

# TRUE NATURE

PILOT EPISODE

WGWA Reg. 2084670  
© 2020 Cheryl Conway  
E: conway.cheryl@gmail.com  
M: (+61) 419 114 210

"How we shout into the woods is how the echo will sound"

--Jean Gebser

**EXT. AMAZON RAINFOREST - NIGHT**

Full moon glows, held up by the heavy leaves of the rainforest canopy.

Rain fall begins scattering fat drops on a dense array of jungle foliage.

Rainwater tracks along the jungle floor quickly forming fast moving rivulets that flow over and between serpentine tree roots and rotting leaf matter.

Carpenter ants soldier along a branch in a line carrying bits of leaves and dead insects.

A wall of sound builds, humming insects, tinkling frogs, and the growl of a distant howler monkey accompany the rain.

Frog catches fly, armadillo scuttles, flowers tremble and drink the rain. The whole scene alive and pulsing.

The ants clamber over each other and march underground to the nest descending into...

CUT TO:

**DARKNESS**

A quiet ritual song is whistled solo. Breathly, discordant and repetitive...it sounds ceremonial, purposeful but not yet at full volume.

Slowly the moonlight pulls back the blanket of darkness and reveals forms.

CUT TO:

**INT. PRIMITIVE WOODEN SHACK - NIGHT**

A match is struck illuminating the face of shaman ALFREDO who lights a fat hand-rolled cigarette. He sits crosslegged on a rough wooden floor dressed in black and white robes covered with intricate geometries.

Taking a full drag of tobacco he pushes it through his lips in a wide whistling arc, filling the match-light with smoke.

The haze hangs in space and we hear a faint uncomfortable groan from the perimeter of the room. The match is puffed out and hope leaves the room.

Alfredo begins to quietly hum a three note melody.

The moonlight coming in through the mosquito netted windows reveals a sparse scattering of human forms on the floor propped against the walls of the hut.

Trembling caucasian female hands, wearing a ring with a blue stone, scrabble across a wooden floor, searching...

The organic jungle soundscape shifts into a throbbing digital heartbeat peppered with mechanical insects.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hey...are you okay? Where--Where are you?

Her hands locate a small weathered plastic washbasin, grips both sides firmly.

Alfredo ramps up the intensity breaking into a loud, commanding song in a language from another planet.

ALFREDO

Na, ney na na na ney, na ney na na ney.

She leans over the bucket and vomits stars and geometric figures into it.

Momentarily puzzled and relieved she watches them dance.

Another tidal wave of vomit violently issues forth.

This time the purge is technicolor, ridiculously filling and flowing over the edges of the basin like a storm at sea. Patterned, luminous snakes surf the liquid as she coughs.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh, God...please.

She looks up from her tub to see two dark animal forms approach.

Strange piggy devil dogs bare their teeth. Are they real? They feel very fucking real.

She scrambles backwards, kicking over the bucket.

It floods the floor with oily green grey slime.

She is up, gasping for air as she crawls backwards in retreat, pushing open the swing door and...

CUT TO:

**EXT. SHACK/CLEARING - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

Tumbles down steps, face-plants in the mud.

She lifts herself up to her elbows and stares into the wall of jungle foliage about five meters away.

Two yellow eyes study her from the foliage which seethes and roils, luminescent. Everything is alive and watching.

The woman rolls over onto her back. Rain falls from the dark sky in a kind of baptism.

MAEVE (40) CI lies spread-eagle with ringlets of wet curly hair, athletic. Her loose muddied embroidered dress riding up her legs. She's never been this filthy in her life but it's not even a vague concern. She IS the mud.

She lifts her head and looks down at her feet.

Flowers and vines coil around her legs blooming and multiplying. So strange and beautiful.

She closes her eyes and opens them again to find her body is that of a jaguar. She is a big cat licking her cub clean, slowly, tenderly, wrapped in her strong paws.

A gun fires nearby. She startles, the sound tearing her vision in half.

She sits up trembling, head spinning wildly to locate the source.

Her vision is red. The rain is red. Everything is red.

## TRUE NATURE

**INT. LOS ANGELES LAW FIRM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

A new age water bottle sits on a table filled with amethyst crystals. This bottle belongs to...

MAEVE HEALY (40) a massage therapist with hair tied into a ponytail, natural, fit and organized, wearing designer hemp clothing. She sits on one side of a conference table distractedly rubbing a festival entry stamp off the back of her hand.

MAEVE'S LAWYER (30s) sits next to her, clean cut and babyfaced. Despite his nice suit and his stack of pages he's gonna get eaten alive.

Opposite them sits... her ex-husband, DR. MARK HUTCHINS (50s), sporting a five-thousand dollar suit with no tie. Others exist to serve him. He is absorbed with his phone.

MARK'S LAWYER (60) an old school lawyer, hiding her age behind heavy makeup and a classic pin striped suit. No paperwork on their side of the table. At all.

MAEVE'S LAWYER

Thanks for coming in today Rachael, Mark. I think we're all encouraged by your willingness to give mediation another try.

MARK

Doctor Hutchins.

Maeve stares at the conference table. Mark stares at Maeve. Mark's lawyer inspects Maeve, her eyes coming to rest on the crystal filled water bottle.

MAEVE'S LAWYER

Sorry. Doctor Hutchins. So, my client would like to set in place a proper parenting agreement.

MARK

Will's happy where he is.

Maeve shakes her head, instantly frustrated. She lets her lawyer take this.

MAEVE'S LAWYER

The school says Will's missing too many days. They've also found spray paint in his locker. His grades have dropped. He should be seeing his mother regularly.

MARK

You're just upset that he doesn't want to see you.

MAEVE

Because you fill his head with lies.

Maeve's lawyer touches her arm. She shuts up.

MAEVE'S LAWYER

The family psychologist has advised that you're being obstructive, Doctor Hutchins.

(MORE)

MAEVE'S LAWYER (CONT'D)

If we have to make an application to the court, you'll be forced to comply with a fifty-fifty arrangement. Why don't we save some money and just draft something up now?

MARK

William's fifteen, he's old enough to make his own decision. He's chosen me.

Maeve digs her fingernails into her forearm. She tries to stifle a cough but it comes anyway.

Maeve's Lawyer puts a hand on her hand.

She stops digging. Takes a measured breath.

MAEVE'S LAWYER

Alright let's come back to that. What about the asset settlement?

MARK'S LAWYER

We are still compiling.

MARK

No. Figures have been estimated.

MAEVE

By you, not the forensic accountant. We need real numbers.(sharp cough)

MARK

What could you possibly know about finances?

MAEVE'S LAWYER

(trying to interrupt)

Dr. Hutchens...

MAEVE

I know how you twist them to serve your own agenda.

MARK

Just stick to your crystals and aromatherapy.

MAEVE'S LAWYER

We've already been waiting for several weeks on this. Can we at least try and do a back of the envelope calculation today?

Maeve barks another cough.

Mark is distracted by his phone.

MAEVE'S LAWYER (CONT'D)  
Doctor Hutchens?

MARK'S LAWYER  
We could try. Mark?

MARK  
Huh?

Maeve begins pulling out documents from the stack.

Coughing fully now a steady wheeze with release.

MARK (CONT'D)  
That won't be accurate. You have no idea  
what things cost.

MAEVE'S LAWYER  
(to Mark)  
We have qualified valuations of the  
house.

Mark scoffs, plays with his phone.

Maeve's lawyer slides her a glass of water.

MAEVE'S LAWYER (CONT'D)  
None of us wants to waste time in court.  
Can we try and make a good use of this  
time today?

MARK  
I'm here.

Maeve clearly unwell, starts shoving stuff into her bag.

Mark rolls his eyes.

MAEVE  
I can't -- you always do this. I have to  
go and work. I can't keep paying for this  
thing to go nowhere.

MARK  
Work harder. I know that's always been a  
challenge for you.

She shoots to standing and collapses to the floor.

A beat.

MARK'S LAWYER  
Let's reschedule?

CUT TO:

**EXT. LAWYERS PARKING LOT - DAY**

Suburban cookie cutter parking lot. Maeve stops at her VW Golf and dumps her shoulder bag on the bonnet.

She rummages around in her bag, digs out a sage stick, and places it on the bonnet.

The paper label wrapped around it reads, "Sacred Sage: Clears Negative Energy Fast."

She digs out a lighter and ignites one end of the smudge. It flames and once it's going she blows it out.

She watches the smoldering and begins a cleansing ritual to shake off the lawyers office.

She passes it over her arms...

...and legs...

She turns in the smoke, breathes in heavily to centre herself. She's back.

**INT. VW GOLF - DAY**

She gets in behind the wheel and dumps her bag on the passenger seat. She leans out with the smudge stick and stubs it out on the cement.

She spots the time on the dash: 12:52PM.

MAEVE

Shhhoot!

She shoves the smudge stick in the car's ashtray.

CUT TO:

**EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY**

Maeve's car pulls out into busy traffic.

She flicks on the radio, fiddles with dial until she finds the outro of a feel good oldie.

She sings along loudly, uplifted.

The smudge stick is still smoldering, slowly hazing up the car.

Maeve sniffs, looks down and notices the burning stick.

She rolls down windows. The songs ends and the news comes with an obnoxious station ID.

REPORTER (FROM RADIO)

Tens of thousands of people displaced by storm could soon need housing as cold weather closes in...

A driver cuts her off.

She slams on the brakes and blasts the horn.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

...New York's political leaders have warned.

A Police Siren does a short blast.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg put the figure at 30,000-40,000 people.

Maeve sees Police lights in the rearview.

She indicates and pulls over.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SIDE OF THE MAIN ROAD - DAY**

Maeve is stopped on the shoulder. The cop car behind her.

The POLICEMAN hoists his doughnut filled waistline out of his car and strides towards her car.

Maeve tries to squelch the smudge stick in the ashtray as smokes wafts out the windows.

Police Officer arrives at the car, stares in at her.

She leaves the smudge stick alone.

POLICEMAN

Driver's license ma'am?

MAEVE

Of course officer.

Maeve starts shuffling through her handbag...

Is surprised and alarmed to find a baggie of ecstasy pills sticking out of her sunglass case.

She goes quite still like an antelope sensing danger near the waterhole.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

What's the reason for pulling me over?

She carefully extracts her license and hands it over.

POLICEMAN

(takes license)

You were driving erratically.

MAEVE

The guy in front cut me off. Didn't you see that?

He waves the smoke away as it comes out the window.

POLICEMAN

What's burning?

MAEVE

It's a sage stick. For uh...smudging.

POLICEMAN

Can you pass it out to me please?

She does. He reads the label.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Clears negative energy?

MAEVE

It's supposed to.

POLICEMAN

You shouldn't have incendiary devices in a moving vehicle ma'am.

MAEVE

What? People smoke in their cars all the time.

POLICEMAN

Wait here.

The Policeman takes the still smoking smudge and walks it back to the squad car holding it at arms length.

Maeve watches him in the wing mirror, and without moving her head and shoulders sneaks another look at the quantity of pills in the baggie. There are six!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

**EXT.- DAY - EARTHCORE FESTIVAL**

Thumping techno charges the lawn of earth warriors, pixies and various gyrating youth. Maeve is a sweaty mess dancing her ass off, eyes closed, at one with the music.

STEPHANIE (28) earth child and rainbow clad festival veteran approaches, gives her a thump.

MAEVE

This music is unbelievable. Why didn't I ever know about this?!

STEPHANIE

Hey, I'm just gonna leave some things in your bag okay? I'm heading to the port-a-potties.

Maeve keeps dancing unperturbed while Stephanie stuffs a cardigan into her shoulder bag, amused.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Remember to drink your water so your head doesn't blow off.

Maeve flicks her a thumbs up and takes a big swig from the amethyst filled water bottle.

END FLASHBACK:

She watches fat policeman in rearview lean into squad car and retrieve the radio and a can of coke. He calls in her license number.

Striding back towards her car, he pours the coke over the sage stick.

Maeve's hand shoots back into her handbag, grabs the baggie, lifts her hips sticks her hand down the waistband of her pants and inserts them into her vagina.

Policeman arrives at her window just in time to see her hand snap from between her legs.

He pauses, a little spark igniting in his loins.

With a knowing smile he presents the soggy sage to her like a dead rodent.

She accepts the dead rodent.

He eases the ticket from the machine and she accepts it.

MAEVE

Are we finished?

POLICEMAN

Unless you wanna do a little rain dance or hex my mother-in-law?

Maeve shakes her head no.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

My ex wife used to get off on the uniform too.

He hands back her drivers license.

Maeve smiles with a bad taste in her mouth.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

You've got a squeaky clean record Mrs. Healy. I'd suggest you do your witchy-poo business and whatever other kinks you got goin' on outside of drive time.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

Maeve hurries towards the hospital entrance, her big bag of gear under her arm.

As she approaches the sliding doors, she recognizes a man on his way out.

This is DANIEL (60S), a lanky, handsome architect clad in a rumpled, slept-in suit. His eyes are pools of blue rimmed red from lack of sleep.

MAEVE

Daniel! Hey.

Daniel returns to earth and realizes it's her.

DANIEL

Hey.

MAEVE

How's Kate doing? I thought you were going to move her out of here into a hospice?

DANIEL

I can't. I don't think...

He shakes his head, tears build.

MAEVE

I'm sorry.

People passing notice his public emotion.

She gives him a hug.

DANIEL

We have to make the choice as a family.  
I'm just waiting for Sofie to get here.

Maeve nods and lets him go. There's genuine warmth between them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Have you got time for a coffee?

MAEVE

I have a client. But... he's in a coma. I suppose he won't notice if I'm a little late. Let's go.

She puts an arm around Daniel, turns him around and they stroll back inside.

DANIEL

Have you been smoking?

CUT TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL - CAFE - DAY**

Maeve notes the congestion at the coffee counter and quickly grabs a juice from the fridge instead.

She turns to see Daniel stepping into the queue.

Bracing herself for the delay, she joins him.

DANIEL

It's not that Kate's dying... it's that we didn't spend enough time talking about what she wanted and now I can't ask her.

They reach the counter and Maeve deposits her juice.

The Barista waits expectantly for their order.

MAEVE

(to Daniel meaning 'coffee')

What do you want?

DANIEL

I don't know what I'd want... how do you decide that for someone else?

MAEVE

(patiently)

You know her best Daniel.

The barista waits awkwardly clearing his throat.

DANIEL

(to Maeve)

Do I? I hardly even know myself. How should any of us be spending our time?

MAEVE

Start with simple choices...coffee?

DANIEL

Sorry. Espresso.

Daniel fumbles in his pockets for his wallet.

Maeve checks the time on the wall clock.

MAEVE

It's okay. I've got it.

Maeve hands over some cash. They step aside and wait.

DANIEL

At my age, you feel like you're flowing into the narrow neck of the funnel. All those decisions you made, good or bad are pushing you through this tight passage under great pressure. When you're young, you're just out there splashing around, believing you can do anything.

MAEVE

Some decisions are hard no matter how old you are.

DANIEL

Yeah but decisions even if they're easy  
create a momentum that you can get caught  
up in.

His coffee is ready. The Barista hands it over.

Daniel heads to a table and Maeve follows.

They select the empty table next to one occupied by,

JESSICA (CI) 30s flowing dark hair, bohemian style with  
bangles and beads, full figured. She drinks tea, wears  
headphones and reads a book entitled "Awakening Shakti"  
by Sally Kempton.

MAEVE

Like what?

They sit.

DANIEL

Well, like architecture. I've had a  
pretty fantastic career but it hasn't  
been without a cost. I spent years  
neglecting Kate and the kids all to build  
a name for myself. I could've taken a  
different path. A path less ego driven.

MAEVE

Goat herder?

DANIEL

I was always interested in some kind of  
energetic healing.

MAEVE

Really? I didn't know that about you.  
Like Reiki or something?

DANIEL

Kind of. When I was young I learned a lot  
traveling through India. A Sadhu told me  
that healing was my true vocation.

Jessica begins to hum audibly at the next table. Maeve  
notices amused.

MAEVE

Wow.

DANIEL

But I was young and chose architecture  
because it had substance or something.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I think I thought healing was too mysterious. I couldn't explain how it worked. Architecture is less hocus-pocus. People get it.

MAEVE

You do make amazing buildings. But I know that one. Real world verses flying blind. Still, if you feel like you missed something, maybe now's your time?

DANIEL

Maybe. Time seems to be running out. I think I need to focus on Kate.

She reaches across the table and puts her hand on top of his. He relaxes under her touch.

Suddenly Jessica erupts into song, oblivious to her surroundings.

Startle gives way to enchantment as Daniel and Maeve stop talking and listen.

This is a beautiful voice, trained but intuitive. The song wafts through the grey cafeteria like frangipani.

The song is Ella Fitzgerald's Angel Eyes and Jessica mirrors her perfectly.

JESSICA

(sings)

Pardon me but I got to run  
The fact's uncommonly clear  
Got to find who's now number one  
And why my angel eyes ain't here  
Oh, where is my angel eyes

Maeve's appointment alarm goes off and the spell is broken.

Jessica stops singing, meets Maeve's eyes and smiles.

Daniel awkwardly retracts his hand.

Maeve fumbles the phone to silent.

Jessica returns to her book.

MAEVE

(to Daniel)

I really need to get to work.

(MORE)

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Why don't you come and see me this week for a massage? Once Sophie gets here and you can take a break.

DANIEL

Wednesday?

MAEVE

Absolutely. Around 3 o'clock? Hang in there.

Maeve gets up, gives him a shoulder hug and scurries to the waiting lift with her gear.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL - COMA WARD - DAY**

Coma patient, BEN (40s) CI, boyish good looks and slim with dark disheveled hair, lies in his hospital bed attached to humming dripping machines. His bed is surrounded by votive offerings of cards, fake floral arrangements and unopened bottles of tequila. He smiles benignly like the patron saint of surfing.

Maeve strides in with her shoulder bag.

MAEVE

Hey, Ben. How's my favorite zombie today? Sorry I'm late.

Maeve plugs her phone in to charge and an essential oil diffuser, choosing a couple oils while she talks.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Had to attend a waterboarding session with Mark and the lawyers this morning. Ghastly. How was your morning?

Maeve slips the pillow out from under his head. Brushes his hair out of his eyes.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

I know, right? If you haven't got something nice to say don't say anything at all.

She lowers his bed.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

How about some tunes? John Lee Hooker? Or Afro Psychedelica? We don't need you to be any more relaxed.

Ben just lies there, eyes closed.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Okay! Let's go with blues.

Maeve puts on John Lee Hooker.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Feel free to join in, don't be shy.  
You've got the rhythm in ya, son, just  
let it out.

She pulls the covers back and from his legs and notices his toenails painted orange. Pumps massage oil into her palm on the beat and begins a leg massage.

A knock on the open door.

Maeve turns to see...

A middle-aged BO-HO couple in the doorway looking like they just stepped off Venice Beach.

JESSICA From the cafeteria downstairs, employing an embodied confidence that fills the room, and...

ELIJAH (LATE 40S) panama hat and Walter White goatee sporting jeans and a collared business shirt over a tropical complexion.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Ben's in the middle of a private treatment. Can you come back in 40 minutes?

JESSICA

Hi Ben, it's Jessica.  
(to Maeve)  
We won't stay long.

MAEVE

Sorry... If you want to wait outside I can come and get you when I'm finished?

JESSICA

It's really our only chance to see him. We're flying out this afternoon. He's a really dear friend. If you could make an exception...

MAEVE

Ahhhhhhookay. I guess it's alright as long as you're quiet.

JESSICA

Awesome.

They sit down.

Maeve gets back to her massage... with an audience.

They sit there and watch.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

So, how's he doing?

MAEVE

Okay, I guess...I don't really know.

ELIJAH

What have the doctors said?

Jessica gets up and picks up the chart from the end of the bed and starts leafing through Ben's paperwork.

MAEVE

I'm not really in on all of that. I see Ben for his massage every week and that's about it.

(to Jessica)

I think that's private?

JESSICA

Can't understand the scribbles anyway. No harm done.

Maeve agitated, tries to regain focus. Resumes massage.

Jaw clenched as John Lee Hooker sings about one tragedy after another. Maeve reaches over and pokes the speaker off. She coughs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You seem stressed. Sorry, I can imagine being a therapist is pretty challenging.

Maeve tensely nods without looking up.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Who looks after you when you've had a tough day?

MAEVE

It's okay really, I love working with Ben, he's great... I could just use a vacation I guess.

JESSICA  
From the long hours?

MAEVE  
Naw.

JESSICA  
From...?

MAEVE  
Long divorce proceedings.

JESSICA  
Ouch. The most painful marathon of all.

Maeve nods.  
Elijah watches his wife winning Maeve over.  
Jessica smiles at her.

MAEVE  
So how do you guys know Ben?

JESSICA  
Ben was part of our conservation project  
in the Amazon. We own some land down  
there.

MAEVE  
The Amazon. That sounds amazing. Ben  
always had a hand in interesting  
projects.

JESSICA  
Yeah, Ben had plans to plant trees and  
all kinds of superfoods on our land, we  
got started and then he had the accident.

MAEVE  
Hey Benedictus, you better wake up soon.  
You've got trees to plant.

Maeve moves up to massage Ben's arm. Jessica stands on  
the opposite side of Ben, reading his get well cards.

Maeve notices her bracelet, a woven tribal design with a  
wooden disk in its centre.

MAEVE (CONT'D)  
That's a beautiful bracelet.

JESSICA  
Thanks. It's Peruvian, my Godmother made  
it.

MAEVE

What's the middle part made of?

Jessica unhooks it and holds it in her hand to explain.

JESSICA

It's an ayahuasca vine.

Maeve glances towards the door, checks they're alone.

MAEVE

Ayahuasca. As in, the hallucinogen?

JESSICA

That's the one. The most important plant in the Amazon.

MAEVE

I've been reading about it for years... I'm really curious to try it but it sounds a bit dangerous. I hear it's something you have to be really prepared for.

JESSICA

There's a lot of misconceptions about amazonian medicines.

ELIJAH

When you do it with the right shaman, it'll change your life. Right, Ben?

MAEVE

So, you guys know a shaman down there?

JESSICA

Yeah, for the last five years I've been an apprentice to a really gifted healer from the Shipibo tribe. Alfredo. He's my spiritual godfather.

MAEVE

That is so cool.

Maeve relaxes and works across Ben's chest.

ELIJAH

We're looking forward to taking Ben back to the land once he wakes up. Alfredo thinks there are plants that can heal his brain injury.

JESSICA

They've just got a whole different way of treating illness. I've seen Alfredo perform all kinds of miracles.

MAEVE

I could use a miracle.

JESSICA

All of us could. What kind do you need?

MAEVE

I've got this problem with the blood pressure in my lungs, the doctors don't have any answers.

JESSICA

Yeah, unless there's a pill for it, they're useless, aren't they? Big pharma controls them all.

MAEVE

Do you think Alfredo could help?

JESSICA

Without a doubt.

Maeve tucks Ben in and wipes her hands with a towel.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Come and visit, we're on our way there after visiting California. We want to be with Alfredo for December 21st.

MAEVE

For the end of the Mayan Calendar...the end of the world.

JESSICA

Hey, you're clued in. It's not going to be the end. It'll be a new beginning.

MAEVE

I'd so love to do that. Right now I just have too many people I'm responsible for.

Maeve tidies up Ben's nightstand.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

...and flying is kind of risky for me. High altitudes.

JESSICA

Women are forever looking after other people, putting their own needs to the side. It's important to do things for yourself sometimes.

Nurse comes in...

NURSE

(to MAEVE)

Why are they here? No visits especially during therapy sessions. The family is really clear about this.

JESSICA

(points to MAEVE)

She said it was okay.

Elijah stands up and goes to Ben's bedside.

ELIJAH

We should go babe, otherwise we'll miss this flight and I need a coffee before we head out.

JESSICA

That's right. Coffee.

(to Maeve)

Journalists' veins run black with it.

As Maeve packs up.

MAEVE

I can relate, I'm hopeless before my morning latte. What kind of journalist?

ELIJAH

My day gig is with a national newspaper. Environmental editor. I'd prefer to be planting trees instead of working for a company that prints on dead ones.  
(shrugs) Goals.

Maeve laughs. The nurse stares.

NURSE

Can you please take this out into the hallway?

MAEVE

Okay, okay.

JESSICA

Do you have a card or anything? Every time I fly to the US my back is fucked. It would be great to get your details for a future massage?

Maeve locates side pocket of the bag and produces a card.

MAEVE

Here you go.

JESSICA

Awesome, I'll be in touch.

MAEVE

Well, it was really nice meeting you both.

JESSICA

Nice to meet you too...

Jessica looks at Maeve's card.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Maeve?

MAEVE

Oh, yes. Maeve.

Maeve extends her hand to Jessica to shake it, but Jessica puts the bracelet around her wrist.

As she does it up...

JESSICA

Jessica Fisher.

ELIJAH

Elijah.

MAEVE

Oh my gosh, I can't take this.

JESSICA

Yes you can. It will look after you until you get to the jungle. Come and see us. Meet Alfredo and his magic plants. We'll be in Iquitos.

MAEVE

Some day. This bracelet is so beautiful.

JESSICA

Some day, never happens. Seize the opportunity. You've got nothing to lose, right?

MAEVE

Thanks. You guys are the bright spot of my day so far. I'll try.

JESSICA

Awesome.

The Nurse, sick of waiting stares like a bulldog.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hasta pronto.

Maeve watches them walk out as the Nurse writes in the chart. Jessica Hitler salutes behind the nurse. Maeve smiles.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL WARD CORRIDOR**

Maeve walks down the corridor offering friendly greetings to various hospital staff.

Maeve sticks her head around the open door of a staff doctor's consulting room.

Inside, perched temporarily on a low stool in front of a communal screen slouches DR. DEREK. Congenial but tired.

MAEVE

Knock knock?

DR. DEREK

Hi Maeve, how's it going?

MAEVE

Okay mostly. Can I get your opinion about something?

DR. DEREK

Friendly opinion or professional opinion?

MAEVE

Based on my recent test results, how safe do you think is it to fly?

DR. DEREK

You know this is risky Maeve. Your pulmonary pressure has been totally erratic. I would stay home and chill.

MAEVE

So, like, what could happen?

DR. DEREK

Apart from blacking out? Respiratory failure. Heart attack. Heart damage. Are you taking the meds?

MAEVE

No. I feel better if I don't.

DR. DEREK

So why bother asking my opinion?

MAEVE

Because Google isn't across my current situation.

DR. DEREK

I disagree. Google. Knows. Everything.

MAEVE

Okay, Google doesn't have your bedside manner.

DR. DEREK

You should be taking this seriously.

MAEVE

I am! I just know that I wasn't always a sick person and maybe I should try some alternatives. You said yourself, they don't know what causes it.

DR. DEREK

We've been through this so many times. As a friend and a professional, just follow your doctor's orders. Stay home. Reduce your stress. Take the meds.

Maeve nods like she always does and silently mimics his last sentence.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HIGHSCHOOL - DAY**

Maeve stands outside her parked car watching for her son Will to exit a well appointed suburban private school. She fiddles with her bracelet.

WILL (CI) 16 year old teen emerges alone from a talkative throng of colorful students. He slouches across the lawn in a monochrome armor of track pants, beanie and headphones.

Maeve waves.

Will sees her but shows no sign of changing his trajectory across the lawn.

MAEVE

Will!

Maeve makes a bee line across lawn to cut him off.

Will keeps walking. Headphones in. Maeve walks with him.

WILL

Hello, Maeve.

MAEVE

Didn't you see me waving?

WILL

What are you doing here? I thought you had some court thing with Dad today.

MAEVE

That was this morning. Hey, I thought we could have dinner together and watch a movie. I bought the magic ingredients and made you... "THE CURRY".

WILL

Naw, I've got plans.

MAEVE

Come on Willy-amo, we haven't seen each other in ages. I'll give you a lift? On the way, you can stop home with me and check out your new room.

They stop walking and stand in the field.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

It's pretty nice. Your room is actually bigger than mine. Jiggsy has been sleeping on your bed. He misses you too.

WILL  
Naw. Take me to Dad's?

MAEVE  
Really? Come on...

Will stares without emotion.

MAEVE (CONT'D)  
Alright. Whatever.

CUT TO:

**INT. VW GOLF - DAY**

Maeve drives along the street lined with expensive houses with hedges and tall fences. A goofy toddler-made clay ornament labelled WILL swings from her rearview mirror.

Will stares ahead, headphones in, blasting music.

WILL  
Your car smells muss.

MAEVE  
(shouting)  
Can we take these out?

She pulls out one of his earbuds. Will pulls away, annoyed, rolls down car window..

WILL  
So did you and Dad finalize the divorce?

Will pulls phone out of pocket. A lighter jumps out and it lands on the console.

Maeve retrieves it.

He hooks his phone to the car stereo, blasts NWA.

MAEVE  
No. We're still working through things.

Maeve turns down volume on the stereo.

WILL  
Yeah, Dad said you'd be difficult.

MAEVE  
What? That's not true Will, I just want things to be fair.

WILL

He does too. It's his money, you didn't earn any of it. Why are you so greedy?

MAEVE

I'm not greedy. I made lots of valuable contributions to the family. Not everything is about money you know.

WILL

So why are you fighting about it then?

MAEVE

I stayed home to look after you when you were little. Sidelined my career. How do you put a price tag on that?

WILL

Whatever. Can we stop at McDonald's?

MAEVE

Why don't you just come over for dinner?

WILL

Can I have ten dollars?

MAEVE

For what?

WILL

Never mind.

MAEVE

Doesn't Dad give you an allowance?

WILL

He's a stinge.

They stop outside a large well appointed suburban home.

MAEVE

Hey, Neil said he had two extra tickets to the soccer game this weekend, did you want to go?

WILL

Naw, I'm not into soccer anymore.

MAEVE

Since when?

WILL

Not interested.

Will unplugs phone, gets out of car.

Will grabs his backpack, it rattles with spray cans.

MAEVE

What's in your backpack?

WILL

So, can I have ten dollars?

Maeve opens purse and passes the money out the window.

MAEVE

I miss you.

WILL

You wouldn't have to if you didn't leave.

That hits her hard.

WILL (CONT'D)

Can I have my lighter?

MAEVE

No. I'm not going to give you your lighter back so you can go and...

WILL

Fine. If you're going to be a bitch, I'll just have to steal another one.

Will turns and disappears inside the security gate.

CUT TO:

**EXT. FRONT DOOR OF MAEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Handwritten note taped to front door says "Need rent paid today, no more extensions. Call me. Lou

She removes note, turns key in lock and pushes door.

**INT. MAEVE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Maeve enters a modest apartment with her bag and is greeted by a chirpy cat JIGGS, at her feet.

MAEVE

Hello Jiggysy, my little man-cat.

They head down hall and stop in a doorway.

Maeve reaches in and turns on the lights...

Stares into Will's empty bedroom. A perfectly made bed with obviously new everything, thoughtfully arranged.

She flicks off the light. Jiggsy meows.

MAEVE (CONT'D)  
(to Jiggsy)  
Will's not coming, pallie.

She walks through an small lounge room filled with plants and drops her bag next to a comfy couch covered with tribal cushions.

Goes to kitchen and turns off the slow-cooker.

She gets out a bottle of wine and pours a healthy glass.

Drinks.

She ponders over a series of abstract black and white drawings depicting vortexes, horizons and single point perspective on the kitchen table. The table has been commandeered as an artist workspace rather than dining area.

She shifts the drawings around into a different arrangement. Frowns, leaves them.

She returns to the unwanted curry and ladles it into Tupperware containers. She shoves it into freezer and shuts the door.

Jiggsy eats his cat food as MAEVE takes her wine into the living room and turns on the TV for company.

Flicks from station to station...

- Cooking Show

- News,

She mutes the volume, keeps flicking.

- Coke ad, Insurance ad.

- Pharma Ad.

James Cameron's Avatar is on... deep into the movie. She leaves it on without the sound on. Sinks into the couch transfixed.

She fiddles with the ayahuasca bracelet.

Jiggysy comes and sits next to her.

She grabs her laptop from the coffee table, opens it up and logs into her email.

A new message from Jessica Fisher! She opens it to find a photo of smiling Ben and a SHAMAN next to a huge tree. The message underneath says "Don't wait, Chica."

MAEVE (CONT'D)

At least one good thing happened today  
Jiggysy, I made a new friend.

She pets cat and returns to the tv screen...

*Na'vi Jake Sully stands under the Tree of Voices. He grabs a glowing vine and connects it to his hair, glowing tendrils wrap around his plait.*

BLING!!!

A message from her lawyer JOHN HOLGATE ATTORNEYS. Subject heading: Next Mediation Meeting.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

(reads to cat sarcastically)

Asshole Mark is unable to attend another meeting for ten to twelve weeks.

Pours another glass of wine and stares at screen.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Fuck it.

She opens browser and clicks on her Flight Centre shortcut. Types: flights Iquitos Peru.

CUT TO:

**INT. LAX - INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL CHECK IN DESK - DAY**

Check in attendant slides boarding pass and passport across counter to Maeve.

CHECK IN ATTENDANT

Boarding at Gate 42, security is to your left. Enjoy your flight Ms. Healy.

MAEVE

Thanks.

Maeve doesn't leave the counter.

CHECK IN ATTENDANT  
Security is just to your left there.

MAEVE  
If I happened to need oxygen on the flight, they have it, right?

CHECK IN ATTENDANT  
If you require oxygen on the flight, you need to notify the airline in advance. Do you have a medical condition that requires oxygen ma'am?

MAEVE  
No, no. I was just wondering. I'm fine. All good.

CHECK IN ATTENDANT  
Enjoy your flight ma'am.

**INT. LAX - PLANE - ECONOMY - DAY**

Maeve is strapped into her window seat while pre-flight protocols unfold. Flight attendant cruises aisle checking seatbelts.

RING RING!

Maeve startles and digs out her phone. Answers.

MAEVE  
Hello?

DANIEL (FROM PHONE)  
Hi Maeve, I'm going to have to cancel that massage this afternoon.

MAEVE  
Shit! Daniel!

DANIEL  
Sorry.

MAEVE  
No, I didn't mean shit at you. Just shit that I forgot. Is everything okay?

DANIEL  
Not really. Kate died this morning.

MAEVE  
Oh no...

DANIEL

Yeah. It was a shock. Even when you think you're ready, you're not.

Intercom makes announcement of impending take off.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Where are you?

MAEVE

(tears up)

I'm on a plane. To Peru.

DANIEL

Peru?

MAEVE

Yeah, for the 21st, the end of the world and all that. I think there's something hopeful there for me. We're about to take off.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT stands over her.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Phones off now please.

DANIEL

Why Peru?

MAEVE

Long story. Daniel I'm so sorry. They need me to hang up. I'll call you as soon as I can. I promise. Send my love to Sophie okay?

DANIEL

I will.

She hangs up. Flight attendant moves on.

She looks out the window and zips her hoodie to her chin.

She quickly finds Will's contact details and sends him the message: I LOVE YOU. Then switches phone off.

CUT TO:

**INT. PLANE - MORNING**

She wakes up as it lands in LIMA.

**INT. LIMA AIRPORT - DAY**

Maeve stands in yet another security line.

CUT TO:

**EXT. - BELEN MARKET IQUITOS - DAY**

Alejandro (26) CI, wearing baggy jeans and unlaced Air Jordans, weaves his way through the congested bustle of the open air market feeding on a bag of small tropical fruits. Like a dog that's been kicked too many times, his eyes avoid contact and he moves quickly, spitting the fruit pips to the muddy ground.

His robotic eating is punctuated periodically by coughing as he cruises down the maze of aisles.

Passing fish mongers, fruit sellers and plastic toys, he turns down the medicine alley. Stalls of women sell tied bunches of plants, seeds, barks and colourful bottled liquids. He arrives at the stall of Doña Maria. She appears to be about 8000 years old.

She sits behind a table of plants, potions and talismans, stitching an elaborate plant motif into a dark swath of cotton fabric. She senses him approach but addresses him without looking up.

DOÑA MARIA

What brings you to me today cachorrito?

ALEJANDRO

I need luck and fortune Abuela.

She snorts amused.

He hangs his head and runs his fingers across the edge of a basket filled with roots.

Doña Maria tucks her embroidery away and assesses him with a steely eye. She rummages beneath the table and motions for him to extend his hand.

She places three small red seeds in his palm closing his fingers, nodding. Relief washes over him.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

Muchas gracias.

Her hand requests payment. He presses a note into it which quickly disappears into her apron pocket.

She deftly fills a plastic bag with some leaves, knots the top and shakes it at him to take.

DOÑA MARIA

For your lungs. You need them more than you need money.

Alejandro shuffles on arriving at a gathering of dozens of mototaxis clumped on the fringe of the marketplace. He approaches his uncle "Tio" a driver in his 60's leaning against his ride.

ALEJANDRO

Hola Tio, are we still okay for tonight?

Tio pretends not to hear the question, tightening the gas cap on his motorcycle.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

Tio. I really need your taxi tonight. It's very important.

TIO

It's always important with you.

ALEJANDRO

Please. Only one night. I'll bring it back in the morning with petrol.

TIO

(sarcastically)

Like last time?

Alejandro's phone rings, he checks the caller and a fleeting look of concern crosses his face. He doesn't answer. Tio has seen this too many times.

TIO (CONT'D)

This is the last time. Pay what you owe and get out.

ALEJANDRO

Don't worry, I just need to do a few trips to the airport to make ends meet. Graciela, she needs school shoes.

TIO

Meet me here at nine.

CUT TO:

**INT. LAN AIR PLANE - ECONOMY - DAY**

The aisles are full of people boarding. Exhausted, Maeve opens luggage bin to find it's full. Another. Full. And another same story.

MAEVE finds her window seat with a SMALL CHILD tucked into it. She checks her ticket.

She shows the CHILD'S MOTHER her boarding pass and points to her chest and the child's seat. The Child's Mother just smiles.

MAEVE  
(to flight attendant)  
Excuse me?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Si?

MAEVE  
Sorry, can you explain to them that this  
is my seat?

Flight attendant checks their boarding passes.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
There seems to be a double booking. I  
have to find one of you another seat.

Flight attendant, mother and child all stare at Maeve.

MAEVE  
That's fine I'll move. Is there another  
window seat? I've been flying for twenty-  
two hours so I'd like to try and sleep.

Flight attendant scans rear seats...

She gestures to a seat in between two BIG GUYS.

MAEVE (CONT'D)  
Window seat? I'm desperate for sleep.

Flight attendant points to same middle row. Maeve sighs.

Small Child waves bye-bye. Maeve waves bye-bye to her comfy seat.

She wedges herself and her bag between the beefy guys.

Maeve on autopilot puts on neck pillow, sprays hydrating elixir on face, drinks from water bottle with a crystal in it, applies eyepatch.

Breathes deeply, rhythmically the Big Guy's arms squishing her from both sides. Darkness.

**EXT.- NIGHT- METRO TRAIN TUNNEL**

Three male figures in dark clothing crouch near a chain link fence. Will uses bolt cutters to scissor an opening in the fence, KOOK holds the fence and a shopping bag of paint tins and GUS stands aside smoking a spliff and keeping lookout.

Fence opens and Will and Kook jog down a grassy slope and race across the tracks into the mouth of a dimly lit tunnel underpass.

Spray cans are shaken and a hand starts a curved blue outline over the concrete tunnel wall.

Another hand follows with orange filling in the form.

WILL

Gus! Hurry up dude.

GUS jogs down grassy slope and across the tracks.

GUS

I tore my fuckin jacket man.

WILL

C'mon start.

GUS

It's a brand new fuckin jacket.

KOOK

Dumbass. That's why you wear shit gear.

Will throws Gus a spray can. Gus bungles the catch.

WILL

Don't test me dude, there's no time.

Will turns back to finish the outline.

Gus doubles back to retrieve the can now resting inside the opposite tracks.

A train rounds the tunnel curve at speed on those tracks.

Will and Kook turn to see the train blasting past.

The spray can rattles in the gravel. Train brakes squeal.

CUT TO:

**INT. PLANE - NIGHT**

Darkness becomes vague forms...and far away voices.

A slapping sound. Then something familiar. A bright red lipstick covered mouth says...

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Senora! Senora Healy! MAY-VAH!

The flight attendant slaps Maeve's face firmly while the two beefy guys sheepishly watch from the aisle.

The rest of the plane is empty.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)  
Esta bien. It's okay. She's awake!

MAEVE  
Where am I?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Iquitos, Peru.

MAEVE  
Good. Not dead.

Flight attendant slides the straw of a juicebox between Maeve's lips and shoos the beefy guys down the aisle.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Drink some juice. You scare us! You wouldn't wake up.

**INT. IQUITOS AIRPORT - BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT**

MAEVE stands blanched and sweaty awaiting her suitcase under the shuddering fluorescents.

Other passengers, entirely local, chat to each other, happy to be home. There is only one baggage carousel at this tiny tropical airport and her pristine Samsonite emerges like Royalty teetering across a rubbish pile.

She retrieves it.

CUT TO:

**EXT. IQUITOS AIRPORT ARRIVALS - NIGHT**

She steps outside with her backpack and wheelie suitcase transitioning from relative calm to complete bedlam.

The dark parking area is chaos, filled with dozens of funny little claptrap rickshaws attached to motorcycles. Male drivers in t-shirts and shorts push forward for prime position, shouting for attention.

DRIVERS

Taxi?! Mototaxi?!

Overwhelmed she stops to take stock as others file out around her through the doorway.

The drivers jockey for position and Maeve feels vaguely faint. In the throng she sees a CUTE STREET KID selling bottles of water.

CUTE STREET KID

Water? One dollar.

She takes her wallet out of her backpack, takes out a US dollar and shoves her wallet back in her bag. Extracts her crystal water bottle to refill.

She sets the backpack down on the ground between her feet. She pays kid, takes bottle still surrounded by drivers, hustling.

ALEJANDRO pushes forward, grabs her wheelie suitcase and heads towards his ride beckoning her to follow.

MAEVE

Hey! Stop!

She lurches after him, as he gets swallowed by the crowd, following for four steps until she remembers her backpack! Back there! She turns back and...

The Cute Street Kid grabs her backpack and bolts off into the crowd.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

HEY! Stop that kid!

She goes to chase him but remembers her suitcase.

Turns back towards the taxi driver.

But now it's just a dark and hectic sea of identical mototaxis, banged up cars and locals shouldering suitcases.

Maeve stands there gripping a plastic water bottle in one hand and the empty crystal bottle in the other.

She stomps and spins around in disbelief.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

CUT TO:

**EXT. - PARKING LOT TAXI RANK**

She wanders along a string of idle mototaxis holding her crystal water bottle looking for her bag. Each driver offers her a ride.

She moves one to the other checking and refusing. No bag. No money. Taxi drivers begin to thin out.

She sees a young FEMALE TAXI DRIVER CI sitting on a mototaxi staring at her crystal water bottle.

Maeve approaches her.

MAEVE

Habla Ingles?

FEMALE TAXI DRIVER

A little.

CUT TO:

**EXT. IQUITOS STREETS - NIGHT**

Maeve rides in the back of a mototaxi swerving in and out of other drivers. Mototaxis are inches from each other almost touching, belching out noise and exhaust.

Every vehicle packed with cargo, driving fast with no safety protection.

Sleeping babies balanced carefully on handlebars.

Bushels of potatoes. Drunk muddy men. White goods. Big bunches of bananas. A small family dressed in their Sunday best.

No helmets. No seatbelts. Bare legs. Sandals.

Blown mufflers, wobbling wheels, greasy rags poking out of petrol tanks. Prayer is the only insurance policy.

Her driver expertly handles the motorcycle, now the proud owner of Maeve's crystal water bottle, swinging from the handlebars.

Rocketing through the throng of vehicles they pass through a shanty town with latino pop pumping out of open doorways, people sitting on milk crates eating street food.

Mangey dogs trot purposefully through the street. Some lay in the middle. Mechanics work on upended mototaxis.

Charcoal cooking fires and plastic table cloths.

Everyone stares. Men sometimes wolf whistle at her.

A beautiful cascade of indigenous fabrics wave on a rack with a woman sewing nearby.

Mud. So much mud.

At last we arrive in the center of town. Street lights glowing. Colonial buildings surround a large symmetrical town square. Locals stroll along contentedly digesting their dinner and groups of young men in fresh t-shirts show off for pretty girls in short skirts and tight jeans.

Maeve's mototaxi pulls to the curb.

FEMALE TAXI DRIVER

Plaza de Armas.

MAEVE

Gracias.

Maeve climbs out.

Female taxi driver waves and whips back into traffic, crystal water-bottle glinting in the streetlights.

Maeve looks around checking four directions which all pretty much look the same.

Feeling suddenly exposed and alone she begins to walk.

She passes an ice cream shop and views the multicolored flavors marked with hand lettered signs. MARACUYA, AGUAJE, LUCUMA, CAMU CAMU, GUYABANA, COCO.

Not one familiar flavor in this case.

She moves on. The street is very dark. No streetlights.

A shirtless dreadlocked hippie argues heatedly in Spanish with a crazy looking local who laughs like a lunatic.

She gives them a wide berth stepping into the street.

A few steps and she sinks into an ankle breaker of a pothole filled with brown liquid. So vile!

Shaking her foot she soldiers on until an oasis appears before her.

The Karma Cafe. An A frame chalkboard sign announces "WIFI. Cerveza. Pizza."

She goes in.

CUT TO:

**INT. KARMA CAFE - NIGHT**

This hippy hangout is a quiet but familiar bastion of young backpackers. Trance music, Psychedelic artwork, couches, stacks of books and vegan burritos on the menu.

LAWRENCE (50s) looking like a counter-culture icon with grey hair, rings, a Hawaiian shirt and cargo shorts sits in the corner, knitting. He notices Maeve, watches her find a couch nearby.

Maeve sits down, relieved.

The Peruvian WAITRESS CI comes over with a menu.

WAITRESS

Hola, Desea algo?

MAEVE

Hi, can I have the wifi password?

WAITRESS

Wifi is for paying customers.

MAEVE

Agua por favor?

Waitress leaves to get water. LITTLE KID CI comes in selling candy, lighters and flashlights.

LITTLE KID

Hey lady, you like Chiclets? You want some?

MAEVE

No!

LITTLE KID

Rolaids?

MAEVE

NO! Nada.

LITTLE KID

Okay okay, chill!

Waitress reappears with a bottle of water and a glass. Gives kid squinty eye, starts to open the bottle and Maeve stops her.

MAEVE

It's okay, I'll do it. Uh...the wifi?

Waitress rolls eyes and scribbles code on a napkin.

Little kid goes over to Lawrence who smiles, greets the kid in Spanish, fist bumps him.

Lawrence buys lighter.

Little kid heads off to hustle on the street. Lawrence makes eye contact with Maeve.

LAWRENCE

The lighters are the safest bet. They won't work at all, whereas the Chiclets are so old they'll blow your crowns. Nobody wants to be at the mercy of the fang ferrets of Iquitos.

MAEVE

Thanks for the tip!

LAWRENCE

So are you fasting or are you broke?

MAEVE

Sorry?

LAWRENCE

Your order of, and then, rather lackluster response to the water.

MAEVE

I didn't realize Sherlock Holmes was an Iquitos resident.

LAWRENCE

At your service madam.

MAEVE

Well Mr. Holmes, maybe you can help me solve the mystery of my stolen luggage.

LAWRENCE

I think this investigation can only proceed if we are well resourced. Beer? Or do we require spirits? My shout.

Lawrence moves over to her table signaling the waitress.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Carlita, dos cervezas, por favor.

MAEVE

(southern accent)

Thank you. Whoever you are, I've always depended on the kindness of strangers.

LAWRENCE

Pleasure is mine. So what brings you to the bowels of the underworld?

MAEVE

Transformation? I dunno. I'm feeling pretty lost at the moment and I met some interesting people who invited me down.

LAWRENCE

Well, you've come to the right place, albeit without sufficient supplies in your canoe.

MAEVE

That's an understatement. But I suppose I don't really need much for the end of the world anyway. The guy who stole my suitcase was probably just part of some greater cosmic plot.

LAWRENCE

Ahhhh, more clues. So you've come for the long awaited end of the mayan long count.

MAEVE

Yep. And it appears that I'll see the end with no toothbrush and filthy undies.

LAWRENCE

It's a folly to think that you'll need to accessorize for the apocalypse.

MAEVE

So you think it's true?

LAWRENCE

What?

MAEVE

The end.

LAWRENCE

The apocalypse is not something which is coming. The apocalypse has arrived in major portions of the planet and it's only because we live within a bubble of incredible privilege and social insulation that we still have the luxury of anticipating the apocalypse.

MAEVE

Well, Iquitos has felt like sitting in hell's waiting room. I mean, who gets all their shit stolen the moment they exit the airport??

LAWRENCE

Yeah. It's definitely a test before you have to face the Medusa. So where are these...

Lawrence does air-quotes.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

...friends of yours?

MAEVE

They're more like acquaintances that I hope will become friends. I've got an email address? I figured I'd get online here and try to send out a few SOS flares.

LAWRENCE

You're in the jungle now. All essential transactions occur face to face. In the third world, the digital exchange is secondary my dear.

MAEVE

So you're saying I'm doomed.

LAWRENCE

No, we just go old school. So what do these people look like and what are their names?

MAEVE

They're a couple. Elijah and Jessica Fisher. He's an environmental journalist and she's been studying with a local shaman. I think his name is Alfredo?

LAWRENCE

Yes, yes...a bit more please?

MAEVE

Um, she's probably in her mid thirties, long dark hair and a big laugh. He is older than she is and more reserved. They said they have land here. They invited me.

LAWRENCE

Does she punctuate most sentences with "Awesome"?

MAEVE

I suppose.

LAWRENCE

They have been known to frequent a few local haunts.

MAEVE

You know them? Are you serious?

LAWRENCE

I know Alfredo Cairuna. Jessica rings a bell. The question is, are you sure you want to find them?

MAEVE

Yes. Definitely.

LAWRENCE

Alright then. Remember, be careful what you ask for.

MAEVE

What are you saying?

LAWRENCE

I'm saying that we can go for a walk and fate will conspire with us. Come on finish up your cerveza.

MAEVE

No, no no. I'm not going anywhere without a wifi signal. I will stay put and sort out my future right here.

(MORE)

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Forgive me Mr. Holmes, I've just lost everything. I'm exhausted. I'm not leaving this oasis.

LAWRENCE

Understood. I'll go scouting.

MAEVE

Would you? Thank you. Thanks for the drink too. I really owe you big time. Holmes, is Alfredo a good shaman?

LAWRENCE

Hard to say really. Shamanism is just show business. Philosophy is just another branch of that same vaudevillian impulse.

MAEVE

So are you saying ayahuasca is bullshit?

LAWRENCE

No. The plants have real integrity. The psychedelic experience is not the equivalent of a dust bunny under your psychic bed, It's a product of the fractal laws that govern the world at an informational level. There is no deeper truth. But human beings? Human beings are flawed creatures.

Lawrence leaves money on the table, picks up his beer and his knitting bag, steps into the street, pausing to light a cigarette.

The lighter flares up unpredictably and he slaps at his hair before heading off.

Maeve nurses her beer and makes a to-do list on napkin. Credit cards, airline ticket, Jessica, Will, Daniel.

She works through it all on the phone. Waitress collects her empty beer glass. She watches the walk traffic outside and becomes engrossed in books of ayahuasca visionary art by Pablo Amaringo.

Her napkin list has all the tasks ticked off.

Jessica strolls in and plops down on couch opposite Maeve who is entranced by the picture book.

JESSICA

Hey superstar!

MAEVE

Hey!

Maeve gets up and lunges over the coffee table for a hug.

JESSICA

Hola amiga! (hugs) How amazing are you going solo on a jungle adventure! C'mon, I'm eating dinner with Elijah down the street.

CUT TO:

**INT. TEXAS ROSE DINER - NIGHT**

A dimly lit and cluttered restaurant bar with wacky American wild west decor, mouldy saddles and spastic neon, mannequins in Texas football gear. Howdy Doody nightmare.

Maeve digs into her chicken and plantains. Jessica and Elijah finished their meal ages ago, they drink juices.

Jessica laughs.

JESSICA

Poor you! We've all been there.

MAEVE

So, I've managed to cancel cards etc online at the cafe but I have no cash. I know it's a big ask, but if I transfer some money to your bank account, would it be possible to withdraw it for me?

JESSICA

Sure, no problem. Easy peasy.

MAEVE

Thank you so much. You're a lifesaver. Oh and a place to stay tonight? I need to work that out too.

JESSICA

You've got lucky timing, we were planning to head out to the land first thing tomorrow morning.

MAEVE

You mean to visit your shaman?

JESSICA

Yeah, we've got some pretty important work to do out there. You're coming right?

MAEVE

You mean doing ayahuasca?

JESSICA

Of course, with Alfredo, that's always part of our time down here. But we also need to check on the trees we planted. We've got cacao and star fruit, passionfruit... pineapples. Last time I was here I also planted all these flowering shrubs around the huts that attract butterflies! You know those beautiful big Blue Morphos? They're huge, like dinnerplates.

MAEVE

Wow, sounds like Eden.

JESSICA

The Amazon is like Eden on steroids.

MAEVE

Oh, sure, it sounds amazing. I just don't know if I would be ready to go first thing.

JESSICA

Why not?

MAEVE

I thought, sleep, regroup? Can you help me report my missing bag?

JESSICA

Report your missing bag? To who?

MAEVE

I dunno, the police?

ELIJAH

The police don't get involved unless you pay them to. People pretty much take care of their own problems down here.

JESSICA

Look, Iquitos can be a shock to the system even when you're ready for it.

(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's pretty confronting but there's also alotta magic here. It's okay, you're with us now.

MAEVE

Thanks. I guess I was thinking maybe Machu Picchu is a better option? I'm just not sure if I'm really ready for ayahuasca. I wasn't in a very good place before I left and since I arrived, everything just seems to have gone wrong.

JESSICA

You know we met for a reason. Think about it, what are the odds of finding us? Halfway across the world in the middle of the biggest city in the amazon. These are signs. The medicine is calling you.

MAEVE

It does feel pretty freaky. I just feel out of my depth, you know?

JESSICA

I think you gotta focus on glass full, not half empty.

ELIJAH

C'mon Jess, you remember how you were at first. After dozens of ceremonies it's easy to forget what life used to be like.

MAEVE

What do you mean?

Jessica gives Elijah a cautioning stare.

JESSICA

Let's just say it was a different lifetime. I struggled and Alfredo and the medicine turned my life around. Gave me answers. Gave me my power back. They can do that for you too.

Smiles at Elijah.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

But hey, if you'd rather join the tourist throngs at Machu Picchu, that's cool. You'll find your way back here when you're ready for an authentic experience.

Jessica distractedly peruses menu.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Shazam! they've got arroz con leche!

MAEVE  
I just feel so unprepared.

JESSICA  
Look, to be totally honest, I don't think anyone is ever ready. It's a big journey but it sorts your shit out.

Maeve pauses, playing with the bracelet.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
This is why you're here, right?

MAEVE  
Yeah. To sort my shit out.

JESSICA  
So?

Maeve lingers momentarily at the Nike tshirt on a guy at the next table. "Just do it."

MAEVE  
Okay.

JESSICA  
Yay!

Elijah waves the waiter over.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Awesome. So we'll need to organise a payment to Alfredo and I'll call ahead and let them know you'll be arriving with us. They'll need to get supplies.

Maeve is still processing her decision, wondering vaguely who said yes just seconds ago.

MAEVE  
Okay, maybe I can transfer that too? How much?

Jessica pulls a pen and her id from her bag, calculates rapidly on a napkin.

ELIJAH (TO WAITER)  
Amigo! Pisco por favor, tres copas. Oh, and uno arroz con leche.

JESSICA

Two thousand five hundred.

MAEVE

You mean US dollars?

JESSICA

Is there another currency in the world?

MAEVE

Whoa, it's alot.

JESSICA

Totally standard, trust me. One week, three ceremonies, food.

MAEVE

I guess I thought things were cheaper in third world countries?

JESSICA

It's hard here. The money they receive from you keeps them in basics. It protects the trees and animals from poachers. Alfredo does free healthcare for his whole community.

MAEVE

Sorry I...

JESSICA

Just remember the privilege you come from. I think it's important to value indigenous wisdom, not exploit people.

MAEVE

No, no, I get it. I'm not trying to take advantage. You're doing good things here.

JESSICA

In a perfect world, money wouldn't have to be exchanged for anything. Reality says, everybody needs to make a living, right?

Jessica slides napkin and id across the table.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Here's my details. Do Western Union it's pretty much instant, bank transfers are hopeless.

Maeve takes out phone and starts the transfer.

MAEVE

Okay so I'll transfer that and...

JESSICA

Bueno! I'll run out and grab it. Back in a flash.

Jessica heads out.

The waiter returns with 3 shot glasses and rice pudding.

ELIJAH

Here we go. (raises glass) A toast to new friends and the end of the world.

MAEVE

Shouldn't we wait for Jess?

ELIJAH

She could be a little while. Drink up. We'll just do it twice.

MAEVE

(raises glass) To new friends and new beginnings.

They knock back their shots.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

Travel traumas aside, it's exciting to be here. You guys seem really passionate about your conservation work. It's inspiring.

ELIJAH

Yeah, ideally we like to get things rolling down here and get to a point where I could quit my job... Devote all our energy to the land.

MAEVE

Stop working for the newspaper?

ELIJAH

Yeah, they're not my tribe. Too corporate.

MAEVE

Yeah, but if you quit who's going to stand up to the climate change deniers?

ELIJAH

The thing that keeps me sane is a side project Jess and I have cooked up.

(MORE)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

A kind of 'biggest and best' nature series. We hunt down the oldest tree or the highest waterfall or the most remote village. We travel to some amazing locations.

MAEVE

Wow, you guys are like explorers too. So you're doing this on the side?

ELIJAH

Hell no! The newspaper pays for it. They know they have to feed me something interesting or I'll just fuck off. They don't want to lose me. All those office monkeys in Sydney are too scared to leave their cubicles so it's a win-win.

Waiter approaches.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Amigo! Tres mas, por favor.

MAEVE

Ohhhh with this jetlag, I don't think I can do another firewater.

Elijah reaches out and puts his hand on hers.

ELIJAH

Don't worry darlin', you're in safe hands now.

Jessica returns and stares at the hand holding.

JESSICA

Well, that didn't take long.

Maeve withdraws hand quickly, embarrassed. Jessica plops down next to Elijah and he puts his arm around her.

Jessica hands Maeve the wad of cash and starts shoveling in the dessert with gusto.

MAEVE

Thanks.

Waiter arrives with three more shots and puts the cheque on the table in front of Elijah.

WAITER

La cuenta, Senor.

Jessica distracts Elijah with a spoonful of the sweet rice dessert. Maeve glances at total.

MAEVE

I hate figuring these things out... how should we cut this up?

Maeve looks up and sees them engrossed in their feeding game. Jessica drops spoon into her empty dish.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

You know what? I'll get this. It's the least I can do.

Maeve peels bills off the wad onto the cheque.

JESSICA

Vamos! C'mon lovely, let's get you to your hotel before you collapse. 6am is going to roll around quick.

They get up and Jessica slides her arm though Maeve's and they head toward the exit onto the pavement.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm so glad you're here.

Elijah hangs back and knocks off all three shots before trailing behind them.

CUT TO:

**EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLYING DOG HOSTEL - EARLY MORNING**

Maeve steps outside, enchanted by the clear morning view of the amazon. Timeless, peaceful, beautiful. A couple street vendors set up.

Lawrence approaches from the river walk a bunch of flowering plants under his arm.

MAEVE

Holmes!

LAWRENCE

Top of the morning to you Alice.  
(gestures to the river) Look at that, eh?

MAEVE

I can't believe I didn't see it last night! It's right there. It's so huge. I feel so...I don't know, insignificant, but in a kind of good way.

LAWRENCE

Panta Rhei.

MAEVE

Panta what?

LAWRENCE

Panta Rhei. Everything flows. Heraclitus.

Jessica & Elijah pull up in clapped out Ford, Latino pop radio blaring. Jessica bounds from the backseat like a cheerful labrador. Elijah slumps in the front seat under the full weight of a hangover, shielded by sunglasses.

JESSICA

Hola! Here, I got you a coffee, latte, right?

MAEVE

Oh my God. Thank you! That's twice now you've saved my life!

LAWRENCE

There's always free cheddar in a mouse trap, baby.

JESSICA

Who let you out so early Lawrence? Or are you still up from last night?

LAWRENCE

Time is but a series of fluctuating variables.

JESSICA

(TO MAEVE)

C'mon let's bounce.

Jessica motions to the clapped out ride.

Maeve pauses to take in the full disaster of this vehicle. Dents, Rust. Cracked windscreen. Filthy beige interior and steady drizzle of liquid puddling underneath. Deathtrap.

MAEVE

In that? No way.

JESSICA

There's no limos in the jungle, babe.

MAEVE

But... I have a child. I don't have travel insurance.

JESSICA

Believe me, this is five star compared to the other options.

Maeve is frozen to the curb.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Do you always run away from things you can't control?

Maeve shakes her head, annoyed... but thinking Jessica may have a point. She looks to Lawrence for guidance. Lawrence shrugs.

MAEVE

Hooboy.

Jessica climbs into the backseat leaving the door open.

MAEVE (CONT'D)

(to Lawrence)

Wish me luck?

Lawrence tips an imaginary hat and hands her a flower from his bunch.

Maeve receives flower and climbs into backseat with Jessica.

Lawrence gestures a papal blessing and the car sputters off down the street.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAR - IQUITOS JUNGLE HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING**

Driver appears half asleep but miraculously steers past buses, mototaxis and pedestrians. Elijah calmly tunes the guitar in his lap.

JESSICA

So sad what's happened to that guy.

MAEVE

What's his story?

JESSICA

Who knows? Rumour has it he was kicked out of whatever university he was with and now he just drifts around Iquitos like a bum.

MAEVE

He doesn't seem like a bum.

JESSICA

I don't trust him. There's a lot of people like him around town. They think they're so smart and then the jungle sends them off the rails.

Wind buffets them from open windows as they pick up speed. Maeve watches the landscape shift from shanty town to two lane highway, latino pop tinkling on the radio.

Jessica sings to the radio.

Driver runs the gauntlet of potholes half asleep.

The road passes underneath through the rusted floor.

They approach an accident. A crumpled vehicle flanked by wailing women and helpless men smokes by the roadside.

MAEVE

Oh my God...they need an ambulance.

JESSICA

We're so far from the hospital, it won't make much difference anyway.

MAEVE

Shouldn't we do something?

JESSICA

They'll work it out.

Maeve watches the carnage shrink in the back window.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Welcome to the jungle.

Elijah dozes in front seat.

The flower from Lawrence has shrivelled to a few gangly threads on the hot car seat.

MAEVE

We could call for them.

Maeve hooks her phone from her pocket and sees a message from Will! She clicks but the message bubble is empty. She clicks again. And again.

JESSICA

You won't have any signal.

MAEVE

What?

JESSICA

We're too far out now.

Maeve keeps clicking in disbelief.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Just chill.

MAEVE

I need to talk to my son.

Driver abruptly swings into the other lane pedal to the floor intending to pass a log truck...he jerks the wheel back hard barely missing the oncoming minivan.

Everyone pitches from side to side. Maeve collides with Jess and her phone flies under the front seat.

Elijah grips the dashboard and the Virgin Mary skids into his lap.

ELIJAH

Jeeeeeeeeezus Fuck!

The wide-eyed driver, crosses himself steadying the car.

Jessica grips Maeve's hand for dear life.

Everyone in the car goes dead silent.

JESSICA

It's okay. We're okay.

She loosens her grip but keeps Maeve's hand in hers.

CUT TO:

**EXT. JUNGLE ROADSIDE - NOON**

Car slows and pulls over in the middle of nowhere.

The sun blazes and insects whir. The road is empty.

They pile out into the humidity and stretch.

Elijah, guitar slung over his shoulder begins dropping their bags from the trunk to roadside.

MAEVE

Holy shit it's hot!

Jessica passes a plastic water jug to Maeve.

JESSICA

Have some water.

Maeve takes an awkward swig from the bottle.

Car doors slam behind them. The driver toots his horn.

Maeve turns to see him whip a rapid u-turn and gun it back up the highway!

MAEVE

Hang on, where's he going?!

JESSICA

Back to Iquitos.

Maeve watches the car disappear over the horizon.

Jessica pops on a hat and starts applying bug repellent.

MAEVE

So how do we get back?

JESSICA

He'll be back in a couple weeks. You might want to change your shoes.

Jessica plops an extra pair of rubber boots into the mud at Maeve's feet and slides into her own.

Two local boys emerge from the forest and wave.

Elijah heads to the trees and starts passing their bags to them.

Maeve stares at the trees. Paralysed.

The insects drone. Howler monkeys roar.

Jessica waves to the boys and heads towards them.

A curtain of heat makes the opaque jungle shimmer.

END OF EPISODE