

AUTUMN SUN

written by

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INT. SMALL CLUB 1- NIGHT

The club looks like a fever dream of the 80s. Hyper saturated colours light a bar, a few tables, a dance floor, and a STAGE. Every seat is taken. The many patrons murmur amongst each other and look to the STAGE with anticipation.

STAGE LIGHTS flash on. Unfazed by the blinding light LAURA (24, transgender and dressed simply but stylishly) steps onto the stage.

There is no background band, only a pounding SYNTH.

She sings. Think Alice Glass singing Blue Velvet. She almost screams the lyrics as she struggles to be heard over the blaring SYNTH.

The patrons watch with a sick sort of pleasure as she struggles with the SYNTH to make the performance hers.

Up a small set of stairs by the bar, there is a sound mixing booth lofted above the rest of the club. We see a hooded man's back, the club spread before him. His head bobs to the music.

He turns a dial. The SYNTH screeches.

The man watches as Laura flinches.

He watches as her legs move on the stage, the glimmer of her lips, and her exposed mid drift.

We see his face. Derrick (30, deep bags under his eyes) glares down at Laura.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, CENTRAL ROOM - EVENING

Laura's apartment is a bachelor suite. The kitchen, bedroom, and living room are all connected.

Laura sits at the kitchen table working on a laptop. Besides her rests a middle market SYNTH. Inexpensive Headphones cover her ears.

She works on FL Studios, the free version. We see she has created a complex instrumental titled "Lost in Back Alleys".

The instrumental plays. It is dark and moody, yet there is a hopeful hook.

Laura frowns, pauses the song and begins to makes some adjustments on her SYNTH.

INT. SMALL CLUB 2, GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Laura applies lipstick into a mirror.

She's distracted. Her hands are shaking as she slowly applies the vibrant colour to her lips.

We see Derrick reflected in the mirror.

He watches her intently.

INT. SMALL CLUB 2 - NIGHT

Laura screams against the SYNTH while crazed dancers mosh in the dance floor beneath her.

Derrick watches her from his perch in the sound mixing booth. He grimaces as he warps the SYNTH. Laura nearly curls up on the stage. She screams as she keeps herself standing.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Laura sets up an expensive mic next to her bed.

Her cat, CINNAMON (cat, any colour), lounges on a pillow.

She has taken all the blankets from her bed and nailed them over her walls and laid them out over her floor. She has even covered the ceiling with old cardboard boxes.

Her laptop sits on her bare mattress. She plugs the mic into her pc. She has Audacity open in one window and FL studios in another.

FL studios has "Lost in Back Alleys" open.

She taps the space bar. A melancholy melody plays from FL Studios.

Place holder lyrics by Ada Rook's song "Moth".

LAURA

(singing)

I think about those years. Time
spent in fear. I'm glad that you're
not here, I wanna make that clear.

Laura's singing continues over the next scene.

INT. BUS - LATER

LAURA (O.S.)

Who did you think you were to me? A pleasant memory? Can't you see? You ruined me.

Laura leans against the window of the bus and watching the buildings pass by.

INT. MUSIC VENUE - LATER

Laura leans on the railing of a balcony. She watches CELESTE (trans woman, same age as Laura) playing on stage below her. Her hair is dark with a pink streak framing one side of her face.

She has an elaborate set up in front of her: a laptop, a drum pad, a synth, a microphone, and her phone with a Hello Kitty case.

Lights flash on and drape her in pink and blue light.

She plays noise music, think Uboa.

She leans forward and screams into the microphone.

Her scream is ethereal and empowered, not like the desperate screams of Laura's performances.

Laura and the musician's eyes meet. She winks at Laura. Laura smiles shyly back.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - LATER

The park is in a low income area. There are people here in the dead of night, mostly tired wanderers looking for a place to sleep.

Celeste and Laura walk down a gravel path, holding hands. The moon shines down on them like a spotlight. They look like angels walking across earth.

LAURA

I think I'm almost finished with "Lost in Back Alleys." Lamar says the mastering has potential but it still feels rough.

Celeste scoffs.

CELESTE

That makes sense. You've never produced a song before.

Celeste scoffs.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I still think that guy's a chaser.

LAURA

I'm not so sure. He's been talking about our future a lot lately.

CELESTE

Like paying for your bottom surgery?

Laura laughs.

LAURA

No, he's been talking about taking me on tour with him.

They stop on the edge of a beach. Just across the water there is a shipping yard lit up in the night.

CELESTE

That is not what I was expecting. How long would you be gone for?

LAURA

A few days. I can't miss much work. Also Derrick won't want me gone for long.

Celeste nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I want to be able to do more. I feel like I'm can never do enough.

Celeste wraps her arm around Laura's waist.

CELESTE

I don't think that's true. I see how hard you work.

LAURA

I still don't feel like I'm going anywhere.

CELESTE

Maybe that's because Derrick
doesn't let you go anywhere without
him.

LAURA

Maybe.

CELESTE

Have you told him about your song
or Lamar's tour offer?

LAURA

No. He doesn't even know about
Lamar

CELESTE

I worry about how he treats you.

LAURA

I don't think I'd be able to find
gigs without him.

Celeste sighs deeply.

CELESTE

I miss that Laura who punched a
producer in the face for refusing
to show our band

Laura can't help but to giggle.

LAURA

Things were crazy back then. We
were crazy back then.

Celeste turns to face Laura, And wraps her arms around her
back.

CELESTE

I think a lot of people would still
say we're crazy.

Laura giggles again, more freely this time. She leans into
Celeste. They kiss deeply. The moon frames their heads like a
saint's halo.

LAURA

I love you Celeste.

CELESTE

I love you too Bunny.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is oppressively conformist. The interior is a amalgamation of various other fast food interiors.

The walls are covered in adverts trying to convince the restaurants patrons they are eating delicious food.

Laura is cleaning tables. She wears the restaurants uniform. She has deep bags under her eyes.

She moves to a table by a window. Just outside, a man with a hood pulled over his head watches her work.

Laura stops wiping. She slowly turns and looks at the man.

The man removes his hood. He has a blank face, as if a sheet of skin had been pulled over his orifices.

Laura yelps and stumbles back, tipping over a chair.

The man lifts a finger over the place his mouth should be.

MAN

SSSSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

BOSS (O.S.)

Laura!

Laura whirls around. Her BOSS (30s, haggard and cruel features) snaps and points at the tables.

Laura looks back out the window.

The man is gone.

Laura turns back to her boss and nods.

She turns back to the tables and begins to wipe them down.

Derrick's face can be seen in the reflection of the window.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

The sun hasn't risen yet, it's like can barely be seen in the sky: a glowing orange premonition.

Cinnamon lazes on the love seat as Laura and LAMAR (27, heavy set, dressed scholarly) sit around the counter-height table. Laura's laptop is between them.

LAMAR

If you bring down the EQ here...

He pulls down a slider in the computer program.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

It should even out the quality a bit.

Lamar presses the space button.

LAURA (O.S.)

(singing)

And in the daylight I collapse
In the distance of what I know and
what I knew had passed-

He presses space again.

LAMAR

See?

Laura nods.

LAURA

I want the lyrics to kind of sound
like they are being sung in an
alley though. Should I add reverb?

LAMAR

Yeah I think that's a good idea.

Laura makes a few keystrokes on her laptop then presses play.

LAURA

(singing)

I saw the blood and the skin upon
the backs of my hands-

She pauses it. Lamar turns and faces Laura.

LAMAR

I like it.

Laura doesn't look away from the computer screen

LAURA

It's getting there.

Lamar leans back in his chair.

LAMAR

Maybe we should take a break. We've
been going at it for a few hours
now.

Laura clicks on a few options in her program.

LAURA
Yeah maybe.

Lamar stands up and looks through the books in a modest bookshelf next to Laura's bed.

Laura pinches the bridge of her nose.

LAMAR
It's good to take breaks often.

LAURA
I need to get this done.

Lamar nods.

LAMAR
Yeah but it's good to clear your head...

He moves over to the bed and sits down.

LAMAR (CONT'D)
And have some fun.

Laura rolls her eyes and turns towards Lamar.

LAURA
Cliches don't turn me on.

He mimics being shot in the heart and falls back on the bed "dead."

Laura can't help but to giggle.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I really appreciate you helping me with this

Lamar sits back up.

Laura closes her laptop and pinches the bridge of her nose.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I really need to finish this song.

LAMAR
Yeah I get it.

Laura moves to the bed and sits next to Lamar. She leans into him.

He wraps his arm around her.

Laura kisses his cheek.

LAURA
I've been feeling very awful
lately, like I'm doing something
wrong.

Lamar gives her a squeeze.

LAMAR
Well, it's okay to take things
easy, you know? Let yourself relax
a bit.

LAURA
I feel like if I do that I'm going
to miss something important.

LAMAR
I think you're more likely to miss
something important if you're
always working yourself so hard.

Laura sighs.

LAURA
Maybe.

She reaches up and touches the side of Lamar's face. He turns
towards her.

LAMAR
I just want to see you relax a bit.

LAURA
Do you want to know how you can
help me relax?

Lamar nods.

Laura takes his hand and presses it against her left breast.

Lamar chuckles.

Laura smiles and leans in to kiss him.

They fall back into the sheets together.

INT. CLUB 3, GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

The green room is spacious with psychedelic tapestries
covering the walls.

Derrick is pacing the room. Laura stands in the corner.

DERRICK
It was all wrong. All wrong.

LAURA
I'm sorry.

DERRICK
You should be. Maybe if you weren't
always hanging around that hack
you'd actually have time to
practice.

LAURA
Don't talk about Celeste like that!

Derrick walks over to her and slams a hand in the concrete by her head. Laura flinches

DERRICK
The fuck did you say?

LAURA
N-nothing.

Derrick punches her in the stomach. Laura gasps for air and falls to the ground.

DERRICK
Don't fucking talk to me like that.

Beat.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
Your hips looked too fat. You
should eat less.

Derrick stalks out of the room. The door slams behind him.

Laura drags herself to the couch gasping for air.

She reaches into her bag and pulls out DRUG PARAPHERNALIA.

She makes a small line of KETAMINE on a tray and snorts it.

She leans back on the couch as the world around her begins to fade out.

Her breathing slows.

The tapestry's patterns begin to swirl on the walls.

The Greenroom door opens.

Her face begins to blur into a cascade of colour more and more until the entire screen becomes a kaleidoscopic dreamscape.

INT. DINGY STAGE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The abstract psychedelic colour reforms into a 16 year old Laura's face. Her eyes are closed and she is nodding to the beat of drums.

Half of her head is shaved and her long hair flops to the other side.

She pulls a mic to her face.

Lyrics are taken from *Gender Dysphoria Blues* by Against Me!

LAURA
(singing)
YOU WANT THEM TO NOTICE

A younger Celeste, tossing her long hair through the air, plays a riff on her bass behind Laura.

LAURA (CONT'D)
THE RAGGED ENDS OF YOUR SUMMER
DRESS

SARAH (16, a trans girl with an infectious friendly smile) plays a keyboard next to Laura. She also has a mic.

LAURA (CONT'D)
YOU WANT THEM TO SEE YOU
LIKE THEY SEE EVERY OTHER GIRL

Sarah leans into her mic.

LAURA (CONT'D)	SARAH
THEY JUST SEE A FAGGOT	THEY JUST SEE A FAGGOT

LAURA (CONT'D)
THEY'LL HOLD THEIR BREATH NOT TO
CATCH THE SICK

ELLIOT (17, trans man with heavy face make up) rocks back and forth as he slams the drums.

LAURA (CONT'D)	SARAH
BUT WE CAN'T CHOSE HOW WE'RE MADE	BUT WE CAN'T CHOSE HOW WE'RE MADE

The song's tempo slows.

LAURA (CONT'D)
ROUGH SURF ON THE COAST

There's a look between Laura and Celeste.

LAURA (CONT'D)	SARAH
I WISH I COULD HAVE SPENT THE WHOLE DAY ALONE	I WISH I COULD HAVE SPENT THE WHOLE DAY ALONE

Laura grins at Elliot.

LAURA (CONT'D)
ROUGH SURF ON THE COAST
I WISH I COULD HAVE SPENT THE WHOLE
DAY ALONE

Celeste and Sarah exchange a smile.

Celeste closes her eyes and grooves on her base.

LAURA (CONT'D)
ROUGH SURF ON THE COAST.

Derrick (22) watches Laura intently from the crowd. Red light flashes across his face. His expression is blank, his eyes watch hungrily.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I WISH I COULD HAVE SPENT THE WHOLE
DAY ALONE WITH YOU

Elliot smiles as he watches Sarah lean into the mic again.

LAURA (CONT'D)
WITH YOU

Laura closes her eyes. Her face is relaxed and a faint smile rests on her lips. She is in a state of bliss.

LAURA (CONT'D)	SARAH
WITH YOU	WITH YOU

Laura opens her eyes. She meets Derrick's gaze. He is staring directly at her.

The audio cuts out.

His eyes are unfocused and his mouth is pulled into a tight line.

Laura stares back at Derrick.

Her mouth is slightly agape.

INT. GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS - BACK TO PRESENT

The greenroom door closes.

Laura stares blankly forward. She slowly sits up, adjusts her clothes, and pulls her phone out of her bag.

She dials a number.

CELESTE (O.S.)
(blearily)
Hello? Laura?

LAURA
Could I get a ride?

EXT. STREET - LATER

Laura is sitting on the curb of a sidewalk.

Celeste pulls up in her car, a second hand beater. She is wearing her pajamas.

Laura enters through the passenger side.

CELESTE
Hey bunny, how was the show?

LAURA
Bad.

Celeste looks at Laura closely. Laura's eyes are looking frantically around the car as she sits relaxed in the seat.

CELESTE
I'm sorry. Do you want to stay over tonight?

Laura shakes her head.

LAURA
I want to go home.

CELESTE
Okay.

Celeste drives off.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - LATER

Celeste holds Laura's hair as she vomits into the toilet.

CELESTE

There you go. You're doing great.

She pats her back.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

You're doing great.

LAURA

Thank you.

Laura spits.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Can you help me up?

Celeste braces her shoulder and gets Laura to her feet. Laura stumbles.

Celeste puts a hand on her stomach to catch her, pulling up her shirt by accident.

Laura winces and groans in pain. Celeste sees an emerging bruise on Laura's stomach.

CELESTE

What happened?

Laura shakes her head.

LAURA

Please.

Celeste watches her intently.

CELESTE

Okay.

She grabs Laura's toothbrush, puts some tooth paste on it, and runs it under the sink.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Here.

Laura takes the brush and half heartedly brushes her teeth.

Beat.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Can I sleep on the couch? Make sure
you are alright tonight?

Laura nods.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Okay I am going to grab some
blankets.

LAURA
I was thinking about Sarah and
Elliot today.

Celeste stops in her tracks. Laura watches her back in the
mirror.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I wish we could all play together
again.

Beat.

CELESTE
Me too.

Celeste leaves the room.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Celeste sits on the loveseat with a blanket over her
shoulders. She reaches into her purse.

She pulls out a PICTURE OF HER AND SARAH. The two are kissing
in front of a lake.

The photo is wrinkled around the edges and torn in some
places.

Laura enters from the bathroom.

She immediately goes to the bed and falls face down on the
sheets. Cinnamon hops up and joins her.

Laura cuddles Cinnamon.

CELESTE
I don't know if I'll ever be able
to love anyone who wasn't in the
band.

Laura makes a guttural noise of recognition.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

It feels like something broke in me
when Sarah died. She was always the
brightest of us.

Laura turns over in bed so she is resting on her side.

LAURA

The world would be a better place
if she and Elliot were still here.
We should visit them sometime soon.

Celeste snuffles and wipes a tear from her eye.

CELESTE

I'd really love that.

She gingerly puts the photo back into her purse.

LAURA

I'm scared to to release my song.
It's not ready but when it is, I'm
worried how Derrick will react.

Celeste nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)

But it feels too important to not.
It's too important to me.

Her eyes flutter closed.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(trailing off)
Love you.

CELESTE

I love you too. I'm sorry-

Beat.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry things are the way they
are right now. I promise they will
get better.

Laura's breathing is deep and even. She is still on top of
the sheets.

Celeste gets up.

As she approaches the bed, Cinnamon meows and runs away.

Celeste wraps the blanket around her.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
I'll find a way to get rid of him.
I promise.

EXT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Through the kitchen window Celeste can be seen returning to the love seat and getting ready to sleep.

The camera pivots up, past the city skyline, to the inky darkness of the light polluted sky.

There is a pulsating light against the darkness. It glows pink and violet.

It slowly moves across the sky, an amoeba so desperately trying to survive.

INT. CELESTE'S CAR - MORNING

Celeste puts the car into park.

CELESTE
Are you going to be okay at work?

Laura nods. She is in her work uniform.

LAURA
Yeah. I'll be okay.

CELESTE
Okay.

Laura opens the door and exits the car.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The sun is too bright, making Laura's surroundings nearly imperceptible expect for the lit up logo of her workplace.

Laura blinks blearily and puts on her work cap.

CELESTE (O.S.)
I love you!

Laura enters the restaurant.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The dining area is full of shouting and loud talking.

Laura walks past a long line of customers as she walks behind the counter to the time clock.

JEREMY(30s, cis man, Laura's coworker) leans on the wall next to her.

JEREMY
Hey beautiful, how are you today.

LAURA
Fine.

Laura finishes clocking in.

JEREMY
I wanted to ask you something.

LAURA
I don't have time. Have you seen the boss?

Laura tries to walk away. Jeremy blocks her way.

JEREMY
Don't be so cold. It'll be a quick.

Laura winces.

LAURA
Okay, what is it?

JEREMY
Just wondering, have you had the surgery yet.

Laura glares at him.

Jeremy laughs.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
(sneering)
What? Don't be so sensitive.

BOSS (O.S.)
Laura! Quit chatting and get to work!

Laura turns around to see her boss with her arms crossed glaring at her.

Jeremy shrugs.

JEREMY
Next time, gorgeous.

He walks away.

Laura moves to one of the registers and signs in.

LAURA
I can help whoever's next!

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT, WASHROOM - LATER

Laura bursts into the washroom.

She immediately uses a staff key to lock the door.

Her breathing is ragged and shallow.

With her hands shaking, she crushes KETAMINE CRYSTALS with a debit card and parts them into lines on the sink.

Laura snorts the ketamine.

She backs into a stall and locks the door.

She sits on the toilet and leans her head back against the wall. She looks up at the ceiling.

Her breathing slows and steadies.

LAURA
Fuck.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - LATER

Laura is back on the till. Her face is placid. She looks far away, disassociated.

Her surroundings are faded, seemingly overexposed.

From the bright surroundings a shadow emerges, dark and inhuman.

A COP (40s, cis man) wearing a bulletproof vest and a gun clearly visible on his hip emerges from the shadow.

A pair of sunglasses obscure his eyes.

Laura freezes up.

COP
I will have four of the quarter pounder meals. One of them with no mayo.

Laura nods and begins tapping on the register.

LAURA

Yes sir.

The Cop's face doesn't move. His features are static, eroded into his face from years of his work.

He puts his hands on his hips.

COP

Nice day we are having, yeah?

LAURA

Yes sir.

COP

Perfect day for a walk, if you catch my drift, isn't it?

LAURA

I'm afraid I don't know what you mean, sir.

COP

I mean it's a good day to get stoned.

LAURA

I wouldn't know anything about that.

COP

Oh really? You look like the kind of guy who would know a few things about that.

Laura's hand hovers over the register.

Beat.

She begins to tap on the screen again.

LAURA

That's not me, sir. That'll be \$24.50.

She taps a few buttons and gestures to the card reading machine.

The cop laughs. A dry, forced laugh.

COP

I'm just messing with you, my man.
I'm not that kind of cop. I'm cool,
people like to get high, I get it.

Laura nods and tersely smiles, not looking away from the register.

The machine beeps. A receipt is printed.

COP (CONT'D)

You have a nice day, alright? I'll
come by again soon to say hello.

Laura hands him his receipt.

LAURA

I can help whoever's next!

COP

Hey! I said have a good day.

Beat.

Laura looks at him.

LAURA

Have a good day, sir.

He nods and walks away.

Laura's hands shake.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, CENTRAL ROOM - LATER

Laura's hands still shake as she washes a few dishes in the sink.

LAURA

That's it, I'm just running in
circles and circles.

Laura scrubs a bowl intently.

LAURA (CONT'D)

No matter where I go I can't get
him out of my head.

She is alone in her apartment.

LAURA (CONT'D)
He's stuck in here. I'm stuck! I'm
fucking stuck!

She throws the bowl into the sink. It shatters, sending shards FLYING.

Laura screams and grabs her hand. She falls to her knees, gasping for breath.

Blood pours from between her fingers.

She slowly uncovers her hand.

The SYNTH screeches.

The skin has been sliced through on the top half of her pointer finger.

The layer of skin remains on her finger, attached by a thin strip of flesh.

Beat.

Laura pulls up the skin, revealing red throbbing flesh leaking blood.

She gasps but doesn't look away from the wound.

Images of a mutilated body flash by her:

An arm with a deep gash down its wrist.

A stomach stabbed into a fleshy pudding.

A hand missing four fingers and half of the thumb.

Blood seeping into a cheap motel carpet.

Sarah's lifeless eyes, hooded by dripping eyeliner, staring into the void.

Laura shakes violently.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I need him. I need him!

She rips off the skin tab w with a SCREAM.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CLUB - LATER

Laura SCREAMS into the mic.

The SYNTH begins to fade.

Laura keeps SCREAMING.

She falls to her knees as the SCREAM begins to peter out.

The SYNTH goes silent.

Laura gasps for air and let's out a moan of exhaustion.

Applause and cheering erupts from the crowd.

CROWD
(chanting)
Animal Ends! Animal Ends! Animal
Ends!

A manic smile spreads across Laura's face.

INT. CLUB, GREEN ROOM - LATER

Laura is sitting on a couch. She watches the door anxiously.

Derrick calmly enters, gently closing the door behind him.

He smiles at Laura.

DERRICK
They fucking loved us.

Laura laughs with delirium.

LAURA
They did!

DERRICK
You did great. You're vocals were
on point. We need more of that
energy. That desperation to please.

Laura nods. She stands up and approaches him.

LAURA
I would do anything to hear them
chant our name again.

DERRICK
My name! I came up with it!

Laura visibly recoils.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
You did good.

Laura begins to shake.

She takes a step back from Derrick.

Derrick looks at her.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

Laura begins to double over.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
Hey.

He reaches an arm up.

Laura flinches.

Derrick gently sets his hand on her shoulder.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

Laura sniffles. A tear tracks down her face. She nods.

Derrick reaches up and wipes the tear from her cheek.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
You must be so tired. Let me drive
you home. You need to get some
sleep.

Laura nods again.

LAURA
Okay.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, CENTRAL ROOM - LATER

Derrick and Laura enter the apartment.

Derrick hovers around the door.

Laura moves to the kitchen sink and pulls out cat food from
the drawer beneath it.

She picks up Cinnamon's bowl and scoops food into it.

Laura moves in front of the bed and crouches down.

Beneath the bed, the glint of Cinnamon's eyes barely catch the light.

LAURA

Come on out Cinnamon, I have some food for you.

Cinnamon does not move.

DERRICK

Antisocial cat.

LAURA

She doesn't warm to new people very quickly. She's a rescue actually.

DERRICK

You picked a cat off the street?

Laura laughs tensely.

LAURA

No, she is from a shelter. She was rescued from an abusive home. The man whom she lived with would hit her.

DERRICK

You mean the man who owned her?

LAURA

I suppose so yes.

Laura stands up and puts the bowl on the floor by the kitchen sink.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(to Cinnamon)

This is here for when you are ready.

Cinnamon blinks at her slowly.

DERRICK

Here, I'll get her out.

Derrick moves to the bed and reaches under it.

LAURA

What are you doing?

Cinnamon hisses.

DERRICK

Fuck!

He pulls his hand out from under the bed.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

That bitch scratched me!

He stumbles back and bumps the table where Laura's computer sits open.

The computer turns on. Her song is open on FL studios.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

I'm going to kill it!

He lunches.

Laura catches him halfway. He slams into her. She holds him back.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Let go of me.

LAURA

(with impossible calm)

Let me look at the scratch, I can apply some Neosporin.

Derrick stops pushing against her.

He sits at the table in front of the laptop.

Laura moves to a drawer where she pulls out a homemade first aid kit.

Derrick sees the song open on the computer.

Laura sits across from him.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Let me see it?

He lifts his hand. There is a tiny red mark where Cinnamon scratched him.

She gently dabs it with a disinfecting cream.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You have to be careful with cat scratches, even the small ones can get infected.

Beat.

DERRICK
I hate being hurt.

Laura nods.

She stands up and puts back the first aid kit before washing her hands.

Derrick leans forward and quietly scrolls to Laura's internet browser.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
My mother used to come home late most nights. She smelled like chartreuse.

He looks through the open tabs.

He clicks on Bandcamp's submission page.

Laura turns off the water as Derrick finishes silently closing the laptop.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
Depending on her mood she would either eat what little food was left in the fridge or she would find me and beat me until I bled.

Laura turns around.

Derrick glares at her with murderous intent.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
I promised myself every night I went hungry or was bleeding in my sheets that I would never let myself be someone's plaything again.

LAURA
I'm so sorr-

DERRICK
I promised myself I would be the one in control! I would be the one who gets to decide the course lives take.

He clenches his fist over his arm.

LAURA
I'm sorry Derrick, that sounds tough.

DERRICK

It made me strong, and resolved.
She taught me what to do when
people fail you.

Beat.

He stands up.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Don't fail me Laura.

He walks to the door and exits the apartment.

Beat.

Laura takes a shaky breath and sits at the table.

Cinnamon crawls out from under the bed and begins to eat her dinner.

EXT. BRIDGE - EVENING

Celeste's car parks on the side of the road just before the bridge.

A wide river rushes beneath the bridge.

Laura steps out of the car with a modest bouquet of carnations. She waits for Celeste as she locks the car.

They hop off the side walk onto a rocky ridge that winds under the bridge.

Laura, sits on her couch clutching Cinnamon close to her chest.

Her laptop sits on the coffee table. Laura stares at her Bandcamp account. "Lost in Back Alleys" is ready to upload.

She reaches out to her track pad and scrolls over the upload button.

She hesitates and bites her lip.

CLICK.

INT. JULIO'S - MORNING

Laura and Lamar sit across from each other eating the best food ten dollars can buy.

Julio's is a beating heart of the city. There's loud conversation, upbeat music, and cheap meals.

LAMAR
You did it?

Laura nods excitedly.

LAURA
It's uploaded!

A waitress sets a cheque on their table.

LAMAR
Laura! That's amazing!

LAURA
Here I'll send you the link!

She giggles and opens her phone. She taps the screen a few times.

Lamar's phone buzzes with Laura's message.

LAMAR
So do you think you will play it live?

Laura's smile fades. She hunches her posture and looks down into her lap. She twists her napkin nervously

LAURA
I don't have much say in the songs we play.

LAMAR
That's fortunate you get to play on a stage though. I want to know what you look like while you sing.

beat.

LAURA
I don't like singing with Derrick.

LAMAR
I've never played on a stage as big as you.

Laura still isn't looking up from her lap. She tenses.

LAMAR (CONT'D)
You're fortunate in a lot of ways actually. You play on a stage.
(MORE)

LAMAR (CONT'D)

You're seeing so many different people-

LAURA

I don't want to talk about this right now Lamar.

Laura looks up from her lap to the exit. She tears the paper napkin into pieces.

LAMAR

Okay. Sorry for bringing it up.

Lamar follows Laura's gaze to the exit. Laura slowly calms and looks down at her lap again.

LAURA

That's okay.

LAMAR

Well I should probably get going. I have a trill beat to finish for some kid in Ontario.

Lamar begins to put on his coat.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

I got something for you.

He reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a small box. He hands it to Laura. She takes it. She finally looks back at him.

She opens the box.

Inside there's a necklace with a pendant the shape of a CRESCENT MOON. It's a inexpensive necklace: a statement piece, elegant.

She pulls it out of the case and holds it in front of her. She smiles.

LAURA

I was actually hoping you'd come home with me. You can pick up your mic?

Lamar smiles and laughs softly. He swings his messenger satchel over his shoulder.

LAMAR

I did bring my laptop.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - LATER

Lamar and Laura are tangled in each others arms, undressed. Their clothes are flung around the bed.

LAURA
(in a low whisper)
I want to be famous. I want power.
I want to be able to change the
world with my voice. I want to make
the world survivable for other
trans people.

LAMAR
Fame is just an exercise in
arrogance.

LAURA
Oh fuck off Lamar.

Lamar cracks up.

Laura reaches onto her bedside table and lifts the CRESCENT MOON PENDANT. She holds it above herself and Lamar.

LAURA (CONT'D)
It's-

LAMAR
Amazing?

LAURA (CONT'D)
Tacky.

They both laugh.

Laura shifts in the bed so her back is to him.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Put it on for me.

He pulls the pendant over her chest and locks the chain. Laura touches the pendant.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Thank you.

She wiggles her body against Lamar's. He wraps his arms over her shoulders and spoons her.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, CENTRAL ROOM - LATER

Laura, dressed for work, fills Cinnamon's food dish. She scratches Cinnamon behind the ear.

LAURA
See you later sweetheart.

She walks over to her couch where Lamar works on his laptop.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Ready babe?

LAMAR
Yep.

He saves his file and closes his laptop.

EXT. INTERSECTION - EVENING

Laura and Lamar walk upstream on a mildly busy sidewalk. A POLICE OFFICER (age indeterminable) watches them pass. The officers eyes are covered by dark tented shades.

He wears a bullet proof vest and a cam recorder clearly visible on his chest. Laura and Lamar don't make eye contact and rush by quickly.

At the end of the sidewalk, they reach an intersection. Their goodbye is inaudible.

Laura begins to walk across the cross walk. She only gets a few steps in until she turns and rushes back to him. They hug each other tightly.

Beat.

Laura smiles at Lamar one last time and they go their separate ways. She is wearing the CRESCENT MOON PENDANT.

INT. DERRICK'S CLUB - NIGHT

Laura finishes screaming her lyrics as the blaring SYNTHS fade into silence. The crowd roars, demanding an encore.

Laura walks through a curtain and offstage. She props herself up against a wall.

She dry heaves.

The synths scream back on. The crowd begins to cheer her name.

Laura turns back to the stage. She tries to steady her breathing and rushes back out on the stage.

INT. DERRICK'S CLUB, STAFF AREA - LATER

Laura walks down the stark hallway towards the green room. She staggers forward, using the wall as support. Derrick rushes Laura from behind.

DERRICK

Laura.

Laura jumps and exclaims from surprise. She turns and faces Derrick.

LAURA

Derrick? Is something wrong?

DERRICK

Yeah. I heard your song. Delete it.

Laura's eyes well with tears.

LAURA

I worked really hard on it.

DERRICK

Our contract says you can't make anything outside of your job. Delete it.

Beat.

LAURA

No.

Laura runs into the green room. Derrick tries to grab her. Laura slams the door shut and the lock CLICKS into place.

INT. GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Laura runs over to a street level window. She quickly pops open the window.

DERRICK (O.S.)

FUCK!

BANG. Derrick hits the door

Laura climbs onto a table beneath the window and slips out into the night.

INT. BUS - LATER

Laura, out of place in her ephemeral outfit, sits in a seat on public transport.

Her eye makeup has dripped down her cheeks and dried. She stopped crying.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - MORNING

Laura carries her heels in one hand as she approaches her door. She opens her bag.

Inside her bag, she pushes aside her PISTOL (any make, inexpensive) and roots in her bag looking for her keys.

The door across the hall from her swings open and MARTHA (93) waddles out.

MARTHA

Oh Laura dear, you're here. Would you like to come in for a spell? I just boiled some water for tea.

She sighs and drops her shoes and begins rooting through her bag with both hands.

LAURA

(mumbling)
I'm a little busy.

MARTHA

I couldn't hear you Laura.

Laura gives up and snaps her bag shut. She wipes at the makeup smeared under her eyes.

LAURA

Sure. I'll come in.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Laura stands over a bankers box, peering at the content: court records. Martha's apartment is full of bankers boxes. They are scattered and stacked around the room.

Martha walks in with two cups of tea. She sets them on the table.

MARTHA

See something you like?

LAURA

Oh sorry, I didn't mean to snoop.

Laura walks to the couch and sits.

MARTHA

That's quite alright. Nobody has given those papers much attention in many years.

LAURA

What are they?

MARTHA

Memories, from decades and decades ago. I just always felt it was important to hold onto them.

Laura takes a sip of tea.

LAURA

Thank you for the tea.

MARTHA

Of course! Oh, I nearly forgot!

Martha rushes back to her kitchen and returns with a platter of homemade cookies.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I made these especially for you.

LAURA

Thank you but I shouldn't, Derrick told me to watch my calories.

MARTHA

Dear what's the point of life if we don't spoil ourselves now and again?

Laura laughs and takes a cookie.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

There you go.

Beat.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Maybe I hold onto these boxes so there's a little piece of me left here when I'm gone.

Laura makes eye contact with Martha.

LAURA
What do you mean?

MARTHA
I'm old, too old, I'm going to die
soon.

Laura nods with a wisdom that seems older than her years. She has seen death many times.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
I donated them, all of them, to
some college archives in Canada.
Did you ever have higher education
Laura?

LAURA
No, I never did. I couldn't afford
it.

MARTHA
Me neither. I spent a few years in
jail and for a number of years
Universities didn't want people
like me.

Martha takes a long sip of tea and has a far off look.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
Women who had been to jail.

Martha looks at Laura expectantly.

LAURA
I left my parent's house when I was
fourteen. I wasn't welcome there. I
spent the last ten years bouncing
from home to home, playing music
with other girls on the run.
Getting by anyway we could.

Laura stares blankly ahead.

Martha reaches out and touches Laura's arm.

MARTHA
You made it didn't you? You
survived?

Laura looks away.

LAURA
Did I?

There's a loud bang from outside of Martha's apartment.

Laura and Martha stand quickly.

Laura rushes to the entry and peaks through the peephole of Martha's door.

The hall is empty.

Laura opens the door.

MARTHA

Laura!

Laura looks back.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Be careful.

LAURA

I will be.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Laura rushes to her door. She grabs the handle. It's loose in the escutcheon. She pushes on the door and it slides open.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, CENTRAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The front door closes. Laura pulls her GUN out of her purse. PISTOL up, she swivels around the room.

She moves to the bedroom and peaks in, GUN pointed in front of her. Satisfied the intruder left, she puts her gun back into her purse.

Laura searches through drawers, finding her social security card, her insurance information, and everything else a burglar could be interested in. All of her furniture remains in place.

She dashes into:

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Laura rushes to her closet and rummages through her clothes, pulling out a box full of cash and KETAMINE PARAPHERANALIA. She sets the box down, confused.

LAURA

Cinnamon? Cinnamon!

Laura checks under her bed. Empty. She runs back to

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT, CENTRAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LAURA
Cinnamon!

She checks under her dining room table. Nothing. She looks under her couch. Hopeless. She starts opening her cupboards at random.

LAURA (CONT'D)
(weakly)
Cinnamon-

She slumps against the kitchen counter and starts to cry. Her phone buzzes. A text from Derrick.

DERRICK
(Text)
Delete your song.

She hurls her phone into the back of her couch.

LAURA
FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!

She keeps crying and curls into a ball on the floor.

There's a knock on the door.

MARTHA
Laura, dear? Are you alright.

Laura sniffs and pulls herself off the floor.

LAURA
Yeah I'm okay. Sorry about the noise.

MARTHA
Do you need anything? I could come on in if you need some help?

LAURA
No thank you Martha, I'm fine.

MARTHA
Are you sure?

beat.