

"ERIN'S VOICE"

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

A TV plays with the subtitles on, a collection of computers run, a ceiling fan spins, but none of it makes any sound.

The top on a Red Bull is opened but there's no pop or fizz.

Fingers fly over a keyboard but, as lines of incomprehensible computer code race onto the screen, there's no clicking.

This is the noiseless world of a deaf man.

DOUG WEBBER, 30s, is in a zone, his focus is absolute. He'd be handsome if he ever got a good night's sleep.

The lights blink out, then flash back on. Doug turns to find his wife with her hand on the switch, smiling at him.

CATHY WEBBER, 30s, wears a simple evening dress and not-quite-expensive jewelry. Her entire look is just a bit over thought out, as if she doesn't get to dress up very often.

CATHY  
(signed, not spoken)  
*We're late. Come on.*

Her signing is lyrical and easy, her face emotive.

Doug gives his computers a longing look, then saves his work.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

Doug drives his older, but well loved convertible through traffic with the top down.

Cathy has her hair back in a bright orange scrunchy to keep it out of her face in the wind.

Doug pulls up to a valet stand, hands his keys to the VALET, then hurries around to open Cathy's door for her.

INT. STEAK HOUSE - NIGHT

DINERS chat and eat in total silence.

Doug and Cathy sit in a booth.

CATHY  
(signed, not spoken)  
*To nine years!*

They toast, but there is no clink as their glasses touch.

We see, but don't hear, him speak. She has to keep putting her glass down to sign but she isn't the least bit bothered.

Doug checks his phone for the hundredth time. Cathy gently plucks the phone from his hand and drops it in her purse.

A WAITER delivers their meals.

Doug watches Cathy take her first bite. There's just the slightest motion around her eyes, but he sees it.

Doug waves the waiter back over and explains the issue. Cathy nods her agreement. The waiter apologizes, takes the plate back to the kitchen.

Cathy beams at Doug. She loves how well he knows her.

EXT. STEAK HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug and Cathy wait at the valet stand.

Cars fly past; their tires rolling noiselessly.

Cathy's head snaps toward an unheard sound.

Her eyes go wide.

She leaps away from the curb, dragging Doug with her.

Doug follows her gaze in time to see a car leap the curb at full speed where they had just been standing.

The car shoots past them --  
Obliterates the valet stand --  
Smashes into a parked car.

Even the horrendous collision fails to penetrate the silence.

Cathy and Doug give each other a long look to make sure they're all right. Witnesses surround them and mutely ask if they're OK.

EXT. STEAK HOUSE - LATER

SOUND returns with jarring suddenness.

Dozens of MINGLED VOICES from the gathered crowd, the SQUAWK of police radios, the GRATING, TEARING sound of the jaws of life as paramedics work to free the drunk driver.

Doug watches as Cathy speaks to a POLICE OFFICER. She signs as she answers his questions.

CATHY  
The guy never even slowed down.

POLICE OFFICER  
Ma'am, why are you doing that?

CATHY  
My husband is deaf, it'd be rude to exclude him from the conversation.

POLICE OFFICER  
Can't he read lips?

Cathy signs the officer's question. Doug rolls his eyes.

DOUG  
For Christ's sake.

Doug's speech impediment is so slight it could be mistaken for a subtle accent.

CATHY  
Very, very few people can. Less than 30% of English can actually be read on the lips. See --

Doug places his hand on her arm, stopping her from signing.

DOUG  
Officer, I'd like to take my wife home now if that's all right.

POLICE OFFICER  
That would be...

The officer turns to Cathy.

POLICE OFFICER  
Should I just talk to you or what?  
Where do I look?

Doug's irritation is clear. Cathy is more patient.

CATHY  
You can just talk to him like you would anyone else. I'll sign.

POLICE OFFICER  
OK. Uh, we have your contact information so if we have any more questions we'll call. Well, I guess we can't call, so, we'll --

DOUG  
Go ahead and call, I'd love to hear  
from you.

The officer watches them go, relieved to be free of the situation.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug and Cathy enter their comfortable little condo. Everything in it is a step up from Ikea, but not a big step.

Cathy drops her purse on a table, Doug instantly picks it up and fishes his phone out like a junky that needs a fix. He reads a message on the screen.

DOUG  
Damn.

Doug looks up to find Cathy waiting to sign.

DOUG  
Did you say something?

She gestures for him to come over. He takes her in his arms and they begin to dance. She gently taps a beat on his back.

CATHY  
(signed, not spoken)  
Can you unzip me?

She turns. He slides the zipper on the dress down far enough to reveal there's not a scrap of clothing beneath it. He gives the exposed bit of back-side a hungry look.

DOUG  
Hello, Mrs. Webber.

He turns her around. They kiss.

CATHY  
*I saved your life. I think you owe  
me something for my trouble.*

DOUG  
The latest build didn't compile. I have to get it running for the presentation. Rain check?

CATHY  
*I'll hold you to that.*

DOUG  
You'd better.

Doug hands her his jacket, then heads to his office.

BEDROOM

Cathy hangs up the jacket, then slips out of her dress. She opens her dresser drawer and pulls out a set of old, comfy, not-getting-laid-tonight pajamas.

From down the hall comes the RAPID FIRE CLICKING of Doug typing a mile a minute.

HOME OFFICE

Silence. Doug is lost in the lines of code on the screen. He seems to look through the monitor more than at it.

Hours fly past in a blur.

INT. A HOSPITAL - NIGHT (DREAM)

Images of NURSES and a DOCTOR float around the blurred edges of vision. The SOUNDS of a hospital are heard only faintly, muted and very far away.

DOCTOR  
OK, it's time.

The world begins to roll past, swimming in and out of anesthetized focus.

Through an open door, in a moment of almost clear vision, we see a woman reclined on a delivery table; her PAINED exclamations are muddy and distant.

As the chemicals steal consciousness away, the clear CRY of a newborn slices through the confusion.

INT. HOME OFFICE - MORNING

Doug's head snaps up. He takes a beat to get his bearing.

BEDROOM

Doug gets dressed. Cathy enters, already dressed for the day.

CATHY  
*Hurry. I can't be late.*

DOUG  
Late? Oh, the thing. Right. OK.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

Doug and Cathy pull into staff parking in separate cars.

As they head onto campus Cathy is met with smiles and greetings of 'Good Morning', many in sign language.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

The walls of the room are covered in posters with large letters and pictures of hands making various signs. "Special Guest: Mr. Webber" is written on the chalkboard.

Doug signs as he speaks to the room full of SECOND GRADERS. Many of the students wear hearing aids.

DOUG

And after college I sold an app  
that made enough money to let me  
start my own company.

CATHY

Any other questions for Mr. Webber?

Hands shoot up around the room. Cathy points to a YOUNG BOY in the back.

The boy signs a question but doesn't speak. His signs are poor and Doug doesn't understand.

Cathy smiles, and patiently corrects the more egregious mistakes. The boy tries again.

DOUG

Oh, how deaf am I?

The boy nods. Doug grins like he's about to brag.

DOUG

Totally.

The students MURMUR and trade impressed looks.

Doug's phone vibrates, he reads the message, gives Cathy a guilty look.

CATHY

Looks like we only have time for  
one more question.

Hands shoot up. Cathy picks a YOUNG GIRL with a hearing aid. She signs as she speaks with a heavy speech impediment.

YOUNG GIRL  
How did you get so successful even  
though you're so deaf? Hearing  
people are mean to us.

DOUG  
Hearing people aren't mean, they  
just don't know how to talk to you.  
But the people that really matter?  
They'll find a way if you let them.

Doug gives his wife a wink.

CATHY  
That's all the time we have. Say  
goodbye, everyone.

The students SHOUT and sign their good-byes.

EXT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Cathy walks Doug out of the classroom.

CATHY  
*Thanks for doing that.*

DOUG  
I wish I could stay longer.

JOSH GERARDO, 44, a friendly man who many a young female student has crushed on, joins them. He offers Doug his hand.

CATHY  
Doug, this is Principal Gerardo.

JOSH  
Call me Josh. Nice to meet you.

Doug shakes his hand, looks at Cathy. She signs the greeting.

DOUG  
Hi, Josh. Nice to meet you.

JOSH  
You must be excited for Cat's big interview. Amazing, right?

Cathy shoots Josh a look but dutifully signs the question.

DOUG  
What interview is that?

Josh is surprised by his reply.

Doug's phone vibrates with another text message.

DOUG  
I'm sorry. I have to go. Morgan is  
going nuts.

CATHY  
Go! Good luck!

DOUG  
OK. Nice meeting you, Josh.

Cathy and Doug kiss. From inside the classroom the students explode into "Oooooh"s and SNICKERS.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - MORNING

Doug circles the multi-level structure searching for a space. To the east the view is of the back of commercial buildings, but to the west it's of the rolling waves of the Pacific.

EXT. PROMENADE - MORNING

Doug steps into a busy, high-end outdoor shopping and entertainment area. Tourists mingle with shoppers, street merchants, and performers with hats out.

Doug navigates through the crowds to a door nestled between a burger joint and a furniture store. A cheap stencil on the door reads "Total Silence Studios".

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - MORNING

Doug rushes up the concrete steps. There's nobody in the reception area to notice him hurry past.

MAIN FLOOR

Doug hustles through a maze of cubicles that make up the main floor. Nick-nacks and bean bags lay scattered around.

About a dozen 20-SOMETHINGS wearing jeans, faded T-shirts, and headphones fill the shared workspaces and tiny cubicles.

One of these is occupied by ZACK, 28, whose space is dominated by a rolling whiteboard covered in tasks and deadlines.

Adjacent to Zack is MIN-JUN, 34, a big Korean man. There are monitors and computers filling most of his cube.

DOUG  
How are we?

Zack and Min-jun trade concerned glances. Zack gives a hesitant thumbs up. Min-jun shrugs.

MORGAN, 29, a short blonde in a smart business dress, rushes up to Doug. She's Doug's sister, and looks the part. She signs like she speaks; clearly and succinctly.

DOUG  
Hey, Morgan.

MORGAN  
Where the hell have you been?

DOUG  
This thing for Cathy went long. The kids had a lot of questions.

MORGAN  
It wasn't in your calendar.

DOUG  
I didn't think --

MORGAN  
Everything goes in the calendar,  
OK? Everything.

She gives him a once-over, and nods approvingly.

MORGAN  
You look good. Come, he's waiting.

#### DOUG'S OFFICE

Doug's office is the largest one in the space, but it's still pretty small. One wall is nothing but floor to ceiling whiteboard covered in diagrams and scraps of code.

Examining this whiteboard is KEN, 53, who looks very out of place in his banker's suit and grey hair.

Doug and Morgan finally show up. Ken and Doug shake hands. Everyone grabs a seat.

Ken speaks directly and comfortably as Morgan interprets.

KEN  
Your sister tells me you're making good progress.

DOUG

We are.

KEN

Your loan comes due in six weeks.

MORGAN

Can we get more time?

KEN

I've done all I can. If you can't get the product running by the deadline I'll have to close you down and sell the work you've done to the highest bidder.

DOUG

What we're doing will be worth billions, it'll change everything!

KEN

That's what I want to believe, but every week some new app comes out that lets me control my phone by talking to it and what you're doing looks that much less incredible.

Doug leaps from his chair and goes to the whiteboard, he stabs his finger at the scraps of code on the wall.

DOUG

This will be nothing like that. This isn't about getting the damned weather, this is about a brilliant personal assistant in your pocket that works every time. It knows you, it thinks ahead. It's the damned science fiction computer wet dream we've been promised for decades and we're this close, Ken!

KEN

I haven't seen anything running and you've spent millions of my firm's dollars. I have to find some way of getting that back. I want you to pull it off, Doug, I do. I'm going to give you every minute of these six weeks, but I can't give you one minute more, I can't.

## MAIN FLOOR

Doug walks Ken out. When he returns he finds the whole team, Zack and Min-jun at the front, looking at him expectantly.

MIN-JUN

Six weeks? What happens if we're not done?

Morgan interprets. Doug shrugs, gives it to them straight.

DOUG

Game over.

MIN-JUN

Are you kidding me? If we don't pull this off I lose my visa. I'll get kicked out of the country.

ZACK

Having 'failed startup' at the top of our resumes isn't going to do the rest of us any good either.

Doug looks around at the wide eyes staring back at him.

DOUG

Here's the thing. If we do release in two months, it's post-crunch vacations, fame, and glory for all. We just have to get over the line. Can we do it?

Around the room people nod.

DOUG

I can't hear you!

Smiles and LAUGHTER.

DOUG

Can we do it?

Loud CHEERS. Doug looks to Morgan. With perfect dead-pan she signs 'yes'. More LAUGHTER.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - LATER

Doug flops down in a chair. Morgan closes the door.

MORGAN

Can we do it?

DOUG  
It's going to be close, but we'll  
pull it off.

Morgan hands Doug an envelope. Doug tucks it in his pocket without opening it.

MORGAN  
*Does Cathy know you haven't been  
paying yourself?*

DOUG  
No, she doesn't. I'll pay myself  
when we've pulled this off. Cathy  
will never be the wiser.

MORGAN  
*Why not tell her?*

DOUG  
I don't want her to worry. Hey,  
how're things with the new house?  
When does escrow close?

MORGAN  
*I don't know yet. There are still  
some things to work out.*

DOUG  
This is the worst part. It's all  
worth it once you get the keys.

She gives him a slanted smile.

MORGAN  
*I hope so.*

DOUG  
I'm gonna drop dead if I don't get  
some coffee. Want anything? I'm  
going to that new place.

She shakes her head.

EXT. PROMENADE - DAY

It is entirely silent; Doug's world. He emerges into the masses of tourists and shoppers, and wades into the throng.

Doug moves through his noiseless world deliberately, his head on a swivel as he walks the few blocks to the coffee place.

At a crosswalk he takes longer than the other pedestrians to step into the street, checking several times for cars.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

A bell on the door jingles silently as Doug steps into the crowded shop, a hip independent cafe with a younger crowd.

He gets in line. The sight of so many noisy things somehow deepens the silence.

Coins don't scrape as a woman slides them over the counter.

There's no hiss as a barista steams milk.

Doug gets to the front and places his order. When the CASHIER silently says his total, Doug reads it off the register.

The BARISTA mutely shouts out a name.

Doug settles onto a chair and pulls out his phone.

A GIRL enters from the back. She ties her apron and takes over at the espresso machine.

A police car's siren blares past. Doug is the only one not to look up.

A VOICE (O.S.)

Doug?

The voice shatters the silence like a bomb.

Doug's head snaps up. What the hell just happened?

He looks around the room frantically.

A VOICE (O.S.)

Doug?

It's a simple, clear female voice that leaves only silence in its wake.

He searches the faces around him. Was it you? You?!?

A VOICE (O.S.)

I have a cappuccino for Doug.

It's the girl behind the coffee machine.

Her name tag reads 'Erin'. ERIN can't be much older than 20. She's beautiful in a plain sort of way. It's remarkable how unremarkable she is. Except...

ERIN

Doug?

He hears her voice.

ERIN  
Are you Doug?

He moves toward her like she might get spooked and run off. He answers "yes" and doesn't hear his own voice.

ERIN  
Take your time. There's no one else  
that wants a drink.

He takes the drink, nods, backs away.

He stumbles to a chair and collapses into it. He gazes at Erin as she makes another drink.

ERIN  
Hey, Claire, I've got your  
macchiato. Come tell me what I got  
wrong this time.

He tries on the word.

DOUG  
Mah-key-ah-toe.

The man next to him gives him a look.

DOUG  
I didn't know how to pronounce it.

ERIN  
Angela, I've got your latte.

He looks at Erin, completely overwhelmed. Finally, the circuits in his brain start to fire again.

He surreptitiously records Erin on his phone as she works.

The morning passes in a whirl of drinks and names. Doug doesn't move, he just listens and watches.

Erin checks the clock, disappears into the back.

ERIN (O.C.)  
OK, Sam, I'm out.

Doug leaps out of his chair.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Erin emerges from the back of the cafe, puts on a pair of earphones, and walks toward the street.

A moment later Doug comes running around the corner of the building. He looks around for her, panic in his eyes. He spots her at the other end of the alley and races after her.

Erin steps onto a bus and is gone before he can get to her.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Morgan and most of the team sit around a conference table in the common area.

MORGAN

Wait, are you telling me this can't be done, or that you can't do it?

ZACK

We can't do it without knowing what Doug has in mind. He's doing all the heavy-lifting on the back end himself. We're just working on the net code and chrome. If he'd clue us in on his plans we could contribute a lot more, but --

Doug rushes past them without slowing.

DOUG'S OFFICE

Doug yanks open drawer after drawer until he finds the cable he's looking for. His hands tremble as he plugs his phone into the computer. He starts transferring the video file.

MAIN FLOOR

Doug flies out of his office and collides with Morgan.

MORGAN

Where were you?

Doug charges past without acknowledging her.

SUPPLY CLOSET

Doug rummages through various bits of hardware until he comes up with a large pair of speakers.

DOUG'S OFFICE

Doug enters with speakers in hand and finds Morgan waiting.

He all but shoves her out of the office and closes the door.

He sets up the speakers, then sits at the desk.

The file finishes copying over. He presses play.

The video plays with all the NOISE from the cafe. Erin's voice is lost in the chaos. Doug doesn't hear any of it.

He frowns at the screen, checks the speakers. The green power light glows. He turns the dial all the way right. The sound DISTORTS and BLARES.

He cranks the dial all the way left, killing the sound, then all the way back to the right.

#### MAIN FLOOR

Morgan stands outside the door listening to the rising and falling sounds coming from Doug's office.

Work on the floor has stopped. All eyes are on the door.

#### DOUG'S OFFICE

Doug grabs one of the speakers and holds it directly to his ear. If he weren't already deaf, this would do it.

An IM window appears, "heads up boss, ur sound is way loud."

He snaps the speakers off with a violent twist of the knob, hurls them across the room, ripping the wire out.

After a long moment Morgan opens the door and peeks in.

Doug turns the monitor away so she can't see what's on it.

DOUG

Come in.

Morgan closes the door behind herself.

She picks up the speakers and sets them neatly in the corner before sitting down. She eyes Doug like he might explode.

MORGAN

*What's with the speakers?*

DOUG

Nothing.

MORGAN

*Douglas.*

Doug stares at the screen a long time before looking up.

MORGAN  
*Are you all right?*

DOUG  
I just... I just need a minute.

Morgan hesitates a moment, then leaves.

Doug checks the clock; after three, school's out.

He brings up Skype and dials Cathy. A moment later she appears on the screen from the home office. The video of Erin plays beside her. Cathy signs into the webcam.

CATHY  
*Hi, what's up?*

He runs his hands over his face.

CATHY  
*Are you OK?*

From the screen Cathy watches with growing concern.

DOUG  
There's something I have to tell  
you. I...

He looks at the video of Erin again and he makes a decision.

DOUG  
I just wanted to let you know I'll  
be late tonight. I'll probably be  
late most nights until we get this  
thing done.

CATHY  
*That's fine. Don't worry about me.*  
*Is there something wrong?*

DOUG  
No. Just crunch time, you know how  
it goes. I'm going to get back to  
it. I love you.

CATHY  
*I love you too.*

Doug closes the call and slumps back in his seat. He watches the video of Erin as it loops over and over again.

INT. A HOSPITAL - NIGHT (DREAM)

A heartbeat monitor BEEPING, a VOICE saying something incomprehensible from behind a surgical mask.

Beneath it all a high pitched SQUEAL like a piccolo playing a double high C slightly out of tune.

A blinding white light. Darkness. The clear CRY of an infant.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Doug snaps out of sleep, shakes his head. On the screen is an error message. He runs his hands over his exhausted face.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Doug stands outside the now closed cafe, looking for Erin like there might be some reason for her to be there.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

Doug finally finds his car, the last in the lot.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug tries to sneak in so as not to wake up Cathy.

HOME OFFICE

Doug walks to his desk. He looks over his shoulder, making sure he's alone, then puts his paycheck into a drawer.

BEDROOM

Doug tip-toes in, only to discover that Cathy is still awake, working on lesson plans.

DOUG

Hey, I thought you'd be asleep.

Cathy, hands too full to sign, gestures to her work. Doug gets ready for bed, crawls in beside her.

He heaves a SIGH. Cathy looks at him with a raised eyebrow.

DOUG

I'm OK, Just a long day.

He kisses her cheek and starts to turn away. Cathy leans in for another, better kiss.

Doug obliges, then kisses her neck. She smiles. He kisses her collar bone. She pulls away, gestures to her papers.

CATHY  
I have to finish this.

He gets the message without having to hear her.

DOUG  
All right, but I haven't forgotten my rain check.

CATHY  
Good. Me neither.

Doug lies down and closes his eyes. Cathy watches him for a moment before going back to her work.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON

Cathy walks with Josh, supervising the children as they play at recess. She stifles a YAWN.

JOSH  
Late night?

CATHY  
Working on a new idea. I think I can bring up retention if I can come up with a set of gestural mnemonics. You know?

JOSH  
No, not really.

CATHY  
Well, righty tighty, lefty loosy. The sounds go together, so that's easy to remember for a hearing kid. But the signs for right and tight have nothing in common. Why should we teach deaf kids the same mnemonics we teach hearing kids? It doesn't help. So I'm trying to build up a set of similar signs that accomplish the same thing.

JOSH  
That's a great idea. Are you presenting that to the Bell Association?

CATHY

I don't think I'm going to take the interview.

He stops her, looks around to make sure they're alone.

JOSH

What? Why the hell not?

CATHY

I took the first interview so I could share my ideas. I didn't expect them to get back to me.

JOSH

Of course they got back to you.

CATHY

But I can't take the job.

JOSH

Can't, or won't?

CATHY

I can't. The job is in DC, it's not like I could commute. Doug's business is here, my students...

JOSH

All right, all right. But you should still take the interview.

CATHY

I don't want to waste their time.

JOSH

You took the first interview to share your ideas, so take the second one and share some more. Where's the harm in that?

INT. CAFE - DAY

Doug, one of the few customers in the place, walks to the counter. Erin doesn't look up.

ERIN

What'll you have?

He hears her. He releases the breath he'd been holding.

DOUG

Is there something you'd recommend?

ERIN  
It's all the same crap with  
different ratios of caffeine,  
sugar, and fat. Pick something.

DOUG  
I'll have a latte, thanks.

She rings him up. He pays for the drink and grabs a seat.

Erin's manager/boyfriend, SAM, 27, a wannabe punk without the balls to get the piercings and ink, comes out from the back.

ERIN  
When are you off? I want to grab  
something to eat first.

Doug listens to the half of the conversation he can hear.

SAM  
What are you talking about?

ERIN  
The movie.

SAM  
What movie?

ERIN  
'Au Hasard Balthazar'. You said  
you'd go. I already bought tickets.

Doug Googles the title. The top result reads "The heartbreakin tale of a donkey and a rebellious girl." A French donkey flick? Really?

SAM  
I can't. I'm covering Jake's shift.  
We'll go some other time.

ERIN  
It's a one-off thing. What do I do  
with these tickets?

SAM  
You can still go.

ERIN  
Go alone to a movie? How pathetic  
would that be? You're an asshole.

SAM  
What's the big deal?

ERIN

The big deal is I dropped thirty  
bucks I can't afford on these  
tickets and now I might as well  
wipe my ass with them.

Doug stands up.

DOUG

Excuse me, Erin, right?

ERIN

Yeah. What?

DOUG

I couldn't help but, uh, overhear.  
I can buy that ticket off of you.

Erin gives Sam a scowl.

ERIN

Fine, thirty bucks.

DOUG

I just want the one. I don't have  
anyone to go with. I mean, you can  
still go.

SAM

What the hell, dude?

Doug doesn't even acknowledge Sam. Erin seems to like that.  
She reads the name off his drink.

ERIN

OK, Doug, it's a date. Here.

He slides her the cash, she gives him the ticket.

DOUG

See you at seven.

ERIN

Don't forget this.

He takes his drink, ignores Sam's blatant scowl, and leaves.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Doug stares at the clock, willing it to tick over. Finally it  
changes to 6:45.

He runs a hand over his face then picks up the ticket.

Morgan enters with a pizza menu in hand. Doug hurries the ticket into his pocket.

MORGAN  
*The usual?*

DOUG  
I'm not staying.

MORGAN  
*It's crunch time. Everyone stays.*

DOUG  
I can't. I have to go.

MAIN FLOOR

Doug comes out of his office. He avoids eye contact with the team as he slinks out the front.

They watch him go like he were the guest of honor at his own party leaving for something better.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Doug hands his ticket to the kid by the door.

THEATER

The theater is old and run down. It's not exactly sold out.

Doug enters with a Coke and a popcorn. He spots Erin by the glow of her phone on her face. He sits next to her.

ERIN  
There's plenty of seats.

DOUG  
Something wrong with this one?

She eyes his concessions, grabs a fist full of popcorn.

ERIN  
I guess not. Here.

She pulls a flask from her pocket, takes the Coke.

DOUG  
I thought there'd be more people.

ERIN  
So did I.

She pours the booze into the Coke. As the lights start to dim she offers Doug a drink, but he waves her off.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - SAME TIME

Morgan, Zack, Min-jun, and the rest of the team eat pizza in silence around the conference table.

INT. HOME OFFICE - SAME TIME

Cathy flips on the lights, a bag of groceries in her arms. She looks around the untidy office and frowns.

She restocks the fridge with Red Bulls and snacks from the bag, then starts to clean up.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

On the screen a black-and-white scene plays out. A donkey stands patiently as three little girls pour water on its head in an impromptu baptism.

Words appear on the screen, "I baptize you, Balthazar..."

Subtitles, perfect. Doug relaxes. He looks at Erin. She stares at the screen, enthralled.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The audience chuckles but Doug only hears Erin. She LAUGHS with joyous abandon. He drinks it in.

The audience is sombre. Doug closes his eyes and listens to Erin. Her BREATHING is heavy, but she doesn't cry.

When a scene startles Erin, Doug gasps along with her. The thrill of the new noise sends shivers up his spine.

This open, expressive person doesn't seem to be the same girl from the cafe.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Doug and Erin emerge from the theater having had two very different experiences, but both having had a great time.

DOUG

That was amazing.

ERIN

I always hate when good movies are over. Feels like getting home from a great trip and having to go back to your shitty life.

She sees him looking at her with a curious expression.

ERIN

Well, good night.

DOUG

Yeah. Good night.

They head their separate ways.

Doug walks past a couple chatting, past a man on a cell phone, past a busking musician on an apple crate.

The sudden silence is such a contrast to the last few hours that Doug can't stand it.

He turns around, runs after Erin. She turns when she hears his approaching FOOTSTEPS.

DOUG

Hey, wait up.

She doesn't say anything.

DOUG

That popcorn didn't do it for me.  
Want to grab something to eat?

ERIN

Look, I have a boyfriend. I'm not going to sleep with you or anything like that.

DOUG

My wife will be very relieved.

ERIN

Then what do you want?

DOUG

Dinner. Do you like sushi?

ERIN

I've never had it.

DOUG

My treat.

She eyes him suspiciously for a second.

ERIN  
I walked, so...

DOUG  
I'll drive.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

Without thinking, Doug walks to the passenger door and opens it for Erin.

ERIN  
Such a gentleman.

DOUG  
It's a habit.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

As Doug walks around the car, Erin hits the button to retract the roof.

ERIN  
Nice.

Doug pulls out of the structure and onto the street.

The wind whips Erin's hair into a frenzy. It's a howling noise to her, but Doug doesn't hear it.

She looks around, spots the bright orange scrunchy on the gear shift, uses it to pull her hair back into a ponytail.

She puts her hands over her head and grins as the night air rushes through her fingers.

ERIN  
(whispered)  
Better than the bus.

Doug has to make an effort to keep his eyes on the road.

INT. SUSHI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As Erin and Doug enter, the STAFF calls out in greeting.

Erin and Doug sit in a booth. He waits for her to say something but she doesn't.

He grabs the sushi order form and starts writing.

DOUG

I love these places. You don't have  
to talk to anyone, you just fill  
out this little form.

A WAITRESS arrives, takes the form.

DOUG

And two hot saki, thanks.

The waitress does a little bow before leaving.

Again, he waits for Erin to say something, but she doesn't.

The waitress returns with the saki. Doug pours them each a shot. They drain them. Erin nearly CHOKES.

ERIN

Ugh, what the hell? It's hot.

DOUG

That's why it's called "hot" saki.

ERIN

Shit's nasty.

She pours herself another shot, drains it, goes back to not saying anything. Doug pours himself another shot.

DOUG

So, you don't come off like the type that'd be into old French films. What gives?

ERIN

What do I come off like?

DOUG

A little bitchy at the moment.

She LAUGHS. The sound almost makes Doug's head swim.

DOUG

So?

ERIN

When you don't like stupid movies about guys shooting robots or idiots falling in love you're not left with a lot of options.

DOUG

You have such a high opinion of Hollywood.

ERIN

Hollywood can suck my clit.

Doug nearly does a saki spit take.

DOUG

Wow. OK.

ERIN

I like foreign movies because they  
take me to places I haven't been.  
Better answer?

DOUG

Much. So, you like working at the  
coffee shop?

ERIN

No one likes working at a coffee  
shop. It's a crap job.

DOUG

Why don't you quit?

ERIN

And do what, exactly? There's  
nothing better for me out there.

DOUG

All right. So when you're not  
slinging coffee or watching French  
films what do you like to do?

ERIN

What's with all the questions?

DOUG

I don't like listening to myself  
talk, I'd much rather hear you.

She drains another saki shot, her distaste for it fading.

ERIN

I write poetry.

DOUG

Yeah, right.

ERIN

Fuck you.

DOUG

Wait, you're serious? That's a  
cheap hobby.

ERIN

Fuck you!

DOUG

No, I mean, it's not like you want to be an astronaut, you know? It doesn't take a space shuttle to be a poet, it takes a pen, something to write about, and some talent.

ERIN

Well, I have a pen. Why am I even telling you any of this?

DOUG

It's the saki.

ERIN

I'm not a mouthy drunk, I'm an angry drunk.

DOUG

Is that a warning?

ERIN

Yes.

DOUG

Poetry. I'd love to hear some.

ERIN

Yeah, right.

The waitress arrives with several plates of sushi. Erin's eyes go wide at the various odd looking dishes.

DOUG

Don't worry, we'll get through this together, trust me.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Doug teaches Erin how to use chopsticks.

Erin tries her first bite, doesn't hate it.

Erin challenges Doug to eat some straight wasabi. His eyes burn and nose runs, but they both LAUGH.

She drinks more saki. They eat more sushi. He talks less, she talks more, and he devours every sound.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

Doug lowers the top. Erin enters her address into the GPS. She saves it as "Erin's Place" and hits "Go".

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

As Doug speeds down the nearly empty streets he doesn't hear the wind, or the engine, or the stereo come on when Erin turns the knob. She dials in a station and cranks the volume.

She HUMS along to the song. Doug's breath catches in his throat. He nearly drives them off the road.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erin points at a space and Doug pulls to a stop in front of a shabby apartment complex. They sit for a moment.

He steels himself, takes a deep breath, turns to look at her.

Erin senses the change in his manner. She leans away a bit.

DOUG  
Erin, I need to --

She cuts him off by opening the door.

ERIN  
Thanks for the ride. I'm working  
tomorrow if you want to come by.

DOUG  
Yeah, all right. I will. Maybe  
bring some of your poetry to read.

ERIN  
Probably not.

She gets out and jogs toward the complex. He watches her climb the stairs and disappear into her apartment.

Doug sits in silence, staring at her door.

EXT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug pulls into the driveway and shuts the car off.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Doug leans into the room. Cathy is asleep on the bed. He tiptoes in, adjusts the blankets, and kisses her cheek.

HOME OFFICE

Doug walks into the immaculate room. The difference from before is obvious but he doesn't seem to notice.

He fires up his computers and tries to get some work done.

EXT. PROMENADE - DAY

Doug heads toward the cafe in his silent world.

ERIN (O.C.)  
(sarcastically)  
Hey, *garçon*, take your time, my  
lunch break is a whole hour.

He stops in his tracks, and smiles. He looks around and finds her sitting at an outside table of a sports bar. He makes his way to her.

DOUG  
Mind if I join you?

ERIN  
Sorry, I'd rather eat alone.

He doesn't say anything. She lifts her bag out of the chair across from her and gives him a look.

EXT. SPORTS BAR - LATER

Erin and Doug sit picking over nachos and drinking beers.

DOUG  
So, is that your place, or do you  
live with your parents?

ERIN  
How old do you think I am?

DOUG  
I don't know, twenty-one?

ERIN  
Twenty-two on the thirtieth.

Doug nearly chokes.

DOUG  
The thirtieth? Of this month?

ERIN  
Yeah. Why?

Doug struggles to find words. He shakes his head to clear it.

DOUG  
Nothing. So, it's not your parents'  
place. Where are they?

ERIN  
Dead.

DOUG  
Oh, shit...

ERIN  
Well, I'm not actually sure they're  
dead, but I can hope.

DOUG  
So, not a Leave It To Beaver  
upbringing, huh?

She LAUGHS derisively.

ERIN  
Yeah, no. I got left at a fire  
station before I could walk.

DOUG  
That's a thing? People can do that?

ERIN  
Looks that way.

DOUG  
So, then what? You grew up in a  
fire station?

ERIN  
No. After that it was seventeen  
years of bouncing from infertile  
yuppies to bible thumping  
hypocrites and back.

DOUG  
Good times.

ERIN

Oh, the best. And they all gave me the same bullshit. "You'll stay with us from now on." Uh huh, or until the next inconvenient moment. Bunch of fucking liars.

PROMENADE

Morgan strolls the promenade drinking a coffee and looking at her phone.

SPORTS BAR

DOUG

Where does poetry get in the mix?

ERIN

This chick visited one of the schools I went to. Did this song and dance about how cool poetry is. I thought she was full of it. But she had us write our own stuff and I actually liked doing it.

DOUG

So let me read something already.

ERIN

It all sucks.

DOUG

All of it? Really?

ERIN

I don't ever know what to write about so I just string words together. Then I read what I've written and hate myself for wasting paper on stupid shit.

DOUG

You just need to find your voice.

ERIN

I've got a voice, asshole.

DOUG

Easy killer. You know what I mean. You have to find the thing that makes what you have to say different than what the next person has to say.

ERIN  
Oh, is that all?

Doug spots Morgan walking toward them. Erin turns and looks.

DOUG  
Shit.

ERIN  
Is that your wife?

DOUG  
Sister.

ERIN  
Are we about to have a scene here?

DOUG  
She hasn't seen us.

Erin gives him an icy look as he takes out his wallet.

ERIN  
And if she did?

DOUG  
I'd explain what's going on.

ERIN  
I think I'd like to hear that.

Doug drops some cash on the table and gets to his feet.

DOUG  
We're just talking.

Doug shoots Morgan a quick look. She's nearly to them.

DOUG  
I like hearing you talk. There's  
nothing wrong with that, right?

ERIN  
I guess not. Should I call you?

DOUG  
You can text me, I... don't like  
talking on the phone.

He turns to go. She lets him get a few steps away.

ERIN  
I don't have your number.

With mounting urgency Doug digs a business card out of his wallet and hands it to her.

ERIN  
Better hurry.

PROMENADE

Doug pretends to spot Morgan and walks over to her.

DOUG  
Hey.

MORGAN  
*Where have you been?*

DOUG  
I was just grabbing some lunch. I'm headed back now.

Morgan gives him an appraising look.

MORGAN  
*After you.*

They set off toward the office. Doug glances back at Erin. He tries to hide his relief at nearly being caught.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cathy HUMS to herself as she grabs clothes out of the hamper and drops them into a basket. She checks pockets as she goes and discovers the ticket stub from the movie.

She frowns at it for a second then tosses it in the trash.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - NIGHT

Doug stares into space, distracted by the silence, unable to focus. He pulls up the video of Erin and puts it on loop.

Out on the main floor the lights blink out. Doug looks up to see Morgan wave good night and leave.

He goes back to watching the video. Finally he makes up his mind, gets to his feet, and heads toward the door.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Doug looks around but Erin isn't there.

Neither is Sam.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Doug climbs the stairs up to Erin's door. He takes a deep breath, lifts his hand to knock, but stops.

From behind the door he hears a sound. A MOAN.

He steps back. He looks around but there's no one in sight. He moves closer and very slowly places his ear to the door.

He listens. The MOANING grows louder, more rhythmic.

ERIN (O.S.)  
Come on, fuck me!

Doug's head snaps back from the door like he's been electrocuted. He's never heard a woman in this state.

He turns to go.

His resolve fails before he gets to the top step. He goes back, places his ear to the door. He closes his eyes, listens to one half of the act taking place inside the apartment.

ERIN (O.S.)  
Don't finish yet, baby, not yet.  
OK, OK now. Oh my God...

Her breathing quickens, so does Doug's.

The noises crescendo.

Doug closes his eyes and purses his lips.

With a final CRY the performance reaches its climax.

Doug's heart races. He slumps against the door, as spent as if he'd been the other half of what he just heard.

For a minute he doesn't move.

At last Doug opens his eyes. He staggers back from the door, slowly turns, and walks away.

He doesn't notice the NEIGHBOR watching from across the way.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug bursts into the living room. Cathy is there.

He walks to her, takes her in his arms, kisses her fiercely.

## BEDROOM

Doug and Cathy make love in absolute silence that aches to be broken. The echoes of Erin's voice make their mute passion seem incomplete.

Doug's look of intense focus mostly masks his frustration.

He stares at Cathy's mouth as she arches her back and utters unheard encouragement.

The headboard slaps silently against the wall.

He quickens his pace, desperate to elicit some sound. Cathy squirms under the assault then thrusts her hips up in one final silent cry.

Doug follows suit with an unheard cry of his own.

He rolls onto his back. Cathy lays her head on his chest. She smiles, serene as she caresses his stomach.

As Cathy falls asleep Doug stares at the ceiling, wide awake. If she turned to see his face, the intense frustration there would startle her.

## INT. A HOSPITAL - NIGHT (DREAM)

Doors move through the drugged fog on either side of the gurney. We strain to see into each room, but the view is always blocked.

From some doors comes the clear CRY of a baby being born.

Through others, the SOUNDS of Erin in the throws of passion.

The baby cries crescendo in urgency and volume as Erin's moaning becomes more insistent and exultant.

## INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Doug starts from sleep, his breathing ragged. He composes himself and looks around. Cathy isn't there.

## BATHROOM

Doug jumps when he sees Cathy at the sink in her robe, brushing her teeth.

DOUG  
What are you still doing here?

CATHY  
*It's Sunday.*

DOUG  
Sunday? Shit. I completely lost track. I'll make us some breakfast.

He doesn't see her cringe as he leaves.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The tiny one-room apartment is the kind of low-rent place that no amount of effort can ever really get clean.

The furniture is a mishmash of hand-me-downs, cheap IKEA stuff, and an item or two off of Craig's List.

Erin sits at the dining room table writing in a notebook. She reads what she's written, frowns, and tears the page out.

She starts again.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - MORNING

Doug does his best to keep track of a busy kitchen; he scrambles eggs, fries bacon, starts toast.

Cathy enters and surveys the chaos. She smiles as he races from stove to toaster to sink to fridge.

The bacon begins to burn and smoke. Cathy moves to take it from the heat but Doug catches the smell and heads her off.

DOUG  
You go sit down, I've got this.

The smoke detector BLARES to life. Cathy does her best to ignore it until Doug turns his back. She yanks the detector down in a single practiced jump and removes the battery.

By the time Doug turns back toward her she's hidden the device in the pocket of her robe.

DINING ROOM

Doug and Cathy enjoy their breakfast despite having to eat around the odd burnt bit here and there.

Doug is remote, lost in thought. Cathy waves a hand to get his attention.

CATHY  
*Are you all right?*

DOUG  
*Yeah, just thinking.*

CATHY  
*OK. So, school's out in four weeks, will we be able to do something during the break this year?*

DOUG  
*Summer, already? Yeah, the app will be done by then. What did you have in mind?*

CATHY  
*We could fly out to see my sister?*

DOUG  
*Or, you know, something else.*

She hits him playfully as she gets up.

CATHY  
*Ass. Need anything?*

DOUG  
*I'm good. What's in your pocket?*

She looks down at the suspicious bulge.

CATHY  
*Nothing.*

He grabs at her, she dodges. After a quick, playful game of keep away he gets the smoke detector out of her pocket.

DOUG  
*Did I really burn it that bad?*

CATHY  
*No. No, it was just time to check the battery.*

He pulls her into a hug and they kiss.

DOUG  
*Need me to put that back up?*

She smiles as she produces the battery from her other pocket.

CATHY  
*Would you?*

DOUG  
OK, but then I have to get to work.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Erin hurries down the stairs and toward the bus stop. Her neighbor jogs after her.

NEIGHBOR  
Wait up.

Erin stops and turns as the woman approaches.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - MORNING

Doug finds a space. He hesitates a long time before getting out of the car.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

Sam works the register.

Erin works the espresso machine. She spots Doug the moment he enters.

ERIN  
Hey, Sam, I'll be right back.

She hurries Doug outside before Sam can react.

EXT. PROMENADE - MORNING

Doug struggles to keep up as Erin marches away from the cafe. The moment they're out of sight she turns on him.

ERIN  
What the fuck is wrong with you?

DOUG  
Excuse me?

ERIN  
I don't know what this is, this thing that we've got going on. I don't know why you keep coming around or why I let you do it. But that doesn't make it OK for you to show up at my apartment uninvited and listen to me fuck my boyfriend.

Doug's eyes go wide.

DOUG

I didn't --

ERIN

Don't you fucking lie to me. My neighbor saw you.

DOUG

How was I supposed to know that you'd be doing... that. I just needed to talk to you.

ERIN

Oh? Did you finally grow a pair? You ready to cheat on your wife?

DOUG

What?!

ERIN

Were you going to ask me if I'd sign on to that? You're done just talking to me?

DOUG

No. Jesus, Erin.

ERIN

Then what? What's so important?

DOUG

I'm deaf!

ERIN

What the hell does that mean?

DOUG

It means I can't hear --

ERIN

You're not deaf.

DOUG

You talk, and I hear it. But everything else?

He gestures to everything around them.

DOUG

I can't hear any of it. Not even a little. But for some reason, I can hear your voice.

She stares at him, her face awash in confusion and, what? Disappointment? Then, in an instant, the anger is back.

ERIN  
Fuck you. You're just another liar.

She shoves him violently. He stumbles backward.

ERIN  
I don't ever want to see you again.  
Leave me the fuck alone, all right?

She storms off leaving Doug alone in the silence.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Silence. Doug mopes into the building in a daze and vanishes into his office, closing the door behind him.

MAIN FLOOR - LATER

More silence.

Doug, Morgan, Zack, Min-jun, and the rest of the team sit around a long conference table.

Min-jun is saying something passionately as Morgan interprets but Doug doesn't see, he just stares at his hands.

With the SLAM of Min-jun's hand on the table all SOUND comes rushing back in a flood. The vibration makes Doug look up.

MIN-JUN  
You're not even listening! We're running out of time and you've been useless. Do you know what I'll lose if you blow this for us?

ZACK  
I haven't seen my son awake in a month and you can't be bothered to pay attention in a meeting?

As Doug watches Morgan sign, he begins to nod.

MORGAN  
You two are out of line.

DOUG  
No, they're right.

All eyes turn toward him.

DOUG  
This company is everything to me.  
To us.  
(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)  
What we're trying to do, it's  
important. So we're going to do it.  
I let myself get distracted, but  
I'm going to get my head back in  
the game, and we're going to pull  
this off. We've put too much in and  
we've got too much to lose. All  
right? Give me the list, we'll  
start at the top.

Zack and Min-jun trade looks.

ZACK  
Yeah?

DOUG  
Yeah. Let's get at it.

Zack drags a rolling whiteboard over. It's covered in tasks  
that need to be done. None of them are crossed off.

ZACK  
OK, item one...

A countdown at the top of the board reads '27 days left'.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Sam works the register. Erin places a drink on the bar.

A female CUSTOMER grabs the drink, takes a sip. She makes a  
face and puts the drink back on the bar.

CUSTOMER  
Excuse me, you used two percent in  
this, I asked for non-fat.

ERIN  
No, I used non-fat.

CUSTOMER  
I can taste it, it's two percent.

ERIN  
Are you kidding me? That's a large  
double chocolate mocha with whip.

CUSTOMER  
So?

ERIN  
You have any idea how much sugar,  
and calories, and fat are in that?  
(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

You think you can taste the type of milk I used? Go drink your super fatty calorie bomb and like it.

Sam makes his way over.

SAM

What's going on here?

CUSTOMER

She screwed up my drink and called me fat.

ERIN

I made the drink right. And I didn't say you were fat, I just alluded to the obvious.

Sam takes the drink from Erin.

SAM

I'm sorry Ma'am. Erin, why don't you call it a day?

CUSTOMER

I want her fired!

Erin leans over the bar, gets in the woman's face.

ERIN

You'll want that foot back when you lose it to diabetes, but we don't always get what we want, do we?

SAM

Erin, go.

Erin storms off.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Cathy stands in front of her class. She demonstrates a sign and watches as the students repeat it.

She moves comfortably through the room, making a minor correction here, giving a compliment there.

She's good at this, very good.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - NIGHT

Doug and the team work late into the night.

A few of the items on the task list have been crossed off. One item on the list, 'Core Hearing Algorithm Optimization', has Doug's name written by it, and is underlined twice.

Cathy arrives for a visit. The team is friendly toward her. He stands at his whiteboard, a marker in his hand sits idle. The countdown reads '19 days'.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erin sits at the dining room table, staring at a blank page. The pen in her hand sits idle.

There's a KNOCK at the door. She hurries to open it.

ERIN  
Here to fire me?

SAM  
No. Want to tell me what that was about though?

ERIN  
Not really. She was a bitch, I made the drink right.

SAM  
I'll let it slide this time. Perk of sleeping with the boss.

He kisses her.

SAM  
I thought we could grab dinner, catch that movie I owe you.

ERIN  
I can't, I'm writing.

SAM  
You can write anytime. Come on. It's not like you have a deadline.

Erin looks back at the blank pages on the table.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erin follows Sam down the stairs.

ERIN

You know, if you ever want to read  
any of my poetry, I'll let you.

SAM

Poetry isn't my thing.

ERIN

Fine. So what do you want to see?

SAM

The new Michael Bay movie got a  
four percent on Rotten Tomatoes.  
It's gonna kick ass!

ERIN

Can we get sushi after?

SAM

Yeah, right. We'll get burgers or  
something.

She stops, turns, heads up the stairs.

ERIN

I'm gonna stay here.

SAM

You're suddenly too good for a  
normal movie?

ERIN

Suddenly?

SAM

What's up with you lately?

ERIN

Nothing. Have fun.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - NIGHT

Zack crosses an item off the whiteboard list. Doug's task is now circled. It's one of just a few final tasks.

ZACK

We might pull this off.

MIN-JUN

Maybe. But...

They look toward Doug's office.

DOUG (O.C.)  
Work you piece of shit!

They watch as Doug goes to the whiteboard in his office and erases a huge swath of code.

ZACK  
Yeah. Maybe.

The countdown reads '13 days left'

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Cathy sets a microwave dinner on the coffee table and flops onto the couch. She looks tired.

She hits the remote and the TV comes on. A message on the screen reads "Your cable bill is past due. Please contact us to resolve the matter."

Cathy frowns at the screen, takes out her phone, and fires off a text to Doug.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Erin closes up shop. The bell on the door JINGLES. She turns hoping to see Doug, but it's just a customer.

ERIN  
Sorry, we're closed.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Erin locks the door, pops in her ear buds, makes her way to the bus stop.

She bobs her head and watches cars rush past. She sees people chatting as they wait. She sees the roller coaster on the pier. She doesn't hear any of it over the MUSIC in her ears.

She takes the ear buds out and watches the world around her in all its noisy glory. She's never listened to it before.

Erin covers her ears and presses tight. Most of the SOUND dies away, but it's still there, muffled. She presses harder.

She looks around again. With the sound gone it's a different world; alien, almost scary.

The bus startles her as it slides into the stop. She didn't hear it coming. She doesn't get on.

As the bus pulls away she takes out her phone.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - NIGHT

Doug stares at his whiteboard in silence. He taps a pen on the desk, notices the lack of a sound. He taps harder.

His phone vibrates in his pocket. He takes it out, reads the message. He grabs his coat and hurries out.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

Doug makes his way past the roller coaster and the Ferris wheel. It's madness; crowds, lights, and riotous motion.

He looks for Erin but can't find her. The further he gets down the pier the more anxious he becomes.

Erin watches him from a few yards back. Now that she knows to look for the signs, it's obvious he can't hear; he moves with very cautious, deliberate steps.

She stops and lets him get further down the pier until he's nearly out of sight.

ERIN  
(whispered)  
Looking for me?

She's barely audible over the pandemonium. Doug is almost a hundred yards away, but his head snaps around.

EXT. PIER - MOMENTS LATER

Doug and Erin walk to the empty end of the pier. The sounds of the midway are much quieter here.

They lean on the railing and watch the waves roll in, not looking at each other. She's still angry at him.

DOUG  
You ruined my life, you know that?

ERIN  
Oh, did I?

DOUG  
Before I met you I was fine in empty rooms. Now, when I'm alone I can't focus. I fixate on the silence. I didn't even notice it before.

ERIN

Yeah, I think I get that.

He turns to look at her.

DOUG

I was so afraid of losing whatever this is that I couldn't make myself tell you. I tried, for whatever it's worth.

ERIN

So just me, in the whole world?

DOUG

Just you.

ERIN

Why?

DOUG

I think we've met before. Sort of.

ERIN

When?

DOUG

Where were you born?

ERIN

St. John's.

DOUG

And you're turning twenty-two, on the thirtieth?

ERIN

Yeah.

DOUG

The surgery that ruined my hearing? It was at the same hospital where you were born, on the same day. I think that you, being born, is the last sound I ever heard.

ERIN

And you think that explains this?

DOUG

It's all I've got.

ERIN

You were there when I was born?

DOUG  
I was. You cried so loud.

ERIN  
I don't cry, I'm not the type.

DOUG  
Being born hurts, I guess.

She mulls this over for a moment.

ERIN  
What am I supposed to do with this,  
Doug? What do you want from me?

DOUG  
I want to hear your voice. That's  
all. In exchange I can, I don't  
know, buy you a drink now and  
then... listen to you? It's not a  
fair trade but --

ERIN  
It's not a terrible deal, really.

They lapse into silence.

ERIN  
Don't ever, ever lie to me again.  
If you do, I'll fuck you up, got  
it? I've had too many liars in my  
life, I don't need another one.

DOUG  
I got it.

ERIN  
Was the surgery to fix your ears?

DOUG  
Yeah. I could hear until I was ten.  
That's why my speech isn't  
impaired. Then my hearing started  
to go. Otitis-Media is what the  
doctors called it. They tried a few  
things, nothing helped. Then they  
ginned up a new procedure that they  
said would fix everything. When I  
woke up my hearing was gone.  
Destroyed is a better word. I went  
twenty-two years without even a  
tinnitus hum. Then I met you.

The bitterness in his voice is obvious.

They go back to watching the waves.

ERIN

I feel like I should talk, so you can have something to hear, but I don't know what to say.

DOUG

What about the waves? I never got to the beach as a kid, I've always wondered what they sound like.

She closes her eyes and listens for a long moment.

ERIN

Waves sound as big as they are, I guess. Little waves make little sounds that feel... the way paper feels when you crumble it in your hand. Thin paper that gives easily with no effort.

She doesn't see Doug turn and look at her.

ERIN

The sound of a big wave is a fist. You see it coming, but there's nothing until it hits, then it fills you. You can feel the whole beach, the whole planet move under your feet, but it's not a sensation in your feet, it's inside you. The sound of the crash grabs you and somehow it drags you in and shoves you away at the same time.

Doug's eyes water as he listens to her description.

ERIN

And the whole time, happening constantly, is the tide... A tickle like a hand running lightly through your hair, a finger going lightly down your neck. The contrast, and the rise, and the fall. The gentle hand in your hair, the finger on your neck, and the fist that you're afraid of, but that you want to come again, to make the rest stop for a moment. And then it does. And then it does again, and again.

Erin turns in time to see Doug wipe a tear away.

DOUG  
Jesus. I thought you'd just make  
some sounds with your mouth.

ERIN  
Oh, God, I'm sorry. Uh, waves go...

She tries to make the sounds of waves with her mouth.

DOUG  
No, don't. I want to keep what you  
just did. Erin, there's your voice.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

Doug pulls to a stop in front of Erin's apartment.

ERIN  
If you could hear other people, if  
you weren't deaf, you wouldn't want  
to talk to me, would you?

Doug is startled by the question.

DOUG  
We wouldn't have even met. You'd be  
the girl from the coffee shop. But  
I would have been missing out.

ERIN  
Do you want to come up?

He looks past her to the door of her apartment.

DOUG  
I have to get home.

ERIN  
Does your wife know about this?

DOUG  
I thought I should tell you first.

ERIN  
You told me two weeks ago.

DOUG  
Yeah, well... I'm going to tell her  
tonight. If she's awake.

ERIN  
OK, if you think you need to do  
that, you should.

She lets herself out. Again he watches her run up the stairs and through that door.

EXT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug parks behind Cathy's car.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Doug opens the door slowly. Cathy is asleep on the bed, a novel, "Annie's Song" by Catherine Anderson, on her chest.

Doug looks at her for a moment, considers waking her, then decides not to.

He takes the book out of her hands, marks the page, sets it on the night stand. He kisses her cheek, turns off the light.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Doug awakens to find Cathy already dressed and slipping on her shoes. She's more dolled up than a normal day of school calls for. Doug doesn't notice.

DOUG  
Good morning.

She smiles at him, gets up to go. Doug sits up.

CATHY  
*I'm late. Are you blocking me?*

DOUG  
Uh, yeah.

CATHY  
*I'm going to take your car.*

EXT. WEBBER HOUSE - MORNING

Cathy rushes out of the house. She grabs a few things from her car, tosses them into Doug's.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - MORNING

Cathy gets settled and hits the button for the roof. She reaches for her scrunchy. It's not there.

She cranks the engine. The radio BLARES to life.

CATHY

Whoa!

Cathy kills the radio, turns on the GPS, enters an address, and drives off.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Doug and Morgan sit across from each other. She watches him intently as he fidgets and looks irritated.

MORGAN

*Are you OK?*

DOUG

*Yeah. I just, can't focus.*

Morgan gestures toward the board.

MORGAN

*How's that going?*

DOUG

*I'm close. But there's something I'm missing, I can't pin it down.*

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Cathy sits across from several men and women in suits.

CATHY

*The new gestures are really helping. It's still too early to call it a success, but I've seen about a thirty percent increase in retention over the last few weeks.*

The lead BOARD MEMBER closes a file. The cover is emblazoned with "AG Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing".

BOARD MEMBER

*I have to say, Mrs. Webber, and I think everyone on this side of the table feels the same way, you're very much what we're looking for. We still have some people to interview, but with your record of student success, and the ideas you've presented? You should be expecting to hear from us shortly.*

CATHY

Wow. Uh, that's wonderful to hear. I have to admit, however, that I wasn't expecting this type of reaction. I was just hoping to share some of my ideas.

BOARD MEMBER

You've certainly done that. Are you saying you're not interested in the position?

CATHY

No! I'm very interested, it's just, I have to let you know, that, uh, I'm not really ready to relocate.

BOARD MEMBER

Oh, well, I can certainly understand that. Washington is a whole country away. But, as this is an advocacy position, it can't really be done anywhere else.

CATHY

I understand that.

BOARD MEMBER

Well, I hope you won't mind us trying to change your mind should it come to that.

Cathy stands and begins to shake hands.

CATHY

Of course not. Thanks for taking the time to speak to me.

BOARD MEMBER

It was our pleasure.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Cathy, an epic smile barely contained, has to fight to not skip to the car.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - DAY

Cathy sits catching her breath and grinning.

She starts the car, fires up the GPS, and scrolls through the alphabetically sorted list of stored addresses.

Her smile fades.

On the screen are both 'Erin's Place' and 'Home'. Her finger hovers an inch from the screen.

She selects 'Erin's Place' and presses 'Go'.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Erin passes a drink to a customer. She glances at the clock.

ERIN  
I'm out, Sam.

As she walks past him into the back he goes in for a kiss, but she ignores him.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cathy pulls up and parks Doug's car at the curb. She scans the complex, not sure what she's looking for.

Erin's neighbor comes down the stairs toward the car.

NEIGHBOR  
Hey, you can't keep parking there.

Cathy gets out. The neighbor hesitates.

NEIGHBOR  
Sorry. Some guy with a car just like yours keeps parking there.

CATHY  
Parking here?

NEIGHBOR  
Yeah, when he drops off the girl from nine. It's not OK, that's a fire lane, if we had a fire --

Cathy finds number nine, and starts toward it. She jogs up the stairs, then hesitates.

She looks through the window. Through a gap in the blinds she sees the unmade bed. On the night stand is a picture of Erin.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Erin pulls out her phone and Doug's card. She starts to enter his number then notices the address.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cathy hurries to the car, gets in, and speeds away.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Morgan looks up to see Erin coming through the door.

MORGAN

Can I help you?

ERIN

I'm here to see Doug. Is this where he works?

MORGAN

One second.

Morgan types into her chat client. A moment later Doug pops his head out of his office and waves her over.

DOUG

Hey, Erin, down here.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Cathy gets out of the car and heads toward the stairs.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Doug closes the door.

ERIN

I thought I'd come see where you work for a change.

DOUG

I don't know if this is a good idea. I haven't told anyone else what's going on.

Erin goes to the whiteboard and tries to decipher the code.

ERIN

What do you do here?

DOUG

We make software that lets people communicate with computers more effectively. That's the idea anyway.

ERIN  
What are you? The boss?

DOUG  
Yeah, I own the company.

ERIN  
Really? That's awesome.

Doug CHUCKLES.

DOUG  
That's nice to hear.

MAIN FLOOR

Cathy hurries into the office.

CATHY  
Is he in there?

MORGAN  
Yeah, but --

Cathy shoves past Morgan, marches toward Doug's office like a moth to a flame.

Morgan chases after her. Heads pop up out of cubicles as Cathy stalks past.

DOUG'S OFFICE

Doug doesn't hear the approaching storm, but Erin does. She turns to face the door and instinctively backs away.

Doug follows Erin's gaze to find Cathy in the door and Morgan standing behind her.

CATHY  
Who is she?

Cathy's quavering words are nearly inaudible. She signs to Doug but the motions are small and her hands are shaking.

The last sign, 'she', is little more than a flick of a finger in Erin's direction.

ERIN  
I'm Erin, I --

Cathy rears on Doug. This time she nearly screams.

CATHY  
Who is she?

The signs are large brutal gestures. The final sign leaves Cathy's arm pointing at Erin like a spear.

DOUG  
I was going to tell you --

CATHY  
Does that make it OK, that you were going to tell me?

DOUG  
I swear to God, Cathy, I promise you, this is not what you think.

CATHY  
I found a movie ticket, you've been to her apartment. What should I think, Doug? What else can I think?

ERIN  
Calm down, it's not like that.

CATHY  
I'm not talking to you, you little... slut!

ERIN  
Excuse me?

Erin steps toward Cathy.

DOUG  
Let me handle this.

ERIN  
No one calls me a slut.

DOUG  
I'll handle this.

Morgan watches the exchange. Then she realizes what's so odd about it; Erin isn't signing.

CATHY  
How long? How long has this been going on?

MORGAN  
Doug, what *is* going on?

DOUG  
Everyone, please. Calm down, I can explain. Let me try to explain.

ERIN  
You were going to tell her.

Erin turns to look at Doug. For the first time Cathy sees the back of Erin's hair. Holding it back in a neat pony-tail is Cathy's orange scrunchy.

DOUG  
I didn't get a chance.

MORGAN  
How are you understanding her?

Cathy's voice trembles as much as her hands. Tears form in the corners of her eyes.

CATHY  
Jesus Christ, Doug! She's wearing my scrunchy. That's mine. That's my scrunchy... It's mine.

Cathy tries to continue but it's a moment before she can make her fingers do what she wants.

CATHY  
You're a bastard, Doug. And, you?  
You're a whore.

ERIN  
You know what, I don't need this.

Erin yanks the scrunchy from her hair and hurls it at Cathy as she shoves past her and out the door.

Morgan goes after her, leaving Cathy and Doug alone.

DOUG  
I'm not cheating on you, Cathy. I can hear that girl.

CATHY  
*Stop it, Doug, just stop! You're making it worse. You've been to her house, she's been in your car...*

EXT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Erin bursts out of the building. Morgan follows a second later and grabs her by the shoulder.

ERIN  
Get your hands off me.

MORGAN  
I'm sorry. Just, hold on a second.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Erin's voice comes through the window from the street below.

ERIN (O.C.)  
Fuck you. And fuck him, and double  
fuck her. I don't need this shit.

Doug cringes, then looks at Cathy.

She looks back at him, her anger and pain clear.

CATHY  
*She's yelling at Morgan, she said --*

Doug gently takes her hands to stop her from signing.

DOUG  
She said "fuck you. Fuck him.  
Double fuck her".

Cathy's eyes go wide. She pulls her hands free, covers her mouth.

DOUG  
Also, she "doesn't need this shit".

CATHY  
(not signed)  
Oh my god, you can hear her.

EXT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Morgan watches as Erin disappears out of sight.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

As the sun sets the room begins to grow dark.

Cathy and Doug sit on the couch. She's as far away from him as she can be without getting up.

CATHY  
*So, how often have you been seeing  
her?*

DOUG  
Almost every day for a few weeks.

CATHY  
*You haven't even seen me every day  
in the last few weeks!*

Doug gets up, goes to the switch and flips on the lights.

DOUG  
I should have told you. I just...  
couldn't. I hadn't even told her  
for a long time. I didn't want to  
break the spell.

CATHY  
*The spell?*

DOUG  
Look, I don't know what's going on,  
OK? But it's amazing to be with her  
and pretend for a bit that I'm not  
deaf. It's like being whole again.  
It's stupid. I get it. I should  
have told you, but I just couldn't.  
I don't have a better answer. I'm  
sorry.

CATHY  
*You're not having an affair?*

DOUG  
I'm not having an affair.

Cathy looks at him for a long time. She lets relief win out  
over doubt and wipes the tears from her cheeks.

CATHY  
*Maybe you'll get more of your  
hearing back. Maybe you could hear  
my voice?*

DOUG  
Maybe. I hope so.

CATHY  
*I want to talk to her. See it for  
myself.*

Doug is surprised by the request, but recovers quickly.

DOUG  
Of course.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Doug walks into the cafe. Through the windows we see him go to the bar where Erin is working.

She's not happy to see him, but his gestures are conciliatory and after a moment she softens.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Morgan sits next to Doug at his desk. He uses his computer, she uses a laptop. They both Google intently.

MORGAN

*Have you tried 'psychosomatic hearing loss'?*

DOUG

Psychosomatic? Like, I woke up from my surgery, thought, 'you know what would be a laugh?' and then spent twenty-two years pretending to be deaf?

MORGAN

*Well... no, but --*

DOUG

*Yes, I looked it up. I got nothing.*

Morgan closes the lid on her laptop.

MORGAN

*Look, I know this is huge for you. I can only imagine, but we need you to get your head back in the game.*

DOUG

*Jesus, Morgan, I'm doing my best.*

MORGAN

*We're down to less than two weeks and we're more or less waiting on you. We've worked so hard to get to this point and you're letting this situation distract you.*

DOUG

*What am I supposed to do?*

MORGAN

*Your job. We have problems too. We're running low on cash.*

*(MORE)*

MORGAN (CONT'D)  
*We'll barely be able to keep the lights on even if we make the deadline.*

DOUG  
*We'll get it working by the deadline. I promise you, we will.*

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cathy turns her back to Doug. He zips the back of her nice black dress. She turns back so he can see her signing.

CATHY  
*I've scheduled an appointment with an audiologist. You should ask Erin to go with you.*

Doug answers quickly and more curtly than he means to.

DOUG  
No, not going to happen.

CATHY  
*What if they can figure out what's going on? Maybe they can restore more of your hearing.*

DOUG  
Doctors screwed up my hearing once already. I'm not giving them a shot at screwing this up too.

CATHY  
(resigned)  
OK. Where is my phone?

DOUG  
It's charging in the office.

HOME OFFICE

Cathy puts her earrings in as she enters the room. She goes to the desk, unplugs her phone, and drops it in her purse.

She unplugs the wire, opens the desk drawer to put it away.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Doug gets out of the car and walks toward Erin's apartment. He hesitates at the foot of the stairs.

He takes a deep breath, then jogs up to her door. Again, that door. He only hesitates a moment before he KNOCKS.

Erin opens the door wearing her best dress. The transformation is startling. She looks amazing.

Doug stares at her a moment before regaining himself.

ERIN  
Is this OK?

DOUG  
Wow, you look great.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin squeezes into the back.

CATHY  
Hi, Erin.

ERIN  
Hi.

Doug pulls onto the street. Cathy sits quietly.

ERIN  
So, where are we going?

Cathy looks at Doug expectantly.

DOUG  
This Italian place Cathy found a while back, it's really good.

Cathy nearly LAUGHS.

ERIN  
What's funny?

Doug shoots Cathy a look, but turns his attention back to the road before he can see what she signs.

CATHY  
It's really true. That's amazing.

DOUG  
What'd she say?

ERIN  
She said it's amazing that you can hear me.

Some of Cathy's excitement fades at this exchange.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Italian restaurant isn't super high-end but the napkins are cloth and the wine list is several pages long.

Doug sits at the table between Cathy and Erin.

Erin scans the menu with growing angst; the salads cost more than she makes in an hour. She looks up from the menu to find Cathy staring at her.

ERIN

What?

CATHY

You're just very pretty. Thank you, again, for doing this, I know how much this means to Doug.

ERIN

Do you always do that?

CATHY

Sign? When Doug's around I do, it'd be like whispering behind his back not to.

(not signed)  
He hates that.

Erin LAUGHS. Doug gives Cathy a faux-stern look.

CATHY

See anything you like?

ERIN

It all looks good.

Cathy interprets Erin's response.

DOUG

You don't have to sign for her.

CATHY

Sorry, habit.

They scan their menus in silence. Not the silence of Doug's world, the silence of a table full of people who either have far too little, or far too much to say to each other.

CATHY

So, Erin, do you go to school?

Cathy's signing draws a few interested glances from the other tables but she's used to it and doesn't seem to notice.

ERIN

I took some writing classes at the  
JC but I dropped out. Seemed like a  
stupid waste of time.

DOUG

Cathy is a teacher.

Erin's cheeks turn beet-red and her eyes widen.

ERIN

Oh! I didn't --

DOUG

She teaches hearing-impaired  
students.

ERIN

I didn't mean anything, I just...  
Is that why you learned sign  
language? To teach deaf kids?

CATHY

I learned sign language because I  
fell in love with a deaf man and I  
wanted to be able to tell him that.

Erin looks over at Doug who smiles sheepishly.

CATHY

The job came later.

RESTAURANT - LATER

Cathy leans back in her chair and sips a glass of wine. Doug  
seems to have forgotten about her.

ERIN

How come you haven't had any kids?

DOUG

It's never been the right time.

CATHY

Doug barely has enough time for his  
work. I barely see him as it is, he  
wouldn't have time for a baby.

DOUG

Cathy...

CATHY

But he seems to have made time for  
you, so maybe there's hope.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin steps out of the back seat, closes the door.

ERIN

Thanks for dinner. Nice meeting  
you, Cathy.

CATHY

You too.

She turns and heads toward her apartment.

DOUG

So... that was fun.

Cathy's expression says otherwise.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - DAY

The lounge has that magical 'transported from the late seventies' feel that all teachers' lounges seem to have.

Josh pours a fresh mug of coffee and hands it to Cathy.

JOSH

Sounds like science fiction to me.  
The whole thing seems fishy.

CATHY

Thank you! I feel like a bitch for  
thinking it's some sort of scam.

She sits on the couch. He sits across from her.

CATHY

He's just been spending so much  
time with her.

JOSH

You're OK with that?

CATHY

I want to be supportive. If I think  
this thing is real, and I've seen  
it with my own eyes, so I have to,  
how do I ask him not to spend time  
with her?

JOSH

Seems like you could just say "I'm  
your wife and I don't want you  
spending time with her."

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Cathy sits on the couch with her book, but her attention is on the clock. It's well past ten.

She types a text message into her phone but before she can finish the battery dies.

HOME OFFICE

Cathy flips on the light, goes to the computer. She fires up Skype, double-clicks on Doug's name.

As the call connects she opens the drawer and pulls out the phone charger. Next to the cable are Doug's un-cashed paychecks. She picks up the stack, flips through it.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Doug types lines from the board into the computer at a mile a minute. An alert pops up, breaking his flow; 'Cathy Webber would like to video chat.'

Doug clicks 'Accept'. Cathy's face appears on the screen. The relief in her eyes is obvious even in the low quality image.

DOUG  
Hey, Cat. Everything OK?

She signs into the camera.

CATHY  
*I'm just bored. The cable's been shut off.*

DOUG  
Shit, sorry, I need to pay that.

CATHY  
*It's OK. I wanted to see how you were doing. I sent you a few texts.*

Cathy watches Doug pull his phone out of his pocket.

DOUG  
Vibrate got switched off.

CATHY  
*Any progress?*

DOUG  
*I think so. I'm trying a different approach.*

CATHY

*OK, I just wanted to say hi. I'm lonely here all by myself.*

DOUG

Just a little while longer. We're so close.

She smiles at him.

CATHY

*I know.*

DOUG

Are you sure you're OK? I could come home --

CATHY

*No. Don't worry about me. I'm just going to go to bed. Do your thing, I'll get out of your hair.*

DOUG

OK. I love you.

CATHY

*Love you too.*

Doug clicks a button on his end. The video chat closes.

He rolls his shoulders to get a kink out, then goes back to typing code.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Cathy closes the Skype window. She gives a little SIGH of relief. She takes the phone charger and the stack of checks, and leaves.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Erin wraps up her end-of-night cleaning. She takes a drink off the bar and leaves.

EXT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - NIGHT

Erin stands outside the door. She finishes a text and hits send. A moment later she gets a message back with a code.

She types the code into the pad by the door and pops inside.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Doug stands up as Erin comes in. She hands him the coffee.

DOUG

Oh my God, you're my hero, this is  
exactly what I needed.

He takes a long pull on the drink.

ERIN

Are you going to be here all night?

DOUG

Actually, I was going to call it,  
I'm spent like old money.

ERIN

Well, want to do something?

Doug considers it for a moment.

DOUG

Sure.

ERIN

You don't have to call the Mrs.?

DOUG

She's already asleep. What did you  
have in mind?

ERIN

You pick.

Doug thinks for a moment, then smiles.

EXT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Erin looks up at the neon "Karaoke Every Night" sign over the bar. Her eyes are like saucers.

ERIN

No way.

DOUG

Come on, do you know how long it's  
been since I've heard a new song?

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Doug lets his eyes adjust to the dim light. He doesn't hear the clamor of the crowd or the warbling singer on the stage.

He can't hear the music but he bobs his head in time with it.  
Erin notices, gives him a questioning look.

DOUG  
I can feel the bass.

ERIN  
(shouting)  
What?

DOUG  
(shouting)  
I can feel the bass. In my chest.  
And you don't have to shout for me,  
I can't hear any of this.

Erin spots a couple getting up from a table. She shoves through the crowd before anyone else can snag it. Doug follows in her wake.

DOUG  
I'll be right back.

He wades through the crowd toward the bar.

A new singer takes the stage. She doesn't hold the mic correctly, a painful SCREECH tears through the club.

Everyone except Doug GROANS, covers their ears.

Doug notices the reaction. He looks back at Erin. The confused look on his face makes her LAUGH.

ERIN  
Feedback.

She's across the crowded bar but he hears her loud and clear. He nods, vanishes into the sea of bodies.

A moment later he returns with four shots of vodka. They each take one, tap them together, drain them down.

DOUG  
I put your name on the list.

ERIN  
I don't think I can! Look at all  
these people.

DOUG  
Don't make me beg.

Erin doesn't answer. They turn and watch the current singer.

DOUG  
Is she any good?

ERIN  
She sucks.

The singer finishes her song and takes a little bow. The HOST takes the mic.

HOST  
All right, up next we've got Erin.

ERIN  
They called my name.

She doesn't move.

DOUG  
What's wrong?

ERIN  
There's no way! There are a million people here, I'll piss my pants.

DOUG  
Focus on me and you'll do great.

Erin grabs both remaining shots and slams them down.

DOUG  
Whoa!

ERIN  
Liquid courage.

He playfully shoves her out of the booth.

Doug buzzes with anticipation. He watches Erin scan through the song book, point out her selection to the host.

She takes the stage, mic in hand. She looks right at him.

ERIN  
(whispering)  
I can't believe you're making me do this.

Erin watches the countdown, takes a breath, begins to SING.

She's not great but it's notes and rhythm, pitch and lyric.

It's music.

Doug can hardly breathe.

Erin looks out at the crowd, finds supportive faces smiling back at her. Then she finds Doug.

He stares at her, as much lost in her voice as in the look of barely controlled elation growing in her eyes.

Erin is in heaven. She beams at Doug.

At last the song ends. The crowd applauds, their hands colliding together noiselessly.

Erin maintains her composure long enough to get off the stage. She hurries back to the table.

Doug leaps up and wraps her in a bear-hug. He kisses her on the cheek as he lifts her off her feet.

DOUG  
That was awesome. Awesome!

ERIN  
I can't believe I did that. What a rush! Freaking amazing. So I was all right?

DOUG  
I thought you were amazing. But what do I know? I'm deaf.

They both LAUGH.

Erin takes a big breath and slowly blows it out.

ERIN  
Thank you. I would never have done that if you hadn't made me.

DOUG  
So you'll sing something else?

The night races by in a blur of drinks and songs. Erin goes up to the stage over and over again.

LATER

The crowd is thinning. Erin sits on a stool in the middle of the stage, her eyes locked with Doug's. She sings "Hey Jude" by The Beatles.

The crowd joins her for the "Na na na na" part. Even Doug joins her despite his horrible singing voice.

Erin finishes the song then ambles back to the booth. There are fresh shots on the table. Doug gestures to them.

DOUG  
I took the liberty.

They drain the shots. Erin is clearly feeling the booze.

DOUG  
You're a karaoke superstar.

ERIN  
You know, I would never have done this without you. And you'd never hear music without me. I think, maybe we're meant for each other.

HOST  
All right, everyone, last call.

ERIN  
Last call for singers. I'm going to do one more.

Doug, grinning like a fool, leans back and watches as Erin picks a song and springs onto the stage.

There are still a few dozen people in the bar, but as far as Doug and Erin are concerned, it's just the two of them.

"God Only Knows" by The Beach Boys begins to play.

ERIN  
I may not always love you. But long as there are stars above you, You never need to doubt it. I'll make you so sure about it.

Doug's expression changes in an instant. His grin fades, his focus sharpens.

He knows this song.

ERIN  
If you should ever leave me, Though life would still go on, believe me, The world could show nothing to me, So what good would livin' do me?

Doug clamps his eyes shut, squeezing back tears.

ERIN  
God only knows what I'd be without you. God only knows what I'd be without you.

When Erin returns to the booth Doug is still choked up. It's a long moment before he looks at her.

DOUG  
That was the song Cathy and I  
danced to at our wedding.

Erin's broad smile fades.

DOUG  
She had me read the lyrics.

ERIN  
(dejectedly)  
That's really sweet. Do you want me  
to sing anything else? They might  
let me get in one more song?

DOUG  
No, thanks. I better get home.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - NIGHT

Doug watches Erin as she steps into her apartment and vanishes inside. He quickly pulls back onto the road.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Doug strides into the living room, a smile on his face.

Cathy is waiting for him. In her robe, with her arms crossed, she looks very small.

DOUG  
Oh, hi. I thought you were going to  
bed?

CATHY  
Where were you?

DOUG  
You said you were going to bed so --

CATHY  
*So you spent the whole night with  
Erin instead of coming home?*

DOUG  
You said --

CATHY

*I know what I said. I was trying to be supportive. I was trying to understand, but...*

She's not angry. She's scared.

CATHY

*I don't want you to see her anymore.*

DOUG

Excuse me?

The sudden look of anger on his face is clear.

CATHY

*I don't want you to --*

DOUG

*You have no idea what you're asking me to give up.*

CATHY

*What about what you're asking me to give up?*

DOUG

*I'm not asking you to give up a damned thing.*

CATHY

*Are you kidding me? I give up things for you all the time.*

DOUG

*What have you given up?*

CATHY

*How about my dream job? You want to start there?*

DOUG

*Dream job? What are you talking about?*

CATHY

*AG Bell wants me to work with them in Washington, and I said no so I could stay here with you.*

DOUG

*Who's AG Bell?*

CATHY

*Advocacy group, for the deaf? I've been interviewing with them for a position in Washington. You've been too busy to even care.*

DOUG

*You're interviewing for a job across the country without telling me and I'm the bad guy?*

CATHY

*You're not the only one with dreams, you're not the only one that's great at their job.*

DOUG

I never said --

CATHY

*And now you're asking me to give up my husband.*

DOUG

That's bullshit and you know it.

CATHY

*Is this really so much to ask?*

DOUG

Yes! Yes, it is! You can get other jobs, where am I going to find another person I can hear?

Cathy struggles to maintain her composure.

CATHY

*Why her? Why her and not me?*

Doug turns away so he doesn't have to see her sign. She moves around him so he has no choice but to look at her.

CATHY

*Don't shut me out. I saw how she looked at you. Please just stop --*

DOUG

No. No way. Hearing her voice is like breathing again for the first time in twenty-two years! You're asking me to give that up because you're jealous?

CATHY

*No, no --*

DOUG

I would never ask you to do that,  
ever, and you know it.

CATHY

*You wouldn't have to ask!*

DOUG

She's not just some other woman.

CATHY

*No, she's not! She's a sexy girl  
who is ten years younger than I am  
that you can hear. How am I  
supposed to compete with that?*

DOUG

It's not like that.

CATHY

*Are you really that blind? You  
can't possibly be --*

DOUG

God damn it, Cathy, that's not  
what's going on here. She doesn't  
love me, I don't love her, I can  
hear her, that's it!

Cathy collapses onto the couch.

Doug softens, goes to her.

CATHY

*Why can't you hear me? I want you  
to hear my voice. I want you to  
hear me tell you how much I love  
you. You've never heard a woman say  
she loves you. I don't want you to  
hear it from her.*

Doug sits beside his wife. He gently takes her hands to stop  
her from signing anything else.

DOUG

Don't you think I wish it was you?  
This isn't something I picked.

She pulls her hands free.

CATHY

*Please. Don't see her anymore. Tell  
me you won't see her.*

DOUG  
I just... I'm sorry but I don't  
think I can do that.

Doug places a hand on her arm. She brushes it off and leaves.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

Erin makes drinks for the morning rush. She looks much worse for the previous night's wear but that doesn't prevent her from humming to herself.

A crowd of patrons waits impatiently for their drinks.

SAM  
Hey, pick up the pace.

She ignores him. He comes over to her station.

SAM  
Are you hung over?

Erin looks at the espresso machine, the crowd, and Sam.

ERIN  
I don't want to do this anymore.

SAM  
Fine, work the register.

She gestures to the whole store.

ERIN  
I don't want to do this anymore.

She gestures to herself and to Sam.

ERIN  
I don't want to do this anymore.

SAM  
Are you breaking up with me, or  
quitting?

ERIN  
Both.

SAM  
Erin, come on, let's go in the back  
real quick and talk this out.

ERIN  
It's a waste of my time, Sam.

SAM  
What is?

ERIN  
This job. You.

SAM  
I'm a waste of your time?

She gives him a sweet smile.

ERIN  
I'm sorry. I don't mean it like  
that. This is my fault.

She hands him her apron, steps out from behind the counter.

ERIN  
You're a good guy, this just isn't  
what I'm supposed to be doing.

SAM  
Is this because of that asshole? Is  
it? Erin! Is it!

Erin leaves. Sam looks at the customers. They all stare.

EXT. CAFE - MORNING

Erin gets clear of the store and stops. She takes a deep  
breath. After a moment she smiles to herself.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - MORNING

Min-jun works at his computer. His phone RINGS.

MIN-JUN  
(in Korean)  
Hey babe, what's up... Are you  
kidding me... I'll look into it.

He hangs up the phone, starts a web browser. He goes to his  
bank's web page, logs in. He finds what he's looking for.

MIN-JUN  
Mother fucker.

Zack pops his head up from his cube.

ZACK  
What's up?

MOMENTS LATER

Zack and Min-jun storm over to Morgan's desk. The rest of the team tunes in to the situation.

MIN-JUN

What the hell, Morgan?

ZACK

Are you kidding us with this shit?

MORGAN

What?

INT. CAFE - MORNING

Silence. Doug steps into the cafe.

He waits, but Erin's voice doesn't break the silence.

Doug realizes that everyone in the shop is looking at him. Then he sees Sam behind the bar yelling in his direction.

Sam hurdles over the bar and marches toward Doug, yelling the whole time.

Doug can't hear his own voice as he stammers. 'I can't hear you. What's going on?'

Sam's first punch lays Doug out. Before he can react Sam is on top of him, pounding on his face.

It's a painful few seconds before several of the cafe patrons pull Sam off.

Sam continues shouting.

Doug staggers to his feet. He's a bloody mess. He yells back at Sam. 'What the fuck! I'm deaf, I can't hear you.'

Sam stops struggling against the guys holding him back. Utter confusion spreads over Sam's face. 'You're deaf?'

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - MORNING

Morgan spots Doug as he comes in. She runs over to him. She's livid. She begins to sign, sees his face, and stops.

Doug looks around. There's no one else there.

MORGAN

*What happened to you?*

DOUG  
Erin's boyfriend. Where is everyone?

MORGAN  
*Paychecks bounced.*

DOUG  
Paychecks bounced? Why?

MORGAN  
*When you cashed your checks you cleaned us out.*

DOUG  
I didn't cash my checks... Cathy.

MORGAN  
*Must be.*

DOUG  
She probably thought she was being helpful. So everyone just left?

MORGAN  
*Can you blame them? You haven't been instilling much faith recently. That fight, now this. So we're done.*

DOUG  
No. No, not yet. We're paid up on the office for the rest of the month and I think I can finish the code myself. If you --

Something in her expression stops him short.

DOUG  
What?

MORGAN  
*Doug, I haven't been cashing my checks either.*

DOUG  
Shit, Morgan. I didn't know.

She smiles sadly at him.

MORGAN  
*I know you didn't.*

DOUG  
What about the house?

MORGAN

*I withdrew my offer months ago. I thought I'd be able to make another offer once we finished the app.*

DOUG

I'm sorry.

MORGAN

*I can't stick around. I have to find a new job.*

DOUG

Yeah, of course. I'll get it done, Morgan.

MORGAN

*I really hope you do.*

He watches her leave. And then he's the only one left in the suddenly very enormous space.

He runs his hands over his face, WINCES.

DOUG

Shit.

EXT. WEBBER HOUSE - DAY

Doug parks the car.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cathy packs her bags. She's been crying.

The SLAM of the front door makes her jump. She turns to see Doug disappear into the bathroom.

He emerges a moment later with a wet towel held to his face. He stops short when he sees her and the half-packed bags.

She GASPS when she sees his face.

CATHY

*What happened to you?*

DOUG

Erin's boyfriend. What are you doing?

Cathy ignores his question. She takes him by the hand and leads him back to the bathroom.

## BATHROOM

Doug sits on the toilet with the seat down as Cathy attends to his injuries with supplies from their first-aid kit.

The immediate need to focus helps Cathy regain some of her composure. She cuts bandages for the more serious gashes.

DOUG  
Where are you going?

Cathy cleans and bandages his face. After a long while she finishes her ministrations.

He looks much better but he's still a sore sight. She puts away the supplies and walks to the bedroom. He follows her.

Doug watches from the door as Cathy finishes packing.

DOUG  
Why are you doing this?

Cathy stops and looks at him.

CATHY  
*I'm scared of you, Doug.*

DOUG  
Scared of me?

CATHY  
*Every time I see you now I'm afraid  
it's going to be the time you tell  
me we're over.*

Doug throws up his hands.

DOUG  
Why would you think that?

CATHY  
*I know you better than you know  
yourself, Doug.*

DOUG  
I haven't done anything wrong.

She doesn't say anything.

DOUG  
So I'm tried and convicted? For  
something I haven't done? For  
something I'm not going to do?

CATHY  
*I can't do this. It hurts too much.*

A look of panic creeps into Doug's eyes.

DOUG  
Cathy, please, just tell me what I can do to make you stay.

CATHY  
*Promise me that you'll never see her again. Choose me over her, right now. Forever.*

The turmoil in his eyes is plain. He doesn't say anything.

Cathy picks up her bags.

CATHY  
I love you. I wish you could hear that.

She walks past him into the hall.

LATER

Silence. Doug walks through the house, in a haze. He screams soundlessly and punches the wall.

EXT. WEBBER HOUSE - DAY

Doug jumps in the car, tears off down the street.

INT. MORGAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Morgan helps Cathy carry her bags into the apartment.

CATHY  
Thanks for letting me stay here.  
I'd go to my sister's, but it's so far. Once school is out --

MORGAN  
Cathy, it's fine.

Cathy's phone rings. She checks the screen.

MORGAN  
Doug?

Cathy puts the phone away.

## CATHY

He made his choice. You know what the worst part is? I can't really blame him, can I? He's deaf, but he can hear her. It's hard to say they're not meant for each other.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Silence.

Doug drags the whiteboard with the task list into his office. The countdown at the top reads '9 days left'. There are only a few tasks that aren't completed.

With his forearm he wipes his main whiteboard completely clean. He stares at the blank board for a long moment, then starts to write.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - LATER

Doug attacks the board with the marker, covering it in code. He takes a step back, looks at it. He traces through the lines with his finger, hope growing in his eyes.

Then he hurls the marker at the board.

He goes to his desk, looks for his phone, checks the screen.

There's a text message from Erin. He hesitates for a moment, then closes the message.

He starts a text to Cathy, types for a long time, hits send.

He looks at the board, willing the answer to appear. He looks at the phone, willing it to buzz.

He runs a hand through his hair.

INT. A HOSPITAL - NIGHT (DREAM)

Baby Erin can be seen through the open door, held by the doctor, CRYING with all her might.

The world begins to fade away as the drugs kick in. But before the darkness envelopes everything, Cathy steps into view. She smiles.

## CATHY

(in Erin's voice)

Hey, are you OK?

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Doug's head snaps up from his desk. He blinks the sleep away and looks around. The office is a mess. The trash can overflows with delivery food. Doug looks like crap.

Erin is standing in the door holding a drink from Starbucks.

DOUG

What?

ERIN

Are you OK? Oh my God! What happened?

She hurries to him, inspects his face.

DOUG

Sam happened.

ERIN

Does it hurt?

DOUG

Only when I'm awake.

Erin looks at the disheveled office.

ERIN

I've been trying to get a hold of you for days. What's going on?

Doug checks his phone. There are a dozen incoming texts from Erin, and twice as many outgoing messages to Cathy that haven't been answered.

He goes to the rolling whiteboard, erases the old countdown, writes '4 days left'. Erin hands him the drink.

DOUG

Cathy left me.

ERIN

Because of me?

DOUG

She asked me to choose.

Erin struggles not to let the sudden flare of joy in her heart show on her face.

ERIN

She shouldn't have asked you to do that.

DOUG  
She was just --

ERIN  
You'd never ask her to make a  
choice like that.

DOUG  
I probably wouldn't have to.

She gives the room a disapproving once over.

ERIN  
You need to get out of here. Clear  
your mind.

DOUG  
I can't go home. I can't.

ERIN  
Come to my place.

DOUG  
No. Thanks, but no.

ERIN  
I'll make you some dinner. You can  
get a good night's sleep.

DOUG  
Damn it, Erin, I'm not going to  
your place.

ERIN  
Don't snap at me, I'm here trying  
to help. I haven't done anything.

DOUG  
Are you serious? My company is  
fucked, my wife has left me --

ERIN  
Don't put that on me. None of that  
is my doing.

Doug goes to the board, erases it for the thousandth time.

DOUG  
I can't leave anyway. I have to get  
this done.

Erin takes a seat.

Doug stares at the blank board. He doesn't move for a long time. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. Opens them again. The whiteboard stares back at him.

ERIN  
You need to get some sleep. You're spent, like old money. Come on.

He turns to look at her, resignation all over his face.

INT. MORGAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cathy sits on the couch looking at a message on her phone. She starts to type a reply, changes her mind, deletes it.

EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Doug holds his bag as Erin unlocks the door. She steps inside, turns on the lights.

Doug hesitates at the threshold before coming to a decision.

He steps through the door.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erin takes Doug's bag and heads down the hall.

ERIN  
Make yourself comfortable.

ERIN'S BEDROOM

Erin doesn't close the door as she gets undressed and changes into a pair of pajama shorts and a baggy T-shirt. She quickly tidies up her room.

ERIN  
The remote for the TV should be out there somewhere. I don't know how to turn on the subtitles.

LIVING ROOM

Erin emerges from the hall with a blanket and pillow.

Doug is already fast asleep on the couch.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - MORNING

The office is empty. The countdown on the whiteboard still reads '4 days left' but there's no one there to update it.

INT. WEBBER HOUSE - MORNING

The house is empty, no different than how Doug left it.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Doug lies sprawled across Erin's tiny couch. He awakens into his silent world, looks around.

At the end of the hall, the door to Erin's room is closed.

Doug tiptoes toward the bathroom.

BATHROOM

Very carefully, Doug closes the door.

The bathroom is so wanting for space that everything sits out in plain view. Being in it makes him feel like a voyeur.

Doug lifts the toilet seat, undoes his fly.

ERIN (O.S.)  
Doug?

She pops her head out from behind the shower curtain.

DOUG  
Jesus Christ!

Doug spins away from her, slips on a shirt, crashes to the floor. His head takes a bounce off the door on the way down.

He lands with his back against the door looking right at her.

ERIN  
Oh my God, are you OK?

DOUG  
I thought you were in your room.

Erin steps out of the shower. Doug looks away. Water cascades off her bare body as she crosses the tiny space.

Her teeth chatter and her skin is covered in goose bumps.

He can feel the nearness of her. Drops of water splash on his head as she leans over him.

ERIN  
Lean forward.

He hesitates, then leans forward.

Erin pulls the thin cotton robe he'd been leaning against from off the hook on the door. She slips into it.

She kneels beside him and gently examines his head.

He opens his eyes, tries not to stare. The robe clings to her every curve, the damp spots turn half transparent.

DOUG  
I'm fine, really. I'll let you  
finish your shower.

She helps him up. There's no space in the tiny room. She shivers against him.

ERIN  
I was done.

He can't resist taking a long look at her. Her nipples stand out clearly through the thin material of the robe.

ERIN  
No hot water.

Doug tears his eyes away, embarrassed.

DOUG  
I'm going to --

ERIN  
You were nine when you lost your  
hearing, right?

Doug swallows hard. They're painfully close to each other.

DOUG  
Erin...

ERIN  
Right?

DOUG  
Yes.

ERIN  
So you've never heard a woman --

DOUG  
No.

ERIN  
Except me. From outside my door.

DOUG  
Yes.

Erin runs her fingers down the side of his face.

ERIN  
Can you read lips?

He's thrown by the sudden change of subject.

DOUG  
What?

ERIN  
Can you read lips?

She kisses him. He starts to pull away.

She MOANS.

It melts his resolve, he kisses her.

ERIN  
Want to hear more?

ERIN'S BEDROOM

Erin unbuttons Doug's shirt, PURRING the entire time. The sounds are more than he can handle. His head swims.

She lets her robe fall open as she tumbles back onto the bed, dragging him down on top of her.

He kisses the nape of her neck. She GASPS.

She places his hand between her thighs and GROANS at his touch. Doug devours each noise. She gently bites his ear.

ERIN  
Make love to me.

The word cuts through the intoxication. He shuts his eyes.

DOUG  
This isn't right.

He starts to pull away, she doesn't let him.

ERIN  
It is right. I love you.

Doug looks down at her as the words hit him.

He struggles out of her grip and steps away. He takes in the room, seeming to notice where he is for the first time.

He looks at her, then looks away.

DOUG  
Please, close that.

Erin closes her robe.

ERIN  
What's wrong? Is it what I said?  
You don't have to say it back.

DOUG  
I shouldn't have let this happen. I  
have to go.

He turns to leave. She leaps off the bed.

ERIN  
You're leaving? You're leaving!?

She shoves him hard, he crashes into the wall.

ERIN  
You selfish fuck. You can't come  
into my life and make me feel like  
I matter and then just leave.

DOUG  
What do you want from me, Erin?

She gestures back toward the bed.

ERIN  
I want that.

DOUG  
I promised I'd never lie to you.  
That? That would have been a lie.

ERIN  
Bullshit.

DOUG  
That isn't what you want anyway.  
That's what you're used to people  
wanting from you. What do you want?

ERIN  
Apparently I don't know.

DOUG

I think what you've been wanting  
your whole life is for someone to  
tell you what you needed to hear.

ERIN

Oh, you think so?

DOUG

But what you really needed was  
someone to hear what you had to  
say.

ERIN

So? Is that so wrong? And now  
you're leaving?

DOUG

Erin, you have so much to say, and  
everyone is going to want to hear  
it. You don't need me for that now.

ERIN

Yes, I do!

DOUG

No, Erin, you really don't.

She lets his words sink in. She begins to CRY.

DOUG

Hey, you're not the crying type.

ERIN

Being born hurts I guess.

He LAUGHS.

ERIN

Don't laugh at me, asshole!

DOUG

You poetry types are so dramatic.

Erin smiles at him through her tears. He hugs her.

ERIN

I know you didn't have a lot of  
options...

She steps back from him, closes her robe more tightly.

ERIN

But still, thanks for listening to  
me.

DOUG  
Of course.

ERIN  
Most people don't, you know?

DOUG  
Don't what? Listen? Really?

She looks at him like she's about to explain something to a child.

ERIN  
You're not the only one that can hear me, Doug, everyone can. But you actually listened. Most people don't do that.

It's Doug's turn to let her words sink in.

DOUG  
Wow. I usually don't.

He takes his bag, goes to the door.

DOUG  
I'm probably not going to see you anymore.

ERIN  
Yeah, I got that. Bye, Doug.

DOUG  
Goodbye, Erin.

He starts down the steps, away from her door.

ERIN  
Hey, Doug, before you go, what's the last thing you want to hear?

DOUG  
You know, I've spent twenty-two years waking up to the sound of you crying. Maybe you could leave me with something more pleasant to wake up to?

She thinks for a moment, can't come up with anything, LAUGHS, shrugs. She begins to speak, he cuts her off with a gesture.

DOUG  
That's perfect. Thank you.

Doug turns, and walks down the stairs.

At the bottom he stops and listens. He doesn't hear anything.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Erin closes the door and collapses against it. She wraps her arms around herself and convulses as she struggles to not let him hear the sounds of her SOBBING.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

Doug walks into his office.

He goes to the rolling whiteboard and crosses 'Core Hearing Algorithm Optimization' of the list. In its place he writes 'Core Listening Algorithm'.

He changes the 4 in '4 days left' to a 3.

He goes to the main board, wipes it clean, and begins to write in long, clear, confident lines.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Josh leans against a desk as Cathy wipes down the board.

JOSH

Wow, Cathy, that's rough. Are you sure it's over?

Her posture answers his question.

JOSH

Come here. You're gonna be all right. OK?

He pulls her into a hug. She lets him, she needs it.

CATHY

It doesn't feel like it.

JOSH

No, I bet it doesn't.

He lets her go. She reluctantly releases her grip on him.

JOSH

Is it too soon for a silver lining?

CATHY

If you've got one.

JOSH  
AG Bell. There's no reason not to  
take it now.

CATHY  
That hadn't even crossed my mind. I  
thought you were going to ask me  
out.

JOSH  
That'd be my silver lining, but  
it's probably a bit too soon,  
right? And by the time it wouldn't  
be, you'll be in DC.

She smiles at him, chews on the idea, and begins to nod.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - NIGHT

Doug takes a step back and looks at his work. He nods as he  
traces a few lines with his finger.

He pulls out his phone, starts a Facetime call. A moment  
later Morgan appears on the screen, clearly having been taken  
from a deep sleep.

MORGAN  
*What's wrong? Are you OK?*

DOUG  
Yeah, actually. I'm great. Do me a  
favor. Gather up the team.

MORGAN  
*Doug, there is no team.*

DOUG  
Get everyone here that's willing to  
show up. It'll be worth it.

MORGAN  
*It's three in the morning.*

He looks at his watch.

DOUG  
Oh, wow. OK, first thing in the  
morning then.

She gives a resigned nod, and ends the call.

Doug sits at his desk, gives the code one last look, and puts  
his head down.

DARKNESS (DREAM)

Silence. Then, Erin's faint, simple LAUGHTER.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - MORNING

Doug is smiling when Morgan shakes him awake.

MORGAN  
*We're here.*

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - MORNING

Doug and half of the team are gathered around the conference table. Zack and Min-jun sit across from each other.

DOUG  
That's what I've done. Can you integrate this with your portion in three days?

MIN-JUN  
That's really impressive. How did you crack it?

DOUG  
I'd been working to make it hear, but it needed to listen. Once I worked that out, the rest was easy.

MIN-JUN  
Right. "Easy".

DOUG  
Well, maybe not "easy".

ZACK  
I think we can make that work.

MIN-JUN  
Yeah, but, why the hell would we?

DOUG  
I couldn't have done this without you. So, I'm going to give out shares of Total Silence Studios to every one that showed up here for this meeting in direct proportion to your time at the company. When this app goes on sale --

MORGAN  
We're all going to be rich!

The team LAUGHS.

ZACK  
In that case, let's get started.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

From within his silent world Doug orchestrates the chaotic final sprint.

He's good at this, very good.

As soon as he gets a free moment, Doug sends Cathy a long text. He closes his eyes as he hits send, willing her to read it, then returns to the whirl of activity.

Zack, Min-jun, Morgan, and the rest of the team spin like cogs in a perfectly built machine. Spirits are high as the hours race past.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Cathy is surrounded by her students. They hold a handmade sign; "Good luck in Washington, Mrs. Webber. We'll miss you!"

From the back of the room Josh gives a few instructions, then snaps a picture.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - TWO DAYS LATER

Ken is surrounded by the entire team. Doug hands him a phone.

DOUG  
Ask it anything.

KEN  
What's the weather going to be --

ZACK  
Too easy!

Everyone LAUGHS.

MIN-JUN  
Ask it something hard.

KEN  
OK, what does my son want for his birthday?

The phone begins to SPEAK.

PHONE

Your son, Scott, has mentioned on Facebook that he would like a next-gen game console. Reviews of the Playstaion 4 have been the best. Would you like me to order one with your default credit card?

KEN

Uh, yes, please do.

PHONE

Amazon has the best price at the moment and will fulfill your order in time for Scott's birthday next Tuesday. I've taken the liberty of having that gift wrapped.

KEN

Well, holy shit. That's amazing.

PHONE

Let me know if there's anything else I can do for you.

Ken breaks out in an ear to ear grin.

KEN

Brilliant. Brilliant! When can we release this?

Morgan interprets.

DOUG

We're good to go now. If we could get another loan to cover payroll --

KEN

Done. Let's get this out there.

The team CHEERS. Doug turns to look at his team and finds them all making the sign for applause.

DOUG

OK, we did it! I have to go. Morgan, can you handle... whatever there is left to handle?

She smiles at her brother.

MORGAN

Of course.

DOUG

OK, OK, I have to go.

The team CHEERS again as he races out of the room.

ERIN (V.O.)  
Maybe somewhere in the world there  
is a woman that a blind man can see  
Or a boy that a numb girl can feel

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Erin sits alone at her table writing with confident purpose.

ERIN (V.O.)  
I was the girl that a deaf man  
could hear, but he chose "maybe"  
with her over "yes" with me.

INT. TOTAL SILENCE STUDIOS - DAY

The team sits around the conference table, each has a small stack of paperwork in front of them.

Morgan signs one last form and slides it to Zack. The header on the form reads 'Transfer of Stock'.

ERIN (V.O.)  
We all have some piece that is  
missing, like part of a puzzle that  
lets the whole picture make sense  
But sometimes I think that it's  
more like a key, that opens a door  
and is never needed again

INT. POETRY CLUB - NIGHT

Erin stands in front of the mic and stares into the darkness beyond the footlights. She speaks the poem with vulnerable confidence, emoting subtly with her hands.

ERIN  
I wonder sometimes, when I feel  
that a piece is missing, if we need  
to be whole to be happy

The audience watches with rapt attention.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - DAY

Doug races through traffic. He puts a hand up and smiles as the wind plays through his fingers.

ERIN (V.O.)  
I don't begrudge him his choice; in  
fact I want the same someday

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

A hand painted construction paper sign taped to the side of the school reads "Have a great summer! See you next year."

Doug wades through the throng of excited students as they hurry off to summer vacation, then sprints down the hall.

ERIN (V.O.)  
I want to find a person so perfect  
that I'd pass up someone as amazing  
as me for just the possibility of  
being with them.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Doug walks in to find Cathy packing the last items in her room. The "Good Luck" sign is taped to the board.

He watches her for a second. She doesn't notice him. He finds the light switch and toggles it off and on.

She turns. It's painful to see him. She closes her eyes.

DOUG  
I finally understand why you left.  
You told me over and over but I  
used the fact that I can't hear as  
an excuse to not listen. I put work  
first, I put Erin first, and I put  
me first, when all that ever  
mattered was you.

CATHY  
*No, no. I won't be in a contest I  
can't win.*

DOUG  
You won a long time ago. I love  
you, Cathy. Please, please, I'm  
begging you to come home with me.

He studies her face as a subtle expression passes over it. He reads the sign on the board. He thinks for a moment and nods.

She starts to sign but he speaks before she can.

DOUG

No. You shouldn't. You can't. This job, it's your dream. You have to go. But let me come with you.

CATHY

*What about the company? What about Erin? You can't --*

DOUG

None of that matters. Morgan can handle the company and I'll never see Erin again.

She struggles to maintain her composure.

DOUG

Somewhere out there is a girl that I can hear, but standing here in front of me is a woman that lets me breathe, that makes the blood flow through my veins. I can't hear without her, but I can't live without you.

She looks sadly at him. Long moments pass.

DOUG

Please say something.

Cathy takes a breath, smiles, and very slowly begins to sign.

FADE OUT:

THE END