DESI seizes the moment, grabbing the gun from ELIAS VOSS' hand. FINCH positions himself beside DESI, who aims the gun at ELIAS VOSS.

DESI

Stay down! Or we'll see if this God can bleed.

VESTA

Don't hurt him!

DESI

You too, Sharon! Get the fuck down!

VESTA

That's not my name!

DESI

Bullshit! Now get down!

VESTA plops onto the floor, sulking like a petulant child.

VESTA

(under her breath)

That's not my name.

DESI stares in disbelief.

DESI

How is this even important right now?

VESTA

It's a sacred thing. You wouldn't understand.

DESI

Well, let me tell you something. I distinctly remember a Sharon that didn't buy groceries, because she wanted a new haircut. A Sharon that took a 9 year old's lunch money, because her boyfriend "needed" some beer. A Sharon that left a sick 5 year old home alone, because she had a date. And a Sharon that exposed her young daughter to a dangerous cult!

VESTA

You're not being fair! I did the best I could with what I had. You two ruined my life, I just tried to put it back together.

DESI

How?

VESTA

What do you mean?

DESI

How did we ruin your life?

VESTA

Well-- Before I had you I--

DESI

So, by being born?

VESTA

I suppose so.

DESI

Wow. Okay. I'm sorry, but we had literally nothing to do with that. Fuck you, Sharon. I'm so done with this.

VESTA tries to speak, but DESI ignores her and turns her attention back to ELIAS VOSS.

DESI (CONT'D)

Godboy! Get those chairs!

ELIAS VOSS

I can get up?

DESI

GET THE CHAIRS!

ELIAS VOSS slowly stands, hands raised, and moves to the far side of the large room.

DESI (CONT'D)

And don't do something stupid. My brother was in the army. He taught me how to put a hole in a fly's scrotum mid-flight.

ELIAS VOSS

(raising hands)

Okay, okay.

ELIAS VOSS drags two chairs over and places them next to VESTA.

DESI

Both of you. Sit down. We're gonna have a nice conversation. Like people do, you know.

ELIAS VOSS and VESTA sit down in their respective chairs.

DESI (CONT'D)

Now, do I need to tie you up, or will you behave?

ELIAS VOSS

We'll behave.

DESI

You know, Elias, I don't think I'll take the word of a chomo. Would you?

ELIAS VOSS stares at her, but not saying a word.

DESI (CONT'D)

I didn't think so. Luckily--

DESI takes a pack of zip ties out of her back pocket.

DESI (CONT'D)

I came prepared. Because not everyone around here is a piece of shit.

ELIAS VOSS

Who helped you?

DESI

Maybe if you treated people better, nobody would have.

DESI opens the packet with her teeth and drops it on the floor.

VESTA

(tauntingly)

Too bad you only have two hands, honey.

DESI points the gun at VESTA.

DESI

You know, you're right. It would be so much easier to handle if I only had one hostage to keep an eye on.

VESTA tenses and pushes her body into her chair, her hands going up defensively.

DESI (CONT'D)

Finch.

FINCH's ears perk up. DESI points at the cattle prod.

DESI (CONT'D)

Go get it.

FINCH retrieves the cattle prod and gives it to DESI. She grabs it with her other hand.

DESI (CONT'D)

Good boy.

In one swift motion, DESI zaps VESTA with the cattle prod, then pivots and delivers a jolt to ELIAS VOSS.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND CEREMONIAL CHAMBER -
LATER

DESI slaps ELIAS VOSS. He blinks rapidly as he comes to.

DESI

A smart man once said--

She slaps VESTA.

DESI (CONT'D)

--Wakey wakey. Eggs and bakey.

VESTA makes a grimace and slowly opens her eyes.

DESI (CONT'D)

(smiling)

There you are.

They realize they're tied up with zip ties: hands behind their backs and legs secured to the chair legs.

DESI (CONT'D)

Who needs more than two hands, when you've also got four helpful paws.

She ruffles FINCH's hair.

DESI (CONT'D)

Okay. Now, I don't want to waste more time on you two degens. Where's my brother?

VESTA laughs. DESI slaps her across the face. FINCH barks.

DESI (CONT'D)

Sharon! I won't ask you again.

VESTA continues laughing. FINCH growls at her and takes a step forward. DESI gestures for him to stand down, and he reluctantly backs off.

VESTA

He's pure!

DESI

Just stop with this bullshit, and tell me where he is?

ELIAS VOSS

He's rotting in some morgue by now.

DESI is taken aback.

DESI

You're lying.

VESTA laughs and laughs like she's having a fit.

VESTA

No! He's not!

She becomes serious.

VESTA (CONT'D)

I'd know, because I heard him beg for YOUR useless life before I ended his.

DESI sits on the floor in shock. FINCH puts his head on her shoulder and whines.

DESI

No. You're not that-- Are you?

VESTA

What? I'm not that what? I finally take care of my needs! Finally! After years of just thinking of everyone else I--

DESI

NO!

DESI stands up and puts the gun to VESTA's forehead.

DESI (CONT'D)

(angrily)

You never took care of us! You never did! You took care of you! You and your fucking boyfriends! You prioritized dick over your own children! Who does that?!? You never fucking did anything but hurt us! And take advantage!

(breaking down)

My brother. Mi--

She can't even bring herself to say his name.

DESI (CONT'D)

He took care of me! My whole childhood. My whole life. He protected me. From you.

(points at Elias Voss weakly)

And him. He made sure I was safe, and warm, and loved.

(pause)

And you took him away from me.

DESI collapses onto the floor, sobbing. FINCH steps over to her and whines quietly. He then turns to VESTA, growls, and approaches her. He puts his paws on her knees, lifting himself up to meet her eye level. He stares her down and growls.

VESTA

(trying to stay calm, authoritatively)

Desdemona. Please, calm down and call off your mutt.

FINCH growls louder.

DESI

(whispering through sobs)

That's his dog. You killed his best friend.

FINCH snarls. DESI sits up, and wipes her face. She looks at VESTA hatefully.

DESI (CONT'D)

Get 'er.

FINCH growls and lunges at VESTA's face. She screams in pain and struggles to escape, causing the chair to topple over. She lands on her side as FINCH pursues her, ultimately pulling her eye out of its socket.

DESI (CONT'D)

Finch. Come here.

FINCH looks back at DESI, then at VESTA's screaming face. He growls menacingly at her before returning to DESI, sitting next to her.

DESI (CONT'D)

I should let him kill you.

DESI stands, and sets VESTA upright. VESTA is in shock, her eye hanging out of its socket.

ELIAS VOSS

Look--

DESI

Nobody asked you anything.

ELIAS VOSS

Please, just hear me out.

DESI turns to ELIAS VOSS angrily.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

Look, just-- I'm not-- You're right. I don't want to die. We both know this is all bullshit. I'm not immortal, I'm no God. I'm just a normal guy--

VESTA turns to ELIAS VOSS. She exhaustedly turns back.

DESI

Who likes little girls.

ELIAS VOSS

Sure, I like young women, but who doesn't? Fact is, I just wanted to be somebody in this life, right? And, now, I am. I can pay you. You have no beef with me. I didn't kill your brother. Just let me go, and do with Sharon whatever you want, then just walk away with a bunch of cash. Easy.

VESTA

My n-- Ves--

DESI

Young women? I was 11. I was the lucky one though. I got away from you, you sick fuck. All these years it was eating at you, wasn't it? Not getting what you wanted. That's why this whole elaborate thing. You couldn't stand that someone that you wanted to destroy got away.

ELIAS VOSS

I wanted to--

DESI

But the others? Faith? She wasn't as lucky as me. She didn't get soccer practice, her first crush, slumber parties, first date, school drama. None of that. You stole that. And that's why you have to die. And if you expect me to believe you had nothing to do with my brother's death, then you're an even bigger idiot than I already thought you were.

ELIAS VOSS

(disappointed)

Faith helped you?

DESI

Does it matter?

ELIAS VOSS

Maybe you should ask Faith what she did to your brother.

DESI turns to look toward the curtain.

ELIAS VOSS (CONT'D)

She's a little liar that one. She puts up a good show with her crocodile tears, I'll give her that.

DESI

She's a child. Whatever she did, she didn't do it because she wanted to.

ELIAS VOSS

She's a decisive young woman. She knows what she wants and she'll do anything to get it. I should know. A husband knows his wife.

Suddenly, FAITH bursts from behind the curtain, screaming in a righteous anger. She runs straight toward ELIAS VOSS and punches him in the face as hard as she can. She punches again and again. He tries to speak, but is met with more punches.

FAITH

You!

Punch.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Took!

Punch.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Everything!

Punch. Punch. Punch. FAITH screams and turns ELIAS VOSS' face into a bloody mess. DESI finally regains her composure, and pulls her off. FAITH screams in anger and tries to break free to continue her assault.

DESI

Hey! It's okay!

FAITH cries and hugs DESI.

FAITH

I'm sorry!

DESI

It's okay.

FAITH

Please, forgive me.

DESI

There's nothing to forgive.

FAITH

I was there, I hurt him.

DESI

You're just a child.

FAITH

Please! Please, forgive me!

DESI
I forgive you.

FINCH approaches and presses his weight against FAITH, trying to comfort her. ELIAS VOSS spits out a mouthful of blood.

ELIAS VOSS
You fucking broke my nose you little bitch. For what? Where are you gonna go? To the police? You think they'll just let you go after all this? What are you gonna do? Huh? Y--

DESI looks at ELIAS VOSS, aims the gun, and shoots him in the head.

DESI
That.

VESTA starts screaming.

VESTA
NOOOOOO! YOU KILLED HIM!

DESI
Shut up!

VESTA continues screaming.

VESTA
HE'S NOT DEAD! HE'S NOT DEAD! HE CAN'T DIE!

DESI
He just threw you under the bus! He just told you he's not a God!

VESTA is screaming.

VESTA
I was supposed to be his queen!
You'll pay! You'll pay for this!

Suddenly, a bloodied and battered POSIE emerges from behind them, tears the gun out of DESI's hand and throws it across the room, then pours half a gallon of denatured alcohol onto FINCH. He turns to see her, and she smirks, pulling a lighter from her pocket. VESTA laughs maniacally. DESI tries to reach for FINCH, but POSIE kicks her arm away.

Soaked, FINCH lunges at POSIE. She stumbles back, spilling the remaining alcohol on herself and dropping the lighter.

POSIE scrambles to pick it up and, still disoriented, gets to her feet.

POSIE
You thought you killed me?

She lights her Zippo and advances towards FINCH. FINCH steps all the way back to VESTA. FAITH hugs DESI tight.

POSIE (CONT'D)
You're the one who's dying today,
dog!

DESI zaps POSIE with the cattle prod in a very short burst, as she passes by.

POSIE bursts into flames and screams. She runs back toward the curtains, igniting them as she flees. The wooden floor, soaked with alcohol, catches fire as well. The sound of her screams fades down the corridor.

VESTA
Now we'll all die here!

DESI
Go ahead and die Sharon. We're
leaving.

DESI stands, and grabs FAITH by the hand.

DESI (CONT'D)
C'mon, Finch.

FINCH turns towards VESTA, growling fiercely. He stands his ground, clearly intent on dealing with her.

DESI (CONT'D)
We have to go. Now!

VESTA laughs.

VESTA
We'll die here together. And before
you die, I get to tell you in how
much pain he was! You murderous
bitch! I get to tell you how he
cried! It's hard to cry with no
eyes! It's--

DESI
Finch.

FINCH looks at DESI.

DESI (CONT'D)

Shake.

FINCH shakes his body, flinging the alcohol off and sprinkling it all over VESTA. DESI picks up the Zippo lighter.

DESI (CONT'D)

Come.

FINCH runs to DESI. She lights the Zippo.

DESI (CONT'D)

Bye Sharon.

VESTA

(screeching)

My name is Vestaaaaaaa!

She throws the lighter at VESTA. She catches fire immediately, her screams echoing as the alcohol and her linen cult uniform ignite.

DESI leads FAITH and FINCH to the table, avoiding the fire in a wide arch. She tears off the saran wrap, grabs a water bottle from the table, and pours it over FINCH. She grabs another bottle, pours it over FAITH, and a third over herself. She then takes FAITH's hand.

DESI

Let's go!

They run through the flaming curtains, while VESTA screams in the background.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - CORRIDORS -
CONTINUED

FINCH, DESI, and FAITH run through the flaming corridors until they reach the fire escape. DESI quickly opens it. FINCH points to the corridor ahead and barks.

DESI

We have to go, Finch!

FINCH begins sprinting down the corridor.

DESI (CONT'D)

FUCK!

DESI pushes FAITH through the fire escape door and runs after FINCH.

The corridors are smoky and chaotic. Distant screams echo through the haze.

DESI (CONT'D)
 (coughing)
 FINCH!

FINCH runs as fast as he can, barking and turning corners. A baby's cry is faintly heard. They pass POSIE's smoldering body.

FINCH turns into a smoke filled room. DESI follows.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - NURSERY -
 CONTINUOUS

FINCH jumps up on the crib and barks. The baby cries.

DESI
 Oh, shit.

She quickly picks up the baby, and all three of them run back through the door.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND - CORRIDORS -
 CONTINUED

FINCH and DESI sprint full speed, with DESI trying to shield the baby with her clothing. The wall curtains are burning around them. They reach the fire exit. FINCH jumps up on the security rod, opening the door. DESI runs through it, holding the door open for FINCH to enter. She's not taking any chances this time. She then dashes up the stairs, with FINCH closely following.

EXT. TLC COMMUNE - OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS - EARLY EVENING

FAITH waits nervously. DESI bursts out of the fire exit door, with FINCH close behind. FAITH's face brightens as she runs towards them. In silence, DESI takes FAITH's hand, while holding the baby with the other. FINCH walks alongside them. They walk through the grassy field, The Lighthouse burning in the background.

Chaos unfolds behind them: cult members trying to extinguish the fire, others running in different directions, some carrying buckets of water, and some just staring in disbelief. None notice DESI, FAITH, and FINCH walking away. They are tired and dirty, covered in soot and blood.

The sky is a cotton candy pink as the sun sets slowly in the background. We see their backs as they walk away from the fire. From the chaos. From their pain.

DESI

Good boy.

FADE OUT.