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Vain Bodies: Predictions about the climate catastrophe, late capitalism, and biopolitics in a
short film

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Abstract

Vain Bodies

By Paula Acocal Ramirez

Kathleen Cutler, a woman forced to take contraception, has hopes of being a mother but struggles to accept her reality much to her husband's dismay. *Vain Bodies* investigates the deterioration of a relationship against the symbiotic backdrop of totalitarianism and late capitalism.

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Thank you to the *Vain Bodies* cast and crew, all of whom I learned and grew alongside with.

Finally, to my family, who always remind me to *echarle ganas*.

Dedicated to the memory of Mark Fisher and the countless victims of capitalism.

Ye are many—they are few

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To You, In The Future

Anxiety birthed the idea of *Vain Bodies*. Acapulco, 2 a.m, sometime in July 2021. Naturally, the day's activities—swimming, surfboarding, snorkeling—should have put me in a deep slumber. But I had caught a news broadcast earlier that night stating UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' reaction to the recent climate report from the Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change. Deeming the report “a ‘code-red’ for humanity” (Guterres), it was understood that the climate disaster had reached new heights. Founded by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, the IPCC is an institution that investigates climate change and helps policy makers understand and respond to the effects of the phenomenon (*IPCC Factsheet*). I tossed and turned all night, grappling with the idea that the Pacific Ocean, a couple hundred feet away from me, would rise a couple of inches. Eight inches seemed like nothing—it wasn't much taller than your suburban garden gnome. But these seemingly tiny changes would sink the coastline, disrupt the ecosystem, and displace inhabitants (*Climate Change 2021*).

The 24-hour news cycle quickly drowned out the IPCC's stunning conclusion with the coverage of Facebook and the Metaverse in August. News anchors informed viewers about a new universe where users can live digitally online. Technological developments such as virtual reality headsets and broadband speeds stimulated developments for the Metaverse—Meta founder and owner Mark Zuckerberg stipulates that total immersion within the digital universe will occur within the next five to ten years (*Connect 2021 Keynote*).

It was within the next five years, however, that we saw an abrupt rupture within the social rights of American society. On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe V. Wade* with the *Dobbs vs. Jackson's Women Health Organization* decision reversing the decades-long

constitutional right to abortion (*Dobbs v. Jackson*). A majority-conservative Court placed the bodily rights of people with uteruses on the chopping block that is state approval. Several Republican states, such as Texas and Georgia, had trigger laws that effectively banned or severely restricted abortions immediately following the Court's ruling (*Abortion Laws by State*).

The events of the past few years occurred simultaneously while the film's concept was in utero—its influence permeating my mind.. The IPCC report and the Metaverse already existed for a few months while I was drafting up the story for an advanced short fiction workshop in December 2021. By the spring of 2022, the concept had undergone a rigorous process of constructive criticism through not only a short story workshop but a screenwriting class as well. Although a thesis application did not require a draft of the script, I believed a first draft was necessary for a smooth transition into the pre-production process if my proposal were to be selected. In April of 2022, my thesis proposal was approved and I immediately began revisions of my first draft.

A few months later, on a brisk day in June I saw the premonitions were close to coming true. After having spent particularly grueling morning killing my darlings during revisions, I saw the news on the *Dobbs V. Jackson* decision that overturned the ruling of *Roe V. Wade*. Oscar Wilde's words: "Life imitates art far more than art imitates Life," (*The Decay of Lying*) took hold in my mind for the wrong reasons. In the world of *Vain Bodies* the government regulations the population in response to the climate catastrophes. The film's backdrop will be explained in further detail in the coming pages, but this is the sociopolitical nucleus of *Vain Bodies*. The DNA of the film, I realized, was extracted from events unfolding before my eyes, over which I had no control. *Vain Bodies* may have been conceived from personal anxieties, but it gradually morphed

into a communal representation of future worries. To you, present reader, I hope these premonitions don't come true.

Genre Semantics and *Children of Men* As a Companion Film

I intentionally wrote *Vain Bodies* as a hybrid of the dystopian and speculative fiction genre. Dystopia refers to the world that the characters inhabit but the element of speculative fiction reminds audiences of the possibility of dystopia. The dystopian elements of the film function at the sociopolitical and technological levels. In the film, government policy oppresses people with uteruses (PWU) as a means to combat climate control: population control via a national pregnancy lottery and the enforcement of contraception on PWUs. The story later reveals that the lack of children has created a demand for the experience of parenthood. Corporations promptly develop and sell a virtual reality simulation for users to live in a world where they have children and are able to interact with them for a limited time.

The genre of speculative fiction is not mutually exclusive from the dystopian genre. R.B. Gill writes, “speculative fiction envisions a systematically different world in which not only events are different but causes operate by logics other than normal ones... [it] embraces a wider, more radical vision of alternative conditions” (73). The main difference between our present reality and the fictional reality in *Vain Bodies* is government structure. The United States, currently, is a practicing democracy but, in the film, totalitarianism plagues society. Amy L. Atchison and Shauna L. Shames note that dystopian states exist, “when there are no civil liberties to speak of” (22) and identifies “the states pursuit of full control” (23) as a characteristic of dystopian control. The fictional fertility policy is a part of a reality where the objective subjugation of PWUs arises from the fictional society's tolerance of totalitarianism.

One must consider the crucial concerns of our current reality and how swift political temperatures can rise and produce despotic policies. The argument can be made that the film is not an alternate reality but one that is en route in the next few years or decades. Noting the events that influenced the conception of *Vain Bodies*, the line between the real and the unreal is thinning, and current events demonstrate the blend between the two. The same has occurred in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*, a feature that has influenced and shaped the development of my own film.

Ontological debates arise when it comes to defining *Children of Men*'s genre—is it science fiction, dystopian, speculative fiction? Theorist Slavoj Žižek's focuses his concern on the film's *raison d'être*: "The changes that the film introduces do not point toward alternate reality, they simply make reality more what it already is. Science fiction realism introduces a change that makes us see better. The nightmare that we are expecting is here" (*Children of Men*, 2006). Definitions aids categorization and the introduction of concepts, but analysis of these concepts' effects is the most salient action. *Vain Bodies* may not share the same category of science fiction, but like *Children of Men*, it aims to present a reality that awaits us. Cuarón has constructed a dark world that builds upon the present hegemony—xenophobia, late capitalism, police militarization—and reveals the horrors we are capable of tolerating.

We must note that the technology in *Children of Men* shares a similar purpose to *Vain Bodies*. The technology in both films aids the government's totalitarian policies, respectively rooted in xenophobia and population growth/control. Cuarón's world includes mundane advances in corporate technology and euthanasia. Subjects have floating office computer monitors and advertisements for a painless suicide kit called "Quietus." The lack of high-technology demonstrates that Cuarón's disregard for the spectacle of technological progress but

rather social regress. *Vain Bodies*' technology, given its short film status, does not have the same scale as its precursor but it meditates upon the devastating consequences of such advances. Ultimately, its objective is to present a world whose arrival is beyond the horizon—current events signal the stops that brings us to a preventable final destination. The concept of *Vain Bodies* first came out in the winter of 2021, and later written in the form of a short story in February of 2022. The decision to begin development within the realm of short fiction was the desire to explore the world of *Vain Bodies* and how the characters move within it. In both pieces, the fertility policies and FetMental, a corporation that makes experiences with virtual children possible, exist to execute and uplift the totalitarian notions of the world. Yet, the structural differences between the short story and script roots in the depiction of a crumbling marriage with late capitalism as its backdrop.

Cinematic Praxis

Literary Adaptation: Short Story to Short Film

In both the short story and short film, , the story reveals the weak marriage between Kathleen and David Cutler, fractured due to Kathleen's crippling addiction to experiences with a virtual child, and her damaging dreams of pregnancy that result in miscarriages. Present, too, is the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and the dystopian government: FetMental's existence and profit depends on the fertility policy. The script departs from the short story in two ways: first, the deletion of secondary characters, and second, the representation of miscarriages and sex.

The first character that was cut in the transition of story to script was Irena. In the short story, she is a older woman who works as a maid for the Cutlers. Irena's character was a point of reference to the past as she remembers when PWUs had the decision to get pregnant and shares

with Kathleen the biological and organic process of pregnancy—sore breasts, fetal movements, morning sickness. A primary resource for Kathleen, Irena is the organic storyteller of pregnancy who stands in contrast with FetMental’s artificial simulation. Her exclusion from the script allowed for dedicated screen to interrogate Kathleen and David’s marriage. Irena was also written as a tool of exposition but in the script adaptation, the news segments adequately replace her. Irena’s presence, however, delineates a sympathetic portrayal of Kathleen—her absence in the film turns it into an empathetic one. The interaction between Irena and Kathleen reduces her complexity of character as Kathleen reverts to child-like behavior when she’s near Irena. Short stories allow lengthy meditations on the minutiae but short film scripts demand an articulate construction of dialogue and visuals to reveal character and story.

The observation of Kathleen and David’s complexities quickly filled the gap of Irena’s absence. Miscarriages and sex take center stage in the film, both varying in explicitness. In the short story, I muted the miscarriage with the intention of showcasing the regularity of the event in the character’s life. The piece lacks description of the pain and sorrow of the miscarriage not only in Kathleen, but in David as well. The short story, script, and film open with the miscarriage, but the latter two ruminate on the experience. In presenting a realistic dystopian future, the goal is to highlight the horrors of what lies ahead. The first opening lines—seconds into the film—demonstrate a woman suffering from government violence, emphasizing the effects of policies. Carnage and grief are necessary as the goal is to provoke audience rumination through spectacle. Media covering miscarriages is sparse and rarely raw—a shot showing blood flowing down a leg, or a bed-ridden, lethargic woman (e.g. *The Worst Person in the World*, *What to Expect When You’re Expecting*, *The Help*). *Vain Bodies* disrupts these standard depictions and

foregrounds a realistic portrayal of a common, but often ignored, biological processes for some women.

Sexual activity between Kathleen and David also grew in prominence in the script and film versions of *Vain Bodies*. In all three—short story, script, and film—Kathleen actively instigates sex with David and it is her primary method of apology and exhibiting vulnerability. The short story ends with Kathleen wanting to have sex with David out of love, compassion, and reunion. She acknowledges her addiction to FetMental, and her neglect of David. “She wouldn’t get pregnant that night, but she didn’t care. She’d rather get to know her partner” (Acocal Ramirez, 10). A kind and sensible resolution did not survive the adaptation. Both the script and film end with the same miscarriage of the opening scene—we learn that Kathleen’s nonviable pregnancy stems from sexual violence, where Kathleen sexually assaults David by poking holes in the condom, effectively removing valid contraception and his right to informed consent. She disregards her husband’s autonomy to achieve her primary goal of pregnancy, demonstrating the violation of trust and collapse of harmony in their dystopian reality.

Heavy and dark subjects are not new to film—the medium uncovers hard truths and immerses viewers in the realities of the characters. One of the grander objectives of the film is to initiate discussions about “taboo” subjects such as miscarriage and rape. Considerations of the subject matter and its treatment were integral to the development and production of *Vain Bodies*.

Cinematography: Making the “Unreal” Real

After securing a producer for the film, the next step in developing *Vain Bodies* was the careful selection of a cinematographer. After contacting several people, I decided to work with

Eli Saliba, a filmmaker who recently graduated from UGA's Film MFA program. His films cover characters dealing with grief and trauma, and there was no doubt the collaboration would be a fruitful one. I reached out, sharing a preliminary style plan and an early version of the script. His response was eager, sharing his belief that the film's message was unique and significant to our current social context. Immediately following the onboarding process, Eli and I began conversations regarding the visual execution of *Vain Bodies*.

The citation of previous works regarding technology, dystopia, and tumultuous relationships was essential to the visual development of the film. "I want people think that this could happen next month," was a constant thought shared with Eli throughout our meetings. Although media such as *Black Mirror* and *Children of Men* were influential to *Vain Bodies*' conceptual development, the film had to heighten the frightening possibility of coming to fruition. The film's overall style was documentary realism, a heightened lack of imitation or illusion (Won-Leep Moon, *Documentary and its realism*), with the occasional but intentional dips into formalism, a complete utilization of a film's technical elements (Alexa Alice Joubin, *Formalism*). Together, we aimed to create a candid portrayal of an appalling life truly within reach.

The realism techniques implemented in *Vain Bodies* include handheld cameras, eye-level angles, and objective shots. An important reference used, which at first glance feels extremely unrelated to the film's concept, was Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (1976). I was drawn to the feeling of total immersion upon my first viewing and immediately thought that the *Vain Bodies* had to create the same effect. Kopple and her camera's close proximity to the subjects feel incredibly tactile and textured—we adopted this goal in order to actualize the

film's .. Because of our participation in narrative filmmaking, I knew that filmmakers from our genre had to be analyzed and referenced in order to develop a well-rounded shot list.

After the initial interest in Kopple, Lars Von Trier, a Danish filmmaker, was our most useful point of reference. Von Trier, the creator of Dogme 95, a film movement that stressed the ascetic nature of filmmaking such as shooting in location, the use of natural light, and handheld cameras. With Thomas Vinterberg, Von Trier developed the ten rules of the Dogme 95, all of which created unruly films showcasing the raw drama of human life. The pair had also developed the movement to spark creative choices from technical challenges, such as working with low budgets and non-actors. The budget of *Vain Bodies*, by Dogme 95 standards, may appear lavish but the \$2500 is a microscopic fraction of current Hollywood films.

Budget was not the only similarity between our project and Von Trier's works. Our inclusion of heavy subjects—miscarriage and rape—were in line with the director's *Antichrist* (2009) and *Nymphomaniac* (2013). Von Trier aims to make his viewers feel uncomfortable and on edge once they are emerged in the story. He often disregards conventional filmmaking rules to authentically present controversial topics. Visual styles taken from Von Trier were the freeform shooting—going a step ahead or behind of the subject, and delayed rack in focus. His style and technique were a common reference as we began the deconstruction of the script into shots.

Shot Lists: Preliminary and Executed Choices

Both Eli and I created our respective shot lists, referenced them in our meetings, and brainstormed new shots and camera movements. My process for creating the shot lists included creating a soundtrack for the script, and having it play as I reread the script. The first draft of the shot list was written on a printed script—I work best attaching images to the lines before transferring them onto a chart. The film is split between two locations, the Cutler residence and

the FetMental building, except for the FetMental commercial. We agreed that the first difference between the two places was in camera movement. The scenes in the Cutler home were all handheld whereas the scenes at FetMental were static—one place is constantly chaotic whereas the other is seemingly stable.

The Cutler residence scenes, aside from being handheld, were conventionally shot until we reached emotional climaxes. Scenes 1, 7, 10, 11, and 12 were all shot handheld with minimal lighting. Scenes 1 and 12 are the same moment in time: Kathleen miscarries while David is outside, banging on the bathroom door. Scene 1 and the beginning of scene 12 are shot in the style of documentary realism with its use of a shaky establishing shot—the camera lingers from a distance as Kathleen is in agony, her trembles representing the inner turmoil that has surfaced. These scenes also include close-ups and medium close-ups of Kathleen's reaction as well as the actual blood clots she holds in her fingers. The close-up of the actual embryo was an intentional departure from the standard conservative depiction of miscarriages (e.g., *Up*).

Scene 10 also included another close up of the embryo, this time on David. In the scene, Kathleen returns from FetMental after David cancels her membership. They argue until Kathleen asks David to kiss her—foreplay begins until Kathleen miscarries and runs away. Kathleen's decision to initiate intimacy comes from her overall plan of getting pregnant; she feigns vulnerability in order to pounce on David's sympathy. The scene is shot handheld with a shotlist composed of establishing shots, medium close-ups, and closeups. The scene also includes a break from the traditional 180-degree rule, a move that purposely disorients the viewer: "a cinematography rule concerning the space between two actors within a frame. Imagine an invisible line passes through the two actors. Under the 180-degree rule, the camera can move anywhere on its side, but it should not pass over the axis" (Jeff Chen, *180 Degree Rule*). It was in

the scene that we decided to cross the 180-degree line when Kathleen asks David to kiss her—Kathleen knows that this action will culminate in sex between them which means another opportunity for her to get pregnant. Crossing the 180-degree line was previously used in scene 7 where Kathleen and David eat breakfast and she asks if they could try getting pregnant on their own without using personal contraception. The line is crossed when Kathleen reassures a disgruntled David that they've been using condoms during sex although we later learn that they haven't. Breaking the 180-degree rule in these two scenes symbolize the disruption of truth and trust within the Cutler household.

In scene David searches for a first aid kit to help Kathleen but instead finds that she's been poking holes in the condoms. Traditional establishing shots and coverage were written and shot but we also decided to include an extreme low angle shot of David banging on the door. Our reference was the ax scene in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*—we aimed for complexity with our choice of angle. A high angle typically connotes power but the subject in frame, David, realizes that he's been raped. Added to the frame is a mirror, creating a second "David" and increasing his presence. I wanted to double him and emphasize the person we are seeing. Rape of men, still a hushed topic, rarely has substantial acknowledgment and discussion in the greater cultural landscape ("*I Didn't Feel I Was a Victim*"). Film and television reflect the aforementioned statement; the few pieces of media that show sexual violence against men demonstrate a spectrum of treatment, ranging from neglect to closure. We decided not to show David's reaction as he finds the condom and the hole formed from Kathleen's tampering. I wanted to respect the realization of his victimization by removing the viewer from David's traumatic moment and having the shot emphasize the information instead. The emotion in that moment belongs to David, and not to us—we receive information and he retains ownership of his emotions. We

learn about the rape alongside David: the point of view shot frames his hands and the condom.

Immediately we jump into the low angle of David banging on the door. David, a rape victim, retains ownership of his vulnerability as his assault is made private and restricted from viewership.

When it came to FetMental, Eli and I agreed that immobility and sterility needed to pervade the visuals. Most shots, with the exception of a few moments, are static and the camera is objective as it “conveys information as if from an omniscient point of view” (Fusco). The camera’s placement and lens stresses distance between Kathleen and her surroundings, contradicting FetMental’s promise of happiness and connection. The disruption of FetMental’s stillness erupts during a client’s breakdown in scene 6—immediately, we return to a handheld, close-up shot of the woman crying for her fake evoking deep emotion. It is a departure from the stern stillness inhabiting the waiting room. Even in scene 9, in the simulation room, there is quiet, awkward distance between the Kathleen and the technician. The scattered toys and decorations do little to warm the environment and only emphasize the corporate atmosphere. Kathleen and the technician only share the frame in the establishing shot, with the rest of the list containing one-shots or a dirty two-shot. The camera’s stability vanishes when the technician informs Kathleen that her membership is cancelled. The shot frames Kathleen in a medium close up and immediately pushes in on her face as she spirals into distress. We included an additional shot of this kind for editing, taking note of Von Trier’s editing style. This new shot, imitating Von Trier’s nightmare cuts, matches the last except it does not follow the tradition of cutting from one angle to another that is at least 30 degrees apart (Friend), the 30-degree rule—it appears like a shoddy jump cut when edited—representing the fracture of Kathleen’s reality and mirroring her breakdown in the previous scene.

The shots for the FetMental commercial matched the style of modern commercials. Establishing shots and close ups compose the scene, while symmetry is also taken into account. We adhered to simplicity to promote the product of FetMental. Stock footage of a mother and child were used to serve the words of the commercial and to enhance the tangibility of the product.

The cinematic shots were designed to enhance the realism of the story and create a balance between observation and immersion. The fulfillment of these goals depended actor performance. Shot lists, floor plans, and style plans were shared with the actors once they were secured for production. I found accessibility to cinematographic notes important for the connection between the sensitivity of human performance and mechanics of the visuals.

Casting Actors:

The principal actors of *Vain Bodies* were Julia Byrne and James Choi, have varying levels of screen acting experience. Back in November, I had the pleasure of sitting in on Theater Emory's auditions spring productions and it was there that I watched Julia's audition. I asked my producers to contact her and gauge her interest in auditioning for *Vain Bodies*. Julia audition was impressive, not only because her performance gave us a glimpse into what Kathleen was but what she could with the character, as well. Casting this role was of the utmost importance, as this character had to play on our sympathetic biases but also reveal the subtleties of her devious intentions. She marveled us later again with her chemistry read—her background as a stage actor and a playwright were essential to her understanding of the material and constructing her performance.

James just started acting in the summer of 2022, and *Vain Bodies* was his second short film. In his first film, he also played the lead and used his previous experience to navigate the

development of his character. He was brought on in January 2023 as a replacement for an actor who couldn't accommodate schedule changes.

Rehearsing with Actors:

Rehearsals with Julia began during the winter break of 2022. We began character analysis with a focus on scene 7; the scene introduces the turbulent dynamic between Kathleen and David, which centers on revelations of both characters. Our sessions always began with a mental health check of everyone and an acknowledgment of the upsetting nature of the scene's subject matter. The character analysis began with the basic questions: what does the character want, and what obstacles are in the way of that want? Julia and James had the liberty to apply their previous experiences and inferences to answer the question, but I stressed the necessity to answer the question in the first person. The small adjustment, I believe, broke down the barrier that the actor puts between themselves and the character. It also prevented the frequency of judgments passed upon the characters, especially Kathleen.

It was in the first rehearsal that Julia had called Kathleen "sociopathic." A wave of excitement rolled over me when I heard her comment because I was finally able to utilize Judith Weston's principles from "Directing the Actor." She argues that it is not on the director or actor to pass judgment on the character, rather we should strive for empathy when crafting a performance (36). Empathy is our primary objective as storytellers, yet audiences are free from this responsibility and can pass judgment on characters.

Continuing on the rule of speaking in the first person, I asked Julia to call herself "sociopathic"—she became flustered, and I asked her what was wrong. Something clicked and, still in the first person, Julia explained why that label was reductive and defended the actions of Kathleen. She interpreted Kathleen's desire for a child as primitive, which brings up interesting

and complex notions when we see that FetMental, an artificial service, feeds her innate hunger. Riding on that warped maternal instinct, Julia saw Kathleen as an intense and driven person, qualities that are often praised in most individuals. These two characteristics tethered Julia to Kathleen as they were an opening to understanding a “sociopath.” When Kathleen lies to David about their use of condoms, Julia and I understood that Kathleen saw it as a necessary lie to have another chance at pregnancy. Kathleen, we agreed, ultimately wants a baby and all her choices in actions, words, and intonation were in service of that goal.

James found the opening questions about his character useful to a certain extent. It functioned more as an introduction to his character’s wants and needs but often found difficulty in becoming David when it came to subsequent readings. A difficulty that arises with fresh actors is that they often stick to one or two emotions throughout the scene, failing to demonstrate the variability of human experience. It was in these moments when we integrated scene dissection via beats into our process. In rehearsals, I had an “actor” version of the script where the scenes were broken down into beats, drawn on the paper in colored pens. After scanning and sending James the relevant pages, I explained to him the concept of beats and how scenes vary in emotions. For example, I told him, “you may be surprised thinking about her request, but later feel sympathy when you see her beg for it.” Julia, having majored in theater, understood these concepts, and worked with James to help build the relationship between the two characters. We typically worked line by line, deciphering the meaning behind them and what the character gains in its invocations.

Directing the Actors:

The production of *Vain Bodies* occurred over the span of five days, two of which were back-to-back. Rehearsals were primarily focused on the scenes between Kathleen and David

because they were the crux of the film. Additional rehearsals were conducted requested by the actor. For example, the actor playing the crying woman in scene 6 requested extra time for us to work on the emotional build up that occurs within a small amount of time. Although all scenes are important to the film, the Cutler Home scenes were the most intense ones not only in performance but in its subject.

Previous character and scene analysis in the form of beat sheets, rehearsal notes, and KEA (knowledge, emotion, and action) charts informed the directions I gave to actors. KEA was especially useful in answering the questions surrounding character action. It also helped us ground ourselves during the heavy moments of production. Scenes 11, 12 and 1 were all shot in the same day, the first being David's realization of his rape and the latter two being Kathleen's miscarriage. The following day covered scenes 7 and 10; scene 10 included the intimate moments between Kathleen and David before she miscarries. My producers and I discussed contracting an intimacy coordinator who could also function as a moderator for the whole crew when it came to filming rape, miscarriage, and intimacy.

The intimacy coordinator helped me choreograph the foreplay between Kathleen and David as well as take note of James and Julia's comfort levels. Boundaries were quickly established for everyone on set, not just the actors. Mental health check-ins and breaks were encouraged for us to have a functioning but healthy set.

Directing James and Julia was an extension of our rehearsals: the questions and comments collectively strengthened the notes given to them on set. Present on all days were my notes from Weston's "Directing the Actor," as it gave quick resolutions to the small questions I had about my own directing. Two main ideas present were the use of active, specific verbs and relatable images. One of the notes I gave James when it came to the beginning of scene 11 was

“save Kathleen now, to save the marriage later,” this action positions him as the hero. A note given to Julia in the miscarriage scene was the image of an exorcism, “Kathleen needs to cleanse herself in order to start again, a defunct embryo doesn’t serve her as much as a newly empty womb.”

The Intersection of Biopolitics, Cruel Optimism, and Late Capitalism Under the Cloud of Global Climate Change

In *Vain Bodies*, the government exercises population control, that is probably one of the strongest manifestations of political power that intersects with biopolitics. The purpose of enforced birth control on uterus owners is to combat climate change, to lessen the pressure on finite resources. Critical theorist Nikolas Rose writes, “Political authorities, in alliance with many others, took on the task of the management of life in the name of the wellbeing of the population as a vital order and of each of its living subjects” (52). This form of power, in addition to being political is also pastoral. It is the “paternalistic welfare state” that takes on the mantle of reproduction for the security of the entire population. To explain his proposed state, Rose discusses Michel Foucault’s theory on pastoral power as, “Modeled on the responsibilities of a good shepherd— who must, of course, be prepared to take sometimes harsh decisions in order to reduce the burden that weak or sickly sheep would otherwise place on the flock as a whole (cf. Foucault 2001)...” (Rose, 61). He later states that this form of power has dominated many liberal democratic societies’ relations to public health and security. Yet Rose focuses on its relation to health and creates a new lens of relational pastoral power. This term refers to more intimate relationships, rather than the individual and the state, there is the individual and the institutional-related individual such as a doctor and patient. This is the kind of power we see in

the film. The protagonist Kathleen does not interact with the lawmakers in this dystopian future, but rather with a FetMental technician that oversees her VR session. This relation is about the “affects and ethics of the guider... and guided” (Rose, 74). Biological desires, such as parental instincts, and its consequences create a space for Kathleen and the technician. Such space reflects the biopolitical world of the film.

In my fictional world, people who miss the presence of children can experience them in a virtual reality provided by a corporation. This was influenced by real-world issues that Rose mentions in his book, such as China’s one-child policy and the 1972 “Limits To Growth” report by Donella H. Meadows, et. al. The creation of the report was to investigate “five major trends of global concern – accelerating industrialization, rapid population growth, widespread malnutrition, depletion of nonrenewable resources, and a deteriorating environment” (*Limits To Growth*, 1). Population control has drastically reduced the amount of children in the world—as the saying goes, “Drastic times call for drastic measures.” The word of the film mirrors that of the past, where “Biopolitical concerns [are in line] with the minimization of risks to health” (Rose, 71). Climate change, or rather climate catastrophe, is a major problem facing the fictional version of the United States in *Vain Bodies*. But because the only economic system the state practices is capitalism, the dismantling of the industries contributing to and exacerbating the catastrophe is impossible. Thus, we witness a socioeconomic issue become one of public health. The fictional state’s interference in health does not include mental healthcare, reflecting the typical American’s healthcare coverage (Becker Bogusz). Although FetMental may be a temporary and arbitrary solution to the individual’s depression due to the lack of children, it is still a temporary relief to a loss shared by many. Mental healthcare is unaffordable for the vast

majority of people living within the United States (Rowan, et. al). Exclusive membership to FetMental not only reflects class privilege but social healthy disparities as well.

Naomi Klein's book, "This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate," details the crossroads that is the decision between capitalism or our climate. Climate change has grown and continues to do so on the fertile ground that is capitalism; our reliance on fossil fuels and incessant overconsumption has created ecological disasters that have, and will, come. Because of this, "the science forces us to choose how we want to respond. If we stay on the road we are on, we will get the big corporate, big military, big engineering responses to climate change—the world of a tiny group of big corporate winners and armies of locked-out losers that we have imagined in virtually every fictional account of our dystopic future, from Mad Max to The Children of Men to The Hunger Games to Elysium" (Klein, 59). The dystopian future that Klein mentions is present in *Vain Bodies*. The fictional government has made the wrong choice: population control rather than dismantling the existence of lethal industries. Our current reliance on capitalism creates this horrific destiny, one of many imagined by other films (e.g., *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Oblivion*, *Snowpiercer*), and is perversely ingrained in our current culture. The latter half of the twentieth century saw the glorification of corporations, such as Tesla, with the deregulation of capitalism and has, "Pit us against the natural world" (Klein, 60).

In "Cruel Optimism," Lauren Berlant describes their theory: "A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing...[it] becomes cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially" (13). The desire of an object and the pursuit of that desire results in the degradation of the individual. The character of Kathleen experiences cruel optimism: She wants a child but is unable to do so without institutional permission and is forced to take birth

control. Her dependency on FetMental, a corporation that allows her to experience motherhood via virtual reality, feeds her desire of motherhood. This desire manifests itself in her purposeful but unsuccessful attempts at pregnancy that always ends in miscarriage. This is the toxic cycle that Kathleen.. Her subscription to FetMental is meant to alleviate her strong maternal instincts, but it instead pushes her to seek a dangerous and selfish fertility method. Kathleen does not thrive in this dystopian future and does not cope with her childlessness in a way that is healthy for both her and her husband. Her addiction to this dream makes her current reality a nightmare: her body is constantly under destruction and her marriage is fragile.

Late capitalism lays the groundwork for the dystopia present in *Vain Bodies*. Philosopher Frederic Jameson writes, “Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism” (*Future City*). Critical theorist Mark Fischer expands upon this idea with his theory of capitalist realism. “The widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it. Ultra-authoritarianism and Capital are by no means incompatible” (Fisher, 2). The politics of the fictional world is a manifestation of ultra-authoritarianism: the regulation of bodies and commodification of biological and instinctual desires. As mentioned before, the government does not seek to dismantle capitalism although capitalism is the reason behind the climate catastrophe. Rather, it regulates the reproduction of the population to ensure the continued existence and reliance on capitalism.

TheFetMental’s role as a temporary fix props up the system upon which it thrives. The clinic that Kathleen visits has pamphlets on condoms, hinting at the corporation’s stance about following the law. This matches our current state, where corporations rely on the government for its deregulated existence that essentially puts profit over people (*Capitalist Realism*). Kathleen

does not question the relationship between FetMental and the dominant hegemonic order. In a way she is part of, “The fantasy being that western consumerism, far from being intrinsically implicated in systemic global inequalities, could itself solve them. All we have to do is buy the right products” (Fisher, 15). Kathleen has bought the “right product” as she temporarily satisfies her wishes without disrupting the current hegemony.

We can characterize Kathleen’s character as having, “Depressive hedonia... an inability to do anything else except pursue pleasure” (Fisher, 22). The temporariness of the pleasure brings Kathleen back to FetMental, again and again, as it provides her with the passions and drive that are absent in her home. Although a complicated character, one of the baseline characteristics of Kathleen is that she is a depressed housewife. She does not work but rather splits her time between her home and FetMental. Her isolation limits any revolutionary act only to herself, and her dependency on FetMental feeds her biological tragedies. Fisher writes that, “Cyberspatial capital operates by addicting its users,” (25) and it is evident that Kathleen, along with her husband, is a victim of capitalism.

Conclusion: Directorial Intention and Evolution of *Vain Bodies*

Vain Bodies engages in a variety of fiction genres and theories but also seeks to spark a conversation within audiences that can, hopefully, lead to change. It is my intention, as the author of the text, to demonstrate that late capitalism is the culprit of not only our current bleak political and economic state, but the imagined misery that could occur in the near future. The dismantling of ruthless corporations, and the oligarchies that obey them, is the only way to combat global climate change and save future generations from its apocalyptic effects. *Vain Bodies* is the premonitions of an individual living in a late capitalist society and although there is great chance

that the film's events won't occur, we must reckon with Oscar Wilde's words: "Life imitates art far more than art imitates Life" (*The Decay of Lying*).

Kathleen and David's frail relationship with each other and themselves warns us of the effects of such a future. Spousal rape and regulated uteruses are an extension of suffocating hegemonic ideals. These two subjects, although not uncommon in our current state, reflects the disintegration of human decency. Yet, I must recognize that *Vain Bodies* as a concept and a production, however, was manufactured in a capitalist system. I acknowledge the lucky fact that the budget of *Vain Bodies* was entirely reliant on grants, excluding it from the challenges of funding and saving us from shallow and bad faith criticisms of self-righteousness and hypocrisy. The argument of *Vain Bodies* was that capitalism destroys lives, yet the film's language may have softened or overshadowed such a potent message.

French film critics Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni in "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" identify five categories of films and their respective interactions with the ideology in which they are produced: films that (a) "are imbued... with the dominant ideology in pure and unadulterated form" (61) (b) "attack their ideological assimilation... by [dealing] with a directly political subject... [and] breaking [with a] traditional way of depicting reality" (62) (c) are apolitical in subject but political in structure and form (62) (d) contain political content but do not criticize dominant ideology due to its adherence to hegemonic structure and form (62) and (e) "seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner" (62). As writers for the magazine, *Cahiers du Cinema*, they acknowledge the capitalist system that produced French films of the 1960s. *Vain Bodies* fits into the fourth category of films that "have explicitly political content but which do not effectively criticize the ideological system in which they are embedded because

they unquestioningly adopt its language and its imagery” (Comolli, Narboni, 63). The film grammar of *Vain Bodies* does not detract from the traditional films of the 2010s (e.g., *The Help*, *Snowpiercer*) and now, 2020s (e.g., *The Worst Person in the World*). We use traditional establishing shots and coverage, detracting only in some edits and rules, such as nightmare cuts and crossing the 180-degree line. Its form of cinema is not one based in revolution but in a liberal discourse that proposes an argument but no solution.

The popularization of criticism against capitalism may threaten to overshadow the pressing issue of climate change. Although the two are intertwined, many overlook the global effects of the climate catastrophe for the domestic damages of capitalism such as homelessness and gentrification. In the film, the climate catastrophe is visually absent but, alongside capitalism, it is the catalyst of Kathleen and David’s misery. Future projects concerning *Vain Bodies* would explore both equally. The script will not be expanded into a feature but rather into a 45-minute episode. The episodic version of *Vain Bodies* will be alongside four more episodes that reflect and showcase the theoretical aspects of biopolitics, cruel optimism, and capitalist realism.

Following the conclusion of *Vain Bodies*’ post-production, a bible will be created for the series. Titled “Anthropocene,” each episode will be a speculation of human life under an advanced stage of the climate catastrophe. It will infer how we as a species survive ecological hardships but fail to instill meaningful change in the systems that brought about our global woe. Falling under the same genre of speculative fiction, the series will blur the real and unreal, presenting us with possible realities. Participation in *Vain Bodies*, fueled by the commitment to critical theory research, motivated my desire to create stories that prey on our fears in the hope of whipping us into action.

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Vain Bodies

written by

Paula Acocal

CAST:
Kathleen Cutler
David Cutler
Hera
Anchorman
Technician/Nia

FADE IN:

1 INT. CUTLER BATHROOM - NIGHT (FLASH FORWARD) 1

KATHLEEN CUTLER (25-35) straddles the toilet, disheveled. Her moans (pain or pleasure?) clash with the heavy knocks on the door. One hand grips her thigh while the other toys with a pulposus blood clot. Her eyes glimmer and stare at her fingers squishing the pulposus clot. Pooled next to the toilet is a bloody, blue skirt.

ANOTHER CRAMP. Her nails dig harder into her leg, pulling a loose thread on her slip, and she cups her mouth with her hand. She winces and gasps for air. The knocks grow louder with each hit.

DAVID (O.S.)
Kathleen? Kathleen!

A tear runs down a blood-stained cheek. She wipes it away, holding her hand there until she slaps herself.

KATHLEEN
You're not a fucking baby.

A wristband that says "FetMental Entry: 2:30 pm" shakes on her wrist as she bounces her leg. The knocks keep coming. A bare foot taps a floor littered with toilet paper, everything soaked in blood.

END FLASHFORWARD

2 INT. FETMENTAL CENTER - DAY 2

Kathleen relaxes in her seat, tilting her head as she fixates on an image on the FetMental brochure: a mother and child. She wears the same blue skirt and her heel taps the floor. An OLDER WOMAN (50s) clears her throat, and Kathleen peers through her shades. Both wear the FetMental wristband.

KATHLEEN
Sorry.

The woman nods her head. Kathleen eyes her nails, picking at the torn hangnails that clash with her gel set. A FetMental commercial grabs her attention.

START FETMENTAL COMMERCIAL:

2.

3 INT. FETMENTAL CENTER - DAY

3

HERA (40s/50s), a woman with the likes of Martha Stewart saunters around a FetMental center.

HERA

Welcome to FetMental, the nation's premiere experiential child center.

She reclines on a chaise lounge and inhales deeply. Peace.

HERA (V.O.)

Lose yourself in a reality where you can hold your own child.

She puts on an electronic headband and, with closed eyes, exhales. Ecstasy.

4 EXT. LAWN - CONTINUOUS

4

Stock footage of a woman playing with a toddler on the grass, the sun shining brightly on them.

HERA (V.O.)

Select your child's age and the length of the experience.

5 INT. FETMENTAL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

5

Hera opens her eyes and smiles at the camera. Reborn.

HERA

Choose happiness. It awaits you at FetMental.

END FETMENTAL COMMERCIAL

6 INT. FETMENTAL CENTER - CONTINUED

6

Kathleen inhales deeply and whips out a compact mirror and dabs a bit of blush. Kathleen catches the older woman looking at her, and she flaunts her tight neck. A CLIENT's (30s) cries distracts them both. Red-faced, she struggles in the arms of a FETMENTAL EMPLOYEE (20s)

CLIENT

No! You can't take my baby away!

The FetMental employee escorts her out. Kathleen shrugs and mouths "Crazy" to the older woman who raises her eyebrows in agreement.

3.

As she finishes her touch-up, Kathleen stares at herself a bit too long in the mirror. A flash of doubt runs across her face and she pushes her shades up, hiding behind them.

A MAN settles on the empty chair next to Kathleen. The only man in the waiting room, the old woman huffs and hardens her gaze. Kathleen leans over and whispers:

KATHLEEN
We all miss them.

The man nods, but still shifts in his seat. A news report plays on the television, and Kathleen turns to look.

ANCHORMAN (O.S.)
Breaking news in our afternoon show, doctors and activists have gathered at the Capitol to call out Resolution 1260, a law that enforced contraception use on all adult women since 2032.

She rolls her eyes but continues to listen.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
To have women get pregnant for a few weeks before the pill completely obliterates the fertilized egg--It's cruelty! It's 2052 for chrissakes!

7 INT. CUTLER EAT-IN-KITCHEN - MORNING (EARLIER)

7

Kathleen places a cooked egg on a plate and with delivers it to her husband, DAVID CUTLER (25-35). Although she kisses his head as the plate lands in front of him, two strangers inhabit the cold house. The same news report plays.

ANCHORMAN (O.S.)
Thank you for starting your morning with us at Vene News. One senator publicly asserts the fertility policy is, "drastically shifting the climate game in our favor."

She scoffs as she settles down with her plate. She stabs her food, and shakes her head.

ANCHORMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This comes after the accusations about the inefficiencies with the national pregnancy lottery. The agency's response: "Have faith."

DAVID

You want to know what I feel? I feel hurt watching you put yourself through this thirteen times... Thirteen times you miscarried and for what?

KATHLEEN

Everyone knows thirteen is an unlucky number.

David scoffs and turns his face away but with two fingers, she pulls his face towards hers.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

You act like I'm breaking the law when all I'm asking for is a shot.

DAVID

What you're asking for is too much to handle in a lifetime.

She cocks her head slightly, and begins to fix his hair.

KATHLEEN

I'm sure next time will be the winner. I heard some women say that the success rate of the pill is 96%. 4% chance of a baby, that's like getting into Columbia... Your cousin got into Columbia.

DAVID

No.

KATHLEEN

I thought Olga did-

DAVID (CONT'D)

Yes, she did.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But I mean no more. You- You're asking for scraps.

Kathleen breaks from embrace but he grabs her hand. She pulls it back with force and goes to the counter, her back to him.

KATHLEEN

Says the lotto believer-

DAVID

He was my son, too! You don't think I mourn what could have been?

He trails after her, and softly lands his hands on her waist.

6.

DAVID (CONT'D)

When he fell out of you, a delicate
and fragmented thing- I couldn't-

She throws his hands off her, ignoring him, and walks to the
door, purse and keys in hand.

KATHLEEN

When will you be the father I need
and I deserve?

He slams his palm on the counter but Kathleen, unfettered,
opens the door. His breath quivers as he inhales and exhales.

DAVID

Where are you going?

KATHLEEN

Where do you think?

He strays over to her as she begins to leave.

DAVID

Kathleen-

The door shuts in his face. Defeat.

8 INT. FETMENTAL CENTER - CONTINUED

8

A TECHNICIAN enters the waiting room.

TECHNICIAN

Cutler, Kathleen.

Kathleen turns and smiles as if she won "Miss America."

9 INT. FETMENTAL SIMULATION ROOM - CONTINUED

9

Kathleen lays down on an extended chair with little aid from
her technician. While she gets acclimated, the technician
types away on her computer. Nothing like the commercial.

KATHLEEN

Is Beatrice sick?

Kathleen takes off her shades.

TECHNICIAN

She retired but she told me to say
hi. Or goodbye, I guess. I'm Nia.

7.

KATHLEEN

Gone then. With all the time spent here with her, I could've asked her to be godmother. That idea went kaput with the last embryo.

TECHNICIAN

It's none of my business but we have some pamphlets on miscarriage prevention and treatment. Condoms, misoprostol.

KATHLEEN

It's just so dramatic. All that blood for a tiny thing.

TECHNICIAN

It's not just the fertilized egg. It's your uterine lining, too. Preventative punishment.

KATHLEEN

Another thing for David to cry about. My husband, he's-

Technician whips her head from her computer to Kathleen.

TECHNICIAN

Mrs. Cutler, your account has been terminated.

KATHLEEN

But I signed in earlier. I mean-

Kathleen sits upright and shakes her wrist.

TECHNICIAN

I see that. But we no longer have access to your information and cannot proceed with the simulation.

KATHLEEN'S breathing begins to grow shallow. She gets up from the chair but still holds on, trying to catch her breath.

KATHLEEN

I'll pay right now, just let me find my-

TECHNICIAN

Our membership is capped right now. We can add you to the wait list, but the wait time is about a month.

8.

KATHLEEN
A month?

NIA
May you please exit? I have
to attend to other clients.

Kathleen grips the chair, and puts her shades on.

10 INT. CUTLER HOME - NIGHT 10

Kathleen drifts into the house and rests her forehead on the door before locking it. She takes off her shades and puts them in her skirt's pocket. At the table, David closes a laptop and greets her.

DAVID
I was starting to worry. Where have
you been?

Shuffling to the counter to drop off her purse, she shakes her keys.

KATHLEEN
Driving. Clearing my head.

DAVID
Well, I'm glad you're home. Drink?

She nods and he pulls out two glasses. He serves her wine and waits for her to tell him when to stop. She doesn't and he stops at the middle.

KATHLEEN
Come on, let's make the most out of
a bad situation.

Staying quiet, David serves himself a bit and takes a sip.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Do you think they miss it? Those
nine months? Whatever, a baby makes
everything worth it in the end.

He moves over to the table, plops on a chair, and drinks.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Do you hate me?

David chokes on his drink.

DAVID
How could I hate you?

KATHLEEN
I'm miserable not stupid.

He returns to her, and sets his drink on the counter.

DAVID

I love you. I want you, safe and healthy. Is that too much to ask?

KATHLEEN

(crying)
That was all I had and you took it away.

DAVID

How could I take away something that didn't even exist?

He grabs her hands and brings it to his face. She doesn't look at him. He moves them around his face and shoulders.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'm here, right here. Can't you see?

KATHLEEN

Kiss me.

DAVID

What?

KATHLEEN

Kiss me.

David looks at her, unsure of what to do. She leans forward to kiss him and he pulls away. She starts to cry.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

(in tears)
Please, I need you.

He slowly kisses her but she envelopes him in her arms and kisses him hard. The two settle themselves on their kitchen floor. He takes off her sweater while she takes his shirt off. Her moans turn from pleasure into pain.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

No... please, no. This can't be happening.

DAVID

Is everything alright? Kathleen?

He pauses to let her breathe but she darts to the bathroom, locking the door. Confused, he raises his hand and sees blood on his fingers. He instinctively rubs the thick clot together. His eyes widen and he runs to the bedroom.

10.

11 INT. CUTLER BEDROOM - CONTINUED

11

Looking for a first aid kit, he opens up Kathleen's bedside drawer. A box of condoms, FetMental pamphlets, a mini aid kit. He grabs it but something next to the kit pinches him.

DAVID

Ow.

Looking at his finger, a dot of blood appears. Again, he looks at the drawer and sees the box of condoms; a safety pin pierces through the box. With a trembling hand, he pulls out a condom with holes in its wrapping.

His eyes dart and he goes to the wastebasket and pulls out a used condom from a few nights ago. He fingers the inconspicuous hole. Disgust and anger run across his face.

12 INT. CUTLER BATHROOM - NIGHT (WE'RE AT THE FLASHFORWARD)12

Kathleen crawls from the toilet to the tub, a bloody snail. She opens the faucet, waits for the tub to fill up.

DAVID (O.S.)

What did you do?!

She pushes herself into the tub. The water begins to reach her belly button as David knocks even harder on the door. As she settles in, pain flashes across her face.

Within arms reach is a drawer, which Kathleen opens and pulls out a shower speaker. She presses a button, and begins to scratch it on the side with her nail. Slowly, the sound a heartbeat begins.

DAVID (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Please, let me in.

After she's done scratching, she places it on the side of the tub, and the heartbeat overcomes David's voice. She shifts in the tub, trying to get into a comfortable position. She winces, a flash of pain runs across her face, but she recollects herself. The water in the bathtub has now become blood red and it engulfs her. The speaker has 14 tally marks scratched on the side and labelled with a "Baby Terry 2049" sticker. KATHLEEN closes her eyes and gently nods to the heartbeat.

CUT TO BLACK.

Vain Bodies

Kathleen Cutler woke up to another bloody morning and, while the damp bed sheets clung to her thighs, dreaded wearing the extra-large pad that she knew would feel like a diaper by mid-afternoon. She honestly thought last month's miscarriage would have been the last one and regretted not buying pads in bulk. But she believed pills can be defective sometimes, even government-mandated ones. With scissors from her bedside drawer, Kathleen cut out the nebulous stain to rescue a sleeping David and his dreams. Cells of the executed zygote seeped under her fingernails as she scratched the soiled fabric and waddled to the bathroom. Her thin thigh hair levitated as she plastered her bare ass on the freezing porcelain toilet seat. Kathleen's eyes shuttled between the bloody toilet paper in the trash and the door, anticipating her husband's benign outburst.

But her short-lived yawn reminded her that it was six a.m., and David was taking in the last few minutes of sleep. Kathleen leaned over from her seat, grabbed a towel out of the sink's cabinet, and threw it on the thin space between the door and the floor.

"I think your name will be Iris," said Kathleen, her words nesting on the blood-crusting cloth.

She ran a bath and stepped inside the tub. Five minutes in, and it looked like she was floating in strawberry kool-aid. She unplugged the stopper. She shivered, watching the bloody water spiral down the drain before she could fill up the tub again. The water barely reached her belly button before David walked in.

"Good morning, D," she said as the water lapped over the ends of her hair. "Did you sleep well?"

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David stared at Kathleen for what felt like half a minute before his eyes dropped to his nose, making his cheeks appear as though they were made of wax. "I can't keep doing this, Kathy," and groaned. "It hurts me to see you like this."

"Minor cramps," she said. "You should have seen earlier, it was like God's plague on the Nile."

"You're making jokes? Breaking the law isn't funny."

"No, but I'm sure the law breaking my uterus is. And as long as I'm taking the pills, we're not doing anything wrong. Congress can't enter our bedroom and tell us how to fuck. And as far as we know, there are no cameras patrolling whether you put a rubber on or not."

"You say this as if you have a degree in constitutional law," he scoffed.

"I'm sure next time will be the winner. You know I heard some women say that the success rate of these monthly sterilizations is 96%. Four percent chance of a baby, that's like getting into Columbia," she said, smearing strawberry body wash on her arms. "Your cousin got into Columbia."

"No."

"I thought Olga—"

"Yes, she did. But I mean no more, Kathy. No."

"Well, just because Iris didn't make it this time doesn't mean that the next one—"

"Stop! Stop. We'll wait for the lottery like everyone else. Okay?"

Kathleen knitted her brows, thinking it was stupid of David to mention such a dead-end method of conception. But whenever she mentioned the fact that they knew no couples with lotto babies, David would reaffirm his belief in the six degrees of separation. With a sharp inhale, she plunged her head into the tub of water. From underneath, the water distorted everything, proving

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reality to be a misconception. Through three inches of water, David looked like a melted mannequin and she couldn't help but laugh, bubbles rushing up to the surface. She brought herself back up, ending up nearly nose to nose with David who sat on the edge of the bathtub.

"Excuse me," she said as she got up and avoided David's helping hand. Her body softly trembled as she searched for a bathrobe. David looked at her helplessly as he left the bathroom.

"I'll use the guest bath," he said. "I'll be back home by six, so don't get too bored."

"I won't. I'll be at the FetMental," she said, as she sauntered into their bedroom smiling. "Busy day."

David sighed as Kathleen picked out her underwear, her back towards him. She turned around, donning a lace bra that clashed with worn granny panties, and asked, "Don't you want me to be a good mother?"

"There are better ways to practice motherhood, healthier ways."

"You say that as if you have a degree in psychology."

Kathleen was a regular at FetMental, the nation's premiere pseudo-infant center. Clients paid for sessions where they could transmit their consciousness to a fake reality in which they had a child. Kathleen's favorite was a toddler because that was the age her childhood baby dolls resembled; she'd rather be safe than sorry with her own baby, so she played with what she knew.

"Don't you want to be a parent?" she asked, making her way towards him.

She began to peck his shoulder and gently pushed him on the bed. She got on her knees and started untying David's pajama pants.

"Not while you're like this," said David, pulling up his pajamas and retreating to the guest bathroom. "Besides, you can't get pregnant until two weeks after a miscarriage. You should know by now."

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Kathleen only wanted to mend the morning's fiasco but she allowed him to have the last word. Kathleen had been like "this" ever since she got her period at fourteen. The government sent the late bloomer a care package that included an array of flowery pads, Belgian chocolates, and bubble gum-flavored contraception. Sterilizing all birthing persons was the grand plan to combat climate change. "Less Presence, Less Pollution," was the slogan, but everyone knew it meant less people, less problems.

Kathleen picked herself off the floor and walked to the kitchen. There she saw Irena, her housemaid, humming Fetmental's jingle, "Hush Little Baby." She walked over to the counter and sat on the chair, its bar digging into the arch of her foot.

Irena brought her a cup of tea. "You need to put something warm in you, Mrs. Cutler."

Kathleen smiled as she blew on her tea and asked, quietly, "Can you tell me what it felt like? One more time."

Kathleen's eyes widened as Irena said, "Sore breasts."

Her heart scratched her chest as Irena sat down to explain a new chapter on pregnancy. Last week, Kathleen naively asked if she had to chew up every little piece of food for her baby like a mother bird.

"When you're with child, you carry its aches. Life is agonizing, no? Life is forming in you," she said, her wrinkles twinkling with happiness. "That frenetic pain tries to escape but gets left behind in your breasts. It's another thing you have to shoulder."

Irena caressed Kathleen's hand before leaving to get a towel to pat Kathleen's hair dry. Kathleen looked at her own breasts but saw a mound-like pile of tissue, skin, and muscle.

She asked, "Where would the milk come from?"

"From your pain," replied Irena.

There was no way around pain when it came to her attempts at pregnancy. Kathleen welcomed it the way she would her mother-in-law's yearly visits, with a Laodicean cant of tolerance. The pills were different in the way that if an egg was fertilized and survived for a few days, the termination would be messy. A punishment cloaked in a lesson, but Kathleen had always loved a challenge. David was a challenge despite being painfully mundane and, despite being a housewife, she worked grueling hours on her charm. She clocked in every day from the moment he began to speak and clocked out just as he closed his eyes for the night.

Kathleen wasn't unlucky. It was just statistics that made her experience these miscarriages. She didn't take them personally, nor did she want to. She just had to keep trying and FetMental was always there. The company's chip shooting false images into her brain was a kind of insemination, at least one that had productive results. Housewives were supposed to have hobbies, and hers was FetMental.

Kathleen came up with a business proposition while in the waiting room. What if FetMental had a bar? After every session she couldn't wait to come back home and have a drink. Or three. She imagined other women did, too. It was a tragic freedom, a reminder of what she could do because of what she couldn't have.

Kathleen patted down her hot pink ruffle tulle skirt, its ferocity extending to her seat neighbors. She glanced at them quickly, a bald man and an old woman, adjusting to the present anomalies of FetMental's core demographic. She wanted to shake his hand and say thank you. Not many men visited FetMental; it was too feminine and neurotic (society already had a hard time separating the two). She wanted to kiss his putty-like dome of a head. But instead she rested her bare neck on the chair's top rail and thought about the first and last time David came to a

session with her. He didn't stop crying for a week—and wouldn't touch her for a month.

Consequently, Kathleen spent an entire afternoon in the attic foraging for her old vibrator.

"Are you going to a party?"

Kathleen raised her head and saw a thin woman with string hair sitting across from her.

She reminded Kathleen of a goat, her neck extended as if she was ready to eat from a hand.

Kathleen smiled and gently shook her head, *No*. She took out a compact mirror and lipstick from her purse and applied another layer. She rubbed her lips together and made them pop as the goat lady looked on.

"Aren't you worried about the spit-up?" asked the woman.

"I like to dress my best for my child. You don't?"

"It's not like it's real," said the goat lady.

Kathleen felt as if she was balancing a small porcupine on her head. She tried to lasso the woman's gaze but she brought her attention back to a magazine ad about a local nursery's sale on chrysanthemums. It was as if the woman had approached Kathleen, handed her a ticking bomb, and ran away. All the heat from her body concentrated in her cheeks and her extremities went cold.

A man in a lab coat came out from a door and, staring at a clipboard, asked, "Ms. Cutler?"

Kathleen raised her hand. She got up, but the bald man was sitting on a part of her skirt. He was wearing dark shades, and she couldn't tell if he was awake. Either way she didn't want to be a nuisance, so she tugged at the fabric. Kathleen turned around to look at the employee who was staring at his watch. She pulled a bit harder and tore the skirt, letting out a gasp. She took a

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breath and careened towards the double doors, occasionally looking back at the piece of light tulle suffocating under the man's thighs. He hadn't moved.

The employee didn't look at Kathleen, his politeness limited to just holding the door for her. He led her through an empty egg-shell colored hallway. To her left and right were pastel-colored doors, and as she walked by them, she heard sobs and laughter, the two blended into a cacophony of indiscernible clamor. Excitement and fear took turns inhabiting Kathleen's stomach, the two ran on top of each other that they reached her throat. She rubbed the palm of a hand across her hip and felt the missing piece of skirt. The man stopped at the last door and knocked and a woman in a lab coat opened it. She beckoned Kathleen to enter and the man left, closing the door behind him.

"Hello, my name is Nia. You can take a seat while I pull up your information."

Nia returned to a small desk and looked at a computer screen that had a bunch of numbers and Kathleen's face. Kathleen shrank when she saw her picture, a moment of strong conviction in her ability to pull off bangs. She hopped on the treatment table, her skirt crinkling against the crisp paper. She laid down and prepared for the cold chip to touch her left temple. Kathleen would sometimes try to recreate the feeling at home with some hard candy and a piece of tape, but nothing felt like the real thing.

Max was somewhere in that chip, and Kathleen wondered what they would do today. Although he was only two years old, Kathleen could tell Max had an inclination toward the arts. A couple months ago, he made an abstract piece with carrot puree and milk on the tray of his high chair. Kathleen wanted to cut out the messy section and sell it to an art curator. She decided on playing with paint. It was important for Max to exercise his senses, to make him feel alive with every touch. Kathleen was doing all the heavy lifting of parenthood. Because of this, she

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was certain Max would grow up torturing small animals before making the transition to human slaughter—all because of David’s absence. A hot tear rolled down Kathleen’s cheek, her acrylic nail smoothly tearing some skin in wiping it away.

“I’m sorry, Ms. Cutler,” Nia said, picking up a clipboard and scratching something off with a pen. “I’m afraid we can’t conduct a session with you today.”

“I’m sorry. What’s going on?”

“Your subscription has been canceled. You’re no longer a client here.”

Kathleen sat up and clutched her purse to her stomach, “We’ve been paying the monthly fee.”

“The account has been terminated,” Nia said without looking at Kathleen, which only made the situation more puzzling. Kathleen felt a pool of tears wavering over her water line, pushing up against one another, anxiously waiting to be released.

Nia looked at her and then at her screen, “We have people waiting.”

Kathleen blinked, boiling droplets rolling down her cheek. No porcupine, no cold hands or feet. The pain took refuge in her tear ducts. She was careful to wipe them away with her knuckles. Gathering her purse and smoothing out the creases in her skirt, she tottered towards the door and looked back to see if Nia would look at her. She didn’t.

“Can someone escort me out?”

David was waiting at the kitchen table by the time Kathleen stumbled into the house. A small lamp in the corner was the only source of light, lighting only half of his face as he called out to her. She was glad he did, though, and meandered over, sinking into the seat next to him. He was silent but there was something about the way that his breathing was calm yet delicate.

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Kathleen stared at him, taking in his features. Max looked nothing like him; he was all her.

Maybe that was what unsettled David. She hadn't realized it before, but maybe that was it.

"I think you need help," David said, gripping her hands.

"David," she said, looking at him earnestly. "If you wanted Max to look like you, you just should have told me." Disbelief danced in his eyes, but she continued, "I've been so selfish keeping him all to myself."

David let go of her hands and rubbed his forehead, "I think you should go to your mom's place for a while. To clear your head."

"I don't need to clear my head."

He didn't bother arguing. Just stared at Kathleen, as any strength she had left began to dwindle. Although it took her a while, she recognized the undulation of her chest. It would mostly happen around flowers and an outsider would mistake it for allergies rather than grief.

"Who'd take care of my garden anyway?" she asked.

In the backyard, Kathleen had planted flowers in remembrance of her losses. Each plant was different, and she toiled to make sure each one thrived. Her beautiful losses bloomed each spring, a kaleidoscope of chrysanthemums swallowing the unsuspecting eye with an inescapable prism of blues, and she hoped that a victorious child would roam around her little Eden. David rarely visited despite Kathleen's constant invitation.

"I will, and if I can't then I'll ask Irena for help," he said, holding onto her embrace.

Her face was on David's back and her warm breath hovered over, "Please, talk to them. They need someone. Irena could do it but they want you."

She closed her eyes, trying to remember Max, but the toddler became a blur that softened like butter on a hot pan. But while they were closed she focused on David's existence. She

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couldn't remember the last time she felt the rise and fall of his chest or the warm light breeze of his breath on her head. He was a sweet stranger, boring at times but kind and gentle. She was digging for treasure in the wrong place.

Kathleen wanted to explore him with a sincerity that was usually reserved for her fake child. She planted her face on his back, hoping that some imaginary thread would tether her brain to his heart. But when she opened her eyes she saw that there was some pink smudge on his shirt.

She turned him around so that he could see her and said, "Kiss me like you miss me."

Kathleen took his shirt off tenderly, reaching for some warmth. Keeping her hands on his waist she pulled him in as she hoisted herself up on the kitchen table. She twisted her grip on that piece of string that flickered with ardor. She wouldn't get pregnant that night, but she didn't care. She'd rather get to know her partner.

Vain Bodies Initial Shot List (Paula/Eli - Ver 5 (Compatible w/script v7)) Cinema Verite Style

#	Shot Type	Movement	Angle	Description	Equipment	Notes
1A	Master shot/wide	handheld	eye	Whole Scene 1; cinema verite style; keep realistic lighting	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
1B	MCU	handheld	eye	Whole Scene 1; focus on hands gripping thigh, fiddling with the clot, digging into leg, pulling on thread, and finally bouncing on leg (showing fetmental wristband).	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	Can this be cut up or all one take?
1C	Insert/POV	handheld	overhead	KC's finger squishes to the clot. Her POV (immerse viewer)	50/85mm; shoulder mount/rig	Nightmare cut
1D	CU	handheld	eye/slightly low	Beginning of scene until line, "You're not a fucking baby"	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
1E	Medium	handheld	Eye level	Whole scene 1; camera looks at KC but also turns to the door when the knocks come in.	24/35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
1F	MCU	handheld	eye	Crane down begins from the line, "You're not a fucking baby" until the end of scene." Need to capture the bloody blue skirt, will be set up to be at her ankles so that we stick to the one angle (which is KC facing camera).	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
1G	CU of light and shadow under the Bathroom door	Handheld	Eye/ground level	The knocks grow louder with each hit. The knocks keep coming.	50mm; shoulder mount/rig	Blast warm light on otherside of the door.
1H	Medium shot of bathroom window	Handheld	Low	KATHLEEN CUTLER (25-35) straddles the toilet, disheveled.	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	Can probably cut since it's a night scene

Vain Bodies Initial Shot List (Paula/Eli - Ver 5 (Compatible w/script v7))

2B	Master/wide shot	static	Eye	Whole scene 2	12-35mm; sticks	
2C	OTS	static	eye	KC's pov; we see the old woman react to KC's foot tapping.	50mm; sticks	
2D	Reverse OTS	static	eye	Older woman's pov.	50mm; sticks	
2E	Insert Med. CU of TV	Static	Eye/low	HERA (40s/50s), a woman with the likes of Martha Stewart saunters around a FetMental center.	50mm; sticks	
2F	Insert of brochure/wristb and	Static	High	Kathleen relaxes in her seat, tilting her head as she fixates on an image on the FetMental brochure: a mother and child.	50mm; sticks	
6A	CU of KC	static	eye	Slight profile, not too sharp.	50/85mm; sticks	
6B	Full two/three shot	Static	Slightly low	The FetMental employee escorts her out. Kathleen shrugs and mouths "Crazy" to the older woman who raises her eyebrows in agreement. - End of scene.	50/85mm; sticks	Client crying in the background. MAN walks into frame and sits next to KC. Profile shot; Long lens
6C	Medium > Full	handheld	eye	Verite; capture the struggle between client and fm employee; start from KC flaunting neck to the client getting escorted out to the man sitting next to KC and shifting in his seat.	35mm; sticks	
6D	OTS	static	eye	Older woman's pov; whole scene 6	50mm; sticks	
6E	Reverse OTS	static	eye	KC's pov; whole scene 6	50mm; sticks	
6F	Full shot	static	eye/slightly low	Full shot of TV with KC in frame, looking at the TV.	50mm; sticks	
8A	Full shot of KC in waiting room	static	Eye	Whole scene 8	35mm; sticks	Technician steps into foreground right thirds. KC in left thirds.

7A	master/wide shot	handheld	eye	Whole scene 7	24/35mm; shoulder mount/rig	End of table in the foreground?
7B	OTS	handheld	eye	KC's pov; all of 7 until KC moves to sit on DC's lap	12-35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7C	Reverse OTS	handheld	eye	DC's pov; all of 7 until KC moves to sit on DC's lap.	12-35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7D	Cowboy	handheld	eye	KC sits on DC's lap (crossed the 180 line)	24/35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7E	MCU	handheld	Slightly low	Cross 180 line again and start with KC, "When will you be the father I need and deserve?" until the end.	50mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7F	CU	handheld	Slightly low	CU of KC while she's on DC's lap; basically a different shot of 7D	50mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7G	CU	handheld	eye	CU of DC, while KC on DC's lap; same length as 7D.	50mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7H	insert	handheld	eye	CU on KC and DC's hands interacting; From beginning of scene 7 until KC pulls her hand away.	50mm; shoulder mount/rig	
7I	Overhead CU of plate with egg	static to handheld	High	Kathleen places a cooked egg on a plate...	50mm; sticks	Figure out how to go from static to handheld shot?

Vain Bodies Shot List (scene 9)

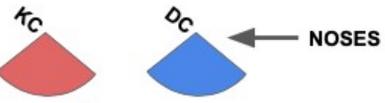
9A	Long/Wide shot in simulation room	static	Eye/slightly high	Whole scene 9	12-35mm; sticks	Pan from looking out the window to a wide shot on the other side of the room.
9B	CU of KC	Static to handheld	Eye	Whole scene 9	24/35mm; sticks; shoulder mount/rig	
9C	CU of KC nightmare cut	handheld	High	Whole scene 9	24/35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
9D	OTS long shot of Tech's back	handheld	Low	All of scene 9	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	Can the Tech be standing at a computer with her back towards KC to show power dynamic and lack of connection?
9E	Med. CU of Tech	static	Slightly low	"Mrs. Cutler, your account has been terminated." - End of scene.	24/35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
9F	Inserts of set dec/props	static	Eye		35mm; sticks	
9G	Insert of KC hand gripping chair	handheld	Eye		35mm	Wristband on right arm Close motorized blinds mid-scene

10 A	master/wide shot (8-9)	handheld	eye	Whole scene 10		
10 B	Medium CU > CU (8-9)	handheld	eye	Whole scene 10; Push in from when KC starts setting her things down on the counter; keep the CU from "Driving. Clearing my head" to the entire scene (maybe cut earlier bc DC will enter the frame if they kiss?)		
10 C	Insert (8)	handheld	eye	Wine getting served		
10 D	OTS (8)	handheld	eye	KC's pov; she dirties the frame but DC looks distant in the frame. Do a subtle zoom in until DC moves to sit on the couch. End on, "How could I hate you?"		
10 E	Cowboy/2-shot (9)	handheld	eye	DC enters frame after KC's line, "I'm miserable not stupid" and hold for the rest of the scene.		
10 F	CU (9)	handheld	Slightly high	CU of DC starting at his line, "I love you. I want you, safe and healthy" until they start kissing.		
10 G	CU (9)	handheld	eye	CU on KC and DC's hands moving while they kiss; taking off sweaters, unbuttoning shirts; could be a part of 10E, maybe push in from the cowboy to a CU as the scene progresses?		
11 A	master/wide shot (8-9)	handheld	eye	Whole scene 10	12-35mm; shoulder mount/rig	From the dresser top at end of the bed; cheat forward for DP to get behind
11 B	Med. Long at the bedside drawer to Medium of DC	Handheld; tilt up to reaction	Slightly low to low	Looking for a first aid kit, he opens up Kathleen's bedside drawer. A box of condoms, FetMental pamphlets, a mini aid kit. He grabs it but something next to the kit pinches him.	24mm; shoulder mount/rig	
11 C	Insert CUs of props	Handheld	Eye, OTS, high, low	A box of condoms, FetMental pamphlets, a mini aid kit. He grabs it but something next to the kit pinches him. He looks at the drawer and sees the box of condoms; a safety pin pierces through the box.	35mm; shoulder mount/rig	
11 D	Insert Ex. CU of condom	Handheld	Low	His eyes dart and he goes to the wastebasket and pulls out a used condom from a few nights ago. He	85mm; shoulder mount/rig	Frontal; DC's face slightly out of focus in background but in focus enough to see reaction?

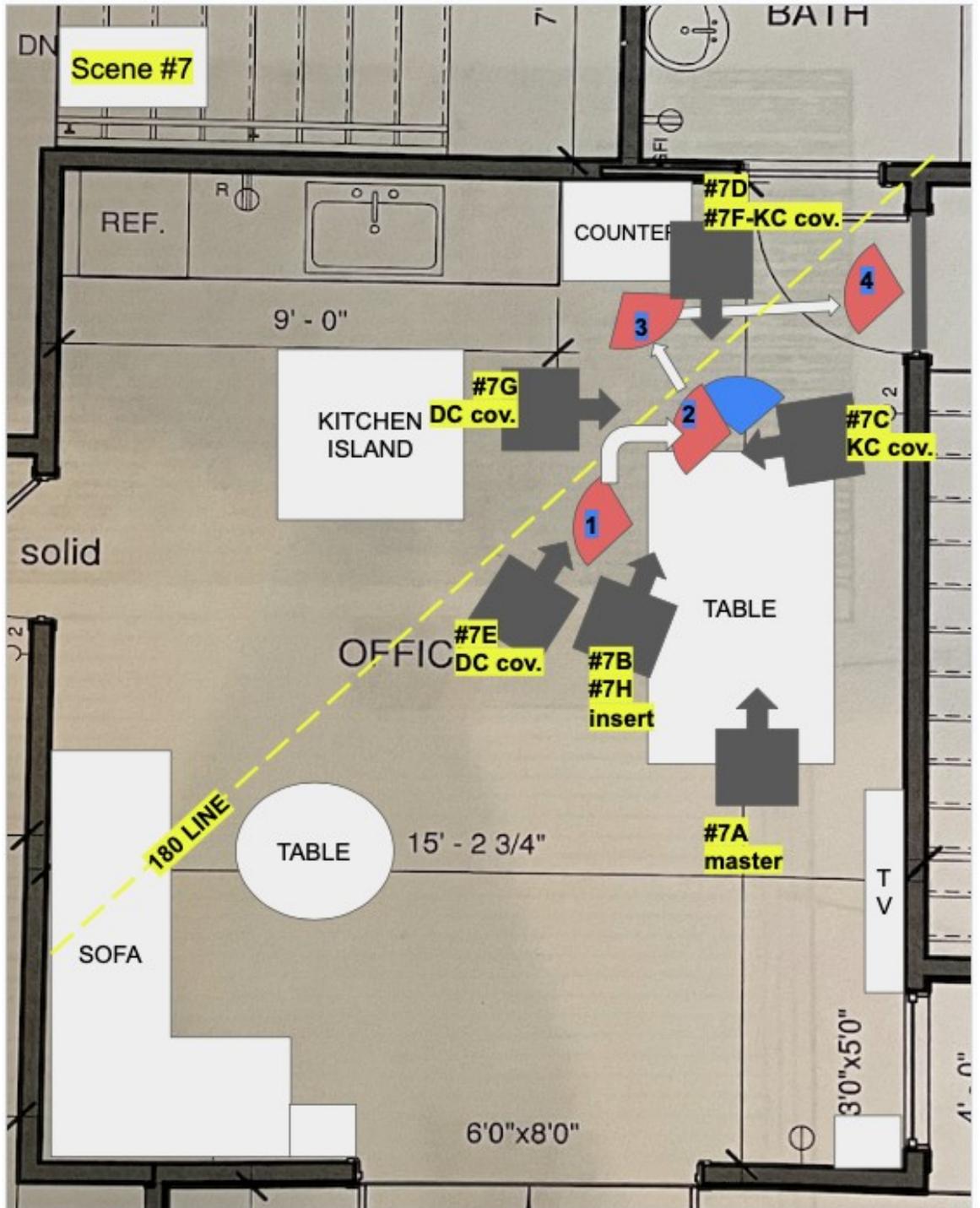
				finger the inconspicuous hole.		
12 A	One-take, tracking shot of KC	Handheld	All	All of scene 12		
12 B	Wide overhead of bathroom	Sticks of something	High	Whole scene		

Key

Characters:



Cameras:



1
 K: K & D are in a domestic space; K is a "housewife." Another "David but this is different."
 D: we're having breakfast.
 E: K - I feel like I'm playing a role.
 D - I think I'm happy. We're in a good place.
 A: K - I'm cooking w/ husband
 D - I'm sitting waiting for breakfast

7 INT. CUTLER EAT-IN-KITCHEN - MORNING (EARLIER) 7
 Kathleen places a cooked egg on a plate and ~~with~~ delivers it to her husband, DAVID CUTLER (25-35). Although she kisses his head as the plate lands in front of him, ~~she~~ ~~stranges~~ ~~she~~ ~~stranges~~ ~~she~~ ~~stranges~~. The same news report plays.

ANCHORMAN (O.S.)
 Thank you for starting your morning with us at Vene News. One senator publicly asserts the fertility policy is, "drastically shifting the climate game in our favor."

K: I am listening to the radio.
 D: we have done the lotto & we lost a kid.
 E: K: I am angry, they're telling lies.
 D: At least they're reporting this

She settles down with her plate. She stabs her food, and shakes her head.

ANCHORMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 This comes after the accusations about the inefficiencies with the national pregnancy lottery. The agency's response: "Have faith."

K: I'm watching her on the food & feel bad for her

Vain Bodies — Shooting Schedule

Scene	I/E	Scene Setting	D/N	Cast ID	Shoot Location	Pages	Hour
DAY 1 OF 4 Call time: n/a; FetMental Center							
3	INT.	FetMental Center - COMMERCIAL HERA saunters around a FetMental center.	DAY	3		3/8	~ 45 MIN
4	INT/ EXT.	FetMental Center - COMMERCIAL Stock footage of mother and child; HERA narrates voiceover.	DAY	3		2/8	~ 30 MIN
5	INT.	FetMental Center - COMMERCIAL HERA finishes therapy session.	DAY	3		2/8	~ 30 MIN
End of Day 1 of 4 Wrap: n/a Total pages: 7/8							
DAY 2 of 4 Saturday, Jan. 28th 2023 Call time: 4:00 PM; Cutler Home							
1	INT.	Cutler Home - Bathroom KATHLEEN experiences a miscarriage, and is on the toilet.	NIGHT	1, 2		6/8	~ 1 HR 30 MIN 4:00-5:30 PM
11	INT.	Cutler Home - Bedroom DAVID runs to find a first aid kit but discovers something else.	NIGHT	2		3/8	~ 1 HR 5:30 - 6:30 PM
12	INT.	Cutler Home - Bathroom KATHLEEN, still miscarrying, moves to the tub and runs a bath. She gets in and listens to an old ultrasound heartbeat of her last, almost viable pregnancy.	NIGHT	1, 2		5/8	~ 1 HR 15 MIN 6:30 - 7:45 PM
End of Day 2 of 4 Wrap: 7:45 PM Total Pages: 1 6/8 Saturday, Jan. 28th 2023							

Vain Bodies — Shooting Schedule

DAY 3 of 4 Sunday, Jan. 29th 2023 Call time: 8:30 AM; Cutler Home							
7	INT.	Cutler Home - Kitchen/Dining Room Cold and barren place witnessing the failure of a marriage. KATHLEEN and DAVID are eating breakfast. The local news plays as their conversation descends into chaos.	DAY - MORNING	1, 2		2 4/8	~ 5 HRS 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM
LUNCH 1:30-2:00 pm							
10	INT.	Cutler Home - Kitchen/Dining Room KATHLEEN, back from Fetmental, confronts DAVID. Deranged passions ensue. Argument occurs at final moments of sunset and ends at night.	NIGHT	1, 2		1 5/8	~ 3 HR 10 MIN 2:00-5:10 PM
End of Day 3 of 4 Wrap: 5:10 PM Total Pages: 4 1/8 Sunday, Jan. 29th 2023							
Day 4 of 4 Friday, Feb. 10th 2023 Call time: 2:00 PM FetMental Center							
9	INT.	FetMental Center-Simulation Room KATHLEEN enters simulation with TECHNICIAN/NIA but learns that her subscription got cancelled.	DAY	1, 7		1 2/8	~ 2 HR 30 MIN 2:00 PM - 4:30 PM
LUNCH 4:30-5:00 pm							
2	INT.	FetMental Center - Waiting Room KATHLEEN sits, relaxed, in the waiting room. Her foot tapping bothers an OLDER WOMAN.	DAY	1, 6, EXTRAS		3/8	~ 45 MIN 5:00 - 5:45 PM

Vain Bodies — Shooting Schedule

6	INT.	FetMental Center - Waiting Room KATHLEEN sees a FETMENTAL EMPLOYEE remove a hysterical CLIENT. A MAN sits next to her, much to the OLDER WOMAN's sexist disapproval.	DAY	1, 6, 4, 5, 8, EXTRAS		7/8	~ 1 HR 45 MIN 5:45 - 7:30 PM
8	INT.	FetMental Center - Waiting Room TECHNICIAN/NIA calls KATHLEEN'S name for her therapy simulation to begin.	DAY	1, 6, 4, 5, 8, 7, EXTRAS		2/8	~ 30 MIN 7:30 - 8:00 PM
End of Day 4 of 4 Wrap: 8:00 PM Total Pages: 3 5/8 Friday, Feb. 10th 2023							

CAST ID:
 KATHLEEN 1
 DAVID 2
 HERA 3
 CLIENT 4
 FETMENTAL EMPLOYEE 5
 OLDER WOMAN 6
 TECHNICIAN/NIA 7
 MAN 8

Producer: Mateo Tewari (678) 592-4268 Director: Paula Acocal (914) 318-1329	<h1>CALL SHEET</h1> <h2>VAIN BODIES</h2>	DATE Thursday, Feb 23, 2023 DAY: 5 of 5 Shooting Call: 12:00 PM
LOCATION ADDRESS Rollins School of Public Health Room: CNR 5001 1518 Clifton Road NE Atlanta, GA	<h1>11:00 am</h1> <p>Check individual call times.</p> <p>WEATHER: 76°F High/65°F Low Scattered showers.</p>	NEAREST HOSPITAL Emory University Hospital 1364 Clifton Rd NE Atlanta, GA 30322 404.712.2000

TALENT

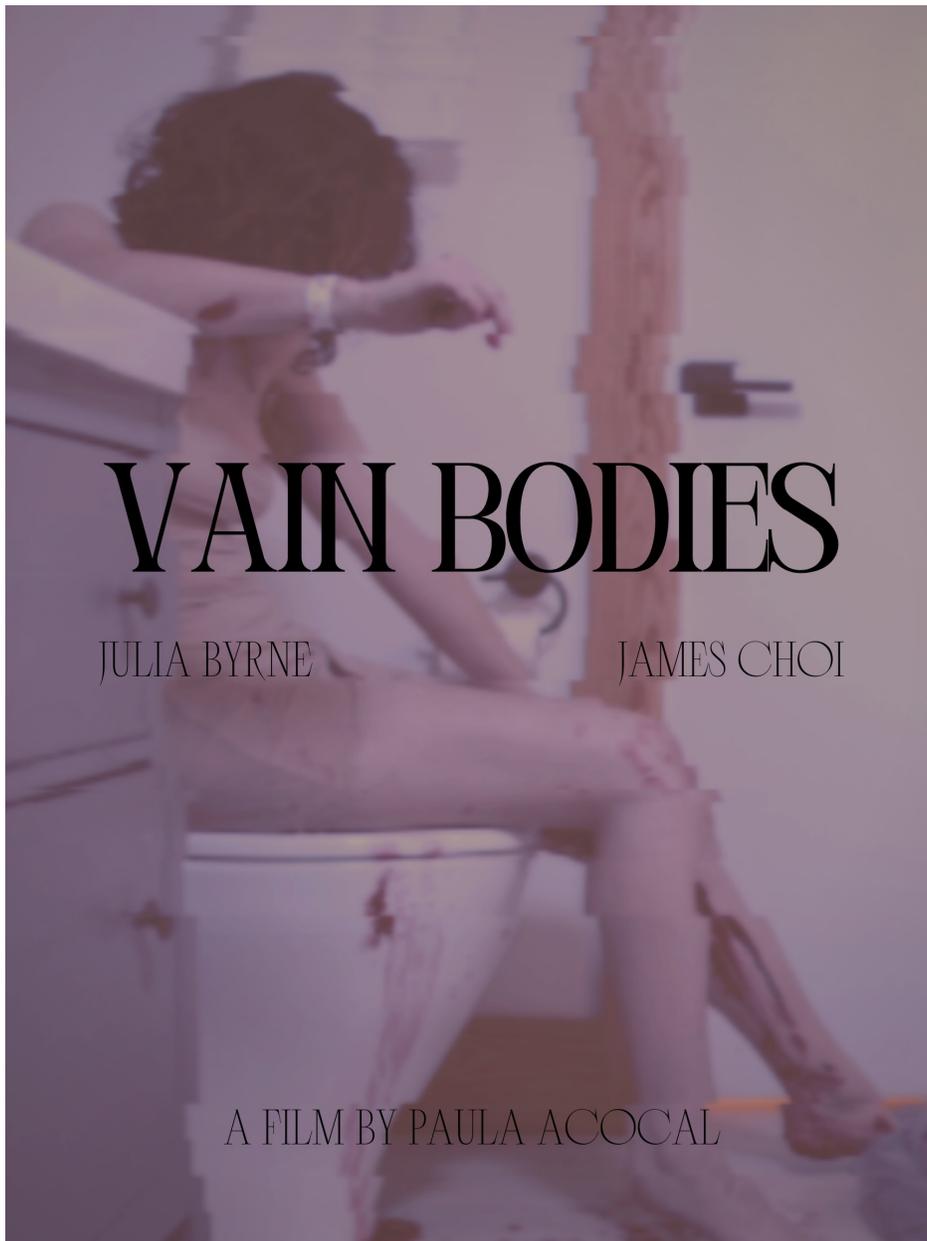
#	Talent Name	Role	Location Call	Pick Up Time	MU/WD	Notes
1.	Julia Byrne	Kathleen Cutler	12:30 pm			

EXTRAS

#	Talent Name	Role	Location Call	Pick Up Time	MU/WD	Notes
1.	Daphne Thomas	Older Woman	12:30 pm			
1.	Madelen Soto	FetMental Employee	12:00 pm			
1.	Hope Zelda Kim	Hysterical Client	12:00 pm			
1.	Kee Antonio	Man	12:30 pm			
7.	Extras	Waiting Room Patients	12:30 pm			

	NAME	PHONE #	IN	DEPT	NAME	PHONE #	IN
PRODUCTION				SOUND			
Director	Paula Acocal	(914) 318-1329	11:00 am	Production Sound	Daniel Cooley		11:00 am
Producer	Mateo Tewari	(678) 592-4268	11:00 am				
Production Designer	Fernando Diaz-Cjeda		11:00 am				
Production Assistant	Fabio Acocal		11:00 am				
CAMERA							
Director of Photography	Eli Salba		11:00 am	Grip	Lingxi Li		1:00 pm
1st AC	Lauren Crawford		11:00 am	Script Supervisor	Daisy Macias		11:00 am
PARKING (See following page for further detail)				COVID COMPLIANCE			
Parking is available at the Michael Street Parking Deck located at 550 Michael Street. Please make sure to enter through the visitor parking gates. Parking fees will be reimbursed. The Claudia Nance Rollins Building (notated by the red star on the map) is across Rollins Way.				All crew fully vaccinated			

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER:		
PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: Vain Bodies	
DIRECTOR: Paula Acocal	PRODUCER: Ethan Wesselkamper, Mateo Tewari	
DAY EXT - YELLOW NIGHT EXT - GREEN	<i>SCRIPT BREAKDOWN SHEET</i>	
SCENE # 9	BREAKDOWN PAGE NO.	
SCRIPT PAGE 6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INT OR <input type="checkbox"/> EXT	
PAGE COUNT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DAY OR <input type="checkbox"/> NIGHT	
SCENE DESCRIPTION		
LOCATION		
CAST 1 Kathleen 7 Nia	EXTRAS	PROPS / WEAPONS Implant, Chair Computer, Shades (?) Pamphlets, wristband (on right side) Toys, Compact mirror/blush; purple latex gloves; tray
	STUNTS	VEHICLES / ANIMALS
SPECIAL EFFECTS The blinds going down and up	WARDROBE Scrubs Necklace, top, skirt, purse	MAKE-UP / HAIR Minimal, the berry lipstick and the blush
SET DRESSING Toys, maybe a tray to put the implant on, maybe a bean bag as a chair or a chair from the waiting room	GREENERY	SOUND EFFECTS / MUSIC
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT	PRODUCTION NOTES	



VAIN BODIES

JULIA BYRNE

JAMES CHOI

A FILM BY PAULA ACOCAL

Direction: Top left to bottom left to top right to bottom right.

VAIN BODIES

BY
PAULA ACOCAL

A MIX OF BOTH

FORMALISM

- HIGH AND LOW CAMERA ANGLES
- A MOVING CAMERA CAN BE USED TO EMPHASIZE SUBJECTIVE STATES OR CREATE ENERGY AND OR MOOD.
- LIGHTING CAN MOVE TO MORE EXTREME USE OF COLOR, LIGHT AND SHADOW IN THE CREATION OF SUBJECTIVE STATES AND VISUAL METAPHORS.



REALISM

- COMPOSITION FEELS RANDOM OR NATURAL, OFTEN WITH AN OPEN FRAME.
- LIGHTING APPEARS TO BE NATURAL IN SOME SCENES
- EDITING HAS A SEAMLESS CONTINUITY EXCEPT THERE S

FILM STYLE



CHARACTERS

DAVID CUTLER, MID-20S

DEDICATED HUSBAND TO KATHLEEN
HE IS THE NAIVE ONE; STILL BELIEVES IN THE SYSTEM
A PUSHOVER; GOES ALONG WITH KATHLEEN'S DECISIONS IN ORDER TO KEEP HER HAPPY
WANTS A HAPPY HOME AND A HAPPY FAMILY BUT IN THE RIGHT WAY



KATHLEEN CUTLER, MID-20S

TROUBLED BUT PERSISTENT HOUSEWIFE
SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE WANTS, AND WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO GET IT
SMART WITH A HINT OF MANIPULATION
SHE'S NOT NAIVE ALTHOUGH SHE MAY SEEM LIKE IT



HERA, 40S/50S

AN OLD WOMAN IN THE FETMENTAL COMMERCIAL
SHE LOOKS SUPERFICIAL, ALMOST LIKE PLASTIC
HAS A NATURAL MATERNAL LOOK DESPITE HER "OLD AGE"



TECHNICIAN/NIA, EARLY 20S

COLLEGE-STUDENT AGED
WORKING PART-TIME AT FETMENTAL TO PAY HER BILLS
DOES NOT HAVE AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO THE CLIENTS
SHE'S JUST THERE TO DO HER JOB



OLD WOMAN, EARLY-60S

A FETTERED CLIENT
 ANNOYED EASILY; A BIT LIKE A STERN GRANDMOTHER
 NO DILLY-DALLYING BUT IS A BIT KIND IN THE EYES



WOMAN, 40S

CAN BE ANY AGE BUT 40S IS A GOOD START
 SUFFERED A BREAKDOWN WHILE LEAVING THE CENTER
 MUST STARTLE THE CLIENTS WHO ARE ULTIMATELY UNBOtherED



ANCHORMAN, 30S/40S/50S

WALTER CRONKITE-ESQUE
 VOICE-OVER ON THE RADIO
 NOT ON-SCREEN



CHARACTER STYLE

WOMAN IN THE COMMERCIAL + EXTRAS

THE WOMAN IN THE COMMERCIAL DOESN'T SPEAK AND IS IN A 20 SECOND CLIP
 SHE IS PART OF AN AD THAT PLAYS WITHIN THE WORLD OF THE FILM

EXTRAS:

15-20 PEOPLE IN THE WAITING ROOM
 A VARIETY OF AGES BUT ALL ABOVE 20-YEARS OLD
 - PERHAPS, THE MAJORITY CAN BE FEMALE PRESENTING, WITH SOME SHOTS OF MEN LOOKING A BIT OUT OF PLACE (A COMMENTARY ON SEXISM/GENDER NORMS AND HOW PARENTHOOD IS OFTEN PUSHED ON THE MOTHER RATHER THAN THE FATHER).

KATHLEEN CUTLER

MORNING



Day



NIGHT



WOMAN



LOCATIONS

WOMAN IN COMMERCIAL



CUTLER HOME

- KITCHEN/DINNER TABLE
- BEDROOM
- BATHROOM

FETMENTAL

- WAITING AREA
- SIMULATION ROOM
- ADVERTISEMENT

DAVID CUTLER

MORNING



NIGHT



TECHNICIAN/NIA



HERA



OLD WOMAN



KITCHENETTE (A SMALL SPACE)

- KITCHEN ISLAND
- SMALL TABLE NEXT TO KITCHEN



BEDROOM

- MINIMALIST



BATHROOM

- CLASSIC WHITE BATH TUB
- DISTANCE BETWEEN TOILET & TUB



FETMENTAL WAITING ROOM

- ORGANIZED LAYOUT



SIMULATION ROOM



MISE-EN-SCENE

ADVERTISEMENT



SETS/DECOR



COLORS/TEXTURES



TYPES OF SHOTS





AMORES PERROS (ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ-IZARRITU, 2000)
CINEMATOGRAPHER: RODRIGO PRIETO
NON-LINEAR SEQUENCE



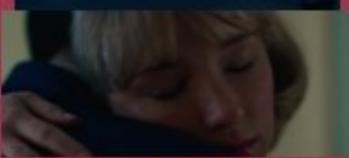
VISUAL AND NARRATIVE STYLES

BLACK MIRROR (S3 EP. 1, JOE WRIGHT)
CINEMATOGRAPHER: SEAMUS MCGARVEY



SWALLOW (CARLO MIRABELLA-DAVIS, 2019)

CINEMATOGRAPHER: KATELIN AMERIZANDI



INFLUENCES

BLACK MIRROR



HANDMAID'S TALE



CHILDREN OF MEN (CUARÓN, 2006)



CHILDREN OF MEN (ALFONSO CUARÓN, 2006)

CINEMATOGRAPHER: EMMANUEL LUBEZKI

