

NINE PERFECT STRANGERS

Episode #101

“Nine Perfect Strangers”

Written By

John-Henry Butterworth
and
David E. Kelley

Based on the Novel By

Liane Moriarty

WRITER'S DRAFT 8/26/19

NINE PERFECT STRANGERS
Episode #101 "Nine Perfect Strangers"
Writer's Draft 8/26/19

CAST LIST

FRANCES WELTY
MASHA DMITRICHENKO
BEN CHANDLER
JESSICA CHANDLER
CARMEL SCHNEIDER
LARS LEE
HEATHER MARCONI
NAPOLEON MARCONI
ZOE MARCONI
TONY HOGBURN

Yao Lee
Delilah
Glory

Alain

Erin

Sam

EMT Shiela Stone
EMT Mark Johnson

NYC Taxi Driver

Kid in a Hoody
Kid in a Hoody 2

SONG LIST

"COME ON GET HAPPY" - THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY

NINE PERFECT STRANGERS
Episode #101 "Nine Perfect Strangers"
Writer's Draft 8/26/19

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

AMBULANCE - NIGHT

PEUGEOT - MORNING & DAY

LAMBORGHINI - DAY

CAMBRIA GENERAL STORE - DAY

SAAB - DAY

TRANQUILLUM

- RECEPTION - DAY
- OFFICE - DAY
- REFECTORY - DAY
- HEALING CENTER - DAY
- SECOND STORY ROOM - DAY
- FRANCES' BEDROOM SUITE - DAY
- BEN AND JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY
- OFFICE - DAY
- ZOE'S ROOM - DAY
- NAPOLEON AND HEATHER'S ROOM - DAY
- LARS' ROOM - DAY
- CHAKRA ROOM - EVENING

EXTERIORS:

NYC - NIGHT

- STREET BY A CONTRACT CAR PARK - NIGHT

STATE ROUTE ONE - MORNING

OLD COASTAL ROAD - DAY

TRANQUILLUM

- ARBORETUM - DAY
- GARDENS - DAY

"NINE PERFECT STRANGERS"

FADE IN:

EXT. NYC - NIGHT

BLURRING, BLINDING LIGHTS. Bright, aggressive, assaultive. The images attack like locusts; the sounds, too... We discern that we are in TIMES SQUARE.

MASHA, forties, business suit, stressed out and unhealthy, phone clamped to her ear, wades fearlessly--
--then insanely into swerving TRAFFIC, to flag a cab--

MASHA

(into her cell)

I have seen it. I've seen it and
it's... listen to me, Tod. Tod. TOD!
Stop making excuses. Stop being such
a pussy. It's on you, not me.

Her dangerously anchored-up cab blocks multiple lanes. HORNS
BLARE. STUCK DELIVERY DRIVERS YELL OBSCENITIES. Masha --
door open, ON THE PHONE -- finishes her cigarette.

NYC TAXI DRIVER

Hey lady, you're killing me here...

MASHA

Can I smoke in there?

NYC TAXI DRIVER

Not since 1987.

Masha FLIPS OFF A HONKING TRUCK, swaling on the butt like
the universe depends on it. Like she's about to weld with
the tip. Masha holds up her hand. A last giant drag.

MASHA

(on her phone)

OK, Tod. Just shut up. Shut up or
you're fired. One more word. ONE WORD
AND YOU CAN CLEAR YOUR MOTHERF--

A last-last drag and she flicks and hops, slamming the
door. The driver pulls into a maelstrom, shaking his head--

MASHA (CONT'D)

Tod, do I hear something? Do I hear
one more word? Tod? To-od?

(waits; smiles)

OK. Better.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MASHA (CONT'D)

Your pitch deck sucks, fact, get a pen, write what I'm about to say--

Masha rummages a vast Goyard tote and comes up with a brown bagged BIG MAC MEAL. XL. Starts devouring, shark-style, as she solos real estate like Coltrane could jazz--

MASHA (CONT'D)

(mouth full, chewing)

--four sections. Four target areas: one -- hard logistics, in particular inner urban logistics; next rental housing in big cities, tap into urbanization trends and the inability of the middle classes to buy their own homes; next prestige hotels and resort complexes, think Grand Wailea and Turtle Bay; next any office property in innovation cities, ask me what an innovation city is and I swear I will de-ball you: metropoli attracting outsized share of educated young workers and tech companies... make sure you pic-ref a few Fortune 500 retired assholes are already in love with--

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET BY A CONTRACT CAR PARK, MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Masha, still ON HER CELL, crosses the street... plips the doors of a top of the Range Rover shiny 1%-er Panzer tank.

MASHA

Driving out of the city right now. I wake up at the beach house I want this in my inbox. Five a.m. Show me you have a future, Tod. Show yourself.

She HANGS UP and opens the car door. Throws her bag in. She stops. Hears something. Freezes. She listens.

Masha turns to see TWO TEENS: HOODS UP OVER THEIR FACES--

KID IN A HOODY

Phone and watch. Give it up, bitch.

KID IN A HOODY 2

Get off that shit now. C'mon!

Masha doesn't seem scared facing down violence. Bored, maybe. Pissed, even. She just instantly assumes control.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MASHA

Really? *Fine*. Shit. I got five hundred cash, here, take it and fuck off.

The nearest kid snatches the bills from her hand like she might bite. But they don't run. They look way more jumpy than muggers. Eyeing each other. Scared. Frozen, maybe--

MASHA (CONT'D)

What, that's not enough? Oh c'mon.

KID IN A HOODY

Do it. Fucking do her.

Masha looks at their scared eyes. At their terror.

MASHA

What do you mean, "do her"? What is this, "kiddy rape" time? Let's just quit while we're five-hundred dollars ahead and I won't tell your parents, who, with any luck, their disgust for you hasn't already metastasized.

Her assailants' eyes harden. One reaches in back of his belt and a GUN falls into his hand. Masha's face drops.

And shows real fear for the very first time.

BLACKOUT

SFX: GUNSHOT. TWO MORE GUNSHOTS. Panicked feet run.

HARD CUT TO:

FLASHING LIGHTS -- AN AMBULANCE fights its way through the downtown traffic madness, we bang into--

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

TIGHT ON A BLEEDING BODY, clothes scissored open, chest covered with electrodes. AN ECG RAPIDLY BEEPS O.C., telling us this patient is fucking dying.

SHIELA (O.C.)

(radioing; urgent)

Bellevue, this is NYU Eighty-Six. Patient now critical, unconscious. BP dropping, seventy over fifty. Sinus tach, one-thirty--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We PAN UP TO PARAMEDIC YAO LEE, twenties, calm amidst the chaos. He snakes a tube down the patient's trachea, then attaches a bag valve mask, squeezing to deliver oxygen. He looks across the rig to EMT SHIELA STONE on the radio.

SHIELA (CONT'D)
(hanging up)
We're six minutes out.

YAO
She's intubated.

Shiela takes over bagging. Yao turns his attention to the Patient's neck, feeling for a pulse, eyeing distended veins. He places his stethoscope to the Patient's chest, listening, when -- the ECG goes from Sinus Tach to Asystole. THE PATIENT HAS FLATLINED, clinically dead.

CU: MASHA'S BLOOD-SMEARED FACE. Eyes open. Pupils stone.

SHIELA
Shit.
(then)
Start compressions.

But Yao remains focused on the ECG.

SHIELA (CONT'D)
Yao?
(then)
Hey!

YAO
No compressions.

SHIELA
WHAT?

EMT MARK JOHNSON drives, fighting through the hoard of TOURISTS, WHOOPING the siren.

MARK
Five minutes -- the fuck is
happening back there?

Shiela watches Yao map the Patient's ribs with one hand, reaching the fifth, left intercostal space.

YAO
Tamponade.

SHIELA
(catching on)
Oh my god--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Yao grabs A SCALPEL. Panic spreads throughout the rig.

SHIELA (CONT'D)

Are you insane?!

Yao lowers the blade inches from the Patient's skin.

YAO

She's going to fucking die.

MARK

(glancing back)

And you'll be going to fucking
prison!

But Yao has gone rogue. The look in his eyes, not so much a paramedic with a scalpel now as a desperate man holding a knife. A beat, then -- HE CUTS INTO THE PATIENT'S SKIN.

SHIELA

(wincing; looking away)

Jesus Christ!

MARK

Don't! Yao--

The protests of his colleagues morph into a hemorrhaging
WARBLED GLOB OF SOUND, as Yao finishes the twelve-inch
horizontal slice from spine to left breast. Then--

YAO

(to Shiela; stoic)

Hold respiration.

Shiela stops bagging. The patient's skin SPRINGS APART as Yao breaches the intercostal muscles and parietal pleura, chest cavity open wide: bone, lungs, and as Yao reaches between the ribs... THE HEART.

The muscle is motionless, encased in the pericardium, a sac currently filled with a liter of blood that shouldn't be there. Yao was right. He grabs hold of the pericardium, any protestations have now given way to stunned SILENCE. He risks penetrating the heart, a coronary artery or a million other complications. It gives Yao a moment of pause... but only a moment.

WHOOSH! With a swift prick to the sac, CLOTS OF BLOOD GUSH everywhere. Yao then cradles the heart like he's delivering a baby. The Patient's life, Yao's life... in the palm of his hand: he massages the muscle, "milking" it from the apex upwards. BLOOD SPITS across his face like a Jackson Pollock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Yao presses forward, doesn't even blink, plugs the small wound with his finger, continues to will the Patient back to life with every squeeze.

SUDDENLY -- THE HEART CONTRACTS on its own, the Patient's BP and pulse regulate. The siren of the ambulance is joined by a BASS accompaniment now, the sound of a BEATING HEART... still in Yao's hand. A miracle. OFF THIS--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STATE ROUTE ONE - MORNING

Glorious. One of those days -- there are many -- that occasion the enlightened to flock to California. We settle on a green Peugeot as it motors, sometimes sputters along California Big Sur Highway. Spectacular coastline. The Pacific Ocean glory-battles both the redwoods and the morning sun. What a day to be alive. On the other hand:

INT. PEUGEOT - CONTINUOUS

FRANCES WELTY, fifty-two, a Molotov cocktail of high-intelligence and low-grade anxieties, fights against her mood with all the wit and "positivity" she can muster.

FRANCES

Wellness, here I come, baby. A new and improved me. Me two point *ohhh*.
Ta da. Ta and da da da.

ANGLE THE SIGN as she passes:

"WELCOME TO BIG SUR"

FRANCES (O.C.) (CONT'D)

S'what I'm talking about. Big Sur me, baby.

RESUME

Then, she can't help herself, checks her phone for the "zillionth" time today. Nothing.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

You little gnat. Graduated first in your class, I bet, in the book agent school of shit. Don't call or text, no, that might just reek of too much courtesy, wouldn't it?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCES (CONT'D)
(then to herself)
Relax. "It's your best book in years." "I would've called you sooner, darling, but I just couldn't put it down, it was just that good oh my god."

And like magic, HER PHONE RINGS. Finally! Her agent! She snatches her cell only to see...

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Ah ha!

ANGLE PHONE CALLER ID: "ERIN".

Frances' face sinks. It's only Erin. Frances answers.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Hey.

ERIN
(saccharine; sing-songy)
How we doing? We achieved nirvana yet?

FRANCES
Still a ways off infinite serenity.

ERIN
(detecting)
You still haven't heard from Alain.

FRANCES
He must *hate* it.

ERIN
He can't. It's a fabulous book. I wouldn't say so if it weren't true.

FRANCES
Yes, you would.

ERIN
(handling)
Honey...

FRANCES
I can't write anymore. Let's just admit it.

ERIN
The book is fantastic. You are fantastic. And you're going to have a fabulous ten days at Tranquillum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCES

You promise you like the book?

ERIN

I really, really did. I mean do._
Do.

FRANCES

Two really's and a did do do? Oh,
fuck me.

Frances CLICKS OFF.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I'm finished.

EXT. OLD COASTAL ROAD - DAY

We follow a brand new canary yellow Lamborghini through the forest and roadway. Hypnotically beautiful, the road is bordered by dark redwood groves, pastures. The road has sharp and deep switchbacks. Nature and adventure combined. But with bumps.

INT. LAMBORGHINI - CONTINUOUS

BEN CHANDLER, thirty-three, is about to implode. His brand new car has limited ground clearance. There is nothing magical going on here.

BEN

This is so fucked.

His wife JESSICA, twenty-eight, rides in the passenger seat. Arms folded, she is tense, they've been fighting. Jessica is beautiful but cosmetically remade. Face, breasts, lips, everything is perfect. And should be, you get what you pay for. She cost more than the Lamborghini.

JESSICA

Can't you just enjoy the beautiful scenery?

BEN

It's kicking the shit out of my car.

Jessica just looks out the window.

BEN (CONT'D)

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

I didn't say anything.

BEN

Ask me, we're taking this self improvement thing a little too far.

JESSICA

What's that supposed to mean?

BEN

It means--

Suddenly a POTHOLE... WHAM.

BEN (CONT'D)

Shit!

(then)

It means that if we keep getting better every day however small the increments, eventually we'll be perfect, won't we? And then what?

JESSICA

(sotto-voce)

Maybe you'll be a perfect asshole.

BEN

What was that?

JESSICA

(sing-song)

Nuh-thing.

BEN

(he heard fine)

I'm not being an asshole. I just don't understand why I'm going to this place.

JESSICA

We're going because we have issues. With us. Us, Benjamin. Should mean more to you than your fucking car.

The irony is not lost on either of them. She's judging him for worrying about a manufactured state-of-the-art, shiny, new bling thing. And what exactly is she?

As the Lambo absorbs another unexpected BUMP, we--

CUT TO:

INT. CAMBRIA GENERAL STORE - DAY

LARS LEE, thirty-eight, Scandinavian, handsome, loads his items on the counter. A bag of organic roasted almonds, three bars of organic dark chocolate, some Skinny Pop, some salmon jerky, and bags of dried fruit. SAM, cashier, proprietor, sixties, scans the goods. Lars eyes the Hostess Sno Ball in the display case. Pure poison. Oh fuck it, he grabs two and tosses them with the other items.

SAM

Find everything you need?

LARS

Well... do you carry wine?

SAM

Right there against the wall.

Sam tilts his head towards some very obvious racks where--

CARMEL, thirty-nine, full-time single mom on a unicorn-rare escape from the soccer practice ratrun... suddenly feels caught, on display, rabbit in headlights, and with two bottles in each hand.

She panics. Almost drops a bottle trying and failing to conceal how good-looking she thinks Lars is.

CARMEL

I'm OK. I'm fine.

LARS

(barely aware she exists)

Yes. I saw those.

(then)

Good wine?

Carmel frowns. Looks at her bottles again. Carmel re-swaps a couple of choices based on happy label color.

SAM

We pride ourselves on mediocre.

As Carmel queues up behind Lars--

LARS

Ah.

Lars is a snob. Sam ups his bumpkin-ese a notch--

SAM

Headed to Tranquillum, I presume?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carmel is all ears. Re-examines Lars, yup, he's still hot.

LARS

And why would you presume that?

SAM

Loading up on forbidden food items.
Bit of a snobby-hobby.

Carmel bites her lip to stop from laughing. Lars doesn't rise. A silent exchange of judgmental daggers.

SAM (CONT'D)

Anything else I can help you with?

LARS

What else you heard about
Tranquillum?

SAM

A lot of things. Mostly good.

Carmel seems happy at this. Her trip clearly has higher personal stakes... than someone coming at this--

LARS

(with a reporter's nose)
But not all of it?

SAM

As I advance in years, my use of
thousand-buck-a-night health spas
has dwindled a tad.

Sams throws on a shit-eating grin, hands him his bag.
Lars nods. Touché. Carmel winces guiltily as--

Lars gets a TEXT PING. Checks his phone:

"PLEASE RECONSIDER. I BEG YOU."

We can see from Lars' reaction, this is disturbing.

CARMEL (O.S.)

They'll be taking that.

Lars looks up.

CARMEL (CONT'D)

(helpful)
They don't allow phones at Tranquillum.
(dishing)
I'm headed there, too. I smuggled a
burner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She feels deliciously criminal to have shared that.

INT. PEUGEOT - DAY

Frances continues to drive in silence. She fights the urge but... she eyes her phone again.

FRANCES

(to herself)

Stop it. It's good, Frances. In fact, it's excellent. Stop being such a tampon.

And suddenly... THE CELL PHONE! She lunges for it, causing her BACK TO SPASM.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Ooow!

CALLER ID: "ALAIN".

She stamps on the BRAKES, snatches up her phone. We know from her face it's him. Her agent. Throws the car into park. A deep, deep calming breath. Then--

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(forced casual)

Hi there.

ALAIN

Frances?

FRANCES

(cheerful)

Were you expecting someone else?

ALAIN

Oh. It didn't sound like you at first. You almost sounded cheery.

FRANCES

I'm at the health retreat thing I told you about. Trying to get into a positive state of mind.

ALAIN

Remember those people who died in that sweat lodge, they thought they were being enlightened when in reality... they were being cooked.

Frances isn't hearing this so much as what she's not hearing, which is "I love the book".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCES

This is not like that at all. It looks amazing. I'm here to heal. Massages. Gentle fasting maybe.

ALAIN

Fasting, please. You eat when you're hungry, it's a privilege.

Frances eyes the Kit Kat wrapper sitting on her console. He's stalling. It must be bad news.

Finally, Frances can bear the procrastination no more.

FRANCES

Anyway...

ALAIN

I'm not the bearer of good news Frannie-bear.

The air goes right out of her. She sucks in her stomach, ready to take it like a man.

FRANCES

They don't want the book.

ALAIN

I'm so sorry. I think it's a beautiful novel, I really, really do--

Frances counts the really's on her fingers.

ALAIN (CONT'D)

--it's the market, romance is taking the worst hit. It won't be forever, it always comes back, it's fashion, a blip... but right now--

FRANCES

So sell it to someone else. Sell it to Timmy.

ALAIN

Thing is... I slipped the manuscript to Timmy a few weeks back, I did have a teeny fear this could happen and obviously an offer on the table would have given me leverage but--

FRANCES

Timmy passed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHE LURCHES THE PEUGEOT OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.

ALAIN

Timmy loved the book. Adored it. He was nearly in tears but said he'd never get it past Acquisitions. They're shaking in their boots over there. Hell of a year. Decree from above is psychological thrillers.

FRANCES

Oh, for god sakes.

ALAIN

Frances. I'll find the right home for this. Might just take a little while. Romance is not dead. It's just been temporarily tied up and left somewhere uncomfortable by kinky sex thrillers. Perhaps it's time you tried a different style? Something fresher. Spicier.

Frances picks up the Kit Kat wrapper and begins to LICK IT. She'll never survive this setback without sugar.

ALAIN (CONT'D)

Frances?

FRANCES

I'm licking a Kit Kat wrapper. Know what that is, Alain? Rock-bottom.

And she gives the wrapper one more long lapping LICK.

ALAIN

Oh, Frances. I'm sorry about this, especially after everything that happened with that horrendous man. Have the police anything new?

FRANCES

I don't want to talk about it.

ALAIN

You've had such a bad trot lately. You should know that evil review had no impact on their decision.

FRANCES

What review?

There is silence. We almost hear the "oh shit" going on inside Alain's brain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Alain?

(silence)

I haven't read a review since 1998.
You know that.

ALAIN

I'm an idiot. I'm a fool.

FRANCES

Why would there be a review when I
don't have a new book out?

Silence. Bad silence.

ALAIN

...some blogger picked up a copy of
What the Heart Wants at an airport
and did an opinion piece about you
and your work in general. It's a
mad diatribe. Linked it to the Me
Too movement which gave it some
clickbait traction. Ridiculous --
as if romantic fiction is to blame
for sexual predators.

FRANCES

What?

ALAIN

Nobody read the piece. Forget I
mentioned it. Early onset dementia.

FRANCES

You just said it got traction. Send
me the link.

ALAIN

It's really not that bad, it's just
this prejudice against the genre.

FRANCES

Send it!

ALAIN

No. I won't. You've gone all these
years without reading reviews,
don't fall off the wagon now.

FRANCES

(dangerous but low voice)
Send it right fucking now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ALAIN

Fine I'll send. I'm so sorry, Fran.
I'm sorry about this entire call.

And Frances CLICKS OFF. A stunned beat. She will never recover from this. Ever.

FRANCES

That's it, then. I'm done. It's official.

A beat, then she leans on the HORN, under--

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I am fucking done! Dead to the world!

And she leans on the HORN again, under--

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Dead to the fucking world!!

She ROARS in key with the horn. And then... suddenly...

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello?

Frances jerks to look to her left -- another sharp BACK SPASM -- to see a MAN crouched over by her window. Startled, she lets out a muted YELP.

TONY

Are you okay?

Meet TONY HOGBURN. Fifties, burly, physically imposing. More like Tony Soprano. She lowers her window.

TONY (CONT'D)

You need help?

FRANCES

(mortified)

Oh. No. I'm good. Thank you.

TONY

You don't look good.

FRANCES

Gee thanks. I was, you know, just having a quiet moment of despair.

TONY

Quiet moment? You were a far cry from quiet, lady.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

TONY (CONT'D)

You were screaming and sounding
your horn like a total psycho. I
stopped the car.

FRANCES

(trying to contain her
resentment)

I do apologize. I thought I was
alone in the middle of nowhere.
Which clearly didn't turn out to be
the case.

TONY

Are you sick?

FRANCES

I beg your pardon?

TONY

You seem like you might be having a
mental breakdown episode of some
sort.

FRANCES

I'm really fine.

TONY

I don't believe that. It's not a
normal thing to be parked on the
side of the road, blaring your car
horn and screaming "dead to the
world" at the top of your lungs.

And now Frances has had enough. She also needs to nip
this before it becomes a real problem.

FRANCES

I just had a hot flash, alright?

Tony blanches.

TONY

Oh.

FRANCES

(mission accomplished)

Yeah. So, I'm good. Thanks for
stopping -- you can go.

He starts to step off. Then turns back.

TONY

Do you take supplements?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

FRANCES

What? I beg your pardon?

TONY

Hormone replacement therapy. I've been told that can help.

FRANCES

Are we having this discussion?

TONY

What's with the tone? I stopped to help. It's known as basic kindness.

FRANCES

I see. Allow me to reciprocate. Should you happen upon a woman having a psycho mental episode, you might as a matter of safety hold off on prescribing hormone replacement therapy.

TONY

You know what?

FRANCES

Here we go.

TONY

(pointing a finger)
I'm going to cut you some slack. Because I can see that you're a very tragic person.

And with that, Tony walks off.

Where is her dignity? She cannot let him get off having the last word. She puts her car into gear and lurches towards him, he leaps out of the way, she skid stops--

FRANCES

(through her car window)
While we're on the subject why don't you get a testosterone patch or two... anyone with that much hair on his head at your age must have one working ball the size of a peanut. At least I'm only temporarily tragic.

Tony's jaw falls open in shock or perhaps to say something back but Frances floors it and FISHTAILS onto the road, leaving him coughing in a cloud of her dust.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

FRANCES (CONT'D)
(to herself)
That probably wasn't necessary.

INT. SAAB - DAY

Meet the MARCONI FAMILY also in transit. NAPOLEON, tall, fifty-ish, drives. HEATHER, fifties, blonde hair pulled in a tight ponytail, intense to the point of being actually taut, rides shotgun. She stares out the passenger window into a blur of nothingness. And ZOE, twenties, rides in the back. She's inherited Napoleon's height but has a cool, casual, relaxed grace that's all her own.

THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY'S "COME ON GET HAPPY" PLAYS OUT. It's like chalk on a blackboard to Heather. Zoe is spared by her earbuds. She's tuned into a different world. NAPOLEON SINGS ALONG WITH THE SONG.

NAPOLEON
(singing)
*Hello world, hear the song that
we're singin'/ Come on, get happy/
A whole lotta lovin' is what we'll
be bringin'/ We'll make you
happy...*

HEATHER
(re: the song)
Are you serious?

SHE TURNS IT DOWN.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Even for you.

NAPOLEON
I used to listen to that song as a kid, it always gave me a case of the "good moodies", without fail.

HE TURNS IT BACK UP as Heather digs her claws into the seat leather--

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)
Add to that it's not just me, FYI. Northwestern did a whole biofeedback study, happy songs, this one included, boost dopamine, serotonin, you name it.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

It's real science, David Cassidy is
a medically established conduit of
joy.

HEATHER

Who drank himself to death.

NAPOLEON

Honey, honey, honey.

That's his code for "Brighten up", "Lighten up", "Seize
the joy". SHE DIGS HER NAILS HARDER INTO THE SEAT
LEATHER.

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

This is going to be good for us.
We're going to have an amazing ten
days.

(then; super upbeat)

Sing it with me, Zoe.

Earbuds still in, Zoe knows he said something to her but
she doesn't know what. Had to be something "happy". She
just smiles, sticks out a "thumbs up".

NAPOLEON RESUMES SINGING, Heather fights off her
revulsion.

INT. PEUGEOT - CONTINUOUS

Frances drives up a long smooth extremely well paved
driveway to Tranquillum. As the buildings don't so much
move into view as yell, erupting from raw nature.

However Frances barely notices the approach, in her
wrestle to the death with her inbox. Stabs a LINK TO THE
BLOG. From her face it's worse than we thought--

FRANCES

Formulaic... trash... drivel...
trite? Are you fucking kidding?

(to herself, the phone,
and the world)

I marched in the Women's March. I'm
not a blight on feminism because I
describe the color of the hero's
eyes. Should have let Jane die?
What?!

As she pulls to a stop and sees the resort for the first
time--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Holy cow. Wow.

It looks like it's just landed from another planet. A stack of high-tech brutalist concrete elevations curve amongst the pines. The entire complex levitates magically either side of a tumbling stream across the entire head of this very well hidden valley.

Frances' car door is politely opened by a bright eyed man-kid, YAO, late twenties, with a hipster beard and a man bun.

YAO

Namaste. Welcome to Tranquillum.

FRANCES

(still reading)

Yeah, yeah. One sec.

Yao doesn't react to her mood mismatch. Doesn't even blink. He speaks, every breath, a calm, measured tone.

YAO

You must be Frances? Come. One journey ends and another begins.

Frances struggles out of the car, still furiously reading.

FRANCES

(to Yao)

Do you have WiFi? I need the rest of this... it isn't downloading--

Frances waves her phone around Yao's calm head.

YAO

(smiling, centered)

Most of the canyon is out of service, we're not sorry.

A BELLMAN moves to collect Frances's hand luggage from the passenger seat.

FRANCES

Wait! Nuh-uh. I got that!

Frances lurches headlong -- rummaging in the footwell for a 7-11 bag of tinkling and crackling contraband.

The Bellman and Yao swap a good-natured, experienced look as Frances stuffs "something" into her bag and lurches out--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Ow! Oh shit. Fuck me. FUUUUCK!

Her hand goes to her back. Yao's strong arms support her like a tai chi move... lift her gently to standing.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Ow! I'm OK.

YAO

Lower back? We can help with that.
Has this happened before?

FRANCES

Only when my life's in bits and I'm least able to handle the pain. So yeah, all the damn time. I'm fine. I'm good. I'm golden.

YAO

Lean on me, let's get you inside.

Yao signals the others to gather and guide them in.

Frances doesn't even notice the perfect buddhist raked gravel pathway, the babbling waters, the exquisite alpine planting.

FRANCES

"...hangover of the last century??"
My first bestseller was 2002. I'm this century? I am so this century.

(to Yao)

Excuse me, could I say goodbye to my car first? A little ritual we have, me and the car, I like to love-thump the trunk a little before I check into monolithic architecture, it's a quirk.

YAO

Go right ahead.

And she begins to REPEATEDLY SLAM HER FIST ON THE TRUNK, taking out her frustration. THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

ANGLE THE LAMBORGHINI, PULLING UP BEHIND:

INT. LAMBORGHINI - CONTINUOUS

As they see the above--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

What the...?

JESSICA

What is she doing?

BEN

Beating up her car. She better not touch mine.

JESSICA

Wait. I recognize her. She's somebody famous.

BEN

Look. It's not too late to call this whole thing off.

JESSICA

(a bit desperate)

Please, Ben. We're here.

BEN

Does that look like healing right there? Why can't we just go to a marriage counselor if...

JESSICA

I told you. It's like a holistic approach. We have to work on everything: our minds, bodies, and spirits.

Meanwhile up ahead, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.

BEN

Jesus.

And then... A HORN FROM BEHIND.

REVEAL: Tony has arrived. And he's already impatient, HONKING AT THE LAMBORGHINI. We're not off to a zen start.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, RECEPTION - DAY

As Yao escorts Frances toward a sine curve of foot-thick redwood that could be a bar, a reception desk, or a work of outsider art in an LA gallery, Carmel is being led away from it by DELILAH, twenties, a dark-haired young woman with skin so beautiful it looks like it's lit from within.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCES
 (still talking to the
 phone; rebutting the
 review)
 It's just so in vogue to
 kill your protagonists
 these days, isn't it? My
 characters are my babies,
 I'm not a baby-killer. I
 don't even wound my
 characters.

DELILAH
 (to Carmel)
 After we get you checked
 in, I would suggest a quick
 forest bathing to lower
 your cortisol, we have an
 award-winning arboretum.

AS FRANCES BUMPS INTO CARMEL--

FRANCES (CONT'D)
 I am so sorry.

CARMEL
 No worries. A fellow Tranquillizer I
 presume? Carmel. Carmel Schneider.

Frances doesn't want to be rude but she's deep "in-phone"--

FRANCES
 (distracted)
 Hi. Frances. Welty. Sorry I've
 really got to read something--

CARMEL
 --I know right? Still gripping mine.

Carmel waves her phone, smiling. SCROLLS PICS OF HER KIDS.

CARMEL (CONT'D)
 Longest I haven't seen any of them
 is ten hours... how am I going to
 do ten days? Do you have kids?

FRANCES
 (reading, not listening)
 Uh huh. Yeh. Kids? Oh nope. Nooooo.

DELILAH
 It'll be fine I promise. They
 aren't in there.
 (points to Carmel's head
 and then her heart)
 They're in here. And in here.

Though engrossed, Frances finds time to glance and wrinkle
 her nose at the sentiment occurring on her periphery.

Carmel finds the idea enchanting. Sighs a deep breath and
 hands it over. Yao extends a hand to Frances who recoils--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCES

Nuh-uh. Get off. Not finished.

Yao puts a very gentle hand on her shoulder.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SOMEBODY IS WATCHING ALL THE FOREGOING ON A MONITOR.

Frances is still deep in conversation with her online content--

FRANCES

(on monitor)

I'm obliged to tie everything up at the end with a giant bow. Those are the rules. If I left my endings ambiguous my readers would come after me with pitchforks. No. No. I need, I need, I still need to--

INT. TRANQUILLUM, RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Yao gently but firmly removes the phone from her hand.

YAO

Imagine you didn't. Because you don't. You don't actually need to.

FRANCES

(blinks, back in reality)

No I... I don't? Whoa. I don't. I never ever read them anyway.

Carmel and Frances look at each other... and laugh. Both feeling their first steps in a new direction.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Frances.

CARMEL

We met.

FRANCES

Sure we did. OK. Whoa, are we going? ...Well, I'll see you later I guess!

As Delilah silently and expertly guides Carmel away, Yao expertly guides Frances in the opposite direction.

They almost collide with Tony, who has entered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCES (CONT'D)

You.

TONY

Why am I not surprised?

YAO

(soothing)

You must be Tony.

TONY

This is your clientele? I pulled over to help this woman, she accused me of having one ball.

FRANCES

I was rounding up. Look at his hair.

YAO

(gentle reprimand)

Frances.

TONY

This woman is not well.

YAO

Tony.

TONY

Where can I pee?

YAO

Your personal wellness consultant will be back momentarily to assist you.

TONY

Yeah, I don't really need help with that. Like riding a bike.

As he heads off--

INT. TRANQUILLUM, REFECTORY - DAY

A breathtaking dining room. Long monastery table. An incredible view of gardens and a glimpse of the mountains and the valleys beyond. AN OPEN FIRE BURNS in a floating chimney modernist steel three-hundred-sixty-degree fireplace. Delilah is leading Napoleon, Heather, and Zoe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELILAH

Breakfast seven. Lunch noon. Dinner six. All our guests eat together.

HEATHER

And how many guests are there?

DELILAH

Nine total. It's very intimate.

NAPOLEON

It all looks so fabulous.

DELILAH

There'll be a bell before meals are served or smoothies during fast. We do ask that you come to the dining room as soon as you hear the bell.

HEATHER

Is there room service?

DELILAH

On request timed nutrition can be brought to your room.

NAPOLEON

I already feel better, I really do.
(to Heather and Zoe)
Is this not beyond fantastic?

ZOE

Maybe in a Harry Potter kind of way.

DELILAH

There's still our yoga and meditation studio through here.

NAPOLEON

(pouring on the positive)
You rarely see engineering like this in a resort. The craftsmanship, the attention to detail. More like the Getty Museum or a Silicon Valley head office. Incredible. Think of those tiles I was showing you earlier... what's extra-ordinary is that someone took the time to individually...

As Frances enters, he lurches at her, beams, and thrusts out his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

Ha, Napoleon!

For a moment Frances isn't sure if he's introducing himself or just yelling a random historical figure.

FRANCES

I'm uh... I'm Frances. Hi.
(realizing)
I've lost my guide.

NAPOLEON

Super to meet you. Are you here for the ten-day retreat? Us two point oh?

FRANCES

I certainly am.

As Yao enters to hand Frances a big green smoothie--

YAO

Here you are. Thought I had a runner for a second.

FRANCES

(re: the smoothie)
What's this?

YAO

Tailored specifically to your metabolic requirements so please don't share even though they are delicious. Also as it has been precisely constructed so please be sure and drink it all.

FRANCES

(tasting it)
Oh that is just the best!

Yao bows happily and retreats with Delilah, leaving Frances with--

NAPOLEON

Meet my beautiful, beautiful girls!
Wife Heather. Daughter Zoe.

Heather shakes hands--

HEATHER

A pleasure to meet you, Frances.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Zoe bobs her head and subtly communicates that she's embarrassed by her dad.

FRANCES

I guess I wasn't expecting to meet
a whole family somewhere like this.

NAPOLEON

A whole family. Yes. Well. Yes.

Napoleon stops, as if even he is suddenly lost for words.

FRANCES

What brings you all here? 'Cause I
gotta say, you look pretty perfect.

HEATHER

(covering, defensive)
Just a break. We don't really do
this type of thing normally.

FRANCES

Me neither. Phew. I've never been
anywhere like this in my life. Just
thought I needed to recharge--

HEATHER

--the batteries?

FRANCES (CONT'D)

--the batteries.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Exactly.

HEATHER

Exactly. Us, too.

An amnesty exchange of pleasantries covering genuine
agony on both sides. Zoe and Napoleon swap a look and Dad
turns the ignition on his torrential chatty flow--

NAPOLEON

We thought we'd explore the hot
springs, maybe even get a quick
soak, do a few laps of the pool,
before The Noble Silence.

FRANCES

The noble what?

NAPOLEON

It's in the welcome pack. Bit of a
surprise, wasn't expecting it. I've
heard of silent retreats of course
and I admit they never appealed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

I'm a talker myself as my girls here will be only too pleased to corroborate but we're here to roll with the punches, or perhaps go with the flow is better.

ZOE

(straight to Frances)

I give Dad thirty seconds.

They laugh then Frances sees Heather's weak smile at her husband's incessant chat fail completely for a moment--

--to look utterly terrified. A look of sheer horror.

Like the door of hell has opened up and she sees inside.

Heather blinks hard as she sees Frances watching her. And like a mask replaced, Heather flips back to smile warmly.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, HEALING CENTER - DAY

As GLORY, twenties, a rising "meditation" Youtube star, leads Lars out of the healing center, they pass a giant piece of medical equipment.

LARS

Not many wellness centers have an MRI machine.

GLORY

Oh, we have all the toys at Tranquillum. Our physio is just waiting for you to complete sign in...

As though timed to the second, Glory stops at a perspex desk with a stack of paper and a single pen.

LARS

(reporter's nose)

How much does an MRI machine cost?

Glory pushes what looks like half a ream of paper over:

GLORY

I wouldn't know I'm afraid. If you could read and sign, we're all done--

Lars flick-books the reams of pages...

LARS

What even is all this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLORY

Our legal disclaimer. Feel free to take it away but we can't begin treatment without it and we'll need a copy on file by the end of today to overnight your stay.

LARS

Does anyone come all the way here and not sign it?

GLORY

(smiling warmly)
You would be the first.

Lars smiles back, one of his "thin" smiles.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, SECOND STORY ROOM/OFFICE - DAY

SOMEONE'S POV, LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW. IN THE FOREGROUND... A WOMAN STANDING ALONE IN THE ARBORETUM.

EXT. TRANQUILLUM, ARBORETUM - CONTINUOUS

It's Carmel standing there, forest bathing, she looks a bit fraught. She takes a full swallow of fresh air.

CARMEL

(to herself)
"You can do this." "You are brave."
"You shall be new again."
(then)
"You shall be thin."

Another breath. And then she HEARS IT. THE HYPNOTIC MEDLEY OF A BABBLING BROOK. Carmel is immediately drawn to it, she follows the sound, turns around the hedge TO SEE:

TONY, PEEING IN A BUSH. He catches her out of the corner of his eye.

TONY

Oh, geez.

CARMEL

(mortified)
I beg your pardon. I was just forest bathing, I mistook you for a creek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY

(finishing up)

My bad. I should've done that. I
had to go and my wellness consultant
was nowhere to be found.

(zips up)

Don't rat me out to the warden,
would ya?

CARMEL

The warden?

TONY

You know. The Russian lady.

CARMEL

(immediately rapt)

Have you met her?

TONY

Not yet. You?

CARMEL

No, but I can't wait. I've heard so
much.

(then)

You look very familiar.

TONY

Well, I'm not.

What an odd response.

CARMEL

I'm Carmel.

TONY

Tony. What are you in for?

CARMEL

Weight loss. Personal growth.

TONY

Make up your mind, which is it?

(off Carmel)

Sorry. I'm kinda gruff around the
edges, you'll get used to me. Or
not.

CARMEL

What are you in for?

TONY

You don't wanna know.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, FRANCES' BEDROOM SUITE - DAY

Frances steps into a jaw-dropping suite, all clean lines and raw finishes and natural material. Beautiful. Serene. A perfectly poised shrine to minimalism, rest and calm.

The soft mountain breeze gently billows the white gossamer floor-to-ceiling curtains. Like she's died and--

FRANCES

Oh wow. Wow. This. Is. Heaven.

YAO

Welcome to Tranquillum. Your wellness journey has begun, Frances.

And instead of smirking Frances finds herself emotional--

FRANCES

I've actually been feeling very unwell lately, Yao.

YAO

I know you have.

He puts both hands on her shoulders. It feels healing.

FRANCES

This is going to be the best thing. I just know it.

YAO

We'll get you well, Frances. We'll get you feeling as well as you've ever felt in your whole life.

Yao steps back, closes the door -- leaving Frances alone--

--and she bursts into floods of HEAVING, SOBBING TEARS.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, BEN AND JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY

Identical to Frances' room. Ben is on the balcony craning to get a wider vantage point. He sees Lars come out. Ben nods and waves. Lars goes back inside. Ben frowns.

Jessica listens. She can hear Frances wailing next door--

JESSICA

Can you hear that?

BEN

Hear what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

That noise, is -- is someone crying?

BEN

I can't hear anything. Probably that lady who was attacking her car. She looked like a basket-case.

He picks up the Tranquillum welcome pack.

BEN (CONT'D)

"Guidemap for your wellness journey"--

JESSICA

--Ben, this isn't going to work if--

BEN

(cutting her off)

I'm taking it seriously, alright?

(then; reading)

Wait, what? "Retreat will begin with a period of silence lasting three days during which there will be no talking, apart from counseling sessions."

JESSICA

Three days?

BEN

No touching, no reading, no writing, no eye contact with other guests or your own companions." What the fucky fucking fuck?

JESSICA

That wasn't on the website.

BEN

"The Noble Silence".

JESSICA

We have to spend three whole days avoiding eye contact and not talking? Even when we're alone?

BEN

"If you must communicate, do so with staff and follow instructions on the blue card at reception. There will be guided meditations -- walking or sitting -- throughout each day.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN (CONT'D)

Please listen for the bells and follow all instructions." Wait, I have to eat every meal... with total strangers... in silence?

She takes the card.

JESSICA

(reading)

"Silence begins at six."

(to Ben)

We got a whole hour left when we can still talk.

BEN

Or look at each other.

JESSICA

Or touch.

Silence falls. Jessica looks at Ben. Ben looks at Jessica.

Jessica sits on the bed. It literally could not be clearer what she's thinking. Ben crosses the room towards her... and passes her to the fruit bowl.

BEN

I'm starving. Think I'll take a walk see if I can find something to eat before I'm not allowed to tell anyone how hungry I am.

Ben exits, leaving Jessica. Marooned. Alone. Frustrated and forlorn on the edge of the bed.

JESSICA

What do you know about hungry.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, OFFICE - DAY

SOMEBODY AT A DESK, SCROLLING THROUGH A VIDEO FILE:

FRANCES -- the photo submitted shows a fifty-ish woman wearing red lipstick, holding a cocktail. A familiar image. She's here to be un-peeled, remade. Easy-peasy.

CLICK TO BEN AND JESSICA. Their beaming smiles give away their unhappiness. Especially Jessica's.

NEXT UP: LARS LEE. A glossy computer headshot. Likely a wellness addict, they exist. He goes to resorts as part of his grooming regime. Makes no attempt to conceal his narcissism.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLICK TO TONY, THEN TO CARMEL, THEN THE MARCONI FAMILY -- NAPOLEON, HEATHER, AND ZOE. The photo shows the three of them in front of a Christmas tree.

ZOOM IN ON THE FACES. They're all smiling, but the eyes are flat and empty.

FEMALE VOICE

What happened to you, my *lapochki*?

CLOSE ON ZOE:

INT. TRANQUILLUM, ZOE'S ROOM - DAY

Sitting alone on her bed, in her room. Legs crossed, right leg over left, the right ankle wiggles, nearly vibrates. As if all her anxiety is coursing through her right foot. Arms folded. Whatever the damage, it's palpable. She just sits there. Right foot convulsing away.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, NAPOLEON AND HEATHER'S ROOM - DAY

Napoleon unpacks his precisely packed suitcase. He's fastidious, anal, and a spatial savant, nobody packs a suitcase more efficiently. He unpacks it with equal fervor, precision, and positivity. Rhyme, order, and zeal. "Busy" as an art form.

Heather emerges from the bathroom, she studies her husband, perhaps is repulsed some by the "upbeat". Napoleon removes a perfectly folded T-shirt, pair of shorts, he lays each on the bed with aplomb, as if to offer them up for inspection. He's a good man. So fucking perfect in every fucking way. He can feel the burn of stare, looks up.

NAPOLEON

What?

HEATHER

Nothing.

He goes back to his unpacking.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Why is she not in our room?

NAPOLEON

Because the rooms are double-occupancy, darling.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

She loves having her own room, are you kidding?

HEATHER

Did she tell you that?

NAPOLEON

(still unpacking)

What twenty-year-old doesn't want to get away from her parents?

HEATHER

Perhaps our twenty-year-old. Perhaps on this weekend of all weekends.

(then)

She's never stayed alone in a hotel room before. And now she's being asked to do so, without her phone, even.

NAPOLEON

You're catastrophizing. She's an adult. She's fine.

And then it hits her. The rage. Triggered by the word "fine", perhaps. Heather suddenly sees herself punching Napoleon's face with a closed fist, crunching his cheekbone, the diamond cluster of her engagement ring breaking his skin, over and over and over, blood dripping. She has to grip her toes to the floor to stop herself from lunging at him as he unpacks his stupid little bag. She focuses on a point on the wall, uses a VARIABLE BREATHING METHOD to decompress herself. Napoleon recognizes the sound of the breathing, he looks up to see it. Only he sees it as grief alone. She can conceal the rage of it all.

He approaches her.

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

(tenderly)

Just ride it out, sweetheart.

He takes her hand, folds it between the warmth of his palms.

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

We will ride it out together.

She clutches at him, her fingers locked into the grooves between his knuckles, like a woman holding her partner's hand in labor as the pain tries to drag her away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She offers a faint smile. To convey her love. And conceal the rage.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, LARS' ROOM - DAY

A carbon copy identical suite. Afternoon sunlight streams in. Lars takes it in, meticulous. Scans essential oils, Tranquillum cosmetics, minimalist furniture. Innocuous.

He opens the door and leans into the corridor. Checks both ways. Pulls the door closed, checks it... locks it.

Lars steps onto the balcony -- scans the grounds. No sign of anyone. Satisfied, he snaps the curtains tight shut.

CUT TO:

NOW IN NEAR DARKNESS -- a Ralph leather holdall hits the bed. Hands flip it upside down and a pocketknife STABS into expensive brown leather. Lars hacks a gash in a seam--

--TO REVEAL A FOAM INSERT. A laptop, mini-mic recorder, pen and a chunk of black tech the size of a hard drive.

LARS
(testing the mini-mic)
Hello hello hello.

His voice bounces back a tinny: "Hello". Lars flips a chunky plastic aerial on the black box and an LED BLINKS. He opens the laptop and connects to the sat-hotspot.

While waiting, Lars grabs the pen and waves it at his face. LIVE VIDEO IMAGES stream on his computer screen.

A messenger DINKS up on his laptop screen: "WE IN?"

Lars nods and types: "RUMORS BULLSHIT. ALL IN. NO PROB."

LARS (CONT'D)
Hells yes.

MESSAGE DINKS: "SECURITY?"

Lars types: "NO ONE EVEN SEARCHED MY BAG."

MESSAGE: "...MAYBE IT'S ALL BULLSHIT?"

Lars thinks. Types: "SOMETHING'S WEIRD UP HERE. I SMELL IT."

MESSAGE: "CARRY ON, MR. BOND."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lars chuckles. Types: "EAT ME, MONEYPENNY."

He shuts the laptop, stows the gear into the holdall, as the GLOW OF A TEXT POPS UP ON HIS IPHONE. He checks it: "CAN WE AT LEAST TALK ABOUT IT?" He closes the phone.

The door suddenly opens to REVEAL DELILAH, Lars is startled.

LARS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, is there a policy
against knocking?

DELILAH
(soothing)
All phones were to be turned over,
Lars.

LARS
This is just for emergencies.

Delilah just fixes a knowing, patronizing look on him, under--

DELILAH
We don't have emergencies here.
Only miracles.

LARS
Delilah. You're perhaps as
competent as you are pretty. But
don't handle me, okay?

And Delilah simply smiles, exits.

LARS (CONT'D)
(to himself)
This place is fucked up.

EXT. TRANQUILLUM, GARDENS - DAY

Carmel has changed into some golden leotard and is doing some disciplined lunges. She times each lunge with a breathy GROAN, she sounds a bit like a wounded animal.

ANGLE:

FRANCES, APPROACHING. With caution, the leotard is enough to stoke concern. Finally--

FRANCES
What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARMEL

(surprised to see her)

Oh.

(then)

The packet said we should try to be in both the moment and spirit even in between assigned activities. You get out of something what you put into it, right?

FRANCES

Right.

CARMEL

I'm Carmel.

FRANCES

Yes, we met at reception.

CARMEL

I wasn't sure the introduction took. You seemed to have just gotten some bad news.

FRANCES

I'm over it now.

CARMEL

(dishing)

So what do you think so far?

Carmel is a serial "disher".

FRANCES

Can't complain. The rooms are nice. The smoothies, delish.

CARMEL

I think it's all so wonderful.

(with a gleam)

When do you think we'll meet her?

(off Frances)

You know. Masha.

FRANCES

Who's that?

CARMEL

Did you just say "who's that"? Masha Dmitrichenko. The Russian. Our leader.

FRANCES

You mean like the general manager?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARMEL

Did you just say "general manager"?

FRANCES

Why do you keep asking me if I said what I said?

CARMEL

More like a super-woman than a general manager. I'm told she has...

(looks left, right, then)

Special powers.

(off Frances)

Transformative. I can already feel her presence, can't you?

FRANCES

Not so much.

CARMEL

Have you met Tony?

FRANCES

Twice. Him I felt.

CARMEL

What do we think his story is?

FRANCES

What do you mean?

CARMEL

(utter fascination)

He looks very familiar to me. And when I said that to him, he was very threatened. Like the idea of being recognized was something he did not want to be.

FRANCES

Really?

CARMEL

Oh, yes. And he strikes me as a person capable of violence. I think he might be...

And Carmel bends her nose with her index finger to suggest "mob".

FRANCES

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CARMEL

(spinning her tale)

I've heard of people who go into witness protection. Right before trial, sometimes they're stuck in wellness retreats, I've heard it. Why, I don't know. Maybe to keep them both off-the-grid, keep them safe, and keep them emotionally sound so they'll make they for compelling witnesses.

Frances is not much hearing any of the content. All that's registering -- Carmel has a better imagination and is perhaps a more gifted storyteller than she is. It's devastating.

And then WE HEAR IT:

THREE GONGS.

CARMEL (CONT'D)

The orientation! She'll be there.

FRANCES

Who?

CARMEL

The Russian, Frances. The Russian.

Carmel can even button it with panache. Devastating.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, NAPOLEON AND HEATHER'S ROOM - DAY

Heather stares out the window, something she is prone to do. Suddenly Zoe bursts in.

ZOE

Somebody stole my stuff.

HEATHER

What?

ZOE

I had chips.

(admitting)

And a second phone. And some other stuff, somebody went through my bags.

Upon which, Napoleon steps out of the bathroom, wearing full meditation habit. He look ridiculous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZOE (CONT'D)

Somebody rifled through my bags.
They took my snacks, my chips, my
Sour Punch Straws.

NAPOLEON

Those are banned items.

HEATHER

Oh, for god sakes.

ZOE

Did they go through your bag?

NAPOLEON

I don't know why they would, I
packed in strict accordance with
the packet regs.

ZOE

(to Heather)

What about you, did they take your
pot?

Heather winces. That was their secret.

NAPOLEON

Your what? Did she say pot?

HEATHER

I use cannabinoids sometimes, it
helps with stress.

NAPOLEON

Cannabinoids. Heather, my god,
that's a gateway.

Heather clenches her eyes shut. WE HEAR ANOTHER GONG.

NAPOLEON (CONT'D)

We need to get to the Chakra Room.
We can discuss this later.

(then)

They said single-file.

As he leads the way, Heather and Zoe exchange a look.

INT. TRANQUILLUM, CHAKRA ROOM - EVENING

Feels almost like sanctified space. An ancient temple's
calm. Through floor to ceiling windows the sun sets
directly into the V of a view of the valley below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The room oriented so the last rays hit the back wall like a sundial and fill the room with magic hour golden rays.

Some guests are already assembled. Ben, Jessica, Tony, Lars. Yao is there, as is Delilah.

*NOTE: WE INTERCUT WITH OUR MYSTERIOUS OBSERVER WATCHING ALL THE BELOW ON A MONITOR.

LARS

(taking it up with Yao)
What I do remember from law school,
you do not get to search our
belongings.

YAO

Not without your consent of course,
which you conveyed when signing the
contract.

DELILAH

You kept your phone, Lars, against
policy. And concealed as much.

Napoleon, taking this extremely seriously, walks into the room and with Heather and Zoe following, they take seats in a semi-circle on Zazen cushions.

TONY

What's this? Were we s'pose to put
on the funny jammie suit?

YAO

Optional.

Ben sees Napoleon and shoots Jessica a concealed giggle. It makes Jessica's heart soar. Just to have him smile at her. Not hating her. Hope is alive.

LARS

I would like my personal items
returned, please.

Napoleon goes full yoga, eyes closed, hands in prayer position, deep breathing.

YAO

I'm afraid we have rules, Lars.

Carmel enters, followed by Frances, Carmel immediately encounters and is re-mesmerized by Lars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARMEL

Hi. From the general store,
remember?

LARS

I do. I'm Lars.

CARMEL

I'm married.
(mortified)

Carmel.

(re: her faux pas)

Oh my god. I am so sorry.

LARS

It's okay. Freudian, I get that a
lot, especially from housewives.

CARMEL

I don't know why I said that.

LARS

I just told you. Freudian.

CARMEL

Why would somebody like you be
here?

FRANCES

Aside from the esteem tune-up.

LARS

(with a thin smile to
Frances)

I already don't like you. Probably
because I've read your books.

FRANCES

Excuse me?

LARS

I'm kidding, of course. I've never
read you.

(re: Jessica)

Perhaps she has.

Frances' face contorts with some psychosis, it looks for
a second she might go for his throat.

CARMEL

(to Frances)

Are you like an author? A writer?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LARS

Yes and no.

And now FRANCES DOES GO FOR HIM, YAO INTERVENES.

YAO

Frances. My god.

FRANCES

Okay. That is not like me.

DELILAH

Let's all find a seat.

FRANCES

(to Yao)

I have never gone for a person's
throat inside of thirty seconds.
Not even Tony's.

TONY

Nice.

YAO

Remember why you're here. And you
too, Lars.

JESSICA

(sotto to Ben)

I told you she's famous.

DELILAH

Let's all take a deep cleansing
breath, and find a cushion.

TONY

Where's the Russian?

DELILAH

(placating)

Tony.

TONY

We paid a lot of money here.

FRANCES

(to Heather)

Is this cushion taken?

DELILAH

She will be with us
shortly.

Heather gestures back, "suit yourself". Frances plops
down with a THUD and an--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Oof! Whoa. Didn't judge the descent good.

Heather smiles, a little. But mostly ignores.

ZOE

(sotto to Heather; re:
Napoleon)

What is he doing?

HEATHER

(your guess is as good as
mine)

The Noble Silence. Getting a head start.

And then Heather feels Frances' gaze.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

(to Frances)

Is something wrong?

FRANCES

No. Not at all.

HEATHER

Why were you staring?

FRANCES

Well, as a writer--

(with a look to Lars)

--even a lousy one -- social observation kinda comes with the territory.

(then)

The three of you seem...

HEATHER

(snappish)

Perfect, yes, you made that point earlier.

FRANCES

I certainly wasn't mean about it. It was a compliment.

HEATHER

A compliment?

NAPOLEON

(cutting this off)

Honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HEATHER

(clipped)

I'm having a conversation with a fellow guest, Napoleon. Is that what we are, guests, patients?

CARMEL

(under her breath; with an eye to Tony)

Inmates?

HEATHER

You compliment people by accusing them of perfection, is that it?

FRANCES

Now, hold on. My compliment was based on the three of you being pretty, handsome, and gorgeous, let alone you could each pass for a fitness instructor.

YAO

(interceding)

Alright.

DELILAH

(sotto to Yao)

Let them go. She's watching.

Of course she is.

HEATHER

And that's all happiness should require.

FRANCES

Why are you attacking me?

TONY

Maybe because it's fun?

FRANCES

Oh, go pee in a bush.

Tony shoots a look to Carmel, "our bond is broken."

HEATHER

I'm not attacking you. The wellness packet encourages self-help and constructive criticism of others so...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

FRANCES

(daring her)

So what? Bring it.

The others are all rapt now. Like we're in immersive theatre.

HEATHER

We've perhaps come to the wrong place, that's all.

A tense beat.

JESSICA

(daring to ask)

Why do you say that?

HEATHER

We're not here to be transformed. We don't fill our days with lunches and facials, we don't belong with the wealthy and unscathed.

(to Frances)

The truth is I envy you. Eat less, exercise more, recharge, you will feel better and be made whole again. I envy you. All of you.

A beat. The whole room is frozen by Heather's palpable intensity, her quiet agony.

FRANCES

(with her own intensity)

Heather. I don't think you get to judge our pain.

This could get ugly, and fast. And then, not a second too soon, the door opens... And in she steps. MASHA DMITRICHENKO. The room is instantly spellbound in a heartbeat. An extraordinary-looking woman. A supermodel. At least six feet tall, with corpse-white skin and green eyes so striking and huge they're almost nearly alien-like. Masha seems like a different species, a superior species to every other person in the room. Even Lars. She has an almost shocking physical presence.

MASHA

Namaste. Welcome to the Tranquillum House. After a brief orientation, we shall begin our very first guided meditation.

Silence. They just stare back, transfixed. She's got a guru-savior hold on them already.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Ben is especially captivated by the woman's utter beauty. Jessica clocks that and is immediately threatened.

MASHA (CONT'D)

Please sit on your pillows now.

And they all sit. Like trained little puppies, every one of them.

MASHA (CONT'D)

My name is Masha.

Masha surveys the room, turning her head in a slow arc to take in their crosslegged, silent subservience. There's something unsettling about it, demeaning even; they're sitting at her feet like kindergarten kids. Finally...

MASHA (CONT'D)

Right now you're at the foot of a mountain. And the summit seems impossibly far away. But I am here to help you reach that summit. In ten days, you will not be the person you are now. Let me be clear on this, because it's important.

She pauses, looks around the room.

MASHA (CONT'D)

(repeating)

You will not be the person you are now.

The words hit Frances like a benediction. "Yes. Yes."

Tony on the other hand greets this with a BIG EYE ROLL. Masha clocks it and fixes her gaze on him.

MASHA (CONT'D)

Tony. Do you have a comment?

Lars chokes down a smile. Masha misses nothing, she then quickly glances to Lars.

MASHA (CONT'D)

How 'bout you, Lars?

LARS

Did you go through our bags? I'm missing some things.

MASHA

You're missing chocolate and wine. As is Frances.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

FRANCES

For the record, both antioxidants.

MASHA

They're not allowed, Frances.

FRANCES

(meekly)

Even so, I don't think you get to go through our stuff.

Masha approaches Frances, kneels in front of her. Frances is suddenly frozen as Masha places a hand on Frances' cheek.

MASHA

You're mine now, Frances. And you want to be mine, don't you? To be in my hands. You want that, Frances, am I right?

FRANCES

(transfixed; softly)

Yes.

MASHA

You want me to see you. And fix what I see.

FRANCES

(a whisper)

Yes.

Carmel is fighting tears. Masha then rises.

MASHA

(to Carmel)

What's wrong, *lapochka*?

CARMEL

(fighting tears)

I'm just so happy. You're everything I hoped for.

Tony rolls his eyes again, Masha quickly fixes a stare on him.

MASHA

Tony.

TONY

Sorry. This all just seems a little too hippy-dippy voodoo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

MASHA

I see.

TONY

And for the kind of money you charge, I don't think you get to just woosh in like Glinda the Good Witch and assert dominion over us. You expect us to just put ourselves in your hands, we don't know the first thing about you. What's your story?

MASHA

My story is I died, Tony.

WHAM. Silence. Nobody doubts it.

MASHA (CONT'D)

I went into cardiac arrest. I was clinically dead.

(re: Yao)

That man brought me back to life.

Yao stands a little more erect. In fact, he is erect, the mere thought of being Masha's savior causes a surge of blood flow. Yao's secretly in love with her. Though it's not really a secret, Masha knows full-well and Delilah suspects.

TONY

Maybe he should be in charge then.

MASHA

He hasn't been to the other side, Tony. I have.

TONY

And is that where you intend to lead us? 'Cause I didn't check that box in the paperwork.

MASHA

Stand up, Tony.

She's scary. Schoolmarm scary. Something tells Tony he best stand. He does. She puts her hand on his cheek. And surprisingly -- he seems to be frozen, mesmerized, transfixed, even. Like her mere touch is spellbinding.

MASHA (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask you a question. And I'd like you to give me an honest answer.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

MASHA (CONT'D)

(then)

Do you like yourself, Tony?

Silence. He just stares.

MASHA (CONT'D)

(once again)

Tony. Do you like yourself?

And then--

TONY

(simply; unguarded)

No. I do not.

MASHA

We're going to change that.

(then)

Please take your seat.

And Tony, a bit cowed, sits. Frances mouths "wow".

MASHA (CONT'D)

You will play by my rules. Rules
you will come to adore.

She already has a hold on them. They look at her in awe.

MASHA (CONT'D)

You'll be experiencing strong
feelings of resistance, of anger,
of frustration. And you'll come to
make those negative feelings a
compass. True north. Go at it. Ten
days. Ten days in a whole
lifetime. You will leave
Tranquillum: happier, healthier,
lighter, freer. Changed in ways
you never before even imagined
were possible.

They are seemingly in her spell.

MASHA (CONT'D)

Questions, comments, before we
begin our first meditation?

Silence.

MASHA (CONT'D)

Nothing at all, my little sheep?

(then)

Somebody say something. Now.
Something true.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

MASHA (CONT'D)
(once again)
Something true.

And a HAND GOES UP. Zoe's.

MASHA (CONT'D)
Yes, Zoe.

ZOE
(palpable)
I miss my brother.

A STABBING PAIN SHEARS THROUGH HEATHER. Napoleon closes his eyes. The rest of the room remains frozen.

MASHA
Look at me, *lapochka*.

Zoe does.

MASHA (CONT'D)
We shall heal.

A beat. There's a lot of pain in this room.

SMASH TO BLACK.

TO BE CONTINUED