

queen elizabeth

by

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Text on black:

"How nice -- to feel nothing, and still get full credit for  
being alive."

Kurt Vonnegut

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

ALEXIS, 17, Black, stares with vehement hostility. Her hair ruffled, bottom lip slightly busted - it's clear she's just lost a fight.

She studies ELIZABETH, 24, Black. An austere desk and her fragile veil of authority separate them.

Alexis scans her... looking for weak spots in her defence.

But Elizabeth holds her ground with an unwavering countenance... waiting patiently for Alexis to speak.

Finally:

ALEXIS  
How old are you?

The bell rings. Kids start shuffling through the halls - filling the room with inaudible chatter and general transition hustle and bustle.

A group of DISRUPTIVE GIRLS walk past the open office door. One girl NOTICES ALEXIS. Lelani. Her main agitator.

LELANI  
ALEXIS STRAIGHT UP GOT HER ASS  
BEAT!

The other girls crowd the door... laughing, taunting her.

ELIZABETH  
Lelani King. That's enough! Get-

Before Elizabeth can get up, Alexis pounces straight on Lelani.

ALEXIS  
STUPID BITCH. SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

Elizabeth tries to break them up. Other girls jump in.

MARCUS, 27, Black, runs to Elizabeth's aid.

MARCUS  
Hey! Stop - Lelani. Off!

Marcus grabs Lelani. Elizabeth takes hold of Alexis. The other girls disperse. Laughing.

ELIZABETH  
Alexis - go to class.

Alexis yanks away from Elizabeth. She sighs and shakes her head. Drags her feet to class.

Elizabeth turns back to her office and meets MARCUS'S FACE. He's just a little too close for her personal bubble to handle.

Lelani stands against the lockers with her arms folded.

MARCUS  
You good, E?

Lelani tries to walk away. Elizabeth nudges in her direction.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
Hey now, Lelani. Hold up.  
(to Elizabeth)  
We're just going to take a trip  
down to Ms. Baylor's office.

Exasperated by the whole thing, Elizabeth flashes him an indignant smile and shuts the office DOOR.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

INSERT: A WALL CLOCK, with the time: 2:57pm

Elizabeth quietly peeks her head out of her office.

She looks to her LEFT. Empty.

Looks to her RIGHT. Empty.

WAIT - A KID goes to the bathroom.

Okay, now the coast is clear.

Elizabeth walks quickly but with composure out of the building. The BELL RINGS as she enters the:

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Elizabeth runs to her car. Looks at her watch. 3:03pm...

ELIZABETH  
Shit shit shit.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - DAY

She turns on the ignition and pulls away as quickly as she can.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE EQUINOX TYPE FITNESS FACILITY - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth inspects herself in front of a mirror.

She has the body of a true athlete. Slender, toned, powerful.

She plays around with her hair, getting her updo just right. Practices smiling and adjusts her cleavage.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE EQUINOX TYPE FITNESS FACILITY - HALLWAY - DAY

Elizabeth breezes by gym patrons, many stop and look. Others say hello. It's like she's a celebrity. It's almost fantastical, like this could be in her head.

She approaches a very long line of eager women in their early 20s to mid 30s, mostly White.

Elizabeth puts on that smile she practiced earlier.

In her best camp counselor voice she screams:

ELIZABETH  
Good evening, ladies!

She unlocks the door to the -

INT. SPINNING STUDIO - LATER

Elizabeth gets herself sorted on the instructor's bike upfront. She connects her iPod to the speakers.

Millennial boy band pop music plays.

She gets her headset on. Watches the women settle in.

GYM PATRON  
Ohmigod is it a Backstreet day?

ELIZABETH  
You know it.

GYM PATRON  
Yes!!!!

It's a full house. It's like a scene from some girl's Bat Mitzvah party circa 1998...

ELIZABETH  
Okay guys! We're on speed and endurance circuits today. In the saddle for 5 minutes, keeping a steady cadence the whole way through, out of the saddle rest for 30 seconds, back in the saddle sprint for 90 seconds and repeat. Decreasing the time in the saddle as we go. Alright? Let's go!

Elizabeth is in her element.

She's a good instructor... really perky, motivational, funny. Is this the same girl we met earlier? At the High School?

The class operates in a rhythmic swarm. The women bob their heads and sway back and forth to the beat, just a few sing along and one or two shout in exhilaration.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE EQUINOX TYPE FITNESS FACILITY - LATER

Elizabeth heads towards the elevator. She spots CALVIN, 29.

She presses DOWN. As the doors open, she hears:

CALVIN  
Hey.

ELIZABETH  
Oh, hey.

CALVIN  
You on your way home?

Elizabeth lets the elevator doors close.

Her back is turned to him still. Like she's fighting against looking at him.

She turns around.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Elizabeth and Calvin go at it. The sex is more necessary than passionate. Only the necessary garments blocking access points have been removed.

They don't look at each other.

EXT. CLOSET - 20 MINUTES LATER

Fully dressed, Calvin waits outside the door while Elizabeth finishes changing. He checks his phone a couple of times.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

Clear?

CALVIN

Yeah, you're good.

She slips out and rushes past him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elizabeth unwraps a BURRITO that's bigger than her face.

She scrolls through her Instagram. She can't help herself.

Happy happy happy smiles party party fun. NEW JOB! New house. ENGAGED!

Elizabeth's aunt, MONA, 40s, shuffles through in nurse's scrubs and a bag of groceries.

MONA

Hey Libby.

ELIZABETH

You're home early.

MONA

New rotation. Did you eat?

Elizabeth lifts up her burrito.

MONA (CONT'D)

You need to learn how to eat full meals, girl.

Mona boils a pot of green beans on high.

ELIZABETH

You need to learn how to not boil  
the crap out of your vegetables.

MONA

I'm just trying to help you girl.  
Before you end up with a big old  
booty.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth and Mona watch "How to Get away with Murder".

MONA

Where's Dani?

ELIZABETH

At her work going away party.

MONA

Why aren't you there?

ELIZABETH

Because I'm not her spouse or her  
co-worker.

MONA

You and her act like you're  
married. I'm surprised you're not  
going to New York too.

ELIZABETH

(feigning surprise)

And leave you? I could never!

MONA

Girl, I wish you would. I can't  
wait for you to make enough money  
to get out of my house.

Beat.

MONA (CONT'D)

You call your daddy lately?

Elizabeth deflects.

ELIZABETH

Shhh! It's that puppy commercial!!!

MONA

I know you hear me.

ELIZABETH

No talking while the show is on.

CUT TO:

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Well, it's not really her room. It's Mona's guest room. Although Elizabeth has lived here for over year, you wouldn't know it.

A SLEEPING BAG, TENT and BACKPACK are lined up neatly at the foot of her bed. She folds one last T-shirt carefully and places it into the Backpack.

Her phone rings. Mom.

Nope.

She swipes her phone aside and glances at her bike.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST ADAMS - NIGHT

Elizabeth rides her decently specked trek road bike. She's fast. She weaves around traffic.

She goes faster and faster. Crosses underneath the 10 and up La Brea until she reaches:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Dark haired, trendy, 25 year-old Nadeesh, (NAD), sits on a stool behind the bar reading INVISIBLE MAN.

Elizabeth walks in with her bike. She slides it against the wall.

Nad quickly glances up and nods.

The crowd is just a little too cool for her but she walks through like she owns it and carefully positions herself at a table in Nad's line of view, then empties the contents of her messenger bag.

Nad glances up from time to time.

Elizabeth looks around trying to be cool.

Finally, she approaches the bar.

ELIZABETH  
Can I get a flat white?

Nad puts down the book.

NAD  
Heyyyyy.

ELIZABETH  
Hey.

NAD  
This book is so good. I can't  
believe I've never read it. Thank  
you so much.

ELIZABETH  
No probs. Glad you like it.

NAD  
(playful) Flat white for the book  
fairy. Comin up.

Elizabeth watches him make her coffee. She focuses in on his lanky but toned arms, slightly too low low-rise skinny jeans, and a tattoo that peeks through the hole in the back of his shirt.

She smiles bashfully. He's too beautiful.

He's nearly finished. With grace, he free pours some latte art on the top.

Elizabeth snaps out of her intense gaze.

ELIZABETH  
Bellissimo!

NAD  
You're like the only one who  
appreciates good coffee in this  
whole place.

ELIZABETH  
(flirty)  
Coffee? I'm here for the  
extraordinary customer service.

Nad purses his lips off her comment... unsure how to read it.

Without anything else to say to each other, they stand awkwardly.

Nad eases back to his chair and picks up the book. After a few clueless beats, Elizabeth slinks back to her table.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Elizabeth scrolls through news articles, and gets distracted by a FACEBOOK notification on another tab. This is a thing.

She flicks through pictures of some girl having a great time.

Friends, food, drinks, guys, sunshine.

Marcus pops his head in. He waits for her to notice.

She does, but ignores him.

He clears his throat.

MARCUS  
So glad spring break is here.

Elizabeth briefly glances over to him, smiles and looks back at her computer.

A TEXT from DANI comes in on her phone. She looks down.

**Oooo girl, your boo is SINGLE now.**

Elizabeth's eyes widen. She sees the bubbles. Waits for it...

**Lana told me Zoha is not having it. HOT MESS.**

She quickly flicks to Zoha's instagram.

She aggressively flicks through photos. ZOHA, 23, at a party, Zoha at Coachella, Coachella, Coachella, Coachella, Zoha at Lollapalooza, Lolla, Lolla, Zoha in Vegas with her hipster friends, Vegas, Vegas, Vegas.

Zoha and NAD at a rooftop bar. Her cursor hovers over the photo.

Elizabeth pulls the screen closer to her face, like she's searching for clues in the happy couple's expression.

ELIZABETH  
Huh.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - DAY

Elizabeth sits in her car. It's unclear how long she's been there. She's now looking at Nad's Instagram, inspecting every picture. Her laser focus is interrupted by Dani's FACE against the Driver's side window.

DANI  
(in a deep man voice)  
Hello Elizabeth.

Elizabeth screams. Dani falls over in laughter.

ELIZABETH  
Oh my god, I hate you.

Elizabeth jumps out of the car and sticks her hand out to her friend's aid... Only to yank it back, allowing Dani to fall on her ass again.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
I seriously thought I was gonna die.

DANI  
(still in a man voice)  
Elizabeth, it's me, Nad. Kiss me.

Dani can't help herself. There's nothing she loves more than teasing Elizabeth about her crush.

Elizabeth grabs Dani's backpack and puts it in the trunk, with her CAMPING GEAR.

ELIZABETH  
Let's go, stupid.

DANI  
You're stupid.

CUT TO:

EXT. PCH - DAY

--- Elizabeth and Dani drive North along the coast. Rage Against the Machine blasts, their heads bob.

--- Dani sticks her feet out of the window and lays her seat back.

--- Elizabeth reluctantly pops a squat on the side of the road. Dani pulls away as she's mid-stream. Horrifying Elizabeth.

--- Dani takes pictures on her phone.

--- They laugh and joke.

EXT. CARPENTERIA STATE BEACH - DUSK

--- They pull into a campsite.

--- The girls set up their tent.

--- Elizabeth inspects to ensure that the campsite is perfectly positioned. Two chairs... check, barbecue grill... check, tent door facing the sea... check.

--- Dani opens a bag of ice and carelessly stuffs a bottle of champagne in it.

--- They strip. Dani is completely naked while Elizabeth is in her underwear.

--- They run out to the sea.

EXT. CAMP SITE - NIGHT

Dani pours Elizabeth a glass of champagne. They clink.

DANI  
To a beautiful friendship.

ELIZABETH  
Six great years.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Wrapped in their sleeping bags, the girls look into each other's eyes like lovers.

ELIZABETH  
Can you just stay until you get a job?

DANI  
Girl, no.

ELIZABETH  
I don't want to be alone here.

DANI  
You can always come with me.

ELIZABETH  
No thanks.

Dani rolls her eyes.

DANI  
I think you need to do something.

Dani hesitates a little. Not wanting to be too hard on her friend who is definitely having a rough time.

DANI (CONT'D)  
(firm)  
I'm saying this because I love you.

ELIZABETH  
I love you too, Dani. You're the sister I never wanted.

DANI  
I love you so much I hate you.

They hold hands tightly.

INT. ELIZABETH'S HEAD. A MEMORY.

THE FACE OF A MAN, IN HIS LATE THIRTIES.

He's youthful, jovial even. This is Elizabeth's father.

He smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Elizabeth is crying in her sleep. She's getting louder.

Dani wakes up, with very little alarm. This is routine for her.

DANI  
(under her breath)  
Not this shit again. Damn.

She rubs her eyes, puts on her head-lamp and looks for Elizabeth's backpack.

She digs through Elizabeth's backpack. Finds an open pill bottle for XANAX. It's empty.

DANI (CONT'D)  
Fuck Elizabeth, what the fuck.

She digs deeper in Elizabeth's bag. Finds a white pill looking thing. She holds it up closer to the light. TIC TAC.

She sighs.

Elizabeth starts to cry louder.

Dani grabs a WATER BOTTLE, opens it up and dumps the whole thing on Elizabeth's face.

Elizabeth snaps out of it.

ELIZABETH  
Jesus, Dani!

DANI  
Take your damn Xanax and shut the fuck up. I am trying to sleep.

Elizabeth pulls a pill out of the sports bra she's wearing and puts it in her mouth.

EXT. MOUNTIAN TRAIL - DAY

Elizabeth and Dani hike to the top and take in the view.

ELIZABETH  
I went to 6-11 the other night.

DANI  
...And?

ELIZABETH  
He called me "The book fairy",  
which I guess is cute.

DANI  
Eghhhh. He has the lamest game.  
(mocking Nad) Uh, can I like borrow  
your book, but then not talk to  
you?

ELIZABETH  
It didn't go like that.

DANI  
...aaand this is why he deserves that  
crazy White girl.

ELIZABETH

She's not crazy, she has a drug problem.

(beat)

I think I should ask him out. Do you think I should?

DANI

Not really...

ELIZABETH

You don't think he likes me?

DANI

No, I think he likes you. I just think... he's kinda not about that life.

ELIZABETH

What does that mean?

DANI

Just be careful. I'm not really sure Nad and his crew understand sincerity, or accountability.

ELIZABETH

You talk about them like they're in High School.

DANI

Well...

ELIZABETH

Well...?

DANI

Nothing girl. Just, you make some stupid choices with men.

INT. SPINNING STUDIO - DAY

Class is over.

Elizabeth exchanges pleasantries with a few regulars on their way out as she wipes down her bike and gathers her things.

INT. SHOWERS - LATER

Careful to not get water on her hair, she lifts her face into the stream.

INT. UPSCALE EQUINOX TYPE FITNESS FACILITY - DAY

Dressed and ready for work, she spots Calvin.

CALVIN

Hey.

ELIZABETH

Hey.

We all know what's going to happen next.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Elizabeth puts her clothes back on post quickie.

Calvin is looking at his phone.

ELIZABETH

Are you keeping watch? Can I leave?

CALVIN

Oh, um.

He goes outside.

Elizabeth waits.

He taps the door, signaling the coast is clear.

INT. UPSCALE EQUINOX TYPE FITNESS FACILITY - HALLWAY - DAY

Elizabeth leaves the closet with Calvin standing guard.

ELIZABETH

Thanks. I'm late.

He calls after her.

CALVIN

You wanna do something this  
weekend?

Without turning around -

ELIZABETH

Text me or something.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Elizabeth flips through articles on her computer, and gets distracted by a FACEBOOK notification on another tab.

She flicks through pictures of some girl having a great time.

Friends, food, drinks, guys, sunshine.

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Elizabeth walks in with a carton of ICE CREAM.

She sees Marcus and a few other "Teach for America" types.

He spots her and waves her down.

MARCUS

Hey! E! Nice lunch.

AT THE TABLE

She sits uncomfortably in the company of the "type A" Teach For America group.

They all talk about their students like lab specimens, all but Marcus who genuinely cares and sees the classroom as the "ultimate" battleground.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Elizabeth, I need you here. Common Core math standards?

ELIZABETH

(Lacks any real perspective  
on something she should  
really know)

Ridiculously low?

One of the TFA girls sneer.

TFA GIRL

Anyway, I really don't get why  
there's a big uproar...

Elizabeth zones out for a bit as the group continue their conversation.

She somehow manages to tune them out completely. She stares blankly at Marcus who nods with enthusiasm, and then TFA girl as she gabs on...

...and then something catches her eye past them both... through the window.

We hear sounds from outside. Traffic noise, wind blowing... that type of thing.

Elizabeth's POV: ALEXIS sitting with the only non Black or Latino students in her grade: FOUR WHITE GIRLS AND ONE ASIAN GIRL...

The CAMERA moves closer in on Alexis.

Alexis looks in our direction.

Back on Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Anybody know the deal with Alexis?  
The senior? The one who fights a lot?

TFA GIRL

Isn't that supposed to be your job?

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSY VENUE - NIGHT

Elizabeth rubs shoulders with the crème de la crème of her alma mater's donor list.

Her name tag: **ELIZABETH TURNER, '13, PHULWANI AWARD RECIPIENT**; sits proudly on her left shoulder.

She smiles. She is engaged. She's exuberant. Her dress is itchy.

Most importantly:

She never lets the hors d'oeuvres get too far away from her.

She is approached by college president, LINDA RAMMEL, 56, who brings along another DONOR who is eager to meet her.

LINDA

Elizabeth! I wanted to introduce you to another one of our donors!  
This is Mark Phulwani.

Bad timing.

Elizabeth has just stuffed a block of cheese in her mouth.

She finishes chewing.

Does that whole "got food in my mouth, how embarrassing" gesture.

She takes a look at MARK, 55, Indian.

Wait.

Could it be...?

MARK

So sorry to bother you while you're eating.

Elizabeth swallows and quickly rubs her hands on a napkin.

ELIZABETH

No, no! Such a pleasure to meet you Mark.

LINDA

I wanted you two to meet, as Mark is normally so busy, but he heard you were going to be here.

MARK

I have wanted to meet you *FOR* ever.

Elizabeth looks slightly confused.

LINDA

He never forgot your application.

MARK

It was just, I was so impressed with everything you've done, I had to come forward and just say what a pleasure it was to be a tiny part of that.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Mark, I'm so touched. Thank you! I definitely wouldn't be where I am now without that scholarship.

MARK

Absolutely. Absolutely. I'm sorry I didn't introduce myself sooner. I travel so much.

ELIZABETH

Of course. Yes.

She senses that he is a talker. She braces herself with some more wine.

MARK

Do you know my boy? He was in your graduating class. I told him to keep an eye on you.

LINDA

Nadeesh Phulwani. You know him right?

Elizabeth chokes out of fear and possibly excitement.

MARK

Where is he? NADEESH!

NAD is summoned by his father whose voice manages to carry clear on the other side of the room.

Nad yells back.

NAD

What?

MARK

(Louder) Get over here!

LINDA

Maybe we can go over to him, save some people's ears, if possible.

MARK

No way, he needs to come over here.

LINDA

(uncomfortable)

It's not a problem. Elizabeth?

MARK

It's fine. He's coming over here.

He's not.

MARK (CONT'D)

God Dammit Nadeesh!

ELIZABETH

I've met him before, so...

Nad realizes they're talking to Elizabeth. He heads over.

MARK

Finally. Many thanks so much for joining us Nadeesh.

Elizabeth clears her throat. She begins to shift the weight in her legs in an attempt to look more relaxed. It's a fidgety mess.

NAD

(to Elizabeth) How's it going?

ELIZABETH

Hey.

MARK

Nadeesh. I wanted you to come over and talk to this lovely lady, as we were just discussing how wonderful it is that she was able to make the most of my generous contribution.

NAD

That's great for both of you.

MARK

"Hailing from sub-rural beginnings in Atlanta with first-generation middle class parents funneling any and all extra income to my father's healthcare, I'm left with very little to achieve my own academic goals."

NAD

Dad.

MARK

"If college is ultimately about fit, should those that can not afford the institution that best suit them be left behind?"

NAD

Dad.

MARK

The answer is NO, Elizabeth.

(beat)

Beautiful words.

ELIZABETH

You memorized it.

MARK

Blew me away. So tell me,  
Elizabeth, what are you doing with  
yourself?

Elizabeth's fake smile stretches further.

ELIZABETH

Well, I've just completed my Teach  
For America fellowship at the  
school that I now work as a  
counsellor... Then applying to law  
school.

MARK

That's wonderful. You hear that  
Nadeesh? Law school.

NAD

Yeah Dad. Leave her alone. Please.

MARK

Such a good girl.

LINDA

Mark, I've got to pull you away.  
Barry Unger is over there and he's  
the architect of our new green  
residence halls. You have to meet  
him.

MARK

Yeah, sure, okay.

(to Nad)

You keep talking... could  
potentially learn something here.

Mark pats his son on the back and rushes off with Linda.

Elizabeth is embarrassed. It's all been a little too much.

NAD

Sorry about him. He's nice, just  
socially stupid.

She looks around at the company she's keeping. Feels  
instantly out of place. So wealthy, so White, not a world  
she's used to...

And that scene. With a brown person no less?

She watches Nad navigate a plate of hors d'oeuvres in  
surprisingly seamless, carefree manner.

ELIZABETH

What does your dad do?

NAD

He's an investment banker. Runs a firm or whatever. He's everywhere and nowhere.

She digests this for a beat.

NAD (CONT'D)

What about your dad?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELIZABETH'S HEAD. A MEMORY.

THE FACE OF A MAN, IN HIS LATE THIRTIES.

We've seen this before.

Elizabeth's father.

He smiles at his daughter - he looks at her in that way only a proud poppa can.

We focus on his HAIR, creased forehead, his big white teeth.

He's just about to say something, until -

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSY VENUE - BACK IN REAL TIME

ELIZABETH

My dad?

(Beat)

Who said I had one?

NAD

(taken aback)

Shit. I'm so sorry. That was really bad.

Nad is the kind of person who never wants to offend, but somehow finds his foot in his mouth more often than he'd like.

A much more self-aware version of Mark Phulwani?

ELIZABETH

No! I have a dad! Sorry. I was  
trying to be funny.

(Beat)

I don't know why I said that. It  
wasn't funny.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLASSY VENUE - NIGHT

Elizabeth leans her back deep into a wall and breathes in.

Nad comes around the corner with a bottle of whiskey. She's surprised to see him.

NAD

I just took this. Want some?

ELIZABETH

Someone might see us!

NAD

So?

He takes a swig, then hands her the bottle.

NAD (CONT'D)

Here.

Elizabeth accepts. Takes a swig. Smiles.

ELIZABETH

Thanks.

NAD

Kinda needed that, huh?

ELIZABETH

Something like that.

NAD

If it makes you feel any better, I  
think my dad likes you more than he  
likes me.

ELIZABETH

That's not true.

NAD

It's not... Just feels that way  
sometimes.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Elizabeth sits on a box of cleaning solution waiting for Calvin.

She checks her phone a few times. She's been waiting awhile.

She decides to take off her jeans.

Tries to sit seductively.

She quickly changes her mind and puts the jeans back on.

Calvin finally arrives. He goes straight for her chest.

Elizabeth pushes him away.

ELIZABETH  
What the hell, man?

CALVIN  
Hey, sorry - had to take care of  
something.

ELIZABETH  
You could have let me know.

CALVIN  
Yeah, I -

ELIZABETH  
I'm not gonna just sit around for  
you.

CALVIN  
Heyyyy, come on Elizabeth, relax.

He tries to kiss her. She turns her face.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
But you're so pretty...

She gives in.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

There's another fight between Alexis and Lelani.

Alexis has pulled out Lelani's weave and waves it in the air before throwing it down the hallway.

From her OFFICE DOOR:

Elizabeth watches as Marcus and a few others break up the fight.

Marcus looks up in her direction, but she closes the door before he makes eye contact.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - LATER

Elizabeth watches Alexis smoke outside.

Her phone rings.

It's her mother again.

Ignore.

She watches Alexis, who throws her cigarette butt on the ground and heads back inside.

A TEXT comes in from Calvin: **DAVEY WAYNES?**

INT. DAVEY WAYNE'S BAR - NIGHT

Elizabeth, Calvin and a few friends are gathered on the patio outside.

-- They drink

-- They laugh

-- They dance

Calvin flirts with a few of the girls. Elizabeth clocks this but pays it no attention. It's not like they came together.

Let's be clear... this bothers her. He literally invited her and what feels like 30 other girls.

But he likes her, want's to know her. Elizabeth, quite annoyed, bored and very stiff, isn't the easiest to get to know.

CALVIN

Wait, where did you go again?

ELIZABETH

Pitzer. One of the Claremonts?

CALVIN

Oh yeah... wait, my friend went to like Pomona. Margot Prosser?

ELIZABETH

They're different places, but yeah,  
I know her. We talked about this.

There's nothing between them. Granted Elizabeth's general 'tude doesn't help.

Calvin backs off. Sees another friend.

CALVIN

Oh, hey Lucy!!!

The odd one out again, Elizabeth heads to the bar, squeezing through random couplings.

She finds an empty seat. She looks back over at the group she came with. They're happy without her.

She watches Calvin dance with Lucy.

It hurts a little, but she brushes it off and quickly tries it on with the bartender.

She pouts her lips and leans slightly forward.

ELIZABETH

Hi there... Can I get a Fat Tire?

It's so obvious and so bad. Bartender doesn't even flinch.

BARTENDER

Six.

Dejected, She hands him the money.

To her left:

NAD (O.S.)

Elizabeth?

He's excited to see her. The drink has had its way with him leaving a more open and chatty guy.

ELIZABETH

Heyyyy.

NAD

I've never seen you here before.

He's grinning. Elizabeth has never seen him like this.

NAD (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

With a chip on her shoulder, due to her feeling particularly un-cool tonight, she goes on defence.

ELIZABETH

You make it seem like I live under a rock or something.

NAD

No, it was just in college you were always into other things.

ELIZABETH

I partied.

NAD

Yeah, like wine tasting parties... which was cool by the way... I get it. You're a sophisticated lady.

He nudges her arm playfully. She stiffens.

ELIZABETH

I did other stuff.

NAD

Okay.

Beat.

She finally registers that he's flirting with her. Idiot. She resets.

ELIZABETH

(plays dumb)

Where's Zoha?

NAD

Didn't you hear? We. Are. Done.

ELIZABETH

Oh. I'm so sorry.

NAD

I'm not.

ELIZABETH

(fishing)

Oh, so you dumped her?

NAD

She's a parasite. I had no clue.  
(changes the subject)

(MORE)

NAD (CONT'D)  
How's the law school applications  
going?

ELIZABETH  
I haven't really thought about  
them.

NAD  
Why?

JON, 23 - tattooed, lanky, British (hams up the accent) and  
way too cool for Elizabeth calls after his friend:

JON  
Naddy Paddy! Mate! Where ya been?

He clocks Elizabeth. Gives Nad a confused look.

JON (CONT'D)  
Come on. I've got this bird I want  
you to meet.

Nad looks back at Elizabeth. She plays off her  
disappointment.

ELIZABETH  
I gotta get back to my friends.  
Nice to see you.  
(to the bartender)  
Can I get another one of those,  
please?

BARTENDER  
You have a full one right there.

This is awkward. She doesn't want to come off as a  
lightweight.

She downs the beer. Looks for approval from the men around  
her.

Crickets.

ELIZABETH  
(to bartender again)  
Okay, so can I have another now?

NAD  
See you around.

Jon grabs his shoulders.

JON  
Maaaate. Let's go.

Elizabeth quickly pays and heads back to the crowd.

She sees Calvin making out with Drunk Girl.

She sighs, looks around.

She takes a swig of her beer, walks past them and out the door.

ACROSS THE BAR

Nad watches her leave then turns back to Jon and CUTE BIRD.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - MORNING

-- She awakens. Still in her clothes from the night before.

-- She stares at the ceiling.

-- Creates a playlist for her spin class. Listens to a few seconds of songs... uses a RPM counter to get the beat just right.

Her phone rings. Her mom again. She answers, reluctantly.

ELIZABETH

Hey Mommy.

(beat)

Yes I'm fine.

(beat)

It's good, I feel like I'm making a difference.

(beat)

Mmhmm.

(beat)

How's daddy today?

(long beat)

Can I talk to him??

Tears begin to well in her eyes.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Hey Daddy! How are you feeling?

(beat)

I'm great.

(beat)

Yes. Aunt Mona is taking good care of me. How about you? You taking good care of yourself?

(beat)

Okay, well that's not the end of the world. You're getting stronger though, huh?

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
(long beat)  
Hello? Oh, hey Mom.

She listens. Tears roll down her face.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Okay. Love you. Tell Dad I love him  
too! Bye.

EXT. WEST ADAMS - DAY

Elizabeth rides her bike through town. She's one with traffic. Feels the wind in her face.

She goes up a hill and enters:

INT. KENNETH HAHN STATE PARK - DAY

Elizabeth sits on the grass, watches life go on around her: Family reunion, lovers strolling by the lake, speed walkers, dog walker.

She takes a cupcake wrapped in foil out of her backpack and starts eating it.

She notices A MAN walking towards her, who looks a hell of a lot like HER FATHER.

She squints her eyes... she can't really make out his face perfectly.

She squeezes her eyes shut and-

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - LATER

She's back on her bike. She's a little erratic.

She uses the short breaks in traffic for quick speed blasts.

Finally a decent break. She gets up to speed quickly.

She's riding fast.

She stops at a red light. Sees the coffee shop in front of her to her left.

Nad is outside smoking a cigarette. He sees her and waves.

She gives an excited nod towards him.

The light turns GREEN.

She's off making a left turn into the coffee shop parking lot and then -

WHAM.

Out of nowhere A CAR HITS HER.

Darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. UTTER DARKNESS

We hear the faint sound of a NAIL FILE, GOSPEL and HUMMING.

We are in Elizabeth's head.

From her POV:

She opens her eyes to discover she's in:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

She looks at her body laid down flat in a bed covered in shitty hospital sheets. A white curtain surrounds her.

She hears a nail file... Wait.

The humming, the Gospel and the filing?

She turns to AUNT MONA. Who has gospel coming out of her phone speakers.

ELIZABETH  
(groggy)  
Ugh, Mona turn that shit off.

MONA  
You better believe. The father covered you in his blood. You need to hear this: You are alive, thank you Jesus, with your mind and body IN TACT - praise him, with a mild concussion and a broken arm. Praise be to God.

Elizabeth rolls her eyes and turns away from her aunt.

ELIZABETH  
You tell Mommy?

MONA  
Mmmhmm.

She drifts back off to sleep.

EXT. STREET - FLASHBACK

WHAM.

Cars are honking.

From Elizabeth's POV:

Her bike is several feet away from her... how? She looks at her legs. She has a bloody knee.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Oh my God. Are you okay? Hello?

Elizabeth looks over to the coffee shop parking lot. She sees a pair of LEGS (Nad's) running over to her.

NAD (O.S.)  
Elizabeth? HEY! Can you hear me?  
Elizabeth?

WOMAN (O.S.)  
I didn't see her. Fuck.

NAD (O.S.)  
Elizabeth?

She looks up at him but the sun is too bright and her vision is blurred.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth wakes up again. She watches Mona knit and hum to herself.

Mona looks over to her.

MONA  
Hey pretty girl. How you feeling?

ELIZABETH  
Better.

MONA

I was worried about you for a second there. By the looks of it, I wasn't the only one.

She knowingly raises her eyebrows at Elizabeth, who is clueless.

MONA (CONT'D)

There's some boy here for you.

ELIZABETH

Huh?

MONA

He said he's your friend? He called the ambulance for you.

ELIZABETH

Nadeesh?

MONA

NUH-Who? I don't know.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nad sits patiently with Elizabeth's warped bike wheel in one hand and a bouquet of flowers in another.

Mona appears.

MONA

Nadeesh?

NAD

How is she doing?

MONA

You can talk to her now.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth grooms herself as well as she possibly can, considering the circumstances... She manages to sit up and smooths over her sheets.

NAD

Heyyyy!

ELIZABETH

Hi!

(points to the bike wheel)

Is that mine?

NAD

Yeah. Your bike is in pretty bad shape. I took pictures.

He puts the wheel down. Awkwardly fiddles with the bouquet.

ELIZABETH

(re: flowers)

Are those for me?

NAD

Shit. Yes. Sorry.

He hands them to her. She smiles and takes a big ol' sniff.

ELIZABETH

Thank you. They're beautiful.

NAD

I'm so glad you're okay. I saw you from the shop. Fucked up, she completely ran that red light.

ELIZABETH

Well, I'll be seeing that *ho* in court.

NAD

Ha. Yeah.

She looks at him strangely.

ELIZABETH

How do you know where I live?

NAD

Oh! Yeah. Sorry. I also have your backpack... your wallet was in it.

He takes off the backpack and puts it next to her bed.

ELIZABETH

Thanks.

And it's quiet again. They both search for something to say.

NAD

So your Mom said you got lucky... just broke your arm?

ELIZABETH  
Aunt.

NAD  
Huh?

ELIZABETH  
Mona is my aunt. I live with her.

NAD  
Oh. Okay. Cool.

ELIZABETH  
Yeah.

NAD  
So, do you want to hang out or  
something? When you're feeling  
better?

ELIZABETH  
(can't even play it cool if  
she tried)  
I - I would love that.

NAD  
Let's do that.

ELIZABETH  
Cool.

Nad gets up to leave.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Do you even have my number?

NAD  
Uh.

He looks through his phone.

NAD (CONT'D)  
I don't.

Elizabeth reaches for his phone.

He obliges. She puts in her number.

ELIZABETH  
Now you do.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAWN

-- Elizabeth looks at her scarred up body in a mirror. Legs, torso, arms... they've been through it.

-- Elizabeth showers with her arm sticking outside the curtain.

-- Elizabeth reads in bed. Her cast gets in the way.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Mona is on the phone to Karen. She paces around a bit as she speaks.

MONA

...and, so, I don't get it. They want him in there every day?

(she listens)

Uh huh, ok, yeah I know what they're talking about... I just don't like how that sounds, really.

(beat)

Just keep me posted I guess.

Dialysis is so tough on the body.

She looks out to the open FRONT DOOR. Watches Elizabeth outside.

MONA (CONT'D)

She's fine, I guess. Seems in good spirits. Lord, I tell you, it could have been so much worse.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Elizabeth half listens to her aunt as she takes in some fresh air outside.

A text comes in.

Calvin:

**Sry about ur arm. I've missed us workin so closely together...  
Hurry bak... :)**

She rolls her eyes. Doesn't respond.

She overhears Mona talking about work.

MONA

I TOLD that man, ten, maybe twenty times now. I don't like these random changes to my shift. I need more than 48 hours notice - especially when I have family to take care of. First my brother, now my niece. It's too much.

(beat)

He don't listen though.

(beat)

You know, it's not just me though. He had the nerve to call another nurse, Heather, and demand she come in when he KNEW she had no one to come pick up her baby from school.

(beat)

I'm so sick of him Karen, I don't even know what to do.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY

They sit in their usual spots on the couch... watching TV.

Elizabeth looks at her aunt. Debates opening her mouth. There's something on her mind...

ELIZABETH

How's my mom?

MONA

You should call her and see for yourself.

ELIZABETH

It was just a question, Mona.

Mona has an agenda and launches straight into it.

MONA

Your mother seems to think you're busier than you actually are.

ELIZABETH

I am busy. I work two jobs.

MONA

That's what I told her, but I just want you to know, you're not fooling anybody.

ELIZABETH

I'm not sure what you mean, but  
ookay.

MONA

What's happening is scary. I know.  
But you don't want to add to your  
momma's stress by not communicating  
with her.

ELIZABETH

(indignant)

I talk to her.

MONA

Okay. Well, maybe actually tell her  
what's going on with you instead of  
that little act you put on for  
them.

ELIZABETH

Oh, so you do want me to stress  
them out?

MONA

They wouldn't be stressed if you  
would just go ahead and grow the  
hell up... Think of that?

Elizabeth shrugs.

MONA (CONT'D)

That's it?

ELIZABETH

What?

Mona mocks her shrugging.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I got nothin'.

MONA

Sometimes, I want to smack you.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - LATER

Elizabeth fidgets in her sleep. It becomes more frequent.  
Increasingly violent.

She's whispering something inaudible. Sleep muttering more  
like.

She starts to cry.

Harder.

Louder.

SCREAMS

It's loud. Piercing.

Her eyes are wide open.

Mona comes in calmly. Walks over to one corner of the room and watches Elizabeth. Careful not to wake her.

MONA  
(gently)  
It's ok Libby. It's ok.

Elizabeth cries and cries. She cries so hard she chokes on her tears.

Mona just gently strokes her hair.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth skypes with Dani on her laptop. Dani is trying on clothes.

DANI  
What do you think of this blouse?

It's tight, see through and has a pretty low V-neck.

ELIZABETH  
For work... in an office?

DANI  
They said business casual.

ELIZABETH  
Dani. No.

DANI  
This is why I'm asking you. I don't fucking know.

ELIZABETH  
You need to go with that Navy pencil skirt - and a normal blouse.

Dani puts back on the skirt. Takes out a "normal" blouse and puts it on. It does indeed look a lot better.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
IN other news... Nad has not called  
me.

DANI  
I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH  
It's fine, I guess. I'm just glad  
he was there. It meant a lot.

DANI  
I can't get over how much of a hero  
he turned out to be, but he  
probably just felt bad for you.

ELIZABETH  
Sure.

DANI  
So he doesn't like you then. On to  
the next one. I'm pretty sure you  
would be wasted on him.

(beat)  
Wait, what about shoes? Fuck, I  
hate this.

Elizabeth's phone rings. It's Nad.

ELIZABETH  
(excited, yet calm)  
Dani. He's calling me right now.

DANI  
Don't even answer that shit. I'm  
serious. Elizabeth. It is 3 AM, my  
first day begins in 6 hours. I've  
got an emergency here.

She holds up two different pairs of shoes.

DANI (CONT'D)  
Which one?

ELIZABETH  
Bye!

DANI  
NO! Keep it on -

Elizabeth shuts her laptop and answers the phone.

ELIZABETH  
(breezy)  
I was starting to think you lost my  
number.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Nad's just finished closing. Chairs on top of tables... lights off. He swings his keys around his index finger.

NAD  
Well, I know you had a concussion  
and everything so I thought I would  
let you, you know, handle that.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)  
Okay.

NAD  
How are you feeling?

ELIZABETH  
Getting there. I've got 6 more  
weeks with the cast, which has been  
a pain. But it could have been  
worse.

NAD  
I'm just getting off work, and I  
remember you saying you live in the  
neighborhood... could I come over and  
raid your book collection?

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - LATER

Nad digs through several tubs of books. She's got all sorts... including children's books. Elizabeth comments on his selections.

She feels judged. Tries to explain herself.

ELIZABETH  
I'm pathetically sentimental. They  
go with me everywhere.

He continues to dig. She doesn't like the silence.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
It's why I'm not in any rush to  
move.

NAD

You're going to inspire the shit  
outta some high school kid as their  
English teacher.

ELIZABETH

If that ends up being my life, I  
will need to be shot.

NAD

But you're in Teach For America.

ELIZABETH

I was in Teach For America... To  
get into law school.

NAD

But you work at a school.

ELIZABETH

And you work at a coffee shop. I'm  
assuming that's not a forever  
thing?

NAD

Could be.  
(beat)  
I don't know.

ELIZABETH

See?

NAD

Do you even want to be a lawyer?

ELIZABETH

No.

NAD

No?

ELIZABETH

But I needed to pick something.

NAD

Why that?

ELIZABETH

I have an obligation to make  
something of myself.

NAD

To whom?

ELIZABETH  
Everyone? Your dad? My parents?  
(defensive)  
You wouldn't understand.

Nad puts the book down and looks at her.

NAD  
You don't owe Mark Phulwani  
anything.

ELIZABETH  
I'm pretty sure his scholarship  
fund has contributed to three  
quarters of my tuition.

NAD  
(under his breath)  
His better investment.

ELIZABETH  
I teach spin classes 4 days a week.  
Ideally, I'd make a legit career  
out of that. Ride, read a lot, hang  
out.

NAD  
Sounds like a good plan... For  
someone less motivated than you...  
but fine. Why not go for it?

ELIZABETH  
Because that isn't fair of me.

NAD  
What isn't fair is family trying to  
force you to do something you don't  
wanna do.

ELIZABETH  
Nooo. No one is forcing me to do  
anything.

NAD  
I was talking about me.

ELIZABETH  
Oh.  
(beat)  
So, what do you want to do?

NAD  
I'm supposed to be figuring that  
out.

He holds up a children's book.

NAD (CONT'D)  
Can I read this to you?

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Elizabeth strolls through the halls. Her cast is in a sling.

She walks past Lelani sitting in front of the Principal's office.

ELIZABETH  
Good Morning Lelani.

LELANI  
Ohh Ms. Turner! Whatchu do to your arm?

Elizabeth will now go through the motions of her day:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - TEACHERS LOUNGE - DAY

-- Elizabeth sits at lunch and listens to TFA bullshit while eating a slice of someone's BIRTHDAY CAKE.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

-- Elizabeth sits at her desk and listens to a CRYING GIRL complain about her breakup with her boyfriend.

CRYING GIRL  
And then his mom said that he  
didn't want to waste his time with  
me...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

More fighting. Marcus looks to Elizabeth. Elizabeth gestures toward her cast... Sorry.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

-- Elizabeth watches Alexis smoke from her desk. Suddenly, she gets up.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Elizabeth eases up to Alexis.

ELIZABETH  
Hey.

ALEXIS  
What happened to your arm?

ELIZABETH  
I got hit by a car. Can I have one?

ALEXIS  
You smoke?

She's never even tried it.

ELIZABETH  
Sure.

She hands a cigarette to Elizabeth and lights her up.

Elizabeth starts coughing... a lot.

ALEXIS  
I thought you were gonna write me  
up.

ELIZABETH  
No.

ALEXIS  
Why?

ELIZABETH  
Because I don't care.

ALEXIS  
But what about my future?

ELIZABETH  
Me stopping you from smoking on  
school grounds and reporting you  
for cutting class isn't going to  
get you into college. Only you can  
do that.

ALEXIS  
It's my free period, and I'm going  
to UCLA in the fall.

ELIZABETH

In that case, there's no real point  
to doing anything in this school  
ever again.

ALEXIS

Are you trying to do some reverse  
psychology shit you learned on me?

ELIZABETH

No.

She takes another drag. Coughs.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

This is so gross.

She puts out the cigarette and walks back inside.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - EVENING

Nad clears his throat and rings the bell. He looks at his reflection in the stained glass window on the door.

He hears laughter. Looks behind him.

Some kids are playing in the street.

They stop and stare.

Elizabeth opens the door. She takes him all in.

He turns back to her and smiles.

INT. NAD'S CAR - EVENING

It's a mess. Tons of shit everywhere. Books, paper, paint of all sorts.

Nad helps put on Elizabeth's seatbelt. Elizabeth studies him, careful not to give away that she's staring. She can't believe this is happening.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry you had to come all the way out here. I'm not that comfortable with driving yet.

NAD

It's cool. I'm happy to do it.

INT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

A folksy alternative band plays.

They're up front nodding their heads to the music. Nad is attentive. He protects her injured arm from getting pushed a couple of times.

NAD  
(yelling over the music)  
Are you having fun?

ELIZABETH  
Hell yeah!

She closes her eyes and gets deeper into the music. Nad takes in all her free flowing beauty. Yeah, a little uptight - but it's in moments like this... he sees her.

She opens her eyes, catches him staring at her. He pulls her in and they dance closely.

EXT. TACO TRUCK - NIGHT

-- It's late. They're drunk. They giggle and flirt as they wait their turn in line.

-- They order.

-- They kick an empty beer can back and forth to each other while they wait for their food.

-- They get their tacos. Nad digs into his, Elizabeth struggles and drunkenly plops her face in her plate.

-- Nad laughs, takes her plate and starts feeding her tacos.

EXT. STREET - LATER

They walk. In Elizabeth's euphoric state, she skips a few steps ahead of him.

They stroll past a Cuban restaurant that's having a salsa night.

ELIZABETH  
Oh my Goddddd! Salsa!!!! Do you know how to Salsa?

NAD  
Uh, ha, no.

ELIZABETH  
I'll teach you. Come on!

She drags him into the restaurant.

INT. CUBAN RESTARUANT - NIGHT

It's dark, hot and sweaty. There's some pretty spectacular dancing happening... clearly regulars.

Elizabeth doesn't hesitate. She pulls Nad straight in.

NAD  
I really don't know how to do this.

ELIZABETH  
Just trust me. I'm going to lead.

She sets him in neutral position.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Just follow the beat. Step forward with your left foot, lift up your right heel and then step back on it... good! Okay now bring back the left foot... yep. Andddd pause on count 4. Now we're going to undo the first 4 steps... step back on your right foot, step into place on your left foot... okay yeah like that, and now bring back your right foot. Yes! Perfect.

They dance... it's clunky and messy but they're having a good time.

An older and very attractive AFRO-CUBAN MAN cuts in. Nad is more than happy for him to take her on.

It's intense. He gazes deeply into her eyes, which is very awkward for her. She laughs a few times and looks over to Nad, who nods and gives her a "thumbs up" in approval.

The song ends. The man kisses her on the cheek and tips his hat towards Nad. Elizabeth looks over with a big smile and waves.

Their eyes meet.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They walk towards Nad's car. Both more quiet and pensive... Sober.

He's going for it.

NAD

So, my house is like 3 blocks away  
if you're tired, or...

ELIZABETH

Ok.

INT. NAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pretty sparse. Hand-me down couches, and the like... a similar set up to his place back in college.

They walk down a hallway. Passing by a few rooms.

NAD

(whispers)

That's Jon's room. And that's our friend Cory's room... They have real jobs so they get real rooms.

They walk into a small space with books lined up along a wall, a lamp, an easel and a fully made up mattress on the cold wooden floor. It's an alcove of sorts with no door.

This is awkward for Elizabeth... probably not what she was expecting but goes with the flow.

He puts her face in his hands and kisses her.

They move closer to his bed, he tries to undress her but she pulls back.

ELIZABETH

Hey, I'm not.

(beat)

Uh, I just really like you so...

NAD

I really like you too. A lot.

ELIZABETH

Really?

NAD

Yeah. I've had a crush on you for years.

ELIZABETH  
(disbelief)  
You never asked me out.

NAD  
I was with Zoha!

She retreats even further.

ELIZABETH  
Don't fuck with me.

NAD  
I'm serious. Come here.

She surrenders into him. He lowers her to her knees on the mattress and gently helps get her cast through her shirt. He takes off his shirt and gets on his knees as well to meet her eye level.

In between kisses:

NAD (CONT'D)  
I should have asked you out  
instead. Zoha was fun, until she  
wasn't.

ELIZABETH  
I can be fun.

NAD  
(sweet)  
I know. I'm having fun with you  
now.

He reaches over to turn off the light.

We see their silhouetted bodies come together. He eases her down onto her back.

He climbs on top of her. Kisses her deeply then moves down, kisses her entire body.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. NAD'S HOUSE - MORNING

Elizabeth and Nad are fast asleep. Elizabeth with only her panties on is the little spoon.

Jon eats an apple and hovers over them.

JON  
Aww, that's adorable.

She jumps up and registers Jon. Embarrassed, she reaches for her top.

Her sudden movement wakes up Nad.

NAD  
Dude. Come on -

JON  
You gonna make us breakfast? We're hungry.

CUT TO:

INT. NAD'S KITCHEN - LATER

Nad is making breakfast as Jon, Elizabeth and CORY, 25, sit at the table.

Both men are staring at her... judging. She can feel it.

ELIZABETH  
So, what do you both do?

CORY  
Too early.

JON  
We're sound engineers.

ELIZABETH  
What does that entail exactly?

JON  
(patronizing)  
Well, we sit around in a recording studio and fiddle with little buttons.

Nad breaks the hostility with the presentation of the food.

NAD  
Eggs, veggie bacon and quinoa muffins. Dig in.

JON  
Aw, thanks Dad.

He brings Elizabeth a flat-white coffee, complete with latte art that looks somewhat like a bicycle.

ELIZABETH

Thank you!

CORY

Dude. You never make us coffee and we let you live here.

NAD

Elizabeth is the only one who would appreciate it.

ELIZABETH

(mid-sip) So GOOD.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Alexis and Elizabeth's smoke breaks have become a thing. They casually lean against the wall and look out to the parking lot.

ALEXIS

I don't fight on purpose. Those girls are always messing with me.

ELIZABETH

I know.

ALEXIS

So why do I get in trouble?

ELIZABETH

They have to blame someone. You're easier.

ALEXIS

That's messed up.

ELIZABETH

Welcome to the wonderful world of education.

(beat)

So, why don't they like you?

ALEXIS

Were you picked on in high school?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

ALEXIS

People didn't like you?

ELIZABETH

No, I mean. Maybe? I guess some people didn't like who I was, in the sense that they thought I should act more... Whatever I wasn't? I don't know.

ALEXIS

Why do people care so much?

ELIZABETH

People are always going to try to change you. They pick on you because you won't let them. This makes them mad because it shows that you don't care what they think.

ALEXIS

But I do care for real. I'm just bad at being any different.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Elizabeth sits at her usual spot and reads a book. Nad is in his usual place behind the counter, also reading when not serving customers.

They look over at each other from time to time.

Elizabeth can't help but sip her coffee with a smile.

INT. NAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nad and Elizabeth watch a movie. It doesn't take long for them to start making out on the couch.

INT. NAD'S ROOM - NIGHT

-- They've moved to his bed and gotten much better at one-armed disrobing.

-- Elizabeth sits cross-legged on the bed in post-coital bliss.

-- She looks around at the stuff on Nad's walls.

ELIZABETH

Did you take those photographs?

NAD

No. I painted them.

ELIZABETH

THOSE? Really? But they're like  
pictures from a camera.

NAD

Photorealism.

ELIZABETH

That's a thing?

NAD

It is a thing.

ELIZABETH

Damn.

She walks over to them for a better look.

NAD

It's more hyperrealism, because  
it's supposed to look high-def and  
then I put my own spin on it. I  
look deeper and try to expose  
something.

She looks at A PORTRAIT OF ZOHA. It's perfectly natural,  
little makeup, straight hair but with dark eyelids and a  
macabre disposition.

ELIZABETH

That portrait is low-key scary.

NAD

Yeah, that was in my thesis show.  
It was like I knew something was up  
with her then and I was trying to  
warn everyone and myself.

ELIZABETH

Do you still paint?

NAD

Not really. No.

ELIZABETH

You should. You're really good.

NAD

You only think I'm good because you  
don't know what you're looking at.

She kisses him.

FADE TO:

INT. ELIZABETH'S HEAD. A MEMORY.

THE FACE OF A MAN, IN HIS LATE THIRTIES...

This again.

We focus on her father's HANDS... they're gesticulating... He's talking to her. Joyful. His eyes light up with each word.

CUT TO:

INT. NAD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Over darkness is Elizabeth's heavy breathing.

A LIGHT IS TURNED ON.

She's sitting upright in full night-terror horror.

Nad is there with Cory. He runs over to her. Holds her bad arm... tries to protect it.

NAD  
(to Elizabeth)  
Hey... hey... Elizabeth!

CORY  
She just started doing that out of the blue?

NAD  
I can't wake her up. It's like she doesn't hear me.

CORY  
I don't think you are supposed to do that.

Jon enters, casually.

JON  
Fuck-inggg hell.

INT. NAD'S ROOM - LATER

Elizabeth is awake, has had the episode recounted to her and is beyond embarrassed.

Nad is panicked. His hands are gripped on her shoulders. He faces her.

She can't even look at him.

NAD

You kept screaming for your Dad.

ELIZABETH

I have night terrors. I honestly have no control over what I do or say.

She slinks into the bed and under the sheets.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You must think I'm fucking crazy.

He rubs her back.

NAD

Hey, everything's gonna be fine.  
I'm right here with you.

She relaxes. Closes her eyes and tries to sleep.

NAD (CONT'D)

Hey, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

(eyes closed, rested)

Yeah?

NAD

If I go to sleep right now, are you going to be okay?

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mona loads the dishwasher in the kitchen. Elizabeth rushes in and stuffs some powdered doughnuts in her mouth.

MONA

I've been waiting to help you.  
Where have you been?

ELIZABETH  
(rushing to her room)  
I'm fine... I can handle it.

MONA  
Who has been helping you get  
around? That boy?

ELIZABETH  
(on her way out the door)  
His name is Nadeesh.

MONA  
(yelling after her) Who's gonna  
watch Scandal with me?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Elizabeth walks through the halls. She sees Marcus. There's nowhere to hide.

He's not like his usual self. Seems almost irritated by her presence.

She senses this.

ELIZABETH  
Oh, hi Marcus.

He gives her a good look up and down. Gives a nod.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
How are you? What's up?

He looks to his left and right. Motions her close.

MARCUS  
Hey- I know what you and Alexis are  
doing... not cool.

ELIZABETH  
Oh?

MARCUS  
Don't worry. I won't tell. But you  
should really stop doing that.

ELIZABETH  
It's not illegal, Marcus.

MARCUS  
It's also not allowed on school  
grounds...  
(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
this is a warning, but if I see it  
happen again, I'm going to have to  
say something.

ELIZABETH  
(feigning fearfulness)  
Oh no! Marcus! You wouldn't!

MARCUS  
You should take the lives of our  
young people seriously, Elizabeth.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Nad and Elizabeth look around. Elizabeth breaks away as she hones in on a particular piece.

Nad grabs her hand.

NAD  
(excited)  
You like it?

ELIZABETH  
Yeah, it's incredible.

INT. ARTS DISTRICT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Nad and Elizabeth walk in and out of various art galleries.

ELIZABETH  
What's keeping you from having your  
stuff shown?

NAD  
Commitment.

ELIZABETH  
Ouch.

NAD  
Honestly, I've got a long way to  
go.

ELIZABETH  
So why don't you commit?

NAD  
Why don't you?

ELIZABETH

Maybe you should apply to MFA  
programs? Lend you some structure  
and time to really explore it.

NAD

I'll make you a deal. You go be  
super spin girl or a lawyer or a  
teacher or whatever you really want  
to be and I'll go be an artist.

ELIZABETH

Deal.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth enters with a few shopping bags from the mall. She walks past Mona on the couch watching TV.

MONA

Hey Libby.

ELIZABETH

Hi aunt Mona.

MONA

(with attitude)

Hey Libby?

ELIZABETH

Hey yeah?

MONA

(more attitude)

Do me a favor and call your  
parents?

Nothing.

MONA (CONT'D)

Do you hear me, girl?

ELIZABETH

I HEARD you. Thanks.

Mona clocks her bags:

MONA

What happened? You buy the whole  
store?

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - DAY

INSERT - SEVERAL CLOTHING TAGS BEING CLIPPED BY SCISSORS.

Elizabeth models herself in a mirror. Changes her hair a few times with different outfit options.

With each new outfit she pretends to be a different person. They are consistently more carefree with their language and their bodies.

She settles on a particularly revealing number.

She puts her face straight in the mirror, slaps on some lipstick and mouths:

ELIZABETH  
Oh hey, Naddie.

Still in whatever character this is, she laughs.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

An Uber pulls up to a LARGE CRAFTSMAN HOUSE blaring music and covered in string lights and lanterns. People mill about on the front patio.

Elizabeth struggles to get out of the car in one piece with the incredibly short skirt she's wearing.

She rifles with one arm through her bag and proudly takes out a gift-wrapped bottle of wine.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nad pours himself another cup of home-brew. He looks around the room. It's packed, mostly with people he knows.

He walks to the back of the house - sees ZOHA on the patio dragging on a cigarette and talking expressively to a large audience.

He immediately turns around.

He peers into one of the bedrooms, where JON and a few others SNORT COKE. Jon looks up, flicks him off.

He walks past a couple of girls, they smile flirtatiously. He's not into it.

He finishes his beer and goes back into the kitchen for another.

He pours himself some more beer and runs into JEFF, 24.

JEFF  
Hey!! It's good, right?

NAD  
Awesome.

JEFF  
Just for you, man. Been working  
hard on that one.

NAD  
(distracted)  
Yeah, it's good.

JEFF  
Hey, sorry about Zoha.

NAD  
She can be here if she wants.  
Totally fine by me.

Nad's spirits lift once he sees:

Elizabeth enter the kitchen... like a lost puppy.

JEFF  
Is that... Elizabeth?

NAD  
Yeah.

She's HOT. She sees them. Makes eye contact with Jeff. Smiles  
brightly.

JEFF  
(to Nad)  
Wow.

Elizabeth a little too excitedly approaches.

ELIZABETH  
Jeff! Hi!

JEFF  
Elizabeth... been awhile. You look  
great!

ELIZABETH  
Thanks! Nice to see you.  
(to Nad, casually)  
Hey you.

They have a rather un-synched embrace. Jeff looks confused.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Oh, Jeff, um, this is for you.

She fishes the wine bottle out with her good arm.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Thanks so much for having me!

He sweeps off a clean spot on his counter amongst bongs, papers and empty plastic cups, and places the wine bottle there.

Nad checks on Elizabeth's arm.

NAD  
How is it? Were you ok to get here?

She nods sweetly. He lightly touches her wrist.

NAD (CONT'D)  
(quietly, to Elizabeth) Does that hurt?

ELIZABETH  
No. Not really.

NAD  
Okay, good.

Pleasantly surprised, and intrigued, Jeff peers on at the happy couple.

FROM ACROSS THE ROOM

Jon, who's shirtless now and has a sailor hat on shouts into the kitchen:

JON  
Nad, mate! Please come in here and take this photo for me!!!

He puts a cigar in his mouth and makes a muscle pose.

NAD  
I don't know what he's been doing.  
Excuse me guys.

Nad walks over to him. Jeff and Elizabeth watch as he calmly takes the photo and talks Jon down.

JEFF

So, how long has THIS been  
happening?

ELIZABETH

I'm not really sure, I just got  
here...

JEFF

NO, no! You and Nad.

ELIZABETH

Oh, not long.

JEFF

Does Zoha know?

ELIZABETH

(defensive) There isn't anything to  
know.

(changing the subject)

Can I have some beer please?

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - LATER

Jeff, Nad, Elizabeth and a few others play APPLES TO APPLES.  
Elizabeth has loosened up.

Nad, on the other hand is on high alert.

He watches Jon and Zoha talk from the corner of his eye. It  
looks heated. As Zoha's body language intensifies, Nad braces  
himself for what's coming.

ELIZABETH

(to Jeff)

Where's your bathroom?

JEFF

Down that hall, three doors on the  
right.

She heads off.

Zoha clocks her.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Elizabeth slips through partygoers and into the bathroom.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - BATHROOM

She pees and embraces the peace and quiet.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Zoha shoves partygoers out of the way as she trudges through.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - BATHROOM

Elizabeth pulls up her underwear... tricky stuff with one arm. Flushes. Washes her hands. No soap anywhere.

She rinses her hands under the sink for a second time.

Looks for a hand towel... nope.

She looks over at a bath towel that probably hasn't been washed in months. She shudders at the idea.

She looks at her skirt.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Zoha turns the knob on the bathroom door.

Tries to push herself in. Locked.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME

Elizabeth wipes her hands on her clothes.

She hears the rattling of the doorknob.

ELIZABETH  
Just a second!!!

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Elizabeth opens the bathroom door.

ZOHA GRABS HER GOOD ARM (THANKFULLY) AND TUGS HER OUT TO THE:

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Elizabeth breaks free and shoves her.

ELIZABETH  
Get off me!

ZOHA  
You fucked my boyfriend!! Fucking  
slut!

ELIZABETH  
Oh my God. Chill.

ZOHA  
CUNT!!!!

Zoha swipes at her. Elizabeth steps back just in time.

ELIZABETH  
Seriously. Zoha. You need to calm  
the fuck down.

More worked up, nearly hyperventilating she grabs a LARGE  
TREE LIMB and swings it at Elizabeth.

ZOHA  
(screaming)  
IM GONNA FUCKING KILL YOU!

Elizabeth manages to grab hold of the limb before it smacks  
the crap out of her. They struggle over possession.

Nad, Jeff and Jon rush to the scene.

Zoha gives it her all, lifting her end of the branch and  
shoves it towards Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's bad arm isn't strong enough yet and hurts like  
hell - forcing her to be pushed backwards and trip over a  
chair behind her.

She falls to the ground, with the branch and Zoha on top of  
her.

Elizabeth pushes them off. Grabs her bad arm in pain.

Zoha gets up and dusts herself off. She looks deranged.

ZOHA (CONT'D)  
What are you even doing here? No  
one likes you. You are ugly and you  
are boring. He is only with you  
because he feels bad for you. Look  
at you. With your stupid cast. Not  
so perfect now, are you Elizabeth?

Elizabeth marches right up to her and PUNCHES HER IN THE FACE.

Zoha is out cold on the ground.

Silence.

Out of nowhere:

JON  
Fucking bad-ass!

Nad and a few of Zoha's friends run over to her. Nad picks Zoha up and carries her back inside.

Near tears, Elizabeth is left on her own, watching everyone around her fret over Zoha.

Jeff walks over and hands her a bag of frozen potato wedges.

JEFF  
You okay?

She takes the bag and puts it on her hand.

ELIZABETH  
Thanks.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Elizabeth walks back inside. She passes by a room and sees Nad sitting on a bed with Zoha's head resting on his lap. She's crying and he's rubbing her forehead.

Elizabeth is done here.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Elizabeth watches music videos on her laptop with one hand in a bowl of ice and another hand stuffing her face with homemade brownies.

Mona comes back from a shift at the hospital. She grabs some leftovers from the fridge and heats it up in the microwave.

MONA  
Did you really eat all those brownies?

Elizabeth doesn't acknowledge her and Mona fails to notice her hand.

She does notice her outfit.

MONA (CONT'D)  
Girl, I hope you didn't actually  
wear that out tonight.

Elizabeth turns the volume up on her laptop.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - SAME

Elizabeth calls Nad. Gets his voicemail.

She hangs up and texts him: **Hey! I haven't heard from you. You OK?**

She waits around for a response. Nothing. After another beat or two she writes:

**Look, I'm sorry about last night. I didn't mean**

She erases **I didn't mean**

She sends the text.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - DAY

Elizabeth sits in front of her computer and anxiously taps her finger against her desk.

She studies Zoha's facebook intently. Searching for something, anything that can give her insight into why Nad hasn't reached out.

Her phone rings.

She grabs it thinking it's Nad and quickly pulls the phone out of her bag.

ELIZABETH  
Oh. Hey mom. (beat) Yeah, I can  
talk. Yeah. Work is good. (beat)  
What's that? A \$600 something  
charge? Uhh well, I had to get more  
clothes... for work, so, Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAD'S HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth knocks at the door. No answer.

She looks at the clock on her phone - 5:47pm

She takes a book out of her bag and sits on the steps.

Time passes. Elizabeth has gotten through a pretty decent chunk in her book. She walks away.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Elizabeth looks around. SOME OTHER GUY is working. No Nad to be found.

ELIZABETH

Hey, is Nad here?

SOME OTHER GUY

Nope. Switched to afternoons.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

She's skyping with Dani, who can't stand the sight of her friend being so pathetic.

ELIZABETH

I fucked up.

DANI

WRONG.

ELIZABETH

I hit her.

DANI

She ATTACKED you.

ELIZABETH

I embarrassed him.

DANI

He's a fucking embarrassment. It's rude.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elizabeth pouts over her dinner with Mona.

MONA

Elizabeth. Why are you always looking so sad? What's wrong with you?

Elizabeth shrugs.

MONA (CONT'D)

This is what you don't get. You are blessed with a degree, a job, a roof over your head and people who love you. BE HAPPY.

ELIZABETH

Are you happy, Mona? With this big house but always working? Working a job you hate, mind you?

MONA

I don't hate my job. I hate my boss.

ELIZABETH

Well why don't you quit then? Why don't you go somewhere else? It's not like you have anybody!

MONA

Excuse me?

ELIZABETH

You're so negative all the time. All you do is criticize me.

MONA

(resigned)

That's life, Elizabeth. You work to pay the bills, you don't always meet the person of your dreams, others will let you down, people die, you can't always do what you wanna do.

ELIZABETH

I don't accept that. Fuck that.

MONA

Also- I don't need anybody talking to me like that in my own house. Please leave my table.

Elizabeth realizes she's gone too far with her elder, and she does know better. She softens, gets up and takes her plate to the sink.

MONA (CONT'D)  
You need to finally grow up and face reality little girl. The world is not going to change for you.

Elizabeth's lack of a response infuriates Mona.

MONA (CONT'D)  
It's about time you start paying your own bills, with your spoiled, disrespectful tail. I'm done with you.

Elizabeth's door SLAMS.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Alexis teaches Elizabeth how to roll a cigarette.

ELIZABETH  
I like this. Way healthier.

ALEXIS  
It's pretty easy once you get the hang of it.

They light up.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)  
How's your dad?

ELIZABETH  
You know what, he's doing well. My mom keeps sending me pictures of him. Wanna see?

She gives Alexis her phone.

ALEXIS  
Aww, that's cute.

MRS. BAYLOR, the school principal marches toward them.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)  
Oh shit!

MRS. BAYLOR  
Alexis, shouldn't you be in class?

ALEXIS  
No.

ELIZABETH  
This is her free period.

MRS. BAYLOR  
Miss Turner, can you meet me in my office, please?

INT. MRS. BAYLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mrs. Baylor speaks, Elizabeth isn't listening, until:

MRS. BAYLOR  
Look, to be frank, they were cigarettes and Alexis has done better in school these past couple of months than she has in a year. But can I just say, a young African American woman such as yourself should be lifting up her community, not tearing it down. You're a good role model for these young women. They need to see a college grad making a success of her life, so let's forget about this.

Mrs. Baylor stretches out her hand. Elizabeth shakes it.

ELIZABETH  
Thank you.

MRS. BAYLOR  
You know, I see a lot of myself in you...

Elizabeth examines the office around her. Stanford Graduate School of Education Doctorate degree hanging proudly behind her boss, photos of Ms. Baylor and girlfriends on a trip to the Bahamas, a photo of her DOG on the desk... this woman has lived a pretty safe life.

Elizabeth sees nothing of herself in this woman. Nothing that she wants at least.

MRS. BAYLOR (CONT'D)  
Hard worker, smart, so accomplished.

Something snaps inside of Elizabeth. Maybe it was the teddy bear with a #1 Principal t-shirt on the desk, or her realizing that she was looking 25 years into the future, but...

ELIZABETH  
(kinda talking to herself)  
Is that it?

MS. BAYLOR  
Pardon?

ELIZABETH  
Yeah, no. I'm gonna quit. Ms.  
Baylor. Yeah, I quit.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Elizabeth marches towards the door with her head held high, triumphantly...

And waltzes straight into:

INT. UPSCALE EQUINOX TYPE FITNESS FACILITY - DAY

Strong, calm, confident, excited. She's free to do what she loves, she's taking life by the balls.

She's also dressed in her spin clothes... a strange sight, seeing as she still has her cast on.

She heads straight for the:

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

She pops her head through the door to see MAGGIE, 31, on the phone.

Maggie waives her in.

MAGGIE  
Well, you are more than welcome to try our Gym for free. I can give you a complementary workout for you and your hubby, no problem. (beat)  
Great! I've got you down. Have a wonderful day!

She hangs up and gives Elizabeth a big hug.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

How's my beautiful girl!! We've missed ya over here. When are you coming back!? Wait, are you gonna take a class?

ELIZABETH

I'm back, and yours full time for now on, Maggie. I thought I could teach my usual class.

MAGGIE

First off, awesome. But. Sweetie, you've still got your cast on, so like, you don't mean this class starting in 5.

ELIZABETH

That's exactly what I mean.

MAGGIE

Lizzie, honey, that's not possible. You're still injured.

ELIZABETH

I can still teach.

MAGGIE

But we've got Jill. The ladies really like Jill...

Elizabeth looks through the door at JILL, 21, White, Blonde, not Elizabeth.

ECU on Jill talking to Calvin.

Elizabeth looks back at Maggie, with fire in her eyes.

ELIZABETH

But it's my signature class. I created it, and I can handle it.

MAGGIE

Elizabeth, you have a CAST on, babe. No one wants to see that.

The phone rings.

ELIZABETH

(trying to keep calm)  
Maggie. I quit my job.

Maggie answers, asks the person to hold. Puts her hand on the receiver.

MAGGIE

(whispers)

I'm happy for you, that's great...  
But we are gonna have to figure  
something out when you're all  
healed up and ready to work,  
because right now I can't have  
imaginary conversations, ya know?

ELIZABETH

Maggie.

MAGGIE

Honey, I have to take this. Hold on  
a sec.

Maggie takes the call. Elizabeth walks out of the office.

EXT. SPINNING STUDIO - DAY

She watches Jill teach her class. Fucking Jill, with her bouncy ponytail and faux pep. Elizabeth could run circles around her.

Jill looks in her direction.

Elizabeth flips her the bird.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

She presses the crap out of the DOWN button.

She looks at her phone. Text from an unsaved number.

It's A PHOTO of her very expensive leather jacket she was wearing that fateful night.

**This is Jeff. I think you left this at my house.**

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - DAY

Jeff opens the door to find Elizabeth.

JEFF

Hey!

He hands her the jacket.

ELIZABETH

Hi. I'm so sorry. Thanks so much  
for contacting me.

JEFF

No biggie.

ELIZABETH

Hey, I'm glad I'm here, actually.  
I'm so so so sorry for the other  
night.

JEFF

What are you talking about?

ELIZABETH

I'm pretty embarrassed about how I  
acted...

JEFF

You mean defending yourself?

ELIZABETH

Yeah but I punched her.

Elizabeth is visibly frazzled. She hovers over the landing.

JEFF

(reassuring)

Somebody needed to.

(beat)

Do you wanna come in?

ELIZABETH

Could we go for a walk instead?

EXT. SOMEWHERE ON THE EAST SIDE - DAY

ELIZABETH

Can I ask you something?

JEFF

Yeah, totally.

ELIZABETH

You're so nice and I feel like  
you'll be honest with me. Will you?

JEFF

Shoot.

ELIZABETH

What's wrong with me?

Jeff laughs.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

No, I'm serious. Like, what makes me so undesirable? Am I that unattractive? Am I that boring?

JEFF

(still laughing)

There's nothing wrong with you.

ELIZABETH

Would you date me?

JEFF

Are you asking? I mean, I -

ELIZABETH

OH MY GOD.

JEFF

Hold on Elizabeth. Relax and hear me out: You are great. Seriously.

ELIZABETH

But...

JEFF

But nothing. I just think that you are one of those girls that guys feel like they need to have their shit together before they even try to approach you.

ELIZABETH

The fuck does that mean?

JEFF

You won't allow for anything less.

ELIZABETH

And that's somehow my problem?

JEFF

I don't really know, Elizabeth. I'm just trying -

ELIZABETH

You know, not that I want you or anything, because I don't but I just think it's crazy how I'm so great but like you won't even date me... What does that say about you, JEFF?

She walks away from him... quickly.

JEFF  
Elizabeth, come on.

ELIZABETH  
No, Jeff. It's cool!

She bumps into A GUY pushing an ICE CREAM cart. Apologizes, keeps walking, but then stops and retraces her steps back to the Ice Cream guy to buy some.

She unwraps it aggressively.

She gets an idea. Grabs her phone.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
(with ice cream in her  
mouth)  
What are you up to tonight??

CUT TO:

EXT. TRENDY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Elizabeth is back in her very expensive outfit she wore at Jeff's party.

She waits in line alone. Looks at all the other women around her... mainly Black and Latina. She tries to mimic their body language.

She pulls her top down a little lower.

INT. TRENDY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Calvin waves Elizabeth over to the bar.

She marches right up to him.

Kisses him. Hard.

INT. TRENDY NIGHTCLUB - LATER

They're on the dance floor. Elizabeth's ass is planted firmly in his crotch.

It's gross.

Calvin hands her a PILL.

She looks at it for a beat and then takes it.

She's proud of herself... "Look at me I'm so cool and carefree".

They keep dancing...

From Elizabeth's POV: The lights get brighter, the music louder, the scene in front of her isn't very stable. Images whip and whirl around her.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CALVIN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth sits on the floor in front of Calvin's front door. Hyperventilating.

This is not a night terror, as she's fully conscious.

Just a full-on panic attack.

ELIZABETH  
(in between breaths)  
I. Seriously. Can't. Breathe.

CALVIN  
You just need to calm down.

ELIZABETH  
My heart is going like 100 miles a minute. This is not fine Calvin!  
What the fuck did you give me?

CALVIN  
God Damn girl. It was just some Molly.

ELIZABETH  
What the fuck is Molly!?

CALVIN  
You don't know what Molly is? Why did you take it?

ELIZABETH  
I'm just trying to go with the flow. And I thought it was just Ecstasy or something.

CALVIN  
Same shit!

ELIZABETH  
THIS DOES NOT FEEL LIKE ECSTASY.  
THIS FEELS LIKE SPEED.

CALVIN  
How the fuck would you know?

ELIZABETH  
(starts to cry)  
Calvin. I'm really scared. I don't  
want to die. I feel like I'm being  
punished for wasting my life... For  
hurting my body... just like HIM!

CALVIN  
Come here.

ELIZABETH  
No. I don't trust you. I want to go  
home.

CALVIN  
Let me take you home.

ELIZABETH  
NO.

She cries harder.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
I can feel this shit running  
through my veins. Killing me!!

CALVIN  
So what the fuck am I supposed to  
do?

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - LATER

Elizabeth is hunched in a ball in a corner.

Mona, tired and very concerned scoops Elizabeth up and hugs  
her.

She cuts her eyes at Calvin.

MONA  
If I find out you date raped her or  
something I will have the po-lice  
on your ass so quick.

CALVIN  
Both of you bitches are crazy.

INT. MONA'S CAR - NIGHT

Silence.

Elizabeth quietly sucks water from a camelback. Still crying.

MONA

Elizabeth. You need to get it together.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - LATER

Mona tucks Elizabeth in. Strokes her niece's head.

Closes the door.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - MORNING

Elizabeth sleeps. Peacefully for once.

Mona rushes in. Shakes her, awkwardly.

MONA

Libby... Libby... wake up baby.

ELIZABETH

What?

MONA

Your mamma's on the phone.

Elizabeth groans.

ELIZABETH

Can I call her back?

MONA

You NEED to take this.

Elizabeth registers the alarm in her aunt's voice. She takes the phone.

KAREN (O.S.)

Libby lou?

ELIZABETH

What's wrong?

KAREN (O.S.)

Baby, I need you to come home.

Elizabeth looks at Mona, who is trying her hardest to keep it together.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Elizabeth, still in her dress from earlier, hair a mess, mascara running, sits in the back of an Uber.

She leans her head against the passenger window.

Mona knocks on it. Gestures her to roll it down.

Wipes Elizabeth's face clean with a spit dampened tissue.

INT. UBER - NIGHT

Elizabeth watches the Los Angeles skyline from the I-10 zip past her. Tops of houses, palm trees, the hills, the lights.

There's an old R&B song playing quietly. "I Can't Get Over You" by The Dramatics. The Uber driver sings along under his breath.

This song. It takes Elizabeth back to a place. She begins to sing.

ELIZABETH  
(singing, loudly)  
*This feeling I have for you  
is strong indeed with a flame I  
can't put out...*

She closes her eyes. Sings louder.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
(top of her lungs)  
*I tired to do without you and find  
someone new, someone new...*

A voice joins in. Louder than her.

VOICE  
*You found yourself a new love  
And it's driving me insane...*

That's not the Uber driver.

Elizabeth OPENS HER EYES. It's her father, Robert. Driving. Looking back at her.

BOTH  
 (in unison, with gusto)  
*I Can't Get Over You*  
*Oh baby*  
*I tired and tired, oh..... I just*  
*can't get you off of my mind*  
*Your love, your love, your love*  
*means more to me then life itself*  
*And without you I can't go on*  
*There's nothing, nothing I can do*  
*To pick up the pieces no matter how*  
*hard*  
*It seems that you were made for me*  
*baby*  
*And no matter how I try*  
*I can't, I can't, I can't...*

This is surreal. It doesn't make sense. The song starts to slow down, the words are warped. Her father isn't her father anymore. It's the Uber driver.

It's her father.

It's the Uber driver.

It's her father.

The song slows to a stop. The sound of static rises to a screeching noise. The car fills with bright light.

FADE TO WHITE

INT. AIRPLANE - TOILET

Elizabeth pukes.

Flushes and takes a seat on the toilet... but not for long as she pukes again.

INT. AIRPLANE - SEAT

Elizabeth squeezes back into her window seat.

The OLDER BLACK WOMAN next to her can't stop staring.

Elizabeth smiles weakly, in hopes that satisfies her.

OLDER BLACK WOMAN  
 You okay?

ELIZABETH  
 Mhum.

OLDER BLACK WOMAN  
You were crying in your sleep.

ELIZABETH  
I have night terrors.

OLDER BLACK WOMAN  
(confused)  
Oh.

ELIZABETH  
My dad's dying.

Older Black woman holds her hand. Elizabeth is comforted by this.

She looks at the clouds through the window.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
His kidneys don't work anymore.  
Dialysis can't help him. No one can  
help him.

EXT. HOSPICE CENTER - NIGHT

Elizabeth is met by her mom, KAREN.

KAREN  
Hey baby.

She takes Elizabeth's bag. Fusses over her just a bit. She starts to cry.

ELIZABETH  
Mom, please don't.

KAREN  
Are you okay? I love you so much.

Her mother's hug suffocates her.

INT. HOSPICE CENTER - NIGHT

Karen leads Elizabeth through the sterile halls. She looks around at the glum faces of families who are in the throes of the long goodbye.

They arrive at a door. Karen lingers for a sec before she opens it.

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - NIGHT

They walk into the room filled with CHURCH PEOPLE she's never met who have surrounded her dad's bed. They're praying.

ROBERT, Elizabeth's father, notices Elizabeth come through the door.

He sits up and stretches his arms out to her.

ROBERT  
Elizabeth?

She slips through the group and plops herself on top of her father for a bed hug.

ELIZABETH  
Hey dad.

ROBERT  
There's my big girl.

The prayer continues. It's annoying.

ELIZABETH  
(to Robert)  
Can they please leave now?

INT. HOSPICE CENTER - NIGHT

Elizabeth pays a PIZZA DELIVERY MAN.

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM

Karen is sleeping on a roll-away bed in the corner.

Elizabeth comes in with the pizza.

ROBERT  
(whispers)  
Keep your voice down.

She takes out a slice and holds it up so he can take a bite. It's slow going but he gets the pizza down easy enough.

ELIZABETH  
Probably feels good to have  
everything off the forbidden food  
list.

ROBERT  
I love me some pizza.

Elizabeth watches him, carefully. Studies his face. Tries to solidify his image in her brain.

He know's she's doing it. He does it right back.

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - LATER

Everyone is asleep. Elizabeth is knocked out in the chair next to her dad.

ROBERT  
(weak) Kar. Kar. Karen?

Elizabeth springs straight up in her chair. Karen is so tired she doesn't even hear.

She gets close to him.

ELIZABETH  
Dad? We're here.

ROBERT  
Libby?

ELIZABETH  
You okay?

ROBERT  
Can you get me some water honey?

She opens up a water bottle and puts a straw in it. She hovers the bottle in front of his mouth so he can sip.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Thank you Libby.

ELIZABETH  
Dad?

ROBERT  
Yeah?

ELIZABETH  
Are you scared?

ROBERT  
No. I'm tired.

ELIZABETH  
I'm scared.

ROBERT  
You're supposed to be scared.

ELIZABETH  
I'm always scared.

ROBERT  
My careful girl. Always so careful.  
Always so hard on yourself.

She keeps hearing this. She takes it in for a moment.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Elizabeth, I wasted so much time.  
Doing stuff I had to do, so you  
didn't have to.

He takes a deep breath.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
I wish I had taken better care of  
my body. It's my fault I'm here...

ELIZABETH  
I wish you had, too.

He grabs her arm... tight. He means it. Elizabeth knows it and it's uncomfortable for her. She resists his vulnerability for a second but ultimately gives in, because her dad finally admitted it.

She hugs him.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
(still hugging)  
I'm really mad at you, dad.

ROBERT  
Please forgive me?

INT. HOSPICE CENTER - DAY

Mona walks briskly through the halls looking for Robert's room. Elizabeth sticks her head out and flags her down.

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - DAY

Mona sees her brother and instantly falls apart.

MONA  
(weeping) Oh. My big brother.

## INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth reads a book in the chair next to her dad as he sleeps.

Karen and Mona speak in hushed tones on the couch.

Robert's breathing looks more labored than before.

MONA

Libby, I'm gonna take your mom home  
for a minute to take a shower and  
change clothes.

ELIZABETH

Okay.

## INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - LATER

Elizabeth fights sleep as she sits and watches her father.

He wakes up from time to time to look at her.

Their glances keep missing one another.

CUT TO:

## INT. ELIZABETH'S OLD HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth grazes in the various food tables and avoids any sort of interaction from anyone.

She watches them all. They know not to bother her.

Except for Mona, who kisses her on the forehead.

IN THE KITCHEN, Dani helps Karen and Mona with everything. Refills drinks, picks up discarded plates. She really and truly is the sister Elizabeth never had.

Elizabeth passes through without a word and heads upstairs.

## INT. ELIZABETH'S OLD ROOM - DAY

She shuts the door and locks it. She sits on her bed surrounded by the relics from her childhood: A Backstreet Boys poster, various trophies, books, and an old bike.

Her phone rings.

It's Nad.

She answers. Holds the phone for a minute. Finally:

ELIZABETH

Hello?

NAD (O.S.)

Hey.

ELIZABETH

Hi.

Silence. She waits again.

NAD (O.S.)

How's it going?

Elizabeth says nothing... Because, really?

NAD (CONT'D)

Sorry it's been awhile. I was crazy  
busy and -

ELIZABETH

(confrontational)

Come ON, Nad.

NAD (CONT)

Yeah, I know I've been kinda M.I.A.  
Completely my bad.

ELIZABETH

Uh huh.

NAD (O.S.)

What are you up to right now? Wanna  
hang out or something?

ELIZABETH

What am I up to? FUCK YOU NADEESH.

She hangs up.

Rage builds in her body.

She calls him back.

NAD (O.S.)

Uh, hey?

ELIZABETH

NO. Okay. NO. So you wanna HANG OUT  
after your ex-girlfriend ATTACKED  
me and then YOU decide to ignore me  
for over a fucking month?

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Not cool man. Like an idiot, I kept trying to reach out and got nothing. NOTHING. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHY did you ignore me? Don't I deserve better? DON'T I? The mature thing to do would have been to just say,

(poorly imitating his voice)

*Hey Elizabeth, it was fun fucking... but I don't actually want to know you or be your friend.*

She waits for him to say something... anything.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(completely done)

You're a shitty person Nadeesh.

She hangs up again.

CUT TO:

INT. NAD'S ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Their first date:

We see their silhouetted bodies come together. He eases her down onto her back.

He climbs on top of her. Kisses her deeply then moves down, kissing her entire body.

They make love. Slowly, considerably, consensually. This is the first time she's ever been so present and so vulnerable with another person. This is the first time sex has meant something.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

She wakes up out of that memory. Her eyes widen. She sees her mom sleeping next to her. Dani is curled up at the edge of the bed with a quilt thrown over her. Mona is knocked out on the floor with one of Elizabeth's stuffed animals as a pillow. She snores loudly.

Dani opens her eyes and sees Elizabeth.

DANI

(softly)

You good?

ELIZABETH  
Yeah. Go back to sleep.

DANI  
You go back to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The doctor removes her cast.

It's off.

ELIZABETH  
It's so pale.

DOCTOR  
Can you move it for me?

She bends and straightens it. Lifts it up and down.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
It's going to feel a little strange  
for a while. But you're all healed  
up so you need to focus on  
strengthening.

ELIZABETH  
How long until I can ride my bike  
again?

DOCTOR  
Everybody is different, but if you  
stick to some good PT I'm thinking  
5-7 weeks?

ELIZABETH  
Jesus.

DOCTOR  
Just take it easy. Every time you  
have a knock or a strain you will  
be setting yourself back.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth opens up a BIKE BOX.

She gathers all the brand new parts and puts her bike back  
together again.

Complete and just like new, she admires it.

She then tries to ride her bike again. With that weak arm, she's hardly back to her former self.

She takes it slow down the road.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

A graduation ceremony has ended.

Elizabeth hovers to the side as she watches Alexis with her family.

Alexis looks up at her. Smiles. Heads in her direction.

ALEXIS

I made it without killing one of  
those bitches.

They high five.

Alexis runs back over to her family.

EXT. WEST ADAMS - DAY

Elizabeth rides her bike like old times. Quickly, weaving through traffic, wind in her face.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

She stands in the parking lot with her bike. Considers going in.

Thinks better of it.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mona helps Elizabeth load the last bit of stuff in her car.

Elizabeth is finally moving out.

MONA

You got everything Miss Libby?

ELIZABETH

Ah, the only thing that won't fit  
is one of my book boxes. Do you  
mind shipping it for me?

Mona lifts the box.

MONA  
Um, this is gonna cost me damn near  
\$100.

ELIZABETH  
I'll send you a check. Promise.

MONA  
But who's gonna watch Empire with  
me?

Elizabeth closes her trunk door and mounts her bike on the bike rack.

She turns around to see Nad watching her.

NAD  
You're going on a road trip?

ELIZABETH  
I'm moving.

NAD  
Where?

ELIZABETH  
Back home, to Atlanta.

NAD  
Today?

ELIZABETH  
No. I just thought I would drive  
around Los Angeles with all my shit  
in my car.

NAD  
I get it, I'm a dick.

ELIZABETH  
You are a dick.

Nad gets an idea.

NAD  
Can I come with you?

ELIZABETH  
To Atlanta?

NAD  
I need a clean slate.

ELIZABETH

I'm not really trying to deal with  
anyone else's shit...

NAD

Look. I can deal with my own shit.  
I just think it would be cool to  
have a change of scenery while I  
paint, and, well, and I would like  
this thing between you and me to  
work.

ELIZABETH

What thing?

NAD

Whatever the fuck this is. I like  
you, you like me, we like hanging  
out.

ELIZABETH

You'll change your mind.

She gets in the car.

NAD

I won't.

Nad jumps in the passenger seat.

ELIZABETH

You don't even know who I am.

NAD

That's only because you wouldn't  
let me.

ELIZABETH

Why should I?

He gets comfortable. Stretches out flirtatiously.

NAD

Because.

She challenges him.

ELIZABETH

Because??

He looks at her sheepishly. He doesn't know.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Why don't you get your shit  
together first then call me?

NAD  
Yeah, sure.

He slides out of the car. Shuts the door.

Stands there.

Elizabeth starts the car. He's still standing there.

NAD (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

She pulls away, watching him from her rear-view mirror.

He waves goodbye.

As she drives, the image of him gets smaller and smaller...  
until he's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW SPIN STUDIO - DAY

Elizabeth teaches her signature 90's pop class to a group of  
predominately black women in their 30s. All shapes and sizes.

She's back in her element.

INT. TURNER HOUSE - LATER

--- Elizabeth helps her mom paint the living room a fresh  
YELLOW.

--- They rearrange furniture.

--- Elizabeth finds Karen on the porch reading a book. She  
hands her mom some iced tea. Karen squeezes her tightly.

EXT. ALTANTA SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT

Elizabeth rides her bike.

Besides the moon and the occasional street light, her  
headlamp and flashing bike lights are the only source of  
decent illumination.

INT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She approaches the door of a cute little bungalow. There's a large BOX labeled FRAGILE. Sender: N.P., 12201 Hyperion Ave, Los Angeles.

She brings it inside.

The decor is very Elizabeth, as is the fact that its incredibly neat and organized.

She opens the box:

A FRAMED PORTRAIT OF HERSELF. Clearly a Nadeesh Phulwani original.

Throws her KEYS in a bowl.

She then walks into her kitchen. Goes straight for the fridge, pulls out A SALAD and a fork then plops onto her couch.

She opens her laptop.

CUT TO BLACK.