

SHIFTER

FADE IN:

EXT. BACKYARD IN ITALY - DAY

A young ITALIAN MAN with a hammer, a four-inch spike and a length of white cord, putters around his yard.

RUSS (V.O.)

Back in Italy in the forties, my grandpa was hanging a washing line one day. He chose the gnarliest-looking tree in his backyard...

Italian Man is seen through the twisted branches of the tree, as if something is looking down on him.

Italian Man ties a knot around the spike, readies the spike against the bark...

RUSS (V.O.)

He took a big swing and--

Italian Man POUNDS the spike home. As the spike pierces the bark, a deafening PIG SQUEAL is heard, making him drop his hammer and cover his ears.

CUT TO BLACK.

NARRATION OVER BLACK

RUSS (V.O.)

The demons in that tree squealed for three days until the townsfolk made him take the spike out.

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

PRESENT DAY

Six college friends sit around a campfire with sausages and beer. Five pup tents in a circle behind the campfire group.

TYLER is the tacit leader of the group; clockwise from him, lesbian couple EVIE and JANE, then BRAD, RUSS and WILL, then back around to Tyler. All of them are 20 years old, except for Jane, 31.

BRAD

What then, Russ?

RUSS

"What then"? He took the spike out.

WILL
Yeah, but the "demons" were still in the tree.

EVIE
(giggling)
Ow! Did they, like, at least put some lotion on the poor stabbed tree?

BRAD
Yeah right, Nurse Evie.

WILL
You wanna put lotion on demons?

TYLER
(goofy voice, referencing
SILENCE OF THE LAMBS)
It rubs the lotion on its bark or it gets the hose again.

Everyone laughs except Russ.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Those old folk tales, man - back in the day, they used to keep people in line, but there's no point anymore--

RUSS
Of course there's a point, Tyler: that demons are everywhere in nature!

JANE
You really believe that? You mean, like, out here?

Russ perks up at Jane's comment.

RUSS
Uh, yeah.

BRAD
So what was your grandpa doing for three days while the demon pigs were squealing?

TYLER
Dude, the washing!

Everyone laughs.

RUSS

Yeah, right. Laugh all you want; people back then were more attuned to the natural world - we're so stuck on technology--

EVIE

You mean like we can't see the other dimension right in our midst?

TYLER

(wagging arms like a ghost)
Not the Earth spirits? Whoo-hoo!

RUSS

Look, I know you're an atheist, Tyler, but this has nothing to do with religion--

TYLER

It's got everything to do with religion, 'tard! Religions created evil - devils and shit - so they'd have something to oppose the "good" they were selling.

WILL

Yeah, but all they've ever done is sell survival skills back to the people who already had 'em.

JANE

What do you mean, Will?

WILL

Like people only figured stealing and murder were wrong when they were given the Ten Commandments by Charlton Heston? Like, three thousand years ago? How did our species survive if we didn't have basic instincts in the first place?

TYLER

Basic Instinct! Best beaver shot ever!

JANE

I'll drink to that!

Tyler CLINKS bottles with Jane.

RUSS

Come on, Will! You and your Psych Major shit!

EVIE
 (to Tyler, giggling)
 You're such a man-pig!

TYLER
 I'm a man-bear-pig, baby!

BRAD
 But it's kinda true, Russ. All animals
 are geared to survive - kill or be
 killed. I mean, Nature is called "Mother"
 not because she's nurturing and kind -
 think about a mother tiger or a mother
 bear - fuck with their kids, they'll rip
 your fucking head off.

RUSS
 Not you too! My best friend-- Look, I'm
 talking about beyond nature!

Tyler, dismissive of Russ, turns to Brad.

TYLER
 Yeah right, Crocodile Hunter! Hey, Brad!
 So what's your scary story, eh? You told
 me you were gonna blow my mind. Don't
 just blow my balls like jackoff here.

Jane and Evie laugh at Tyler's crudeness. Brad forages in his
 backpack as he speaks.

BRAD
 More than that, man! The ground's gonna
 shift under your feet.

Brad pulls out a Journal that looks decidedly antique.

BRAD (CONT'D)
 (to Russ, Tyler, Will)
 You guys know my grandpa, right?

EVIE
 You've told me about him.

TYLER
 Wouldn't shut up with his war stories...

BRAD
 Yeah, well, Tyler - he said you were too
 school-smart to understand world-smart.

Tyler gives a derisive snort, swigs his beer.

TYLER

Whatever that means. Crazy old Polish
sausage!

Tyler glances at Jane. Their eyes meet and they laugh off
Brad's grandpa, a shared moment that Russ notices.

JANE

(laughs)

So what's "world-smart," Brad?

BRAD

(leafing through Journal)

Well, it's kinda like the war with al
Qaeda: we're using technology to combat
people who are outside technology. They
keep evading us because they aren't using
cellphones or computers. The only way
we'll see them is if we also leave
technology behind. Open our eyes.

RUSS

(trying to impress Jane)

But that's what I'm talkin' about!

BRAD

No. You're talking about devils and shit!

RUSS

That's the natural world, man! My grandpa
said there was this little boy, see, in
his village, kept saying "devil devil
devil devil" -

EXT - FOREST TRAIL - NIGHT

The dark forest trail is seen from the P.O.V. of something
walking stealthily down it. In the distance, we see through
the foliage, Brad, Tyler and others at the campfire. We hear
their voices from the trail.

BRAD (O.S.)

Oh, man! Russ, just listen, wouldja--

Tyler and Will chortle, interrupting Brad. Evie laughs.

TYLER (O.S.)

No, no - let's hear it!

RUSS (O.S.)

--so his dad warns him, "Don't say that,
son - or the devil will come for you!"

From the forest trail, we see the campsite get nearer and nearer. Then cut back to:

EXT - FOREST CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

RUSS (CONT'D)

But the kid won't stop: "devil devil devil." He tells his dad, "There's no such thing - teacher told me so!" So one day, the kid's walking home from school, and he hears this scraping noise coming from a ditch and--Jesus Christ!

Russ exclaims as two HIKERS step from the forest trail into the campfire circle. Everyone swears profusely at being startled.

HIKER MARTIN

Whoa! Take it easy, guys! Didn't mean to scare you--

TYLER

Well you fuckin' did! Christ! Isn't it a bit late to be out hiking without flashlights? You wanna break a leg?--

BRAD

(holding his heart)

Or have someone beat the shit out of you for giving 'em a heart attack?!

HIKER MARTIN

(flips on flashlight)

Yeah, but we didn't know if you guys were, y'know, normal, so-- Hey, I'm Martin... and Polly.

HIKER POLLY

Hey... hey... hi...

HIKER MARTIN and HIKER POLLY are late-20s. They greet the kids with handshakes and waves.

Polly's backpack sports a tiny plush yellow kitty attachment.

HIKER MARTIN

We're just looking for this campsite with two massive trees fallen together and the stream kinda winds under them--

TYLER

Yeah, I know it, but dude, it's about three miles further down that path.

Tyler points up another forest trail.

HIKER MARTIN
(aside to Polly)
Told you we were close.

HIKER POLLY
(aside to Martin)
We've been hiking five hours already,
hon.

HIKER MARTIN
So what's a half hour more? Anyway, we
can't park it here--

BRAD
You guys want a beer or something?

HIKER MARTIN
Thanks, but we better get a move on.

HIKER POLLY
Yeah thanks, take it easy, guys!

Everyone bids goodbye to the exiting Hikers.

HIKER MARTIN
(to Polly, as they exit)
Told you we spent too long at your mom's
place...

TYLER
(to Brad)
So hit us, Rob Zombie!

EVIE
What about Russ's little devil kid?

TYLER
Fuck the little devil kid - it's all
bullshit anyway!

RUSS
(laughing)
You're such a prick, Tyler!

TYLER
I'm a man-bear-prick, baby!

BRAD
(Journal open on lap)
Shapeshifters, dudes.

WILL
Shape-what-now?

EVIE
You, like, totally lost me.

BRAD
Beings that can change their shape. On a
molecular level. Science - not myth.

Silence from everyone. Tyler breaks it.

TYLER
Fuck off.

BRAD
No, hang on. About six months ago, just
before Grandpa Gabe died, he gave me this
Journal.

RUSS
Shit! I didn't know your grandpa was
dead.

BRAD
Poor guy - we thought he was losing it...
Me and mom visited him and he took me
down to his basement and dug up this
thing from under the floorboards.

WILL
Was he a spy or something?

RUSS
Shit, man!

BRAD
He kept saying, "They're getting close!
Keep this safe! They're getting close!"

EVIE
Who's getting close?

TYLER
The Polish Sausage Police...

BRAD
Dunno. But I been reading this thing and
his theories make sense.

Brad finds an inside page, handwritten in English, with
sections in Polish. Hand-drawn pictures of mystical beings,
devils, mermaids, Inca priests, etc.

TYLER

You brought that shit out here?

BRAD

Hey! Best place for a campfire story - around a campfire! But look - this is when he was in Korea in 1951; he parachuted into this mountain jungle in Kangwon and his unit--

WILL

That's tight! So he was an Old Dog!--

BRAD

--and his unit got lost:

(starts reading)

"...we tried to find our way with no moon, and clouds blocking the stars. But the forest was black as coal..."

CUTAWAYS as Brad speaks.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #1 - SAME TIME

We see the feet of Hikers Martin and Polly on forest path.

BRAD (V.O.)

"Then something whipped out of the forest and grabbed Taylor. At first I thought they were coming down from the trees - but they were the trees!

We see Martin leading Polly through the darkness, their flashlights ineffectual. Something suddenly grabs Polly from the surrounding foliage. She utters a tiny yelp and is gone before Martin can turn around.

BRAD (V.O.)

"I saw them grab Polowski as he tried to run. More paratroops were landing in this godforsaken hellhole and they were taken before they could get out of their chutes..."

Martin turns in every direction, whimpering, desperately looking for Polly, when something indistinguishable whips out at him from the forest. He tries to run and it grabs him.

BRAD (V.O.)

Goldberg was screaming as he was being cut up by something..."

We see Martin's throat and torso being slashed, as he lets out a strangled scream.

BRAD (V.O.)

"And then the bombing started - right on schedule - but we were right in the middle of it! We should have been ten miles south! The bombs killed a few trees, but the other ones - those trees killed our men. I don't know how they didn't get me..."

Martin's and Polly's bodies are being thrashed about and ingested by something in the darkness. Martin's dead hand lets go of his flashlight, which topples end over end, splaying dancing lights over the carnage.

BRAD (V.O.)

"...but when I saw them feasting on my buddies, I picked up and ran. Like the devil was after me - and I realized: the devil was."

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

We see the kids, silent, digesting Brad's tale, when Tyler breaks the silence.

TYLER

So much for "leaving no man behind"--

They are startled by a strangled scream, at the edge of hearing.

Evie yips and grabs Jane.

WILL

The fuck was that? Didja hear that?

RUSS

I dunno. What'd you hear?

Everyone is silent, trying to listen. Only LEAVES RUSTLING in the wind.

We see the faces of the kids as they look around at the trees.

EVIE

(softly)

I hope those people are all right.

Beat. Silence is broken by Jane, who startles everyone; upbeat, loud, motioning to her beer.

JANE
Okay! Who's up for another one?

All the kids ask for beers, maybe a little too loudly, to reassure themselves.

Russ, closest to beer cooler, rises, bends, pulls out beers.

JANE (CONT'D)
(at Russ)
Woo hoo! Look at that tight butt!

Russ turns quickly, embarrassed, hands a beer to Jane. Scattered, nervous laughs.

Russ gropes for other beers with his back to the cooler, while Jane eyes him, amused; he hands beers to Tyler and Brad, takes one himself and motions to Evie, who declines.

EVIE
Still going, thanks Russ.

Jane makes a "toast" gesture with the new beers.

JANE
Good call on the camping trip. Thanks for the invite, guys! To Evie's friends - y'all are cool in my book.

Everyone CLINKS bottles with each other, mutters acknowledgement, swigs. Jane kisses Evie deeply.

JANE
(breaks kiss, motions at Tyler)
Except for this one - he's hot!

Evie pushes Jane playfully. Russ looks on jealously.

TYLER
Yeah, well, tell that to Evie. For four years I kept wondering why she wouldn't fuck me!

WILL
Yeah, while you jumped every other cooz in school.

BRAD

You've already gone one whole day without it. You gonna make it three more days, stud?

TYLER

I dunno - your mouth's starting to look pretty good, Bradley.

WILL

(mincing)

Stay away from him - he's mine!

Will jumps up suddenly and tries to plant a kiss on Tyler's mouth, Tyler holding him off.

Everyone laughs.

TYLER

(struggling with Will)

Yeah! Everyone wants this! You want this, Brad?!

BRAD

(laughing)

Fuck you!

WILL

Aww yeah! Take it bitch! Yeah yeah yeah!

Will pretends to jack off over Tyler, then falls to the ground as if spent, amidst laughs.

EVIE

(laughing)

Perverts!

TYLER

See? I got bitches everywhere. Eat my sausage, lover!

Tyler throws his half-eaten sausage at Will, who picks it up and hurls it into the forest.

RUSS

Shouldn't do that, Will. Bears can smell food for miles.

WILL

Ahh, it'll be okay.

EVIE

What kind of animals are out here anyway?
Should we be so far from the trails?

TYLER

I been out here hundreds of times with my
dad. For the good spots, you gotta go way
off trail - if you're still seeing Almond
Joy wrappers or condoms, keep movin' cos
you ain't hit wilderness yet, babe.

RUSS

Well, Los Padres National Forest... I
heard there's mountain lions out here--

Brad jerks up, drops his Journal, and makes for his tent.

BRAD

(traveling to tent)

Mountain lions?! What the--? Are you
kidding me?!

TYLER

Yeah, there's the odd cougar, like Mrs.
Cole in Physics, or Mrs. Freeman in
Biology, or-- Jayzuz Christ!--

Tyler exclaims at Brad returning from his tent, wielding a
handgun.

RUSS

Holy shit, dude! Since when've you had a
gun?

BRAD

Few months. My cousin gave it to me. We
won't let any bears or mountain lions up
in here.

WILL

Who's "we"?

BRAD

(in a DIRTY HARRY rasp)

Smith. And Wesson. And me.

TYLER

Question is: Know how to use it, Dirty
Harry?

Brad rattles through specs, pointing out his descriptors,
unloading and reloading the magazine, then racking the slide.

BRAD

Smith & Wesson 9 millimeter semi-automatic MP pistol, four and a quarter inch barrel, no magazine safety, no internal lock, 17 rounds.

Without warning, Brad locks his arm straight out, aims at a far-off tree and FIRES THE GUN. The sound is monstrous in the quiet forest. The bullet RICOCHETS off the tree, then ECHOES.

A HOLLOW HOWL, almost subliminal, accompanies the ECHO, which goes unnoticed by everyone.

Evie yelps and hugs Jane. In the aftermath, we see Russ, hands over his ears, shocked; Tyler with an incredulous look on his face. Will runs to the tree to check the target.

RUSS

(removing his hands slowly)
Fuck me...

EVIE

(indignation for shocking her)
Brad!
(then humor)
First it's his grandpa killing trees, now you!

TYLER

(amused)
Shit, Harry! There's hair on them nuts after all.

Will calls from the shot tree, about 100 feet away in darkness.

WILL

No doubt!

P.O.V. TREE

We see Will in closeup, peering intently at us, examining in awe, then turning and running away from us, to the campsite in the distance. We cut back to:

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

JANE

(amused)
Uh... there's always the campfire to keep animals away, Brad...heh heh.

TYLER
 (to Evie)
 What is it with you and the sacred trees?
 You a greenie now?

EVIE
 No, but they're alive, aren't they? Don't
 shoot 'em.

BRAD
 What am I gonna shoot then? Everything's
 alive.

EVIE
 So don't shoot anything! I mean, unless
 someone's trying to kill you.

TYLER
 I know who's trying to kill us.

Tyler has seen Will returning to the campfire circle,
 sneaking up behind Russ. Tyler times his remark:

EVIE
 Who?

TYLER
 The devil!

On the word "devil," Will grabs Russ from behind, who screams
 like a girl, then shoves the guffawing Will off him.

BRAD
 You know the shifters had a lot to do
 with plants becoming sacred.

Will motions to Brad for the gun.

WILL
 Give us a look!

BRAD
 Careful, dipstick!

Brad hands Will the gun while Tyler talks.

TYLER
 You and your shifters! Plants became
 sacred in Genesis when God told Moses to
 treat everything living as sacred - but
 eat the trees - then contradicted himself
 a couple minutes later by saying even the
 trees are sacred.

Russ laughs. Jane is impressed.

JANE
You're pretty well-versed in that book
which you despise, Tyler.

TYLER
(sly look at Jane)
Know your enemy.

Will offers the gun to Russ, who is looking at Tyler's flirtation with Jane; he is jerked out of his trance, then refuses to hold the gun, so Will returns it to Brad, who tucks it into the back of his jeans while he talks.

BRAD
(brandishing the Journal)
There's no Genesis crap here, Phil
Collins! We're talking about knowledge
older than any holy texts.

TYLER
Polish Sausage should know - he's older
than any holy texts.

BRAD
After the war, he didn't report anything
he'd seen - but the shifters became his
crazy obsession. I swear, if divorce was
in fashion back then, my Grandma would've
left him.

CUTAWAY

We see Brad from the darkness of the forest, from the direction of the shot tree, as he speaks. Something is watching.

JANE
Sounds like a crazy old coot, Brad.

Brad turns to various pages for verification, and hands the Journal around to Russ and Will, who pass it around.

BRAD
Yeah, when you hear little pieces like
this. But he traveled the world, Jane. He
talked to tribes in Argentina, the
Amazon, spoke to people in the Andes,
direct descendants of the Incas--

INSERTS

of the kids looking at book pages, where we see Incan calligraphy, handwritten English, Polish, hand-drawn diagrams of anthropomorphic jaguars, trees, map diagrams, etc.

RUSS

Shit! He's had some life. I had no idea!--

WILL

Yeah, but what about the frickin' trees?!

BRAD

--but his theory covers a strand of evolution that got stuck in with myth.

RUSS

You still talking about shapeshifters?

TYLER

Man - never expect a straight answer from a Political Science Major.

The Journal passes back to Brad. He flips to a page.

BRAD

We're talkin' about a species that evolved long before mankind - alongside Paleozoic fauna maybe - they were probably discovered many times but look--
(starts reading)

"...only when Man started documenting the world around him in writing did any record get passed along of beings that didn't seem to belong to the natural order..."

EVIE

What beings?

BRAD

The shapeshifters.

EVIE

But what does a "shapeshifter" look like? I mean, how do they look when they're not looking like other things?

BRAD

Who knows? Maybe some dinosaur fossils are actually shifters?; maybe shifters are those strange fish that turn up every so often, that people think come from the bottom of the ocean--

TYLER

Maybe maybe maybe. So grandpa wants to call them shapeshifters?

BRAD

(sarcastically)

Right, so the devil can be a goat, a rottweiler, a snake, a centaur, a bat-winged thing - but that doesn't make him a shapeshifter, shit no!

WILL

The Devil!--

Will grabs Russ again, but the joke is wearing thin.

JANE

(laughs)

Now this sounds like science!

BRAD

Back in the day, without biological knowledge, people had to explain the unexplainable the only way they knew how: these beings became "supernatural."

TYLER

Yeah, but this is all contention, dude--

BRAD

I agree. But there's no contradiction in grandpa's notes. The theories could be true. And Tyler, Scientific Method: unless you can disprove something, it remains a viable theory.

EVIE

So, like, Dracula is a shapeshifter too?

BRAD

Wouldn't you call someone who could turn into a bat or a wolf a shapeshifter? How did vampires get stuck as vampires? How did werewolves become "lycanthropes"?

WILL

Man, that Kate Beckinsale is smokin' in that movie with the Lycans. That leather!

TYLER

An oldie but a goodie!

JANE
She's not that old!

BRAD
(reads)
"The Aymara Indians pass down tales from the Tiahuanaco civilization; in the ruins, there were stone carvings of jaguars transforming into men and ancient astronauts turning into giant birds."

WILL
Yeah, but what about the trees, dude?

Tyler and Jane laugh together. Russ feels the bonding and tries to join in the laughter.

BRAD
Plants being sacred comes from shifters as trees. Revered out of fear.

RUSS
So shifters are humans that can transform into trees?

BRAD
They're not human, man - another species altogether. Grandpa never tried to call them fancy names - they shift their shapes; seemed logical to call 'em "shapeshifters." And they could shift into anything organic, not just trees.

EVIE
I get it. So that kinda explains where we get all those fairytales of talking trees and animals.

BRAD
You got it! How about the Ents in "Lord of the Rings"?--

WILL
I hated that shit--

BRAD
--or Greek mythology: Apollo pursues Daphne and she turns into a tree; it's all based in some kinda reality.

TYLER
 (dismissive)
 More like based in some kind of
 hallucinogenic drugs.

WILL
 (mock terror)
 So that's why Evie loves trees - she's a
 shapeshifter!

Will laughs and serves himself another sausage and vegetables
 from tupperware tubs; he eats as Brad talks.

BRAD
 Maybe there is no such thing as angels or
 ghosts.

TYLER
 Give the man a fuckin' prize!

Will throws a piece of food at Brad.

BRAD
 (brandishes Journal)
 This says you're right! Maybe there's no
 such thing as leprechauns, zombies, Earth
 spirits, Lucifer, even God and Jesus,
 Zeus and Thor--

RUSS
 Better watch it, Brad - or you'll be
 trying to kiss Tyler!

Will rises, food mashed in his mouth, and tries to kiss Brad,
 who fends him off, while laughing.

JANE
 Hot!

BRAD
 (to Will)
 Jesus, dude!

Evie giggles. Will resumes his seat.

BRAD
 (matter-of-factly, not
 melodramatic)
 Maybe... there are no superstitions.
 Maybe... there are only shapeshifters!

Tyler takes a beat to digest this, then bursts out laughing.

TYLER

So you're trying to disprove superstition
- with another superstition!

JANE

If no one's going to kiss, I'm gonna get
another beer, thanks, Russ.

Russ CLINKS around in cooler and grabs more beer as Brad
continues.

BRAD

(reads)

"Before writing existed, humanity passed
down stories of shifters in folk tales,
in carved runes, in ancient rituals. The
shifters are burned deep in human
consciousness."

WILL

(eating)

Okay, but get to the scary bits.

Scattered laughs.

BRAD

Shithead! The only reason we don't know
more about them is 'cause shifters were
ostracized from human societies.

JANE

Why? Were they gay?

Laughs. Evie yips in mock shock and pushes Jane playfully.

WILL

(to Evie)

It's true! You are a shapeshifter!

We see the kids from the darkness of the forest again.
Something watching them; now moving stealthily around the
perimeter of the campfire.

BRAD

(reads)

"...it was the Garden of Eden story. We
drove out the angels and talking snakes.
And over the eons, we lost sight of them.
The ancient ones tell me the shifters
want it that way..."

EVIE

But why drive them out? Wouldn't it be fun to have a shapeshifter friend? Fly you around, or ride on his back like a horsey.

Jane laughs, hugs Evie.

JANE

How cute!

BRAD

(reads)

"...Humans could not exist alongside beings that treated them as sustenance - even though we could communicate with them, it was like living with wild tigers. Organic life is the shapeshifters' energy supply, and humans are especial delicacies."

WILL

What's that supposed to mean?

BRAD

We are their food.

A loud THUMP from the forest, as of something falling, from the direction of the shot tree. Everyone jerks their head toward the noise; Brad instinctively jerks his gun out, stands, arm rigid, aiming into the darkness.

TYLER

(into the darkness)

Hey, you guys get lost again?

Two beats. Silence from the forest. Nothing happens. Then laughter from all the kids.

RUSS

Aww, fuck!

EVIE

(breathless)

I think I pissed my panties!

TYLER

So take 'em off, girl!

The Journal has fallen to the ground, Brad sits, picks it up, places it next to him.

Will stands up and screams into the darkness.

WILL
We're still here, motherfuckers!

Laughing, Will runs to his tent, near the shot tree.

TYLER
Where're you goin'?

WILL
I got some badass shit, dude!

JANE
(swigging beer)
Fuck!

EVIE
Y'know that's your eighth, hon!

JANE
Counting for me, hon? Aww, that's sweet!

TYLER
Oooh, the boyfriend puts his foot down.
How many have I had, Evie?

EVIE
Just making sure she doesn't get sick.

JANE
(smiling)
I'm a big girl, hon! Catch up if you
wanna get laid tonight!

Amidst "whooo"'s, Evie exclaims in embarrassment.

EVIE
Jane!... Uh, I really gotta take a pee!

TYLER
(to Brad)
Hey! Gimme another of those Polish
sausages - and I don't mean your grandpa!

Laughs. As Brad serves a sausage to Tyler, Evie moves off into the forest behind the tents.

Jane looks at Evie as she retreats. Tyler gets Jane's attention by waving a sausage between his legs lasciviously.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Don't worry, honey! While she's gone, try
the real thing!

JANE

I've got the real thing, Tyler. Why else would you want it?

BRAD

Oooo! Burn!

Russ reaches into his backpack, pulls open a small laptop.

TYLER

(laughs to Jane)

Whatever, Lady Jane! Don't come cryin' to me in the middle of the night!

(to Russ)

So how many shapeshifters trying to friend you an Facebook, dude?

BRAD

(refers to Russ proudly)

King of Porn here. Anything you want, this guy's got the tools: Rottweilers, bukkake, two girls and a cup--

RUSS

Shut up, Brad! I'm checking what kind of animals are in this area, so we won't have the fucking O.K. Corral-- hmm... no signal...

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Evie has moved far into the forest behind her tent. She squats and pees. We hear CAMPFIRE VOICES, MUFFLED, far-off.

As Evie squats, she hears FOREST VOICES from the other direction, deep in the forest. She calls in that direction.

EVIE

Hey, you guys!...

The FOREST VOICES stop. She can't hear the CAMPFIRE VOICES anymore. All is silent.

EVIE (CONT'D)

(worried)

Not funny, you guys!... Janey? You there, too? Make 'em stop...

Beat. Then the FOREST VOICES start again.

Evie tries to finish quickly, as she hears RUSTLING from the direction of the FOREST VOICES. She pulls up her panties and jeans and starts hurrying back. Suddenly--

EVIE (CONT'D)
Umph! Oh shit! Shit! Will!

Evie has run headlong into Will. They are still out of earshot of the campfire. Evie laughs nervously. Will has a lit joint in his hand.

WILL
You okay, hon?

EVIE
(breathless)
I heard voices! I-- I-- Where'd you come from?

WILL
I heard you calling out something.

Will offers Evie the joint, which she ignores.

EVIE
I heard voices!

Will gestures towards campfire in the distance.

WILL
(matter-of-factly)
Yeah. Those douchebags over there.

EVIE
No! From out there! Someone's out there, Will.

WILL
Yeah, those two hikers. Although I thought their precious fallen trees were like, three miles in that direction--

EVIE
No, it wasn't-- wasn't like human voices--

WILL
Hey, don't get all horror movie on me, Evie! Come here.
(hugging Evie)
You can hear sounds for miles in the forest and you can never tell what direction they're coming from.

Will breaks the hug and looks at her reassuringly.

WILL (CONT'D)

Hey, if there was someone out here, they woulda heard Magnum Force down there and pissed their pants in the other direction. Or come down to see what all the shooting was about. I think he scared off all the animals, not just the bears and mountain lions!

Evie laughs nervously.

EVIE

Let's go back.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT II

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Evie and Will walk into the campsite to find Russ fiddling on his laptop, Brad offering advice on getting a connection.

RUSS

...No, it just keeps prompting me to "try again" - it's not an error--

BRAD

The trees must be blocking...

Tyler and Jane are comparing their phone devices, almost snuggling, laughing, leaning against each other drunkenly.

Tyler looks up at Will and Evie.

TYLER

None of us can get connected. You guys get a signal?

Will pulls out his phone device and checks, while Evie stares daggers at Jane, who is oblivious to her.

WILL

(makes scary voice)
Oooh! The natural world taking over...

Tyler sees Will's joint.

TYLER

Don't bogart, dude.

Will lets Tyler take a drag, who holds it up to Jane's lips at his shoulder. She drags on it while he holds it, then he hands it back to Will. Brad puts his hand out for it.

Evie pulls out her phone perfunctorily. Jane notices Evie is back and rises, jovial, ruffling Tyler's hair before stumbling back to Evie.

JANE

(slightly slurring)

Hey, honey bunny! Tyler's got that icon with the little guy scratching his head - that's so cute! Makes me think of you--

Evie fumes silently and sits. Jane sits next to her, smiling and kissing her ears.

WILL

(realizes)

Shit! I was supposed to call my girl!

Russ closes the laptop, puts it in his bag.

RUSS

Shit!

JANE

How come you guys are out here without your bee-otches?

TYLER

Some couldn't make it, some complained about it, so we all said fuck it - jus' the boys.

JANE

(referring to Evie)

What's this one doing here?

TYLER

Ah, she's one of the boys. And we let her bring you along so she wouldn't feel too much penis envy.

EVIE

Ouuh! Excuse me?!

TYLER

(to Will)

So who you fuckin' now? Still Becca?

EVIE
You guys are pigs!

TYLER
(to Jane)
See what I mean?

Will answers, distracted, while meddling with his phone.

WILL
Nah, man. Liesl.

JANE
I still can't believe how guys talk when they're not around girls they wanna fuck.

BRAD
(to Will, his phone to his ear)
That German chick? Nice, dude.

TYLER
How's it different from chicks in the locker room?
(launches into joke)
This kid takes a Playboy to his dad and points at the girl's muff and says, "What's that, daddy?" "That's called a pussy, son." "Then what's a cunt?" "Everything else around it."

All the boys break up laughing, except Russ, who chuckles.

JANE
Yeah? What is a man?

WILL
(confused)
'What is a man'?

TYLER
Heard it.

JANE
A life support system for a dick.

Tyler, Will and Brad moan. Russ laughs. Evie is silent. Brad still has his phone to his ear, not getting through.

TYLER
(to Jane)
Whatever, touché! Bradley's about to become Mrs. Al Bundy.
(to Brad)
(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

Picked out the pattern for your ball and chain yet, honey?

Jane is not listening to Tyler anymore, sweet-talking Evie, smoothing things out. Their voices are lowered.

SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Jane and Evie. Tyler and Brad.

JANE

'S'matter honey?

EVIE

Why were you with Tyler?

JANE

What do mean? You don't trust me?

BRAD

(phone to his ear)

Fuck you, Tyler. You wish you had Ashley.

TYLER

Yeah, I wish I had her - but not with a state contract. You're only 20, dude. Don't throw away your life!

EVIE

I trust you, but it's like you're teasing these guys and ignoring me sometimes.

JANE

I didn't realize. I'm sorry baby! You're the one I'm spending the night with - you know that, Evie.

EVIE

I know, but it just makes me feel--

JANE

Come on, we're here to have fun, baby.

BRAD

It's "getting a good start" on my life, Tyler. You should try it sometime. Ah, fuck it!

Brad throws his phone into his backpack.

TYLER

I try it every night. Sometimes three or four times.

EVIE
I love you, Janey.

JANE
Love you too, sweetie!

Jane and Evie kiss in makeup fervor.

WILL
Ah, fuck it!

Will throws his phone into a backpack, pulls out another beer and starts munching on a sausage; sees the girls making out.

WILL (CONT'D)
Ow, get a room, honeys!

TYLER
No, don't get a room! Don't mind us!

Tyler motions to the girls to continue. Evie and Jane stop and laugh, but continue hugging.

TYLER
Well, we know who they're bangin.' Who you bangin,' Russ? Anyone we know?

RUSS
Who me?

Russ picks up the Journal distractedly to have something to do. He pretends to read it between questions from the group.

TYLER
(pointing into darkness)
No, the other Russ over there. Well?

RUSS
I don't know.

TYLER
Whadaya mean? You just don't want us horning in on your action, eh? Is it Selma Carmichael?

RUSS
Yeah. I mean, no.

BRAD
You told me you were seeing her last month.

RUSS
 (visibly distressed)
 I been on a few dates, yeah.

WILL
 Dates?... Dude, slipped her the Polish
 sausage yet?

RUSS
 I been dating her - whadayou think?

WILL
 (catching a whiff of fear)
 Yeah, but - have you fucked her?

RUSS
 (looks at Evie and Jane)
 Y-Yeah, but uh, y'know, but I respect her
 too much to talk about, uh, you gotta
 understand it's not just--

TYLER
 Dude, you're a virgin!

BRAD
 (spit-take on his beer)
 No kidding?! How come you never told me?

RUSS
 What're you talking about? Nothing to
 tell.

WILL
 I'll say!

Jane jumps in, to Russ's rescue.

JANE
 Come on, you guys! You're only 20. How
 much have you guys fucked?

WILL
 Ask Tyler.

As Tyler makes a "studly" gesture, Will lights another joint
 and puffs away.

JANE
 Well, I've still got ten years on all o'
 you babies--

WILL
 Hang on! It doesn't count if you've only--

JANE
Girls. And guys.

That shuts everyone up.

TYLER
Tila Tequila over here! So go on: lay
some wisdom on us.

Jane whispers to Evie, who assents to something. Jane rises
and crosses the short distance to Russ.

JANE
There's nothing wrong with this hottie.
He's just taking it easy, not blowing
your wad, are you, honey?

RUSS
Okay.

Jane plucks the joint from Will, takes a toke and bends down
in front of Russ, letting her cleavage show, which Russ tries
not to look at. She plants a kiss on Russ's lips and exhales
the smoke into his mouth, eliciting a "Whoooooo!" from
everyone. Russ coughs, surprised.

JANE
(whispers)
I'd do you, honey. Like the devil.

Jane hands the joint back to Will, who is applauding, and
saunters back to Evie, who mouths, "I love you."

WILL
I like the dyke!

TYLER
Don't worry, dude - you've got 20 more
years to become a 40-year-old virgin!

Will laughs, referencing movie, THE 40 YEAR OLD VIRGIN.

WILL
The Pusilaya! You gotta stop putting the
pussy on a pedestal!

BRAD
(to Russ)
That's it, bro! I'm getting you a hooker
soon as we get back!

Will rises, holding his stomach.

WILL

Oh god! Those sausages are not natural. I gotta push out a badger.

(like John Wayne, facing the dark forest)

I'm goin' in. Cover me.

TYLER

Blow me.

Will hands his joint to Tyler, then sets off into the darkness, towards the shot tree. Brad grabs a toilet paper roll from his backpack, throws it after Will.

BRAD

Hey! Incoming!

WILL

(from the forest)

I wanted to go natural in the natural world!...

BRAD

(sniggering)

Douchebag!

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Will puts an unlit joint in his mouth, as he finds an area in the darkness to dump, pulls down his pants, squats. He lights the joint and sings to himself.

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - SAME TIME

Brad shows Tyler the Journal, while Russ moves to sit near the girls. Evie is rapt with Brad and Tyler's exchange.

BRAD

(to Tyler)

...We eat other living things to extract energy and shift it into our own cells. It's kinda magical when you think about it: grass looks like grass until a cow eats it - then it turns into parts of a cow - then the cow turns into parts of you.

EVIE

That is sooo stem-cell!

TYLER

It's just biological processes:
assimilation, osmosis, mitosis - you know
that! It's basic science.

BRAD

Sure it's science - but "science" is what
we use to describe "magic"!

RUSS

(to Jane)

How long you guys been seeing each other
anyway?

JANE

(looking at Evie)

I've known her since she came into the
bank a year ago to open an account,
looking all mature-- Doesn't she talk
about me?

EVIE

(turns to answer)

I talk about you! And I am mature!...

Evie turns back to Brad and Tyler.

TYLER

(to Brad)

But "magic" is what we use to describe
douchebags.

Evie giggles.

RUSS

(to Jane)

I kinda know you from Dave's party.

JANE

Who's Dave?

BRAD

Hey, I totally agree, man. But Arthur C.
Clarke said, "Any sufficiently advanced
technology--"

EVIE

Arthur who?--

RUSS

(joins other conversation)

He did that movie, 2001.

JANE
Old sci-fi author.

BRAD
He said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

EVIE
That is sooo, like advanced metaphysics.

RUSS
(back to Jane)
Dave Sanderson. We danced a little and you were kinda drunk but you-- you looked nice.

All their heads look up when they hear Will in the distance.

WILL
(shouting, muffled)
This shit is goooood!

Laughs around the campsite.

TYLER
(to Brad)
But you're not talking technology - you're talking biology - if your bullshit can even be called "biology."

BRAD
We're talking about a species that consciously controls its shapeshifting.

EVIE
Like chameleons? Or male frogs that, like, turn into females when the populations are low?

BRAD
Even more extreme; absolute conscious metamorphosis.

JANE
(to Russ, seductively)
I'm kinda drunk now, Russ.

EVIE
(to Jane)
You okay, hon?

JANE
Like an old mama. You'd never think she
was 20 and I'm twice her age!

EVIE
Hey! Only 32.

JANE
Thirty-one!

TYLER
(to Brad)
What makes you think I wanna read your
poindexter book anyway?

BRAD
"Know your enemy."

TYLER
Eurgh! Get it away from me! I feel my
dick going soft already.

Everyone is startled into silence by a HIGH-PITCHED, GURGLING
SCREAM in the direction of Will.

Silence from the campsite for two beats, then Tyler breaks up
laughing, which prompts them all to relax.

TYLER
(shouting approbation)
Will! Money!

Jane looks at her empty bottle and motions to Russ.

JANE
Shit! I need a drink.

Russ brings her a beer, which she struggles to twist open.
Russ takes it back, twists it open for her.

JANE (CONT'D)
You're a gentleman, Russ.

Russ pulls a Swiss army knife out of his pocket.

RUSS
Here, use this if you need to.

JANE
Thanks, hon. But you've already opened
it. And I don't think I could use that
thing to open a bottle anyway.

RUSS

Just if you need it for later. Hey, you gotta make do with what you got sometimes.

Jane takes the knife.

JANE

Thanks, Russ. Appreciate it.

Silence between Russ and Jane as Tyler continues in B.G.

TYLER (O.S.)

We gotta do some target practice on some real game tomorrow with your shit, man. How come you never told me? We coulda done that shooting range in Northridge--

Another BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM from Will's direction.

Brad looks at Tyler, concerned. Tyler rises slowly, as everyone looks to him for a decision.

BRAD

Whadaya think?

TYLER

I think we go take a look, but if that mongo is pulling our nutsacs, he's gonna get my shoe in his ass.

Tyler swigs his drink and walks into the darkness, in the direction Will went, the others following.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Okay, we're comin, ' mongo!

Jane stumbles after the rest.

TYLER (CONT'D)

(speaking voice)

Hey, Will!

Silence from the forest.

BRAD

(shouts)

Will! We get it, man!

EVIE

(yells)

Will!--

Tyler motions everyone to be quiet, as he listens.

TYLER
(whispers)
If he's playing us...

The kids all walk further into the darkness, silent. Tyler motions for the others to silently fan out, his fingers to his lips.

Nobody notices in the darkness that the tree Brad shot earlier is no longer there.

Will's far-off yells for help come from the direction of the campsite. All heads turn.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Come on!

Tyler leads the charge back into camp.

As they arrive, Tyler's attitude takes it for granted Will is there.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Yo, fuckface! Gave us heart attacks for a second - just a second, mind you... Hey, Will... Hey, fuckface!

Everyone looks around. No Will.

Will's far-off voice again cries for help. All heads jerk around, trying to pick the direction.

BRAD
Where are you?! Will!

WILL
(muffled, far-off)
Over here! Get offa me-- No! No! Aaaaagh!

BRAD
(to Tyler)
Is he punking us?

TYLER
Well, the best gags are the ones you can't tell, right?

EVIE
He sounds scared, Tyler.

Jane flops to the ground near the fire.

JANE
I'm tapped! Gotta take a breather!

EVIE
Baby, you okay?

JANE
I guess I did have too much to drink,
hon. That smoke didn't help.

Tyler grabs a flashlight, motions for others to do the same.

TYLER
You wanna rest, Jane? - that works - stay
here in case the douche comes back;
(to Brad)
you and Russ try over there; Evie, come
with me.

As Russ moves out, he jovially refers to his Swiss army knife to Jane.

RUSS
(makes knife-wielding gesture)
You know what to do if anyone messes with
you.
(makes bottle-opening gesture)
Or if you need anything else.

Jane fake-smiles to Russ as he trots off.

The two parties exit the campsite in earnest to find Will.
Jane is left alone.

She sighs and crawls to the beer cooler, opens it, takes another beer. She can hear everyone's far-off shouts for Will, as she manipulates the Swiss army knife to pop the top.

A movement at the campsite's edge startles her. She spins around on her knees to face - a badger. It tentatively edges near the fire.

JANE
(slurring)
Oh, hey there, little fella! You smell
the sausages, eh? Here.

Jane throws the badger a sausage, which it munches quietly.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Brad and Russ with flashlights, trekking through heavy underbrush.

RUSS
Whadaya think? Is he kidding?

BRAD
Dunno. Hey, Will! Fuck's sake, man!

They hear Will's shout from up ahead.

BRAD (CONT'D)
There! I knew it!

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The badger starts nibbling at the Journal, which lies on the ground. Then it grips the Journal with its jaws and drags it backwards into the forest like prey. Jane sees this and dives on the Journal.

JANE
Oh shit! Don't eat that, little fella!

The badger GROWLS as it engages in a tug-of-war with Jane over the Journal.

JANE (CONT'D)
Hey! Gimme that! What's with you? Don't the sausages taste better?

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Brad and Russ stop for breath.

BRAD
Jesus, how far have we gone?

RUSS
I don't like this, Brad. Every time we get to where his voice is coming from, it's somewhere else. The guy can't be moving that fast.

BRAD
He's not moving - we just can't figure where his voice is coming from. You can hear sounds for miles in the forest and you can never tell what direction they're coming from--

RUSS
How can he be miles away? He just left to take a crap!

BRAD
Maybe we came in the wrong direction.

RUSS
This is fucked up! I'm going back!--

BRAD
What're you talking about? We have to find him. Now it looks serious - maybe he's injured.

RUSS
If he's injured, how come he keeps moving?

BRAD
He's not moving!

RUSS
(calls out)
Will! Shit, where's the campfire? We gotta go back - he's probably back at camp, the shithead! You hear him anymore?

BRAD
(listens for a beat)
Okay. Maybe you're right. Let's check it out. Will!

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - SAME TIME

Tyler and Evie have returned to camp.

TYLER
Any sign?

JANE
No, but there's this cute little fella who tried to eat Brad's book--

Jane turns to the badger. It is gone. She has the Journal in her lap.

JANE (CONT'D)
Awww! He was just here!--

Brad and Russ arrive back at camp.

TYLER
I guess nothing, huh?

BRAD

We could hear him shouting all over the place, but we couldn't get to him.

TYLER

So could we.

BRAD

What's going on, Tyler?

Russ notices Jane has another beer and gleefully comments on his part in it.

RUSS

(cheesy wink)

Hey! Looks like you took care of business with my tool!

Jane makes a "guess so" face and raises the beer.

TYLER

(to Brad)

I dunno. We must've gone a mile. He musta taken one helluva shit - or the guy's been abducted by aliens--

EVIE

D'you think those people have anything to do with this?

TYLER

What? No! They were just a coupla hikers. What? Like they kidnapped him for a mad threesome?

JANE

(aside)

Well, he was lookin' pretty tight...

BRAD

What if he's hurt or unconscious and he can't yell anymore?

RUSS

Tyler, I know he's your best friend an' all, but if we stumble around anymore in this pitch black, one of us is gonna break a leg.

TYLER

(considers a beat)

Okay, look, it's 2 a.m. - sun rises in about 4 hours.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

If he's really hurt, at least he won't be moving - and we have to have our strength to carry him outta here anyway--

EVIE

We shouldn't move him if he's hurt--

TYLER

Okay, I forgot Nurse Nightingale over here - whatever! We still have to find him. Either way - we're five hours deep - and that's just to the main road. So... I guess we wait until light.

Tyler tries one last time.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Hey, Wiiiiill!

Silence from the forest.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Goddammit!

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BRAD'S TENT - NIGHT

Brad is climbing into his sleeping bag when a drunk Jane opens his tent-flap and flops in. She sits heavily beside him. Her eyelids droop, her words slur.

BRAD

So what's up, Jane?

JANE

Don't lose that gun, Brad. Y'hear me, don't lose that gun!

BRAD

Gun's safe, Jane--

JANE

Don't lose that gun, okay?

BRAD

Okay, I won't lose it, Jane. You better go lie down; you're pretty fucked up--

JANE

Tyler thinks this is some kinda movie where we rustle up a posse and-- but if we couldn't find your friend after that long search... just keep your gun--

BRAD

What, are you thinking some kind of hillbilly axe-murderers or something?--

JANE

No, Brad. Now you think we're in a movie! Mountain lions, you said it yourself. Or bears. Maybe he was-- maybe he was...

Jane is drooping while she talks, fading out. She snaps half-awake when Brad talks.

BRAD

But we woulda heard something.

JANE

We did! He was calling for help - and you couldn't find him.

BRAD

Voices carry miles out in the forest--

JANE

But are you a perfeccion-- a professional tracker? Huh, Brian?

BRAD

(corrects her)

Uh, Brad.

JANE

Could you tell if you were following a voice or whether twigs are broken 'cause of Will being dragged; or whether there's- - or if there's a bear?

BRAD

Guess not.

JANE

Neither can I. It's real life, Brad. Your friend's probably gonna die out there--

BRAD

Don't say that--

JANE

I'm just being sensh... sensible. Trying to keep it in perspective, y'know? We've gotta accept the worst if we--

BRAD

Jane - shouldn't you get back to your honey?--

JANE

That's why I'm here! That's why! 'Cause I want my honey safe and you've got a gun and you've got the magic hands--

Jane massages Brad's hands. She drifts off during this blurt, then snaps awake again.

JANE (CONT'D)

--and if anything happens, I can count on you to bust a cap in its ass, right?...

Brad waits patiently for Jane to stop, until he realizes she has. She has passed out right next to him.

Brad pushes her timidly, trying to wake her.

BRAD

Jane. Er, Jane.

Brad tries more forcefully, slapping Jane's face lightly and shoving her unconscious body. Jane is motionless.

Brad surreptitiously slides Jane's t-shirt up to reveal one breast. He cups it, moaning softly. Jane stirs. Brad stops. Two beats, then he starts fondling again.

As he kisses her on the neck softly, Jane belches loudly. Brad jerks away. He swishes the smell away with his hand.

BRAD (CONT'D)

(loud whisper)

You gotta be kiddin'-- fuckin' Polish sausages!...

Undeterred, Brad starts fondling again.

Jane lets rip a GIANT FART.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Fuckin' Christ on a stick!

Brad pauses, wondering whether to continue, Jane FARTS again, squeazy and wet. This one smells horrible, Brad violently fans it away, pulls his t-shirt up over his nose.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Fuckin' dyke... what a waste of tittie!

With the t-shirt gas-mask, he decides he can still fondle, so he goes in again for the breast. Another loud burp, followed by a small dribble of vomit.

The last straw. Brad bolts up and exits his tent, swearing.

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Campsite is dark except for fireplace embers. Brad goes a short distance into the forest, out of sight of camp, and pees, then walks back to the embers, pokes around.

BRAD (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Where are ya, Will? What're you doing,
 man?

Brad looks at his watch - 2:45 a.m.; looks over at Will's empty tent. He glances at Evie's tent, then heads towards Russ's tent.

INT. EVIE'S TENT - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Jane and Evie are snuggling, naked. Jane is seemingly sober.

EVIE
 But you told me you've slept with guys
 before, and Tyler's a sexy guy, I mean,
 all the girls at school--

JANE
 Well, who hasn't slept with guys? Even
 guys these days - it's "in" to be "out"--

EVIE
 I haven't.

JANE
 Well, honey, that's okay - you were
 honest with yourself from a younger age.

EVIE
 And you said you'd sleep with Russ.

JANE
 I was kidding - the poor guy. It's harder
 for guys to be virgins.

EVIE
 (insecure)
 Would you ever do it again?

JANE

What? With a guy? No. You're all the honey I need, sweetie!

EVIE

I'm so scared, Janey. I've never felt so cut off from our real lives.

JANE

I'm right here, Evie!

They kiss longingly and move against each other. Jane's hands are on Evie's groin in the sleeping bag.

EVIE

(in pleasure)

Your hand feels crazy tonight!

INT. RUSS'S TENT - SAME TIME

Russ peeks out of his tent-flap towards Evie's tent, masturbating. He sees wisps of motion and hears MUFFLED GUTTURAL SOUNDS from Evie's tent.

Suddenly, a figure blots out the opening of his tent. Brad.

BRAD

You awake, Russ?--

RUSS

(startled, loud whisper)

Jesus fuck! You gave me a heart attack--

BRAD

Sorry dude, just out for a walk-- hey, lemme in...

Russ frantically tries to zip up his sleeping bag as Brad enters.

RUSS

No, Brad! No! Hang on!

Brad busts Russ with an erection. Brad looks across at Evie's tent and puts two and two together.

BRAD

What's goin--? Oh, shit yeah! Lemme in!
Lemme in!

Brad hunkers down next to Russ, both peering through the darkness to Evie's tent. They talk in loud whispers.

BRAD (CONT'D)

And put that shit away, Russ! It's like the War on Terror in reverse: I'm fightin' my urges "over here" so we don't have to go "over there."

RUSS

(laughing)

Fuck you!

Beat, as they peer out.

BRAD

The MILF was just up at my tent!

RUSS

(suspiciously)

Oh yeah? What did she want?

BRAD

Wanted to get it on, what do you think?

RUSS

(disheartened, limply)

What? Oh... but I thought...

Brad sees Russ is crestfallen.

BRAD

Just shittin' ya, man! She was drunk as fuck, passed out.

RUSS

Oh.

BRAD

So what's with the celibate shit, dude? I've known you for twelve years - you never told me you didn't fuck that Carmichael chick!

RUSS

I never told you I did!

BRAD

Yeah, but you implied - anyway, shit! Mah man is gonna get it on when we get back next week. My treat.

RUSS

Yeah, well...

They watch the wisps of action silently. They can't see anything - they're making do with the fantasy.

BRAD

Fucken bulldyke farts like a trucker! She musta woken up and bailed back to her own tent, thank Christ! She's like a man, dude! No wonder Evie likes her.

RUSS

I've always wondered about that.

BRAD

What?

RUSS

If a lesbo is attracted to a masculine chick, why not cut out the middle man and just do a guy?

BRAD

Save money on dildoes and shit.

Smothered laughs.

RUSS

But it's the same with guys too.

BRAD

(distracted, still peering)
I guess.

RUSS

Homos like smooth, effeminate guys - so why not just fuck a chick?

BRAD

Don't look at me, I'm the choir. You think too much, dude. You should be out there doing it. Told you, I'm buyin' you a hooker.

RUSS

Some guys like that "brutal top" thing, though. Those guys are masculine--

BRAD

Jesus, dude! Cut the gay shit! If you're trying to grease me up for a Brokeback, it ain't gonna work.

RUSS

I'm just sayin'...

MUFFLED NOISES from Evie's tent. Brad still peering.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Can't really see that much.

BRAD
Yeah, but it's just knowing they're over there diving on each other's muffs - well awww yeah!

RUSS
Shhhh!

Beat.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Brad... what d'ya think happened to Will?

BRAD
Dunno... but we gotta find him tomorrow, or, you know, it might be bad.

INT. EVIE'S TENT - SAME TIME

EVIE
What are you doing? Oh, don't, that's kinda hurting, baby--

Jane is on top of Evie. From behind, we see Jane's naked back roiling with something under her skin. Evie's face registers alarm, then terror; as she is about to scream, Jane shoves a hand down Evie's throat. We hear Evie's jawbones CRACK.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - DAY

The next morning, sunny 7 a.m. Tyler is cooking breakfast, somber.

INT. RUSS'S TENT - SAME TIME

Brad snaps awake, realizes he is in Russ's tent, jumps up embarrassed, waking Russ in the process.

BRAD
Jesus, dude!

RUSS
Fuck! Morning already?

Tyler sees Brad exiting Russ's tent; simultaneously, Jane exits Brad's tent, adjusting her clothing, yawning.

TYLER
 (jovial)
 Hey-hey! What's goin' on here?! The lesbo
 comin' outta the shapeshifter's tent and
 the shapeshifter coming outta the
 virgin's tent.

BRAD
 Fuck off, Tyler!

TYLER
 So at least he's not a back-door virgin
 any more--

Brad is so shocked to see Jane exiting his tent, he
 disregards Tyler.

BRAD
 (to Jane)
 What're you - what're you doing?

JANE
 I musta fallen asleep - sorry, Brad.
 (moving to Evie's tent)
 Hope my baby didn't miss me last night.
 Honey?

Brad registers shocked surprise, but says no more.

TYLER
 Okay, come on - hands off cocks and into
 jocks! We gotta find that bastard. Want
 some bacon and shit?

Jane enters Evie's tent with babytalk.

JANE
 (entering tent-flap)
 Hey baby cutie muffin!... You look so
 cutie-gumdrops wrapped up in that--

Beat. Jane screams from inside Evie's tent.

Jane staggers out of Evie's tent, dazed, blood on her arms
 and sweater. She stumbles into Tyler's arms, sobbing and
 screaming. Russ notes this.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - LATER

Jane is calm, arms crossed, head down, blood drying on her clothes and forearms. Brad's arm is around her. Russ stands alone. They watch silently as Tyler enters Evie's tent alone.

INT. EVIE'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Tyler kneels by Evie's dead body, expressionless, looking at her mouth completely broken open and blood blanketing her groin under the sleeping bag. He closes her eyes.

From inside Evie's tent, we can see Russ outside, peering in, getting an idea of the gruesome tableau, turning his head in horror.

Brad sees Evie, is taken aback for a moment, then lets go of Jane, strides to his backpack. He pulls out his gun, whimpering angrily.

BRAD
(to himself)
Fuckers! What kind of fuckers...?

Tears roll down Brad's cheeks as he wields the gun and looks around the forest impotently. Jane cries softly.

BRAD (CONT'D)
(screaming at forest)
You fuckers! Come get some, you motherfuckers! Come on! Cowards! Fuck-ing pig-fuck-ing cow-aaaaards!

JANE
Stop it, Brad! Stop!

RUSS
(consoling)
Come on, man! We'll get the fuckers!

Russ shepherds Brad and Jane away from Evie's tent.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Take it easy. We have to think about what to do?

BRAD
Think about what--? We kill the fuckers who did this - simple! We kill 'em!

JANE
What's happening?

RUSS
What do you mean?

JANE
Was this an animal? Is something out here taking Will and now Evie?

BRAD
Hey, Will is not taken. He's probably just over there, the fucker. We just have to look--

RUSS
We woulda heard the commotion if an animal was doing... doing all that.

JANE
Then who? Why? What kind of insane--?

Tyler exits Evie's tent.

TYLER
Hey. I wrapped her in her sleeping bag. She's pretty messed up "down there" as well. This whole thing is pretty messed up, guys.

Weeping inconsolably, Jane is swept into Tyler's embrace. Russ looks on jealously.

JANE
My baby! Did you take care of her?

TYLER
Yes. I did what I could. Look, Jane, guys, whoever, whatever did this - look, Evie's gone, but Will's still out there. Maybe whoever, whatever did this, might've done this to him. But maybe he's escaped and lying in a ditch - more reason to find him ASAP.

Brad is hopping around like he's on crack, raring to go.

BRAD
You're right - let's move move move move!

RUSS
Take it easy, Brad. You don't want to hurt any of us with that.

Brad points the gun at Russ.

BRAD
What, motherfucker?

RUSS
(recoiling from the gun)
Hey hey hey! What're you doing? Channel
your shit, man! This wasn't me, dude! Get
a grip, for fuck's sake!

TYLER
Put it down, Brad! Put it down! Come on!

Brad points the gun at Tyler, who stares him down angrily.
Tears stream down Brad's face as he raises the gun in the air
and squeezes off rounds, screaming.

CUTAWAYS

We see forest vistas, GUNFIRE ECHOING in the wilderness.

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS.

Brad is calmer.

BRAD
(quietly)
We're gonna find these motherfuckers and
we're gonna fuck 'em up!

JANE
Goddamn right we're gonna fuck 'em up.

RUSS
What? Wait - we gotta call the cops--

TYLER
With what? These?

Tyler pulls out his cell, still dead, looks up at sky.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Unbelievable! How does this happen in
2009 with GPS, WiFi, Blackberrys, fucking
geosync satellites, a couple hours drive
from Los Angeles - how can we be so
fucking isolated? Paying all this money
for this Flintstones shit!

RUSS
This is heavy duty, guys! We can't go
Rambo! We gotta get outta here and get
some help--

BRAD
You kidding me, bro?!--

TYLER
Russ! We're five hours deep in Los Padres
- eight, if we wanna carry Evie out--

JANE
Whadaya mean "if"?--

TYLER
I meant - you know what I meant. We got
eight hours of daylight we still gotta
find Will, who's probably injured or...
(avoids thinking about it)
--fuck!... So forget the police - we're
on our own out here for at least two more
days. Priority: Find Will. So look, we
got supplies for a few days--

BRAD
Meant to be four days of hiking and
swimming and shit, not this bullshit!--

TYLER
(ignoring BRAD)
--food and water, so that's a start.
Lemme get my shit and we're gone.

Tyler walks off to his tent, enters. Brad, Russ and Jane are
left standing in the early morning sun.

RUSS
Leave the gun, Brad.

BRAD
You gotta be shitting me.

Brad tucks the gun into his pants.

BRAD (CONT'D)
(to Jane)
And where were you?

JANE
Whadaya mean? I fell asleep in your tent.
I told you I'm sorry.

BRAD
Forget that! When did you leave?

JANE

This morning. You saw me! What are you saying?

BRAD

(confused)

But we saw you last night--

JANE

Saw me where? What are you talking about?

BRAD

We heard--

RUSS

We heard you and Evie... you know...

JANE

Me and Evie what?

RUSS

(turning red)

You know - uh, getting it on...

JANE

Getting--? I wasn't even in there last night! What were you guys doing? Spying on Evie? Goddamn perverts!--

BRAD

No, no! We just heard-- your tent's just over there--

JANE

But I wasn't in my tent - I was in yours!

Voices are rising, as Tyler returns with his backpack.

TYLER

What's all the noise?

BRAD

We were just telling Jane we heard someone else in Evie's tent last night - and she says it wasn't her--

TYLER

You what?! Why didn't you say something?!

RUSS

It didn't sound, like, sinister or anything! It just sounded like...you know, like sex.

JANE

You're saying someone else was in there having--?

RUSS

Well, if you say you weren't in there, maybe... er... maybe she was like, uh, you know, maybe she was--

TYLER

Man up, Russ!

RUSS

Uh... we, uh...

(suddenly decisive)

I don't wanna talk about this now! It's shit that she's gone, but she's gone, so it doesn't matter what we heard!

TYLER

Of course it matters; it'll help us figure what happened!

RUSS

Tyler, you don't understand--

BRAD

Okay, we heard her maybe pleasuring herself, was what we heard... Maybe.

JANE

And you were listening?

BRAD

Not intentionally. We could just hear, it's so quiet out here.

(indicating Russ)

This guy was listening first and I just came by--

RUSS

You fucker!

BRAD

Well, shit man! The only reason you figured she was jacking is 'cause you were doing it--

TYLER

So you just jumped into bed with him like a coupla fucking butt-pirates. Oh, it all makes sense now--

BRAD

Hey, blow me, Betty! I came over to talk -
and I bust him with his nuts out, and he
tells me they're doing it over there, so
I-- y'know, uh--

JANE

So you stayed for the show.

Silence. Brad and Russ hang their heads contritely.

JANE (CONT'D)

(on verge of tears)
Freakin' pigs.

TYLER

Okay, so we all admit we're a buncha
perverts. So Evie was--
(he darts a look at Jane)
--big deal! It still doesn't tell us what
happened to her.

Tyler moves to Jane, takes her in his arms again. She
responds. Russ looks on coldly.

TYLER (CONT'D)

(to all)
Get your shit. Let's move out - no time
to waste.

As Brad and Russ gather their packs, Tyler turns his
attention to Jane, speaking intimately, softly.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Here, drink this, it'll make you feel
better. You gotta get outta those
clothes...

Jane responds softly, femininely, nodding at all Tyler's
words. Russ watches all of this. He turns in disgust and
walks to Evie's tent, stops, stares at the opening.

Jane, her arms covered in drying blood, moves dazed towards
Evie's tent and Russ; Tyler goes to the campfire to dispose
of the long-cold breakfast.

JANE

(dazed, to herself)
Oh. I can't go in there.

RUSS

What do you need?

TYLER
Don't sweat it, Russ.

Tyler comes from way over near the fire, enters Evie's tent. Jane doesn't seem to see Russ. As Tyler passes Jane, he pats her behind. Jane doesn't seem to notice or mind.

From inside Evie's tent, with Russ still standing nearby as if invisible, Tyler calls out:

TYLER (CONT'D)
Which top do you want?

JANE
Dark blue, long sleeves, please.

Tyler exits with a white top instead.

TYLER
Here. This would look cute on you. Can't go rooting around forever.

JANE
Okay.

Russ silently fumes.

Tyler moves to Brad to discuss a search plan. Russ never moves from his standing position, watching Jane's every move.

Jane takes the top to a stream about 100 feet downhill.

Russ targets his gaze at Jane at the stream, through obscuring foliage.

Tyler and Brad's dialog is in b.g. as we see Russ watching Jane at the faraway stream.

TYLER (O.S.)
(to Brad)
Whoever's out here is serious, so we spread out in groups of two. You and me, hey? And Russ can go with--

BRAD (O.S.)
What? I thought you'd wanna... uh, I'd better go with Russ.

TYLER
Let's have a look at that Journal.

Brad is taken aback at the suddenness of the request.

BRAD
The what? Grandpa's Journal? What for?

TYLER
I wanna read it.

BRAD
What - now?!

TYLER
Just gimme it!

BRAD
Whatever, dude!

Brad pulls Journal from his backpack and hands it to Tyler, who leafs through it thoughtfully, actually reading it. Brad looks on befuddled.

BRAD (CONT'D)
You gettin' enough Vitamin D, dude? You look pale as a tan-lined tittie.

RUSS'S P.O.V. THROUGH OBSCURING FOLIAGE.

We see Jane stripping off her top. We see her naked back as she washes her arms, then splashes water on her face.

TYLER (O.S.)
Did your grandpa ever publish any of this shit?

BRAD (O.S.)
That's the only copy - guess I should've scanned it or something before I brought it out here in the elements...

CUTAWAY

Jane holds her hands over her face, sobbing. Without warning, she looks back up the hill - directly at Russ, as if seeing him through the foliage.

ANGLE ON RUSS

Russ, embarrassed, looks away, but remains in a casual position. When he looks back at Jane, she is still looking at him. He looks away again.

BRAD (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Okay, give it here - I gotta put it back.

TYLER (O.S.)

Can I read it on the path?

BRAD (O.S.)

What? Yeah, right! Give it back - I don't want you drawing a mustache on Dante's Satan.

TYLER (O.S.)

C'mon dude - lemme hold onto it. I'll be careful.

ANGLE ON BRAD

BRAD

Are you shitting me? That's my grandpa's last fuckin' gift to me, man! Gimme it!

Brad grabs the Journal and stuffs it into his backpack.

RUSS'S P.O.V. THROUGH OBSCURING FOLIAGE.

Jane puts on the white top, not making any effort to hide her nakedness. We catch glimpses of naked breasts.

ANGLE ON RUSS

As Russ stands motionless, watching Jane make her way up the hill, he is startled out of his reverie; realizes Tyler has been calling him.

TYLER

Russ! Hey! That's your name, right? Russ! Demon-boy! Russ!--

RUSS

Uh, yeah, uh, Tyler - what's up?

TYLER

Figure we'll make a giant circle - you guys take that path until we meet you on the other side of the valley. See that stack of pines? Meet us there at 3 o'clock, okay?

BRAD

What if we find him?

TYLER

Three gunshots. And if we find him, uh, I guess the only way to communicate is a fire, so watch for smoke along that path.

Brad and Russ start walking up their chosen path. Brad suddenly jerks to a stop, Russ almost crashes into him. Brad looks around, puzzled.

BRAD

Shit! Wasn't that tree here?

RUSS

What tree?

BRAD

That one I shot. I coulda sworn--

Russ waves his arm in an arbitrary direction, preoccupied, looking over his shoulder to catch glimpses of Jane.

RUSS

It's over there somewhere.

BRAD

No way, man! I know where I aimed; I visualize where I'm shooting...
(dismissive)
...ah, whatever...

Brad thinks better of trying to solve the mystery and continues up path.

Russ looks back at the campsite area.

SLOW MOTION

Russ sees Jane arrive back at the camp and walk directly into Tyler's open arms with a luminous smile. They kiss like lovers, Tyler grabbing Jane's ass and the back of her head, Jane grinding against Tyler--

BRAD

Hey, Russ! Hey! We're moving. Come on!

Russ is startled out of his daydream.

RUSS

Oh, shit yeah! Brad, yeah. Coming. Kinda half-asleep still...

As Russ follows Brad up the path, he darts a look back at the real campsite scene:

Tyler talks to Jane with his hands on her shoulders, brushing hair out of her face. Tyler and Jane set off in the other direction. Just before they disappear from sight, Russ sees them hold hands.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT III

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #1 - DAY

Tyler follows Jane into the forest. Jane shouts for Will. Tyler doesn't. He looks back along the path, as if ensuring they're out of sight of the others.

JANE

Will! Hey, Will! Can you hear us?! Will!
It's Jane and Tyler.

Jane looks at Tyler, who gives her a questioning look.

JANE (CONT'D)

Well, go on - he's your friend.

Tyler takes Jane's hand. He pulls her close and kisses her. She responds at first, then pushes him off.

JANE (CONT'D)

No, Tyler. I think you've got the wrong
idea. I'm in no place right now, honey.
And if I was, well...I don't know.

Tyler tries to get close again.

TYLER

I want you, Jane.

JANE

No!

Jane extricates her hand and walks off quickly down the path, shouting for Will.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #2 - SAME TIME

RUSS

D'ya think she likes me?

BRAD

What? Who? Jane?

RUSS

Yeah.

BRAD

Dude, she's old enough to be your mother!

RUSS

I think she likes me.

They stop, sit, drink.

BRAD

Now why would you think that?

RUSS

Just the things she does.

BRAD

The 'things she does'? What're you talking about? You've known her two days, you're in a Paris romance?

RUSS

She likes guys as well - she said so.

BRAD

Russ, you gotta get your head out of your pants. Come on. Let's find Will.

Brad rises and leads the way.

RUSS

I decided: I don't want you to buy me a woman, Brad. I'd feel... wrong.

BRAD

Hey, Leo DiCaprio, I got news for you: this isn't Paris and a lesbian isn't gonna romance you. You wanna nail her? Go ahead and try - but you got more chance going Brokeback with Tyler, I tell ya--

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #1 - LATER

MEDIUM SHOT

We see only Jane in shot, struggling through underbrush.

JANE

What if we don't find him, Tyler? Or what if we do find him and the same thing's happened to him? I don't know what I'd do. In a way, I'm glad Evie won't see it--

Jane stops short at the sight of an arm in a clearing. A bloodied backpack is curled around it. Jane sees the tiny yellow plush kitty on the backpack.

Jane's eyes widen in terror. She exclaims and turns to Tyler behind her.

JANE (CONT'D)
Oh my God! It's those hikers! Tyler!--

Tyler is not behind her.

JANE (CONT'D)
Tyler?! Oh God, Tyler! Don't leave me!
Tyler!--

Jane is silenced by a mournful cry in the distance.

EVIE
(far-off, muffled)
Janey! Janey! Help me!

JANE
(wide-eyed, incredulous)
Evie?

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #2 - SAME TIME

RUSS
How will we know if Tyler finds him?

BRAD
Just keep looking at the other side of
the valley - he said he'd light a fire--

Brad stops in surprise as he sees smoke rising from the other side of the valley.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Jesus-fuck-me-Christ! Whoo! I don't
believe it! C'mon, let's go!

Brad and Russ race back towards camp.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Jane runs into a clearing. She sees Evie, up against a tree, crying, a heavy log trapping her legs. Jane doesn't realize it, but Evie is wearing the clothes Tyler was just wearing.

There is a small fire in the clearing.

Evie sees Jane and her eyes light up.

EVIE

Oh, Janey! Is it you? Is this real? I was so scared!

Jane moves toward Evie, relieved and tearful.

JANE

Sweetie! Oh God! I love you so much! I'm sorry I wasn't with you! We thought you were--

Jane snaps back to reality. Inches away from Evie, Jane focuses on Evie's male shirt, the jeans, the shoes. Jane's eyes and voice go cold:

JANE (CONT'D)

--dead.

Evie's eyes, weeping and joyful, suddenly go cold themselves.

JANE (CONT'D)

What is this?! You're dead! Who are you?
What are you?

As Jane turns to run, Evie grabs her ankle, making her fall flat on the ground. Jane's hands touch a solid fallen branch.

Evie easily pushes the log off her legs, freeing herself, as Jane grabs the branch and swings it like a baseball bat at Evie's head.

The branch connects, knocking Evie unconscious.

Jane rises, branch still in hand, looks at Evie, then turns her back and weeps.

CLOSEUP

Evie's eyes snap open.

Jane's scream is heard as we cut to the next scene.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - AFTERNOON

Brad and Russ sit quietly around the dead campfire with beers. A plate of sausages sits on the cold grillplate.

RUSS

Hope he's all right.

BRAD

We'll know in a bit... Don't know how he could be way over on that trail, though; coulda sworn he went in that direction.

RUSS

Probably trying to sneak around and scare us. Man, they're taking their time.

BRAD

Douche probably broke his leg or something in the dark.

RUSS

(hesitantly)

Or maybe... maybe 'cause--

BRAD

Don't! We'll just wait, okay...?

They see Jane returning to camp.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Hey, whoa! About time! You musta lit that fire two hours ago, Jane.

As Jane nears, Brad realizes something is wrong; Jane is disheveled, crying - and alone.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Uh-oh. This doesn't look good.

Brad runs to meet Jane. He puts his arm around her shoulders and leads her to a seat in camp.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Where are the other guys, Jane? Hey, hey, take it slow--

JANE

(sobbing and hitching)

I think, I think, Tyler - Tyler - he's not-- I saw Evie. I think Tyler--

RUSS

You saw Evie?

BRAD

Calm down, Jane. It'll be okay. Tell us what happened. Where's Will and Tyler?

JANE

Why do you think we found--? We didn't find-- I think Tyler is-- I don't know what I'm saying. Brad, you told us--

BRAD

You gotta take it slow, Jane. Where's Will and Tyler?

Russ brings a bottled water for Jane, who grabs it and gulps it down. Brad and Russ look at each other.

RUSS

You said you saw Evie?

Jane goes silent and motionless, her head down. Brad shakes her gently with his hands on her shoulders.

BRAD

Jane... Jane.

Beat.

JANE

(voice flat and even)

I think Tyler is a shapeshifter. I think he killed Evie. He killed those two hikers, and he tried to kill me by becoming Evie in the forest.

Brad and Russ look at each other, speechless.

BRAD

Tyler-- what?

JANE

Did you check Evie?

RUSS

Did we wha--?

JANE

Did you check Evie?! Did anyone check Evie after Tyler went in there?

RUSS

Whadaya mean 'Tyler is a shapeshifter'?

BRAD

Why should we check Evie?--

Jane rises, determined, heads towards Evie's tent.

JANE

We have to check Evie. We have to make sure. We have to check Evie--

Brad tries to hold Jane back, but she pushes forward, pulling Brad's arms off her.

BRAD

Whoa whoa whoa! Hold on! Don't go in there! What're you doing?--

JANE

(hysterical)

We have to check her! We have to check her! Get outta my way! Move! Move!

Jane stops moving to scream unintelligibly and Brad, who lets go. She calms.

RUSS

Jane, what-- Why should we check, Evie?

Jane keeps inching towards Evie's tent as she talks, Brad and Russ keeping close.

JANE

(to Brad)

You said we were food.

BRAD

What're you talking--?

JANE

For shapeshifters - you said they treated us like food.

BRAD

So?

JANE

Has anyone checked Evie?

RUSS

No, Tyler said he wrapped her up; no one's been in there since this morning.

BRAD

And what about those other hikers? You said they were dead? That Martin guy and his chick?

JANE

Yes!--

BRAD
How can you be so sure?

Jane stops moving.

JANE
I found... I found pieces.

RUSS
Jesus, Jane!

Jane moves fast again.

JANE
We have to check. I have to check. I have
to make sure--

Brad moves into Jane's way again, arms up at the ready, but
not touching her.

BRAD
Jesus! Jane, don't do this to yourself--

JANE
I know what I'm doing. She's my lover.
Was... I have every right to see her.

JUMP CUT TO:

Jane, Brad and Russ hesitate at the opening of Evie's tent.

RUSS
Guys, we shouldn't be defiling her body
like this--

JANE
No one's defiling anything! We're just
checking.

Jane enters Evie's tent, hitching back sobs and tears.

INT. EVIE'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Evie's body is enshrouded in her sleeping bag, blood
everywhere. Russ and Brad peer in from outside, as Jane
carefully unzips the bag. She looks back at the boys,
hesitant, then flips back the bag covers quickly.

Jane gags, closes her eyes and jerks her head away.

Brad and Russ recoil from the sight and away from the tent
opening. Russ vomits.

Evie's body is a hollow, bloody shell, her ribs sticking up from her flesh, her innards gone.

Jane rushes from Evie's tent and retches.

BRAD
(coughing)
Oh God! Where's Tyler now?

On all fours, Jane answers, spitting mucus.

JANE
I knocked him out-- I knocked Evie out--
I mean, he's somewhere up that path. We
have to get going! We have to get out of
here now, Brad! I don't know how long
before he gets back h--

Jane hears the CLICK of a gun being cocked. She looks up.

Brad is pointing the gun at her. Russ looks on, scared.

RUSS
Dude, what're you doing?

BRAD
(evenly to Jane)
You knocked him out?

JANE
Yes. Why are you--? We have to--

BRAD
Guess it's good to be a bulldyke
sometimes, eh?

RUSS
Brad... I believe her--

BRAD
I don't.
(to Jane)
You said he turned into Evie. What sort
of crap?-- Even if he was a shapeshifter -
which I fucking doubt - why would he turn
into Evie to get to you? He was already
with you.

JANE
Why would I lie to you? I just showed you
what he did!--

Brad cuts her off.

BRAD
What he did? What he did?

JANE
He ate her!

BRAD
You ate her!

JANE
What?!

BRAD
You went in the tent first this morning -
and you came out with blood all over you!

RUSS
Jane?

JANE
(softly, not wanting to
remember)
I - I touched her.

BRAD
(loudly)
I think!--
(to Russ)
You know what I think?

RUSS
Brad, don't do anything--

BRAD
I think this crazy bitch killed her
girlfriend - for whatever crazy bitch
reason - then she killed Tyler. Now she
wants to walk outta here like Little Miss
Innocent!

RUSS
You think she's a shapeshifter?

BRAD
What are you talking about shapeshifters
for?! She's just a fuckin' psycho bitch!

JANE
(tears in her eyes)
Why would I tell you to check Evie? Why
would I come back here? Brad - think,
please--

BRAD

You're trying to catch us off-guard with your insane story--

JANE

It's your insane story - I just saw it happen! Please, stop this! The shapeshifter's in the forest! We have to get outta here--

BRAD

Have all you people lost it?! I tell you about shifters and suddenly everyone's a fucking shapeshifter!

JANE

(incredulous)

All night you been saying that stuff was true--

BRAD

And what if it was? This isn't medieval Europe! My grandpa lived in the fucking Dark Ages! This is California in the fucking 21st century, for God's sake - what the fuck is going on?!

JANE

(quietly)

Then just let me go. I'll leave you guys alone. I'm going.

Jane turns slowly towards Evie's tent.

BRAD

(raises the gun)

What're you doing?--

JANE

I need my things. They're in there. I'll just get them and go.

Brad moves towards Jane and shouts in her face, brandishing the gun. Jane flinches away from him.

BRAD

(unsure)

It's not logical! Why would he change to Evie? Why? That's where you tripped up, killer bitch! What - really - happened - huh?

JANE

(beat)

I walked away from him.

RUSS

(perks up)

You walked away?

JANE

He tried to kiss me and I wouldn't do it with him. So I stayed away from him.

(to herself)

How could I have trusted that prick?

Russ gets a hopeful look in his eye.

JANE (CONT'D)

(to Brad)

Okay? You satisfied? He tried to get it on with me and I wouldn't go near him after that. After I found those people, I realized he wasn't with me - and then I heard Evie.

BRAD

(calmer now)

Why wouldn't you do it with him? You and him seemed pretty cozy this morning.

JANE

(quietly)

'Cause in case you haven't heard:

(screams hysterically)

I'm a fucking lesbian! What is it with you straight guys?! Can't you fucking get it through your thick skulls that you aren't a lesbian's secret fantasy? Penis envy, my fuckin' twat! You dickheads have pussy envy!

(spittle flying)

That's all you ever want - a fucking pussy! All you ever talk about, all you ever think about; it's the only reason you're alive - to get back inside a goddamn vagina!

(beat, then calmer)

You fuckers! Stop pointing that gun at me! Brad! Russ! We have to get out of here; we need to find Will; we need--

BRAD

Okay, shut up!--

JANE

--we have to take Evie out - but God help us if Tyler gets back here. We have to move--

BRAD

Shut up!

Brad rakes his hands through his hair, flustered, pacing, pointing the gun, then deciding against it, then re-pointing it at Jane.

RUSS

(to no one in particular)
What're we gonna do?

Brad makes a decision and re-points the gun at Jane.

BRAD

Okay, here's what: if you're lying, then we're in deep shit - 'cause you're a fucking psycho! But if you're telling the truth - fucking shapeshifters--
(voice rising until he's screaming in panic)
--here in California in fucking broad daylight! This is fucking bullshit!

Silence from Russ and Jane.

BRAD (CONT'D)

All right - Grandpa's Journal said they can be anything living - what if he's a tree? What if he's here now?

JANE

(as if obvious)
He can't get here as a tree, Brad...

Blank look from Brad.

RUSS

Trees can't walk, dude.

BRAD

So is he still a person? An animal?

JANE

Why you looking at me? Consult your goddamn book! Come on, you guys, I'm not the shapeshifter. I never even heard of shifters until last night. You've got to do something, Brad.

BRAD

Why me?

Jane looks at the gun, which Brad still points at her.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Hold on! I'm not going to shoot one of my best friends 'cause some cooz tells me. I've known Tyler for six years. I've known you for two days. You gotta give me something better than that!

JANE

If you don't do something, we're all going to die.

Brad looks at Russ, indecisive.

Then Brad gropes his backpack, pulls out the Journal, takes it to Russ's tent and shoves it in the food cooler.

RUSS

What're you doing?--

In a swift movement, Brad hands the gun to Russ and moves toward the path.

BRAD

Keep her covered.

RUSS

Hey! Whoa! What up, dude?

BRAD

I'm gonna take a look--

RUSS

Then take the gun, dude!

BRAD

What if she's lying? You're stuck here with a psycho killer. Or a shifter.

RUSS

Then I should go check - you're the expert with this thing.

Brad stops, looks at Russ as if the answer is obvious.

BRAD

You really wanna go?

RUSS

Uh, no, I guess. But what if she's telling the truth? Tyler will see you coming and--

BRAD

No shit, I'm not gonna walk up the path like a fuckin' lemming - I'm taking that ridge.

Brad starts to run off, turns back, motions toward the food cooler.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Dude, do me a favor: keep it safe.

RUSS

Whadaya mean? Why'd you put it in the--?

BRAD

I think I know what he meant now:
"They're getting close."

Russ and Brad look at each in understanding, then Brad turns and scrambles up the side of the trail. Soon he is out of sight, leaving Russ alone with Jane, in uncomfortable silence.

JANE

Great vacation, huh?

RUSS

Don't!

JANE

Don't what?! I'm just trying to be normal. Considering.

RUSS

Well... don't try and be normal. Get down. Don't try anything.

Jane slowly drops to her knees in front of Russ. Russ looks at her cleavage, sweaty and dirty.

JANE

If I was really this shifter thing, wouldn't I just run off and turn into a little animal or something, so you guys couldn't find me?--

RUSS

Did you mean it when you said you'd sleep with me?

JANE

(incredulous)

Huh?-- What? What's the matter with you?

RUSS

Yes or no?

JANE

You really are a virgin, aren't you?

RUSS

I never said that.

JANE

You don't have to, party boy.

RUSS

Don't mock me!

JANE

(contrite)

Okay, sorry, Russ... Been a shitty day, y'know.

RUSS

Why don't you want to fuck me?

JANE

What? This is not the time or the place, Russ - and I'll say it again - I'm gay. We're in the middle of the forest, your friends are missing--

(shouting, tearful)

--my girlfriend's just been murdered, you prick! You pig shit!--

RUSS

Then why did you tell me that?!

JANE

(sobbing)

Tell you what?

RUSS

(imitating Jane)

"I'd do you, honey. Like the devil."

JANE

Shit! I don't know! I was drunk! I was trying to make you feel better--

RUSS

(tragically)

Why did you kiss me?

JANE

Why are you doing this, Russ? Just be cool. We should go help Brad. He doesn't know what Tyler can do--

RUSS

You didn't have to hold his hand--

JANE

Christ Jesus! It's been such a long time, I've forgotten what it was like to be a virgin and have a crush--

RUSS

What, a crush on you?

JANE

Kinda Oedipus Complex, isn't it, Russ? I'm old enough to be your--

RUSS

(matter-of-factly)

Take off your clothes.

Jane is silenced, fearful now.

JANE

Russ--

RUSS

You chicks think you can just cock-tease and everyone will open doors for you and buy you shit and there's no consequences. I know what you were doing at the stream. Take off your clothes.

JANE

Russ. I didn't mean to make you feel--

RUSS

(firmly, pointing the gun)

Take off your clothes! Now!

Jane, on the verge of crying, strips off her top, exposing her breasts.

Russ makes no move except to reach into his pants and start masturbating. Jane, still on her knees, slowly starts to unzip her jeans to pull them down - but stops. She notices Russ is now silent, tugging himself staring at her breasts.

Jane regains her composure at the ludicrous sight. She sighs relief and becomes mocking.

JANE

Shit, Russ! Is that all you wanna do?
Jerk off?

Russ keeps tugging, ignoring Jane.

JANE (CONT'D)

Guess you'll have to say you raped me just so they won't call you a virgin anymore! And then you'll do jail time. Pretty pathetic choices: a wanker or a rapist--

Russ moves forward and backhands Jane across the mouth with his gun hand.

JANE (CONT'D)

Son of a-- What's the matter with you, you sick fuck?!

Russ puts the gun against Jane's breasts, aiming at her heart.

JANE (CONT'D)

(suddenly contrite, whimpering)
Okay, Russ... okay. I'll do what you want, okay? Russ, please...

Russ's actions get more frantic, his breathing gets faster, he makes small animalistic grunts. Then he hits Jane again, while groaning in pleasure.

Jane holds her face, tears now falling.

Russ backhands Jane again, drawing blood, increasing his pleasure.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. RIDGE - AFTERNOON

Brad sneaks along the ridge, looking down at the path and scanning its length.

Brad sees a body in the brush, near the path. It is Jane, bedraggled, bloody, but alive. He clambers down to her side.

He doesn't notice that she is wearing Tyler's clothes, a little more bloodied than when we last saw them on Evie.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #1 - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

JANE
(sobbing)
Brad! God, you were right! Your bullshit stories! I didn't believe it until I saw it with my own eyes!--

BRAD
Holy shit! She was telling the truth! About herself!

JANE
He went back to camp as me, Brad! Tyler is me--

BRAD
I know, I know. Come on! Shit! I left Russ alone! We have to get back now! Can you make it, Jane?

JANE
Okay, okay, help me up! Ungh! my leg!

Brad drapes Jane's arm around his shoulder. She leans on him and they limp along the path towards the campsite.

BRAD
Come on!

JANE
Have you got your gun with you? You brought your gun, right?

BRAD
I left it with Russ. I'm glad I did now.

JANE
I'm glad you did too...

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - SAME TIME

P.O.V. FROM BEHIND JANE'S NAKED BACK.

Russ's lower body is obscured but he is still tugging away.

CLOSEUP

Jane's jeans pocket, as she fingers the Swiss army knife.

CLOSEUP

Russ's face, losing himself in his pleasure.

Jane watches Russ's face. We see Russ relaxing his gun hand as he tugs.

JANE
(softly, head bowed)
You were right, Russ.

Russ gives her a minimum of attention.

RUSS
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm...

JANE
I could really use your tool.

RUSS
(breathing heavy)
You want it, Jane? Don't you? Tell me!

Jane suddenly whips out the Swiss army knife and fumbles with it, trying to open any gadget.

RUSS
Shit! Bitch!

Russ is surprised, but forcefully smacks the Swiss army knife out of Jane's hands with his gun hand. It lands too far away to retrieve. Jane makes a motion towards it, but Russ brandishes the gun and she freezes.

Jane looks at Russ, who has stopped tugging and regards her with disappointment.

RUSS (CONT'D)
There's no trusting you bitches, is there? Nothing you say is real - it's all lies! You're a cunt - like all of them!

JANE
And you're a pussy!

Russ moves in and backhands Jane hard across the face with his gun hand.

RUSS
Mmm! Now that's hot!

Jane is spun around and thrown backwards, landing near the plate of sausages.

Russ moves toward Jane on the ground.

CLOSEUP

Sausage plate: Jane grabs desperately at a sausage.

As Russ bends down to grab Jane, she turns on him with a sausage and rams it into his eye.

JANE
(enraged)
You fuck! Too gutless to try the real
thing?

As Russ recoils, blinded, Jane grabs his gun hand, scrambles to her feet and knees him in the groin.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL #1 - SAME TIME

Jane's arm is around Brad's shoulder as they limp along. They are startled by a GUNSHOT from the direction of the campsite. They look at each other, start hobbling more urgently.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - AFTERNOON

Russ lies on the ground, panting, holding the gun. Jane lies on the ground nearby, in a small pool of blood, topless, motionless. Brad runs up - alone - dismayed look on his face.

Brad is wearing Tyler's clothes, even more bloodied than before.

RUSS
I had to kill her, Brad. She tried to
kill me. She was the monster!

BRAD
What monster? Give me that gun.

Brad grabs at the gun, but Russ shies away from him.

RUSS
Where's Tyler?

BRAD
(concerned)
Give me the gun, Russ. We've got to get
out of here.

RUSS
(breaks down)
I know! We just gotta get home! Gotta get
outta here, man! Look at all the blood!

We see Jane's blood on the ground.

We see Brad's arms and shirt, caked with blood.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Look at all the blood. So much blood!

BRAD
Calm down, Russ!

Brad tries to hold Russ from jerking around everywhere.

RUSS
Come on, man! Let's go! What're you
doing? I murdered Jane, man! We gotta get
outta here!...

Russ babbles, unthinking, and allows Brad to slowly extricate the gun from his grip, throwing it aside.

BRAD
You were right, Russ. Jane was a shifter.
But not the one you killed - the one I
found back in the forest.

RUSS
(jerks back to reality)
What?-- What are you talking about? How
could she be in two--? Where is she now?

Brad stands before Russ, his arms on Russ's shoulders.

BRAD
There are only shapeshifters.

Brad changes into a gargoyle figure with leathery bat wings.

Russ in utter shock, speechless.

Still holding Russ's shoulders firmly, Brad morphs as he talks, shifting into the things he describes.

BRAD (CONT'D)
No modern angels...

Brad turns into a bird-person, with thick white feathery wings, feathers covering his body like a dove, but with human features interwoven.

BRAD (CONT'D)
...or ancient astronauts.

Brad turns into a silver-suited astronaut, but his silver covering is organic skin that resembles a spacesuit.

RUSS
(terrified)
Who... are you?

When Brad/Shifter answers, his features change as he speaks, to the iconic figures he mentions. They are not solid changes, but shimmering, liquified representations.

BRAD
I have no name. I am Nosferatu. I am Jesus. I am the whispering grass under your feet. Our blood is older than humanity. Our essence is passed through blood. Werewolves and vampires bite and suck; Jesus's disciples drank; babies are born in it.

Brad/Shifter changes to a vampire, a werewolf.

RUSS
Please... please...

Brad/Shifter changes to an old man - Brad's GRANDPA GABE.

BRAD
We know what Gabryjel Walczak has written. But it must never be seen...

Brad/Shifter leans in like a confidante and his head morphs to a pyramid shape with a single eye at its apex (as on the dollar bill).

BRAD (CONT'D)
We're like the Illuminati - we like our secrets!
(moves out again)
But old Gabryjel passed his knowledge to his descendant, Bradley Walters.

Brad/Shifter morphs back to Brad.

BRAD (CONT'D)
We followed. Now the time has come to destroy it.

Brad's hands are still on Russ's shuddering shoulders, not letting him move.

RUSS
What do you want?

BRAD
 (leans in again, serpentine
 whisper)
 The Journal.

RUSS
 What Journal?--aaaaaagh!

Russ screams as Brad slams a crab-like claw into his shoulder.

BRAD
 Mmm... You look delicious, Russ.

RUSS
 (finds his anger)
 So - so you're just a cannibal? Is it
 that simple, you piece o' shit?

BRAD
 Cannibal? No. The thought of shifter
 flesh makes me sick. But human tissue - a
 delicacy! It drives our metabolism. We're
 just here to live and perpetuate. Like
 you. Does the grass call the cow evil?
 Are you a monster - because you're
hungry?!

Brad's claw takes a small chunk out of Russ's shoulder. Russ screams as Brad puts the bloodied flesh to his mouth and tastes it.

RUSS
 No!-- Gnngh! Aaaaaaagh!

BRAD
 Mmmm! Tastes like... chicken! One last
 time: Where is the Journal, you quivering
 boy?

RUSS
 I don't know what you're--aaagh!

Brad digs the claw deep into Russ's shoulder, scooping a big chunk out of him torturously (like an ice cream scoop), while staring intently into Russ's eyes, which are wide with terror. Russ can only dribble with pain.

RUSS (CONT'D)
 Please... please leave me alone. I don't
 really know what you look like - just let
 me go home. I won't tell anyone, I swear--

BRAD

You know.

We see Brad/Shifter start to morph, but we cut to:

CLOSEUP

Russ's face. Still held in the Shifter's grip, all he can do is watch in abject horror as we hear SQUELCHING FLESH and BONES CRACKING, as the Shifter morphs to its "true form."

HARD CLOSEUP

of Shifter's body (so we cannot tell what part of the body), Russ sees a tiny "tattoo," like a birthmark, throbbing. That's the last thing he sees before he blacks out.

CUT TO BLACK.

SLAP

Russ is slapped awake by Brad, who still holds him with crab-like claws. Brad peers at Russ's face curiously, as a scientist would look at a specimen.

Russ takes one look at Brad and screams uncontrollably.

RUSS

Aaaah! Aaaah! Aaaaaaaaaaagh!

Over Russ's screams, a GUNSHOT is heard. Brad jerks and lets go of Russ, who falls to the ground limply. Behind Brad, Jane has shot him from the ground.

Brad turns toward Jane. She continues SHOOTING. Brad lunges at her, shapeshifting into a bear, a cougar, into Tyler.

When Brad/Tyler shifts into Evie, Jane screams and keeps SHOOTING. Evie shifts into Jane herself, then falls. Jane empties the gun at close range into the Shifter's face until it CLICKS.

JANE

Motherfucker!
(she continues weeping)

Russ looks on, stunned. Jane holds her shot shoulder, blood everywhere. She pulls her top to her and painfully slides it on, weeping. She has put the gun down, and now snatches it up quickly when she sees Russ move toward her.

JANE
 (aims at him)
 Stay away from me, you son of a bitch!

RUSS
 (matter-of-fact)
 Gun's empty, Jane.

Jane resignedly lets the gun flop to the ground. Russ looks at the Shifter, tearful. He stammers a little before words come.

RUSS (CONT'D)
 Fuckin' thing ate my friend... fuck!

Jane is blank-eyed, unresponsive. She stares at her own dead form lying before her.

RUSS (CONT'D)
 Jane. Sorry for...

Russ motions toward her chest. He blinks back tears.

JANE
 (stunned)
 What the fuck just happened?

Russ tries to help Jane up, but she pulls away from him. Her face contorts in pain, and she allows herself to be helped. He is in pain as well, bleeding, sniffing.

RUSS
 We have to get out of here - get a doctor.

JANE
 You shit! You did this to me!

RUSS
 Look, I'm sorry! But this is not good! They came for the Journal. That's what Brad's grandpa meant: "They're getting close." That means there's more of 'em. And we gotta take that book outta here and get it to someone who can do something about it.

JANE
 (grimacing in pain and anger)
 "Do something"?! Do what?! What do you want to do, Russ? Wipe out a whole species from the dawn of time? Fuck!

Jane moves off towards Evie's tent.

JANE (CONT'D)
Good luck, shithead! Get me outta here! I
oughta call the cops on your ass!--

She stops suddenly.

JANE (CONT'D)
Oh, God!

Russ looks around at Jane's exclamation; realizes she can't go into the tent with Evie's body. Russ sighs, wordlessly enters the tent and brings out her backpack.

Russ holds out the backpack as well as he can with his own ruined shoulders. Jane doesn't look at him and takes it.

JANE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

RUSS
(quietly)
We gotta help each other, Jane. I'm
sorry, I told you--

JANE
Okay - shut the fuck up. Leave it!
(beat, despondent)
I can't carry everything we need, Russ.

Russ packs as he talks.

RUSS
We take just one more night's supplies.
We got four hours of daylight left. And a
five-hour hike.

JANE
Five hours if we're not leaking blood.
Looks more like seven now...

RUSS
We gotta go through the night.

JANE
I don't think I can make it.

RUSS
If we sleep, we're dead. A bear'll smell
our blood.

JANE

But what if it's still out there?

RUSS

Look! Jane, that's him. He-- It's dead. It trailed Brad out here for the Journal; It took Will last night and it killed those hikers, then It... then Evie. Then Tyler. When you went into the forest with It, It turned into Evie - you told us yourself. It was like a game of chess, maneuvering us to be alone. Then when Brad went back, It turned into you. Then It became Brad. There's no one out there - just our friends.

JANE

They could still be alive--

RUSS

(sadly but firmly)

They're dead, Jane. It thought we were all dead, so It could go for the Journal with no one to stop It.

Jane weeps.

Russ retrieves the Journal from the food cooler and puts it in his own backpack. He roots through Brad's pack, shaking out clothes and utensils.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Fuck! No bullets.

Jane and Russ both see the Swiss army knife. Jane pockets it.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Fat lotta good that's gonna do if there's more of these things.

JANE

Sometimes you gotta make do with what you got, Russ.

Painfully, Russ hoists his pack onto his back. He holds out a hand, but Jane doesn't take it.

RUSS

Let's get the fuck outta here.

P.O.V. GROUND LEVEL

We see the Shifter's body in foreground. We see Russ and Jane, backs to us, many feet apart, slowly walk out of camp, away from us.

DISSOLVE:

Russ and Jane walking out of camp, to signify passage of time.

PUSH IN

on the Shifter's body, lying in pool of blood.

A badger furtively pads out of the underbrush towards the fresh meat. It takes a bite from the mashed face of the Shifter. As it nibbles, it jerks its head up. A cognizance awakens in its eyes and it pads off up the path, following Russ and Jane.

P.O.V. GROUND LEVEL

The badger moves away from us. As it pads off, it shapeshifts into a naked man, seen from behind.

The man turns slightly before he disappears up the path.

It is Will.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END

SHIFTER
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