

LOVE OF YOUR LIFE

Written by

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OVER BLACK

The white noise of a public park. Dulcet, indiscernible human VOICES. Lilting BIRDSONG. A peal of LAUGHTER, far away.

A BREEZE rushes through the trees, and we come up on...

EXT. PUBLIC GARDEN - DAY

A WOMAN moving down a path. She's wearing a linen shirt with a wrinkled collar, hair cut in a blunt crop that hits just below her jaw.

She's tired-- shoulders hunched-- and a bit rumpled, but her eyes are searching. There's a gameness to her, a hunger: an in-extinguishable flicker of hope. This is **MAYA, early 40s.**

She tilts her head and discovers she's surrounded by cherry blossoms. They weep, petals drifting down like snow.

The falling flowers brush her shoulders. The sun touches her face. She stands, awash in wonder, almost childlike: for a moment, she is a younger version of herself.

Maya walks on, a smile unfurling, until something up ahead arrests her. She halts. Her eyes widen, her lips part, and before she can speak, we CUT TO:

I/E. SUBWAY - BOSTON - DAY

A rattling train car clangs down Commonwealth Avenue.

A WOMAN in scrubs, her long hair piled in a bun, is curled in a vinyl seat. She's poring over a nursing textbook. This is **Maya, late 20s:** bright, wry, a little shy, but intense.

PRELAP: a knock-knock-knock, quick and aggressive.

EXT. ALLSTON HOUSE - DAY

Maya stands on a porch crowded with moving boxes. She grows exasperated, checks her phone, and KNOCKS again, as... the door swings open, revealing: CHARLIE, late 20s.

CHARLIE

Maya, right? Sorry. Charlie. Did you text? I didn't hear--

Charlie is a mess: scruffy, sweaty, with a wild head of hair. He's a bit of a goof, in mis-matched socks and basketball shorts, but conspicuously kind and secretly brilliant.

MAYA
I did text.

CHARLIE
I am so sorry. I was packing, and
then I got an idea, so I stopped,
and then I got sucked into the idea-

She eyes him, wondering if he's ever going to let her in.

MAYA
The end table...?

CHARLIE
Yes! Right through here.

On Maya: she smirks, assessing him as she slips past his body. Though he is odd, he is objectively attractive.

On Charlie: out of Maya's view for a second, he quickly pats his sweaty face with the bottom of his t-shirt.

INT. ALLSTON HOUSE - DAY

Maya stands in the middle of a barren living room, inspecting a Shaker-style end table. Charlie calls from the kitchen--

CHARLIE (O.S.)
I got it at an estate sale in
Brookline. Super nice lady, selling
her sister's stuff. I would take
it, but my new place is a studio
with this really weird shape.

He saunters through, eager to engage her.

CHARLIE
You could use it as a night stand,
or at the end of your couch, or for
overflow with books, I don't know
what your bookcase situation is...

MAYA
(deadpan)
Are you in sales?

She doesn't look at him, and he cocks an eyebrow, sizing her up. His gaze lands on her shiny rubber CLOGS. They look like candied apples. They make him smile.

CHARLIE
I'm an academic. And you're a
doctor?

MYA

A nurse.

He lights up, about to ask another question, but--

MAYA

This drawer, is it decorative or--?

She tugs the mushroom-shaped knob of a small compartment, but it won't budge. She jimmies harder as he approaches.

CHARLIE

No. That should open. Let me try.

When he reaches, the bare skin of his arm brushes hers.

CHARLIE

Sorry.

They share a fleeting look. She steps back.

He grips the drawer and yanks it with force. Nothing. He gropes underneath and tries to dislodge the base where it's stuck. He gets frustrated, and Maya watches, amused.

CHARLIE

My hands are a little...

MAYA

Clammy.

CHARLIE

From moving boxes all day.

MAYA

Okay.

Shaking out his wrists, he stalks across the room.

MAYA

You're going to sneak up on it?

CHARLIE

I'm going to re-approach it. It's a psychological trick, it's real.
Would you distract me for a second?

MAYA

Uhh... You said this was oak. It's actually cherry. It needs a stain.
And I guess it's defective--

CHARLIE

You like it, though. I can tell.

MAYA
I like old things.

CHARLIE
They have a soul.

MAYA
Well, they've seen some shit.
(he's in motion)
Please don't hurt yourself.

She braces as he crosses the room: he passes the end table, then doubles back. The drawer sticks, again, and she laughs.

MAYA
I'll give you seventy-five.

It's a low-ball, and she expects him to respond, but he just studies her, drawn in by her laughter.

CHARLIE
Have we met before?

MAYA
I don't think so.

CHARLIE
Did you go to BU?

MAYA
For undergrad... so did a million other people.

CHARLIE
You're familiar to me. But in a very specific way.

Her cheeks grow hot. His attention is disarming.

MAYA
Are you going to negotiate?

CHARLIE
Seventy-five sounds good.

MAYA
(a little guilty)
Good.

CHARLIE
Great.

She nods, a twinkle in her eye, trying to read him.

EXT. ALLSTON HOUSE - DAY

Charlie carries the table out onto the porch. Maya trails.

MAYA

They're grippier than sneakers.

CHARLIE

You don't need to defend them--

MAYA

Everybody wears these!

CHARLIE

Yeah, but not everybody picks that color.

(sincere)

I'm serious. I love them.

She huffs as he stoops down to bubble-wrap the table's legs. He bites the end of a strip of masking tape, tearing it.

CHARLIE

Do you want to go out with me sometime?

(then)

To be clear I won't look like this.

On Maya: she's surprised, and she almost laughs. But despite their obvious connection, she demurs.

MAYA

Maybe. I'll think about it.

CHARLIE

Sure. Mull it over. Get some outside opinions. You have my number.

There's something sexy about his ease as he sets the table in her arms and begins sweeping the porch. As she heads off--

CHARLIE

I swear, we've met before.

(she peers back at him)

Maybe we did and you don't remember.

MAYA

I think you just want that to be true.

CHARLIE

Why?

MAYA
Because it would be...

Charming? Romantic? Meaningful? She trails off.

CHARLIE
It would, wouldn't it.
(like a challenge)
See you later. Maybe.

She tucks her chin, smiling to herself as she hoists the end table and trudges down the street toward the T.

I/E. SUBWAY - DAY

Maya clutches the end table. She's on a commuter-packed train, acutely aware that she's taking up too much space. She glances apologetically at the PASSENGERS looming over her.

The T dips underground and hits a sharp bump. Suddenly, that stubborn drawer springs open. One rider SIGHS, annoyed. On Maya: a soft gasp as she peeks in, discovering something.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAY

Maya digs through a cardboard box, buried at the back of a closet. From a nest of junk, she untangles a dusty WALKMAN. She feeds her newfound CASSETTE TAPE into the Walkman's mouth, and we PRELAP: an eerie melody, ethereal and soft...

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maya, wearing the Walkman, sands the Shaker table over an unfolded newspaper. Unconsciously, she moves in rhythm to the music pouring through her headphones. It's strange: a series of sonic swells, distorted as though we're underwater.

She applies a stain, painting in smooth, careful strokes.

She sets the table at the end of her couch. She adjusts it.

She stares off, thoughts churning, as this weird futuristic loop plays. A sudden CLICK, and she's jarred. The sound CUTS OFF. She pops the tape out, flips it over, considering...

CHARLIE (PRELAP)
It's a phrase from Hadyn's Symphony
44. Just a few measures.

INT. CHARLES STREET BAR - NIGHT

A dark, lush bar, in the ground floor of a historic stone house. We float past FRIENDS, DATES, an old MARRIED COUPLE...

CHARLIE (O.S.)
But I spliced the tape so it plays
as a loop. It's like a circle--

MAYA (O.S.)
Repeating over and over.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Except it changes a little each
time.

FIND Maya and Charlie, cleaned up, nestled in low-slung leather chairs. A votive flickers on the table between them. Out the window, PEOPLE pad by on the craggy brick sidewalk.

CHARLIE
Because the more you play it, the
more the tape degrades. It's just
iron oxide glued to plastic. As it
dissolves, disappears, the music--

MAYA
Dies.

His eyebrows rise. He nods. Then he smiles.

MAYA
It sort of hypnotized me.

CHARLIE
I can't believe you had a Walkman.

MAYA
In an old box of stuff of my mom's.
So is this what you study? Music--?

He licks his lips, thinking about how to explain it.

CHARLIE
Close your eyes. Would you?

Maya humors him, letting her eyelids flutter closed.

CHARLIE
You hear... forks clinking on
plates. The ice crackling in your
glass. That grainy record.

A loud, idiosyncratic GUFFAW cuts through--

MAYA

A laugh.

CHARLIE

Yes. And all the sounds you might not notice: the hum of electricity. Footsteps from upstairs. Some guy's leg shaking three tables over. Layers of auditory information make up this environment. And the environment gives you a feeling, consciously or unconsciously-- it affects your central nervous system. You know all about that.

She opens her eyes. She absorbs him, this ball of energy.

MAYA

I do.

CHARLIE

So that's what I study. Auditory environments. How we can create them to make people's lives better. Using technology, or--

MAYA

More archaic techniques.

She taps a finger on the tape, sitting on the table.

CHARLIE

Exactly.

MAYA

Can I keep this?

CHARLIE

Technically, you bought it.

MAYA

What will it sound like, when all the iron oxide powder wears off?

CHARLIE

For a while the notes will still be there, but the tails will get shorter and shorter. So--

He starts HUMMING to demonstrate the progression, too loudly for this setting. A couple of heads turn. Maya is both amazed and embarrassed as he HUMS ON, unselfconscious. When the performance finally winds down the tables around them are staring, and Maya finds herself totally, improbably, smitten.

CHARLIE

Then it'll just be white noise.

She ponders him, enjoying the way his eyes dance over her. He takes a sip of his Long Island Iced Tea.

CHARLIE

I want to know about you.

MAYA

What can I tell you?

CHARLIE

Oh, I don't know. Likes and dislikes? What's the hardest thing about your job? What pisses you off, do you believe in fate, how do you feel about your mom? Everything.

Maya's breath catches in her chest. Her body tics. She knows, instinctively, that life is about to change. She leans in:

MAYA

Okay.

EXT. CHARLES RIVER ESPLANADE - DAY

A boat, sail snapping in the wind, tacks across the river. Charlie and Maya stroll, drinking coffees, talking. She's in her scrubs, fresh from work. The water glints behind them.

MAYA

The ER is chaos. Like working in a busy restaurant where everyone's ordering off a different menu and they all hate the food. I mean, that's a good day. The bad days are... death, blood, trying not to vomit from the smells. But I love the *rush*.

INT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Maya hustles through the bustling ER. She ducks into a curtained-off room, where a PATIENT slumps in a wheelchair. She flicks a monitor and stoops to speak to the patient, MOS.

MAYA (V.O.)

The ability to intervene. Sleeves rolled up, getting shit done.

She poises herself, and then with great strength LIFTS the patient under their arms, moving them from wheelchair to bed.

MAYA (V.O.)
It's hard to watch people in pain.
You learn to compartmentalize.

Off Maya's determined grimace: she's a powerhouse.

EXT. CHARLES RIVER ESPLANADE - DUSK

A pink-orange sunset stretches over the Boston skyline. Maya and Charlie walk the river, this time on the Cambridge side--

MAYA
No, I was shy, but I was secretly weird. The first time I played truth or dare was during recess in fourth grade, and I did every dare. I genuinely freaked people out, because they hadn't even really heard me speak. And suddenly I was licking the monkey bars and screaming I love Mr. Kisakye and trying to sniff a Canadian Goose in the field.

Charlie gawks, mock-disturbed. She bats at him.

CHARLIE
I always picked truth.

MAYA
And you were probably honest.

CHARLIE
Of course.

MAYA
The difference between a weird kid and a nerd.

Charlie laughs, it's true. He mulls. Then, he ventures--

CHARLIE
Do you think you want to have children some day?

INT. MIT MEDIA LAB - DAY

Charlie leads Maya through the Media Lab, past small exhibits showcasing ongoing research.

The work is interdisciplinary-- integrating art, science, design and engineering-- but all focused on human adaptability, solutions for the future.

MAYA (V.O.)
I always thought I did.

QUICK GLIMPSES as she explores: a GALLERY WALL of whimsical, computer-generated images. On a pedestal: a compact, robotic WATER PURIFIER. A row of MONITORS showing PEOPLE counting to one hundred in dead languages, their voices overlapping.

MAYA (V.O.)
But sometimes I wonder if it's kind of narcissistic to have kids at the end of the world.

Maya lingers over a tiny, intricate model of Boston encased in glass. It's made of sand, and melting hunks of ICE demonstrate the effects of climate change. A motor, connected to a computer with satellite data, replicates the tides.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
How do we know it's the end of the world?

With a dial, one can adjust: 5 years, 10 years, 20 years.

MAYA (V.O.)
Don't we?

CHARLIE (V.O.)
What if it's not?

Maya peers over her shoulder and sees that Charlie has been waylaid by a bunch of COLLEAGUES. He waves her over...

EXT. BOSTON PUBLIC GARDEN - DAY

On Maya's giddy, stupid grin as she whispers to Charlie. They're shoulder to shoulder, her mouth grazing his cheek--

MAYA
I've wanted to do this for years.

CHARLIE
Why haven't you?

MAYA
Never found someone corny enough to do it with me.

REVEAL they are riding a SWAN BOAT, surrounded by tourists.

CHARLIE
Well. Congratulations.

As if to counter this jibe, he tips her chin up toward his. Slowly, they kiss. It's perfect: luxurious and unexpected.

CHARLIE
Too much?

Maya bites her lip and shakes her head, no.

INT. CAMBRIDGE STUDIO - NIGHT

We push through Charlie's tiny apartment. It is indeed oddly shaped, a triangle with an exposed brick wall. Books are everywhere. Stacked on the floor, double-lining a built-in shelf, filling the defunct fireplace. We move through...

...to find Maya and Charlie tumbling into bed, pawing at clothes. Lips on cheeks and necks and eyelids. Charlie is confident and decisive, and Maya's pulse pounds. It's all very connected and powerful, until... abruptly, he stops.

CHARLIE
I am so sorry I have to do this.

Maya sits up, alarmed, covering her body. He reaches into a box, on the floor beside his bed. He grabs an INHALER.

CHARLIE
(he takes a big puff)
I have asthma-- not usually an
issue-- you should be very--
(another puff)
Complimented.
(he can breathe)
Oh my god. I am so sorry. Fuck.

She laughs as he collapses beside her, eyes on the ceiling. The moment lost, perhaps. But: she watches his chest rise and fall. She leans over and kisses him, patient and sexy. His hands move to her body. Her eyes widen--

MAYA
It tastes sweet.

CHARLIE
You freak.

MAYA
You nerd.

Off Maya, dizzy with excitement as he overtakes her...

INT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Maya moves through the churn of the ER. She flops down at a monitor to attack hours' worth of reports. Beside her is KALI, 20s, acerbic, diminutive, a beast of a nurse. Maya's friend. Despite Maya's stress, she glows. Kali clocks this--

KALI
Jesus fucking Christ.

Maya bites back her smile.

EXT. DUMPLING HOUSE - NIGHT

Tucked into a booth at a bright Chinatown hole-in-the wall, Maya and Charlie eat xiaolongbao from steamy straw baskets.

MAYA
It was a dental conference. At an
all-inclusive resort.

Charlie hangs on her every word. She pours tea, milking it--

MAYA
On Sunday, he went back to Warsaw.
And... that was the last time they
were together.

CHARLIE
Are you saying...

MAYA
Yep. I am the product of a one-
night stand.

His jaw slackens in astonishment. She peers past him--

MAYA
I don't know that my mom would've
chosen to have a kid if it hadn't
sort of happened that way... but
she did all right. She lives in
Australia now with her weird
boyfriend. They play a lot of
cricket. She's gotten more
conservative.

(a resigned shrug)
We don't have a tremendous amount
in common.

CHARLIE
I mean... aren't people's lives
fucking *interesting*?

Maya's both charmed by this view and a bit skeptical of it.

MAYA
 If you like pathetic cliches.
 (she hesitates, then)
 And you're really close with your
 family, huh.

CHARLIE
 Yeah. Probably unhealthily so.

MAYA
 That's great.

Maya bites into a big, juicy dumpling, burying her angst.

EXT. BOSTON - NIGHT

Maya and Charlie, arm and arm, wander home, past TOURISTS and STUDENTS and LOCALS, loping through their illuminated city.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE on the face of JASON, late 20s, in a company-branded ball cap, talking fast, pausing only to glug his Pilsner--

JASON
 What they don't tell you is the
 minimum deposit to open these HYSAs
 can be really low, especially ones
 that don't have a brick and mortar.
 But don't get me wrong, they are
 not all created equal.

He cracks open another beer, getting excited.

JASON
 If you call me at my office I can
 walk you through. Call me anytime.
 I'm usually at my desk by 6:30.

REVEAL he's talking to a mild-mannered MIT Philosophy PhD.

MIT FRIEND
 Okay. Thanks. Yeah I'd probably
 call you a little later than that.

Jason smiles. He might seem like a blowhard former frat boy if he wasn't so gangly and approachable. But he's doing his best impression. The discrepancy between what he's going for and what he actually *is* might be endearing, when he's not wasted and taking up all the air in the room.

JASON
And one more thing--

Maya grabs Jason's arm before he can continue. Whispering--

MAYA
Dude, release this poor person. I
want you to meet him.

Jason lets Maya drag him through the party. Past the counter, loaded with dutch ovens and casserole dishes, pizza boxes and takeout containers-- it's a big potluck, Maya's friends and Charlie's converging for the first time.

Charlie's in a circle with Maya's GIRLFRIENDS. Maya parts them and squeezes through, presenting Jason to Charlie.

MAYA
Charlie, this is Jason.

Jason and Charlie click, an immediate rapport. We CUT TO:

LATER

Jason holds court amidst the group, regaling Charlie--

JASON
Late Night, in the basement of the Towers. And there's Maya doing her work-study, hair net, gloves, serving mozzarella sticks and curly fries, and-- what were those things? Those, like, triangle pockets--?

MAYA
Oh, god, I don't even know. They
were good--

JASON
So good. Anyway, I show up with a bunch of the hockey guys, they'd made a bet about how much ranch dressing this one dude could drink. But they didn't want to order anything, and Maya was guarding the condiments--

CHARLIE
You were a hockey player?

JASON
No no they just lived on my floor.
I was...
(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
 bearing witness, I guess, I don't
 even know how-- But God that's--
 really nice that you thought that.
 Jesus.

(to Maya, in disbelief)
 He thought I played division one
 hockey. Man, you made my night.

Charlie shrugs, sincere, as Maya shakes her head...

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - NIGHT

The guests are gone, and, basking in the afterglow of the party, Charlie and Maya clean the kitchen. He dumps out a pitcher of a murky, brown, batched cocktail, perplexed--

MAYA
 (adoringly)
 I told you not to make so much--
 you're literally the only person
 who likes Long Island Iced Teas.
 (he gasps, "offended")
 So what did you think of Jason?

Charlie mugs at her, surprised.

MAYA
 Relax. I've seen him sleep through
 a fire alarm and an evacuation of
 an entire building.

REVEAL: Jason is passed out on their couch.

CHARLIE
 (mouthing)
 I love him.
 (then)
 We're going to hang out next week.

She likes this, but she scoffs, a warning--

MAYA
 Just be prepared that he may flake
 on you, or show up hungover, or
 make you pick him up in, like,
 Eastie because he ended up crashing
 someone's bachelor party...

Charlie moves to her, scooping her up in his arms.

CHARLIE
 Thanks for the heads up.

MAYA

You know he and I dated for like
two seconds sophomore year.

CHARLIE

Oh yeah. He told me *all* about it.

She squirms playfully but he won't let her go. Then--

CHARLIE

Should we take his hat off?

MAYA

Nah. You can throw him a blanket
though.

Charlie releases her and moves to the living room armoire. He absently raps his knuckles against his old Shaker table as he passes. When he reaches for a blanket, he notices something.

CHARLIE

Maya. Did you take Alice Yi's
Jungian psych class?

He tugs down a slim book from the shelf above the linens.

MAYA

Yeah. The dream analysis one.

CHARLIE

When?

She rests her hands on the sink and calculates.

MAYA

Um, Fall of... No. Spring. So that
would've been...

CHARLIE

2011.

MAYA

Sure.

CHARLIE

That's where I know you from.

She reads his smirk, remembering this theory.

MAYA

That was like, the second most
popular class at BU. There must've
been two hundred people--

CHARLIE

Closer to three, I think--

MAYA

Exactly. It's impossible.

CHARLIE

No. It's unlikely, but entirely possible. And I knew it.

Maya knows that glint in his eye: there will be no convincing him otherwise. She sighs as he peruses the book, dreaming.

MAYA (PRELAP)

I didn't say I wouldn't go.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAY

Maya tears through the apartment, towel-drying her hair, as Charlie pursues her. He's dressed, keys in hand, frustrated--

CHARLIE

You're not even close to ready and I'm double-parked outside...

MAYA

I had a monster week, Charlie--

CHARLIE

We've had this planned for a month--

MAYA

What's the big deal? You see them constantly, I'll come next time.

CHARLIE

So you don't want to go.

MAYA

I just told you: I'm exhausted.

CHARLIE

I don't think that's what this is.

MAYA

I'm sorry. I worked a fourteen-hour shift, performed CPR on a guy twice my size as they wheeled his fucking stretcher, had to epi a pregnant woman in anaphylactic shock, and in every other spare minute wrote reports. Yesterday. Does that not sound exhausting enough for you?

She glowers at him.

CHARLIE
Of course it does, but--

MAYA
Sorry if I don't feel like being
around a bunch of people right now.

CHARLIE
It's not 'a bunch of people.' It's
my parents and my brothers, and
they're really looking forward to
meeting you.
(pointed)
And it means something to me.

Triggered, agitated, she starts quickly pulling on clothes.

MAYA
Now you're trying to guilt me.

CHARLIE
No, I'm trying to--

MAYA
You're being a baby.

CHARLIE
Well you're being... shitty.

MAYA
Good one. Ingenious.

She barrels past him. He watches, shocked, as she slips on
her shoes and disappears out the door.

EXT. CHARLES STREET - DAY

Maya trudges angrily, stewing. She gets halfway down the
street before she stops herself. What the hell is she doing?

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAY

The door creaks open. Maya slinks in, calmer. Charlie's at
the table, waiting for her, and she's touched that he stayed.

MAYA
Is it too late to go?

I/E. CAR - DAY

Charlie drives as Maya peers out the window. Silent. Still
uneasy. She fumbles with the radio, scanning stations.

She lands on a song she doesn't recognize, it's in Portuguese, with a sweet, bouncy hook: "The Waters of March" by Antônio Carlos Jobim.

The music settles over them. And after a minute, Charlie starts humming, tapping the steering wheel to its charming tune. Maya smiles, relaxes a bit. She turns up the volume.

A moment passes. Then--

MAYA

What if they don't like me?
 (avoiding eye contact)
 Or what if I don't know how to act
 around them? It's hard for me.
 Other people's family. Family in
 general.

He reaches over and squeezes her shoulder. Then, tender--

CHARLIE

I have to tell you something.
 (bright, buoying)
 I've never brought anyone home
 before. That's how sure I am that
 they're gonna love you.

She forces a smile, but this only ratchets her nerves as they careen down the highway, city giving way to greenery.

EXT. HULL HOUSE - DAY

A gray-shingled, weatherbeaten house, close to the sea.

RUTH, late 60s, silver hair, tan, frayed MIT sweatshirt, sweeps the porch of dog hair, sand, and errant cigarette butts. When she hears a car approach, her head whips up.

RUTH

Ker, he's here!

Maya and Charlie park across the street. Ruth observes them as they gather their things. She notices the way Maya hesitates, the way Charlie slows to meet her place.

When they arrive at her porch, Ruth engulfs Charlie in a big, lingering hug. Her eyes level on Maya as she holds him.

Maya sucks in air, preparing herself: Ruth is down-to-earth but powerful, an immediately intimidating presence.

RUTH

And Maya.

Maya hands Ruth a small bouquet of peonies.

MAYA

It's so wonderful to meet you-- oh--
These are for you.

RUTH

Ahh. Wow.

A bit precious for Ruth's taste. But Maya lifts a rack of Bud Light--

MAYA

Also for you.

Ruth smiles, her dimples deepening.

RUTH

Terrific. Garage fridge, Charlie?

Charlie grabs the beer, and Ruth pulls back, looking at Maya. She rests both hands on Maya's shoulders, absorbing her.

RUTH

God you're beautiful.

On Maya: the weight of Ruth's gaze is overwhelming.

EXT. HULL HOUSE - NIGHT

KERRY, 70, has tiny glasses, a shock of white hair, and a devilish grin like Charlie's. He lords over the picnic table--

KERRY

And this is age ten, mind you, even
after I'd paid the fee-- sent in a
check and filled out the g.d. form
-- this kid looks me straight in
the eye and says no dad, I'm not
joining, because Mensa's elitist.

(Maya laughs)

I said I don't care, I already told
everyone at work about it, and you
are ten, so sign on the dotted
line, pal. Of course he did, he was
so good-natured.

The porch is full, it's a big, loud, family party. Kids run around, neighbors pop over. Charlie's twin BROTHERS, 36, and their WIVES are there; Matt's at the grill, and Colin's on a ladder, fixing a broken set of string lights. Maya's at the picnic table, a bit out of her element, but doing her best to fit into this specific culture.

A huge slobbery dog, WILMA, clomps over and, with a low WOOF, plops her head in Maya's lap. Maya feeds her a potato chip.

COLIN

That was when Charlie got obsessed with zero.

KERRY

Oh my god, the zero phase. No this was after that-- I remember 'cause the Sox were in the playoffs and here comes little Charlie, he can't stop talking about zero--

Charlie reaches over, handing Maya a fresh Bud Light.

CHARLIE

Zero is profound. It's nothing, represented as something--

KERRY

That is our Charlie, right?

MAYA

Brilliant?

Kerry smiles, but that wasn't what he was going to say.

KERRY

Passionate.

Maya ponders this, just as Colin succeeds, and the Christmas lights overhead all TURN ON. The effect is funky and magical, the porch cast in a multi-colored glow. From the grill--

MATT

You guys want burgers, dogs? Maya?

MAYA

I'll do one of each. Thanks, Matt.

Charlie wraps an arm around Maya, appreciating her.

RUTH (O.S.)

Charlie? Help me with the cooler?

Charlie hops up.

INT. HULL HOUSE - NIGHT

Maya ferries dirty plates to Ruth, at the sink. The kitchen is full of barbecue overflow, and the butcher block island is a mess: bags of snacks, stacks of newspapers, paper cups.

MAYA

Can I do anything to--?

Maybe it's the several beers, or the compulsive desire to contribute, to please Ruth, but Maya starts tidying up.

RUTH

Oh, no, honey, you can leave that.
Just sort of the state of things
around here.

Maya stops, worried that she overstepped. Ruth eyes her--

RUTH

You know what? You can feed Wilma.
(Maya hesitates, unsure)
She's already eaten today but she
was so good at dinner. The bag's
right there.

Ruth jerks her head in the vague direction of a pantry.

MAYA

Oh. Sure.

Maya's not sure if this is some kind of test, but she proceeds very carefully, locating the gigantic, unwieldy bag of dog food, lifting it slowly. Ruth watches as Maya tilts the bag, terrified to spill the kibble.

Hearing the food PLINK against the metal bowl, Wilma barrels in. The screen door is ripped, and she charges right through.

MAYA

There ya go, Wilma.

Maya breathes and gives Wilma a scratch behind the ears.

RUTH

I want to show you something.
(Maya approaches her)
Charlie. The first picture we got
before we adopted him.

Ruth shows Maya a grainy, computer print-out picture of baby Charlie, in a tiny frame, perched on the edge of the sink.

RUTH

Kerry's always putting it in
different places around the house.

Maya smiles, finding this very sweet. Ruth leans in, conspiratorial. Her lips curl, her gaze is piercing--

RUTH

He's my favorite person in the world. So. Be good to him.

MAYA

I will.

Ruth rinses her hands, wipes them on a towel.

RUTH

You know he's never brought anyone home.

MAYA

I know! I couldn't believe it when he told me.

RUTH

Really, why?

MAYA

Because you guys are so close.

This lands on Ruth with a sting that Maya doesn't intend.

RUTH

Guess you must be very special.

Before Maya can formulate a response, Ruth throws her arm around Maya's shoulder and steers her out to the porch.

RUTH

Oh sorry honey, shit, I got your fancy blouse all wet.

MAYA

No, don't worry about it.

Through the trembling screen door, Ruth takes a moment, arm clenched around Maya, to behold her family on the porch.

RUTH

Hey, how about an ice cream walk?

EXT. HULL STREET - NIGHT

The whole group walks with their ice creams toward the beach. A pack moving together under the stars. Charlie whispers--

CHARLIE

How're you doing, hanging in?

Maya looks around at everyone talking, laughing, and arguing.

A couple of the KIDS have lit sparklers-- they crackle and hiss, twinkling as they burn. Maya absorbs this vibrant, messy, chaos. They've now reached the sand of the beach...

MAYA

I get it. All of this. It's beautiful.

Charlie considers her, struck by her.

CHARLIE

I love you.

Maya turns to him, surprised.

MAYA

I love you, too.

Without considering the audience, he grabs her and kisses her. Matt whoops, Kerry whistles, and suddenly everyone is cheering. There's a note of teasing, but they're excited for Charlie. He dips Maya a little, leaning into the performance.

Ruth, up ahead, turns. She half-laughs, caught by surprise.

Off Maya's euphoric grin as the kiss ends...

A SERIES OF SHOTS as time accelerates

--MASS GENERAL. All bundled up, Charlie walks Maya to the hospital through a blustery snowstorm.

--FLEA MARKET. Charlie and Maya snake through the aisles, treasure-hunting. Maya shows Charlie a battered old clock.

--BEACON HILL. A U-Haul CHUGS up Maya's street. Charlie leans on the horn. From her stoop, Maya waves, welcoming him home.

--PUBLIC GARDEN. On a picnic blanket, Charlie and Maya pour wine into paper cups. The swan boats glide by, beyond. He whispers an idea. Off her tantalized look, we CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLES STREET - DAY

An ominous sky, purple-gray and churning with clouds, looms over the city. The air is thick, pressure building...

A thermometer outside the hardware store reads: 87 degrees. A raindrop hits the brick sidewalk. And then: a DOWNPOUR.

CHARLIE (PRELAP)

What do we do? Should we cancel?

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie paces, shoeless, wearing a button-down shirt and slacks. He and Maya are in the throes of preparing for a party, but the TV, blaring in the background, shows coverage of an impending summer HURRICANE.

MAYA

Half the time these things blow over. And it's your birthday, everyone will show up, monsoon or--

CHARLIE

It is my birthday.

MAYA

I don't need an out. Do you?

He ceases his pacing. He looks at her. He smiles.

CHARLIE

No.

She continues setting out platters of food. Out the window, the storm ratchets in intensity. Their tiny A/C unit whirs.

CHARLIE

So Jason's going to pick up my parents at the train.

MAYA

All right... You sure he knows to be on time, and all--?

CHARLIE

You don't give him enough credit.

(she accepts this)

Okay, what do you think.

(he holds out his arms)

Should I button the top one, or no?

I can put on a jacket, too.

Maya sizes him up. He's so cute, a little nervous in his outfit, but he looks great. He futzes with the buttons.

MAYA

Save the jacket. Maybe put it on later if you want.

CHARLIE

Yeah yeah, right.

MAYA

You're perfect.

He moves to her, impulsive, and pulls her into a charged embrace-- she laughs, surprised-- their faces close as the rain roars... until... THE POWER CUTS OUT.

The A/C sputters, the TV clicks off, and all they can hear is the howl of the storm. They balk at each other, horrified.

MAYA CHARLIE
No fucking way. No no no no no.

They reel, shocked, and then they burst into laughter.

INT. MAYA AND CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A dinner party in full swing, a GROUP OF FRIENDS are here. The room is dark and covered in candles. Everyone has shed at least one layer of clothing, and they sit around the table in sticky camisoles and t-shirts. The windows are open; water drips down the sills. But it's loud and boisterous and fun--Charlie's BROTHERS mingle with Maya's friends.

BATHROOM

Charlie dumps bags of ice in the bathtub over a few bottles of champagne, wedged in. He hears a knock at the door.

LIVING ROOM

Charlie opens the door to find Jason: nice raincoat, baseball hat, completely drenched. Jason shirks off his jacket--

CHARLIE
Dude you're so late.

JASON
It's fucking insane out there.

Jason hits the wall of heat as he enters the apartment.

JASON
Oh my god.

CHARLIE
I know, it's a thousand degrees in
here, come in. Hey, guys!

Ruth and Kerry trail Jason.

CHARLIE
Okay so champagne is self-serve in
the bathroom, there are room
temperature beers, and can I get
anyone else a drink?

Ruth senses something off, here. She fixes Jason with a look. He shrugs, he doesn't know what's going on, either.

RUTH
 Where's Maya?
 (Charlie stutters)
 Charlie...?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maya stands in front of a mirror wearing a simple white dress, a silk-satin slip with a gauzy overlay. Her flashlight is tilted up on her dresser to cast some light. Her hair is down. She sprays it with dry shampoo. She takes a minute to consider whether this is "enough." She decides that it is.

She picks up a bouquet of flowers from her dresser.

LIVING ROOM

We follow her as she floats through. Her GUESTS turn: there are gasps, cheers, coos. A few of them are already misty-eyed; touched, but clearly not surprised, and Maya laughs.

MAYA
 Oh my god, you told them.

Everyone LAUGHS along with her, looking at Charlie.

MAYA
 I leave the room for one second!

But Charlie hardly even hears the joke because, crouched down by the phone and its speaker, he's frozen, rapt and moved, seeing her this way in the candlelight. His eyes well.

MAYA
 So should we do this?

Everyone goes wild. On Ruth: still shell-shocked. MUSIC from the battery-powered speaker pulls us through:

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

--Maya and Charlie stand with an OFFICIANT, their coffee table pushed aside. Flashlights and iPhones illuminate them.

CHARLIE
 I spend a lot of time in my work
 thinking about awe and wonder
 emotions. What happens to our brain
 chemistry when we marvel at tiny
 things-- or get close to big ones.
 (MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's different from joy, it's more magical. The feeling people get from religion. Travel. A stunning view in nature, or a huge city.

(his eyes shine)

Maya, I get this feeling from you. Every day. From the simple fact that we found each other.

--Maya reads from notes in a tiny bound book.

MAYA

I've never told you this, but I've dreamed of you my entire life. This feeling. I knew it was out there, somehow, but I didn't know if I'd get to have it. It almost seems too good to be true, to be standing here with you, now, my dream. You astonish me.

(their inside joke)

What would Jung say?

--A feast. Champagne is poured into mis-matched juice cups. Jason plinks his with a fork, and rises to give a toast.

JASON

I met Maya in college and I never wanted to hang out with anyone else. She was my favorite person. Until she introduced me to Charlie.

(people laugh)

Show of hands: who here would call Charlie their best friend?

(hands shoot up)

See. It's a dogfight. There are people from Charlie's kindergarten class who still list him as their emergency contact. But guess what, Maya wins. And she deserves it. And that is the biggest compliment I could give to either of you.

Jason gets the tiniest bit emotional, looking at his friends.

JASON

What must it have been like, to know the secret of the universe, to have known it for so long, while the rest of us were stumbling around, looking for that kind of meaning...? You were always so cool about it, too.

(a couple laughs, then)

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
Congratulations, you guys. You've
won the jackpot.

Glasses clink. Off Maya, moved by this...

--At the door. Ruth and Kerry are heading out--

MAYA
Stay! We got you a hotel around the
corner, it was a surprise--

RUTH
It was a surprise.

Ruth hugs Maya, quickly, and Maya feels her bristle.

RUTH
I'm glad you got to do this just
the way you wanted.

Maya chews on this, deciding to swallow it, to brush it aside, as Charlie comes around the corner to say goodbye...

--QUICK FLASHES as the merriment crescendoes: GUESTS feast on a big half-melted buttercream cake, digging in with forks. The champagne bottles disappear from the tub of ice. The last of the late-night revelers go wild, dancing to the battery powered speaker. THUNDER GROWLS, loud, shaking the building. Charlie leans out the window, over the torrential roar, and SCREAMS triumphantly to the empty, dark street below. CUT TO:

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maya and Charlie sit on the cool kitchen floor in their underwear, eating the dredges of the cake.

MAYA
Did you tell Jason?

CHARLIE
What, before? No. Swear to god.

Maya marvels at this. She believes it.

MAYA
He was really great.

CHARLIE
That's what I'm saying. Deep down,
beyond the... whatever... the guy's
got the soul of a poet.

Charlie licks buttercream from his fingertips. Meaningfully--

CHARLIE

I am so drunk.

MAYA

Me too.

CHARLIE

And so hot.

MAYA

I have an idea.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Maya and Charlie stand, naked, in the dark. She plucks the last champagne bottle from the ice-bath, and coaxes him...

MAYA

Okay. We have to do it fast. One...
two... three.

They wince and squeal, cackling as they step INTO THE FREEZING WATER and quickly lower themselves into the tub.

MAYA

Oh my god oh my god oh my
god!

CHARLIE

It hurts-- ooh-- it's okay.
It's nice. Okay. Oh. I like
this. It's okay. It's good.

Charlie tips his head back in shivering bliss.

CHARLIE

This is the best thing we ever did.

MAYA

The cold bath?

CHARLIE

The wedding.

Maya's heart swells. She agrees.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as life whips by:

--BEACH. A low-key, Cape Cod honeymoon. Maya and Charlie walk the tideline, their wedding bands shimmering in the sunshine.

--BEACON HILL. Glorious Halloween in Boston. Charlie and Maya hand out candy on their stoop. Maya watches a young family walk by: PARENTS and a tiny KID dressed as a NURSE. It stirs her. Charlie notices her wistful look. He smiles to himself.

--APARTMENT. A holiday party for all their friends, tinsel-lined windows, tiny tree in the corner. Maya steals Charlie's gift, in the throes of an contentious White Elephant.

--PARAMOUNT DINER. Maya lumbers into a greasy spoon. Windows fogged, bacon sizzling. She flops down beside Charlie and Jason, who have ordered half the menu. She uncoils her scarf--

JASON

Maya. Is this gonna be a big deal?

She peers to: a small, muted TV over the counter. It plays news coverage of the COVID-19 virus. A banner reads: *CDC confirms 15th case of Coronavirus in the U.S.*

If we didn't realize it before, it is clear now: we are in early 2020. Maya doesn't know how to answer this question.

She glances at Charlie, stricken. Off her withering look...

INT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Maya wears a surgical mask over her N-95, plastic goggles, a disposable surgical gown, and a scrub cap.

MAYA

We have him on Vimpat in high doses. Dilantin. He finished Valproic today. He's on Keppra, a high dose... We can't seem to keep his pH in a normal range.

She's updating a DOCTOR in the corner of a busy thoroughfare in the ER. A chaotic din around them, as NURSES, DOCTORS, and environmental TEAM, in various degrees of PPE, move through. The hospital is totally overwhelmed; it's all hands on deck.

DOCTOR

And his pulmonary status is--

MAYA

Worsening.

The doctor consults the patient's chart. Someone CALLS for her attention, and she snaps up.

DOCTOR

I have to check on Bed 11, young mom on Ecmo. I'll be back--
(handing Maya the chart)
FaceTime the family.

A grim nod, and Maya keeps moving.

INT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

As Maya hurries down a corridor, she crosses with Kali, who's getting on shift. A quick, short-hand check-in as they pass--

MAYA

How're you doing? How was your night?

KALI

Okay. You? How's Bed 9, are they--?

MAYA

Hanging in. On a vent now.

Kali absorbs this as Maya hustles on... past a glass room marked with an X for "dirty," a "resus room."

INT. PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Maya holds up a cell phone as a family FaceTimes with an INTUBATED PATIENT. Maya tips her face away as they communicate tearfully in Armenian. The patient, of course, cannot respond.

INT. ANOTHER PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Maya checks on an elderly MAN, assessing his drip and monitors. He's crumpled in his tiny bed, mask loose around his face. He doesn't quite have the wind to speak--

MAYA

Mr. Alvarez. Feeling any better?

She flicks on the light, opens the curtains.

MAYA

One of the doctors showed me your restaurant's review in the Globe.

He is very weak, but at this mention, he perks up.

MAYA

Oh my god, that French dip? I can't wait to try it. My husband is gonna order half the menu.

He squints, and his mouth twitches, an attempt at a smile.

MAYA

Now let's see if we can get you to take a few sips of water, okay?

INT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Maya cranes over a monitor. A chart shows ICU beds marked with orange bars, ER space is purple. Everything is full.

She jerks up as she hears the sound of a CODE, and the scramble of professionals RUSHING to revive someone.

Maya powers through, focused on the work in front of her.

EXT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Maya staggers out, bleary-eyed and wired. A line snakes through the auxiliary triage space, set up in the parking lot. With the cry of a SIREN, Maya fights the urge to flinch.

She cuts down Charles Street. Beacon Hill is a ghost town. All of its charming shops and restaurants are closed.

When Maya finally encounters other people, a COUPLE walking a dog, they clock her scrubs and cross the street.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maya pushes through the door. She stops right in the entry and strips off her scrubs. She puts her N-95 in a paper bag and seals it. She slips out of her socks and underwear.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Next time we'll talk about soft
fascination and neurodivergence.

Maya shoves her balled up clothes straight into the washing machine. She twists the dial to EXTRA HOT. From a make-shift workspace in the corner, Charlie wraps up a Zoom lecture--

CHARLIE

So check out the paper on Attention
Restoration Theory in environmental
psychology. Okay? Thanks, all.

(then, to Maya)

Hi.

She raises a hand in hello. He doesn't move to her as, naked and depleted, she stalks across the room to the shower.

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

Maya stares at the tile wall, disassociating. Through the steam, we see Charlie venture in, a blur.

CHARLIE
Hey.

He passes her a beer through the shower curtain.

MAYA
Thanks.

He sits on the floor to talk to her, back against the wall.

MAYA
They turned the hockey rink into a
morgue.

He hangs his head and sighs deeply, feeling for her.

CHARLIE
At least, tomorrow--

MAYA
I have to go in.

CHARLIE
I thought--

MAYA
They're short staffed. Everyone's
sick.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN

Maya's eyes spring open before her alarm goes off. Adrenaline already coursing through her body. She curls up against sleeping Charlie, savoring a few moments of peace.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAWN

Maya pulls her scrubs from the drier. She puts on her mask. Removes her sneakers from their bag. She offers a goodbye wave to Charlie, who's at the coffeemaker.

MAYA
Love you.

INT. MASS GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Maya, game face on, checks on a PATIENT with a bone-rattling cough. Someone calls a CODE BLUE. Maya races to the resus room. Doctors and nurses descend on a patient in distress...

Maya's gutted when she registers: it's Mr. Alvarez.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maya trudges in, shattered. She stops in her usual spot, where she would kick off her shoes and quarantine her clothes, but she cannot. She just does not have the energy.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
I thought you'd notice.

She jolts to attention. She sees he has laid out a beautiful takeout meal for them, the table set with candles and cloth napkins, like it's a date at a proper restaurant.

She tugs off her mask. But she cannot move.

MAYA
That's so nice, Charlie.

Her head falls to her hands.

CHARLIE
Bad one? Hey...

She nods. He goes to her, and she lets him hold her, scrubs and all. He rubs her back as she collapses against him.

CHARLIE
We are going to get through this.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maya, fresh from the shower, hair combed back, stares at her phone on the couch, scrolling catatonically. In the kitchen, Charlie sanitizes groceries with Clorox wipes. On the record player: Jobim croons in Portuguese, their favorite album.

A SIREN wails, tearing down the street outside. Maya shudders. Then, she straightens, a flicker of resolve--

MAYA
When all this is over I just want
to run away.

He sets down a Cloroxed box of cereal, serious.

CHARLIE
Let's run away. We should travel.
Seriously, where would you...?

MAYA
Everywhere. I want to go to all the
places we've talked about but never
gone. Japan.
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
I want to eat sushi in Osaka. And
Europe-- Portugal and Paris and--

CHARLIE
I'm writing this down.

He grabs a pencil, and the grocery receipt-- and scribbles.

CHARLIE
Where else?

MAYA
Can you believe I've never been to
California?

CHARLIE
Really? It's going on the list.

MAYA
I might be able to take a leave for
a while, or do Telehealth.

CHARLIE
I could apply for a sabbatical.

She stares off, allowing herself to dream. Feeling a bit of
hope. On Charlie: the romance of this stirs him...

CHARLIE
And then what? Once we've traveled
the world? And the West Coast of
the United States? We come home,
and...

A quiet beat. Maya side-eyes him with a smirk.

CHARLIE
What? I didn't say anything.

MAYA
I can hear you thinking.

He rests his pencil on the counter.

CHARLIE
Look I want whatever you want.
We're already a family.
(he shrugs, thinking)
But I just... I don't know. I think
we'd have a lot of fun.
(no pressure)
I'm just dreaming.

She closes her eyes.

MAYA

It used to scare me so much. But
with you I can picture it. Which
also scares me, I guess.

She opens her eyes and she sees that he's looking at her, so
handsome, with that wistful Charlie glassy-eyed smile.

MAYA

Oh Jesus Christ don't--

CHARLIE

I'm not doing anything!
(sincere)
I'm just excited about our life.

She's very moved by this until another siren SCREECHES.

CHARLIE

Let me turn up this music.

He moves to the record player. The song crescendoes, volume
intensifying, until, abruptly, Jobim's singing CUTS OUT.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark, still, the middle of the night. A COUGH cracks
through the silence. Another cough, and then a whole string.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

--A PULSE OXIMETER clips to a finger.

--Maya, green but on her feet, paces. Charlie lies in bed,
curled up, clearly ill. His cough is wet and deep.

MAYA (INTO PHONE)

I don't know, Ruth. I feel
terrible.
(a little frustrated)
Yes. The asthma. I'm well aware.
(then, generous)
He'll be okay.
(listening to a question)
No, I don't have it that badly.

--Charlie wheezes, roiling in bed, sweaty.

--Maya retrieves Charlie's inhaler.

--Maya takes Charlie's temperature.

--She tries to spoon him some broth, but he turns away.

MAYA
Please. You need the calories.

--Morning. Maya presses a cool compress to his head. She listens to his breathing. She checks the pulse ox again.

MAYA
Honey, your O2 is not great.

CHARLIE
It's 93.

MAYA
Ninety is hospital time, okay?

CHARLIE
Eighty-eight. That's what you--

MAYA
You're short of breath, and--

CHARLIE
Not if I... focus... on breathing.
(they lock eyes)
You said everyone is crashing the
ER. And you can't go with me.

She wrestles with this, anguished.

CHARLIE
I don't want to go to the hospital.
(he inhales, a rasp)
I don't want to be waiting there--
(desperate)
I don't want to be alone. Please.

This crushes her. She tests his O2 again. It's holding at 93.

--Night. Maya watches Charlie, wracked with guilt.

--BATHROOM. Day. Charlie lies in the tub with a towel over his head. Maya peers in. He gives her a thumbs up, but she can tell he's hurting.

--In bed, Maya rubs Charlie's back as he COUGHS. He wheezes, struggling to catch his breath. She clips his finger.

MAYA
Ninety. We're going. Come on.

CHARLIE
Please, no. Let me rest here. Just
let me rest.

He cowers around her body. He clutches his head, woozy.

CHARLIE
Whoa...

MAYA
Are you dizzy?

CHARLIE
I don't want to move.

MAYA
Deep breaths, and if it doesn't go up, we're going to the hospital in five minutes.

CHARLIE
Can you just hold onto me.

She holds him, rubbing his back, tormented. His cough SHAKES his body. She takes his O2: 89. Maya stiffens, commanding--

MAYA
Charlie. We're going.

EXT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAY

It's a blur as TWO PARAMEDICS load Charlie, on a stretcher, into an ambulance. Maya, wearing a mask, argues with one--

MAYA
But I work at MGH--

PARAMEDIC 1
Ma'am I just said: we cannot take you.

Maya leans in through the back, reaching for Charlie. She touches his ankle, all she can grab, gives it a squeeze--

MAYA
It's gonna be okay, honey. I'll get to you. All right?

They make blistering eye contact until Charlie lowers his head, COUGHING, just trying to breathe. Maya darts a look to Paramedic 2, who's sympathetic and already in the ambulance.

MAYA
He has asthma, did you note that--

PARAMEDIC 2
We did.

MAYA
 Tell them to call me as soon as
 he's triaged, please--

On Maya: as the ambulance doors SLAM SHUT in her face.

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - DAY

Maya paces, phone pressed to her cheek, talking to Kali.

MAYA (INTO PHONE)
 You need to sneak me in.

KALI (THROUGH PHONE)
 Let's get him stable and we'll see.
 He syncopized, Maya--

MAYA (INTO PHONE)
 What?

Maya listens to the whir of the hospital around Kali's side of the conversation: the VOICES, the orders, the beeping and humming of machines, the hustle as she moves through--

MAYA (INTO PHONE)
 Kali are you with him right now?
 What's his O2 sat? And do they all
 know that he has asthma? He should
 be priority for--

KALI
 They're intubating him.

This is an escalation, and it lands on Maya, hard--

KALI
 I'm gonna have to call you back.

A cruel BEEP as Kali hangs up. Off Maya, agonized...

INT. BEACON HILL APARTMENT - LATER

Maya, nerves racing, paces. Every second drips by. She stares at the phone, willing it to ring again. She peers over all their stuff, their life: Charlie's books; the receipt lying on the counter, the list of places in the world to visit.

On Maya: fuck it. She cannot stand this anymore. She moves to grab her keys, her mask... just as her phone RINGS.

MAYA (INTO PHONE)
 Kali I'm coming, and you're gonna
 get me in, all right? I don't care--

KALI (THROUGH PHONE)
 Maya, stop.
 (then, grave)
 You need to talk to him.

Maya freezes. *You need to talk to him.* She knows this tone. She hears the symphony of machines, beeping slowly.

KALI
 He's not doing well on the tube.

MAYA
 What? Well try another intervention
 -- get him on ecmo. Put him on--

KALI
 We're trying everything. But you
 need to say whatever you need to
 say now--

MAYA
 Can we FaceTime? KALI
 He's really not doing-- no,
 no time--

MAYA
 Fuck. Okay okay--

KALI
 Putting it to his ear.

The b.g. noise shifts slightly. It takes all of Maya's strength to steady her breathing, to feign calm, to speak--

MAYA
 Charlie? Hi honey. I just want to say I love you. And everything is going to be fine. We are going to get through this, just like you said, and we are going to do so many wonderful things, and we're going to travel the world and we're going to have a family. Charlie, hang in there. Don't go. All right? Because we have--

A loud, low, BEEP erupts in the background. A CODE is called. Shouting VOICES. Then: a shuffle of activity as a team descends to help. She listens, mouth agape. Now: it's the sound of STEPS moving away, fast. ORDERS, impossible to discern. Maya's disoriented: what's happening?

MAYA
Charlie. Kali. Is someone there?

Maya's voice quakes. An impossibly long, harrowing moment passes. And then, here's Kali, fighting to stay professional--

KALI
Maya I am so sorry.

On Maya's face as her world implodes.

She stands, motionless, phone pressed to her ear. All Maya can hear is tough-as-nails Kali, swallowing tears on the other end of the line, and the din of the hospital.

We stay with Maya, frozen, devastated, until we CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Maya cradles her head in her hands. A RING drones. She is making a call. The crackle of an answer, a far-off VOICE--

MAYA
Ruth?

RUTH (THROUGH PHONE)
Maya, how's it going? How is he?

Ruth's voice is so small, as though she's in a rainstorm. Maya is dumbstruck, a sob trapped at the back of her throat.

RUTH (THROUGH PHONE)
Wait, Maya hang on one second I've got suds all over my hands-- just a minute-- I've got it on speaker but I can't-- hang on.

The dog barks in the background, the news on the TV blares. And Maya hears the rush of water cease. Her face twitches. She tries to remain steely, in nurse mode.

Ruth clicks off speakerphone and her voice booms, suddenly loud and clear.

RUTH
So how's he doing?

MAYA
Ruth, he's gone.

RUTH
What?

Maya teeters on the edge of collapse. But she soldiers on, stifling her own overwhelm and pain to get through this--

MAYA
Charlie died at the hospital.

An excruciating beat. Ruth stammers, in disbelief--

RUTH
What-- the hospital? When-- Are you at the-- you're with him?

MAYA
No, no I couldn't-- the paramedics took him to Mass General and I--

RUTH
You sent him in there alone?

A cold chill shoots through Maya.

RUTH
No-no-no. This can't be right.
There's been some mistake.

MAYA
Ruth--

RUTH
Maya I have to go.

CLICK. She hangs up the phone. Off Maya, brutalized.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Maya hunches on the couch in the dark. Trance-like. So shocked she cannot move her body. Perhaps hours have passed this way, or days, or years, who can say?

A SIREN tears by. She doesn't flinch. She doesn't hear it.

But a sharp BUZZ cuts through and reaches Maya: she startles, jumping involuntarily and propelling herself to the intercom. She presses the button and listens. On the other side--

RUTH (O.S.)
Maya?

Ruth's voice is a low, guttural growl.

RUTH (O.S.)
Maya come down here.

MAYA

Ruth... I... I can't. I'm still positive, and I...

RUTH (O.S.)

I don't give a fuck about that.

Before she can respond, Ruth's despair transforms into fury.

RUTH (O.S.)

They won't let me into the hospital! They won't let me into the fucking hospital, Maya! Come down here. You need to tell me what happened, how did it, why-- How could you let this happen? COME DOWN HERE NOW!

Maya presses her body to the wall. She hears a WAIL, ferocious and raw, and she moves to the window. Trembling, she looks out, and sees Ruth screaming on the sidewalk below.

RUTH

You did this. You did this.

(feral)

What the fuck have you done?

Maya backs away from the window as another siren shrieks. She closes her eyes, clenches them tight, withdrawing into herself. She waits for silence.

She waits. And waits. It feels like a lifetime.

Finally: it is quiet. Ruth is gone. And Maya's eyes open.

She is still. Zombie-like. Her heart pulverized. Then, in a sudden burst of movement, she TEARS OFF. And we CUT TO BLACK.

I/E. TRAM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: **Maya, mid-30s, three years older than when we saw her last.**

We hover over her face, an unlit cigarette between her lips. Time has weighed heavily on her, and she effuses angst. But there's also something free about her, in the worst way: she is completely untethered.

She sways with the tram, legs splayed wide, taking up space.

As it rattles to a stop, she rises, lighting her cigarette before she steps off. A PREGNANT WOMAN sitting by the door glares and clicks her tongue.

MAYA

Oh, relax.

The woman gawks, disturbed, as Maya hops off the tram. Apparently the woman understands English, because we're in...

EXT. LISBON, PORTUGAL - NIGHT

The tram, a yellow cable car covered in graffiti, disappears behind Maya, chugging up a steep hill.

We follow her as she weaves through the Alfama district... winding down a narrow street... passing an ornate church... a stunning wall of azulejos, centuries-old blue-and-white tile. A pigeon coos, perched on the head of a statue of some saint as she cuts through a cobblestone alley...

INT. EXPAT BAR - NIGHT

Maya drains her glass of wine, killing the bottle. She bites into a buttery, flaky, foie gras pie, devouring it.

Behind her, a couple of men, TOURISTS, shoot the shit. Their words are inaudible, but she registers the tenor of their voices, that too-loud, nasally pitch: American English.

She raises her head. To the bartender, projecting--

MAYA

Glass of water, when you have a moment. Thanks.

The guys turn to her, hearing her accent.

GUY 2

Hi. Hey. Are you American?

Maya cranes in their direction and nods.

GUY 1

Us too. From Cincinnati. We're here for a wedding. Are you on vacation?

MAYA

No.

GUY 2

Do you live here?

Maya considers this question.

MAYA
Sort of. For now.

Maya locks eyes with Guy 2: he's freckly, a little sunburned, soft-bodied. She takes a swig of her water.

GUY 2
Are you... Meeting someone...?

Maya's eyes narrow.

GUY 2
I just mean-- I-- you should join us. Next round's on me.

Maya shrugs, why not. CUT TO:

EXT. PRINCIPE REAL - NIGHT

Maya stumbles up a hilly street with Guy 2, drunk. She slows. Then, suddenly, at the edge of a small park, she pukes.

GUY 2
Oh.

He halfheartedly moves toward her to help, but she waves him off, and he doesn't argue, retreating to a safe distance. She grips the wrought iron fence as she wretches.

A COUPLE, early 20s, traipsing through the park, laugh at her and comment in Portuguese. She wipes her mouth. She wants to shout back at them, but she doesn't know what to say.

She spits a few times and looks up at the guy.

MAYA
Uhh, sorry... Do you still want to--

GUY 2
Oh. Oh yeah, I'm good.

She's surprised.

MAYA
All right.

He ushers her on.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

In the bathroom, Maya brushes her teeth with toothpaste on the tip of her finger. She rinses. She moves into...

BEDROOM

The guy leans awkwardly against his bed. Maya approaches.

MAYA
We don't have to kiss.

He moves in and kisses her sloppily.

MAYA
Wow. You're disgusting.

He laughs. She pushes into him, knocking him into bed.

LATER

They have sex. We're on Maya's face as she disappears: in her mind, she's gone someplace else entirely.

LATER

Maya wakes to the gentle snoring of Guy 2. He's lying on his stomach, his wide back exposed, so pale he's nearly translucent, like a lizard warming itself in an aquarium.

She peels herself up quietly.

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

She trudges past a supply closet. She reaches in and grabs a few mini containers of shampoo, a bar of soap. There's a tower of toilet paper rolls. She considers, then grabs one of those, too, and stuffs it in her purse.

INT. BAKERY - DAWN

Maya buys a loaf of bread from a tiny shop, the first customer of the day. When she roots for her wallet, she rifles past the roll of toilet paper. The BAKER notices. She half-expects him to comment, perhaps she wants him to, but he doesn't care. He just wraps Maya's bread and hands it to her.

EXT. LISBON STREET - DAWN

Maya rips hunks of sweet bread and eats it while she wanders home, cutting through squares and down steep crooked staircases, past a gaggle of PARTIERS returning from a discotheque in Barrio Alto, past WORKERS in uniforms headed to their shifts. Utterly anonymous.

INT. LISBON APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

She walks up the creaky, narrow steps to a small rented room.

INT. LISBON APARTMENT BUILDING - RENTED ROOM - DAY

It's a dusty, quirky, AirBnB situation, a flat furnished with someone else's things. We clock meager evidence of Maya's presence, here: her half-open suitcase, a laptop balanced on a bunch of books, alcohol bottles, takeout containers.

On the windowsill is her Walkman. Charlie's old sweater hangs on a doorknob. The few relics of her life in Boston.

The sound of RUNNING WATER draws us to...

BATHROOM

Maya stands naked over the tiny claw-footed tub. She runs the water ICE COLD. She steps in, sinks down, wincing at first, but it relaxes her. Eyes closed, she eats the rest of her bread, shivering in the bath.

INT. RENTED ROOM - DAY

Maya, somewhat pulled together, perches in front of her laptop, headphones on, doing a TELEHEALTH shift. QUICK CUTS:

-On Maya's face as she addresses a patient on her screen.

MAYA

Your surgery was Tuesday?

(listening)

Okay. And did you *finish* the round of antibiotics?

-Maya doesn't flinch as she assesses a bleeding laceration.

MAYA

Yeah, that looks deep. You need to go to the ER, or urgent care's fine. But first I want you to clean the wound, let me walk you through.

-Maya talks to an anxious young WOMAN with a crying BABY.

MAYA

And what's her temperature now?

-Maya, slouched, talks to a GRIEF THERAPIST, a funky white-haired lady with turquoise jewelry, kind and enthusiastic.

MAYA

I used to rehab antiques. Fix things up. But I don't want stuff anymore, and I--

GRIEF THERAPIST

I think it should be an entirely new activity, something you've never tried before, not connected to your old life. Now here's one-- this is just an idea-- but... *ikebana*, the Japanese art of flower arranging. It's tactile, beautiful, and surprisingly physical...

Maya covers her frown, trying to be polite. And we CUT TO:

INT. RENTED ROOM - DAY

Maya plays a game of Tetris on her phone-- the floating, colorful blocks mesmerize her. She passes hours this way.

Light drains from her room as the day wears on.

EXT. LISBON - DAY

Maya navigates the craggy sidewalk. She passes a storefront, and something snags her attention: through glass windows, she sees it's a DANCE STUDIO. A class of WOMEN mark a modern routine. They look so free, so present...

Maya ponders going inside, but instead, she trudges on.

INT. EXPAT BAR - NIGHT

Maya's at her usual stool, halfway through a bottle of wine.

In an adjacent PRIVATE AREA some FRIENDS have a dinner party.

She hears the sound of drunk voices singing HAPPY BIRTHDAY in English. She cocks her head. She watches as a beautiful cake is delivered to the head of the table.

As the BIRTHDAY GUY leans in to blow out his candles, a FRIEND with a camera crouches to snap a picture, lit by one of the tall candlesticks on the table. A WOMAN beside him jostles closer, bumping into the candle, which wobbles-- LIGHTING HER SLEEVE ON FIRE. Before she notices, the photographer drops his camera and claps his hand over the flame, putting it out, but BURNING HIS PALM in the process.

The Birthday Guy blows out the candles, oblivious at first, until all of his guests shrieks and scramble--

Maya sips her wine, debating whether to intervene.

PORTUGUESE FRIEND
Ice, get him some ice!

ENGLISH FRIEND
No no, butter--

BIRTHDAY GUY
There's some over here--

When a hand dips into that butter ramekin, Maya cannot abide.

MAYA
Hi hi, excuse me, sorry. Do not put butter on that burn--

Everyone freezes and looks at this disheveled interloper.

MAYA
It could contain bacteria, especially sitting out with that cheese, you don't want an infection. Plus it retains heat.

She locks eyes with the photographer: FELIX, 30s, British, bright-eyed, tattoos, leather jacket. He is shockingly good-looking, and, based on his clothes and his affect, perhaps trafficking in "cool." She's both suspicious and intrigued.

MAYA
I'm a nurse.

EXT. LISBON STREET - NIGHT

Water plumes from the mouth of a stone FISH, a fountain carved into an enclave. Maya stands with Felix while he runs his hand under its stream.

FELIX
Fifteen minutes, really?

MAYA
Get comfortable.

FELIX
What do you think?

He shows her the wound. Beneath the burn, which is starting to bubble, there is a tiny tattoo of a sparrow.

MAYA

So far so good. The blister's
normal.

(then, can't help it)
What's the little bird?

FELIX

That's for my daughter. A character
from her favorite book.

MAYA

Ah.

FELIX

She's four.

(then)

Do you work in a hospital?

MAYA

Used to. A thousand years ago.

She turns to go back inside.

FELIX

You won't stay?

MAYA

I'd like to finish my drink.

FELIX

Let me take you out for a fresh
one. In about thirteen minutes.

He smiles, and a strange thrill shoots through her.

MAYA

Why?

FELIX

Why?

MAYA

What about your friends?

FELIX

They'll hardly notice. We've been
together all day...

(he cocks his head)
Help me escape.

Maya's compelled, but she looks down, reluctant. Honest--

MAYA

I'm not really, like, a good time.

FELIX

Well I am.
(she peers up)
And you look like you need a
distraction.

When her eyes meet his, it's electric.

I/E. LISBON - NIGHT

A SERIES OF SHOTS of their night out

--PHARMACY. Maya pulls vaseline, gauze, and alcohol from the shelves, reading labels, all business.

FELIX (O.S.)

So when you're not doing telehealth
or rescuing people in bars--

--STREET. Under the neon light of a old-style Fado club, Maya cleans and dresses Felix's hand, applying vaseline.

MAYA (O.S.)

I move around. Eat. Drink. Too much
of both, probably.

FELIX (O.S.)

So what, you're waiting to die?

MAYA (O.S.)

I guess. I look at art. At people.
I wander around.

She wraps it carefully, a little tight.

--A COCKTAIL BAR. Sexy and dark. They drink Caipirinhas.

FELIX (O.S.)

That's what brought you to Europe?
Solitary hedonism?

--DIVE BAR. Steins of Sagres beer slosh and clang, cheers.

MAYA (O.S.)

Distraction. In your words.

--STREET. Outside the unmarked door of a hip discotheque.

MAYA

We're too old!

FELIX

What are you talking about?

He scoffs at her and glides inside. Reluctant, she follows.

--On the DANCE FLOOR. Maya forgets herself, dancing alone, amidst all the sexy, sweaty, kids in their early 20s. She's transported, and her movements are sort of strange: she plods, she stomps, she hangs, limp. But there is release.

MAYA (V.O.)
My husband died very suddenly.

At a certain point she remembers Felix, across the floor. He dances contentedly, on his own. He doesn't do too much, he's not trying to get in her space, or attract her attention, but in his own low-key way, he's a shockingly good dancer, and she's captivated. Their eyes lock. He holds her gaze.

FELIX (V.O.)
I am so sorry.

MAYA (V.O.)
Thank you.

EXT. TAKEAWAY WINDOW - NIGHT

Famished and drunk, they devour prego: drippy beef sandwiches pounded with garlic, doused in cheap yellow mustard.

MAYA
It's amazing how much you can talk
about your dead husband and men
still want to fuck you.

Felix laughs, nearly dropping his sandwich. Maya blanches.

MAYA
I'm not saying you. I just mean
generally--

FELIX
No, I get it. That's a good
observation.
(he chuckles, then)
Get some more mustard. Here.

He doctors up her sandwich and she takes a huge bite. It's so good. Then, suddenly vulnerable, her mouth full--

MAYA
I never do this.

He ponders her.

FELIX

So what will you do? When you've run out of distractions, traveling Europe?

MAYA

I don't know, kill myself?

Felix's mouth twitches. His brow furrows.

MAYA

Oh. I'm sorry.

FELIX

A bit crass.

MAYA

You're right. I apologize. Really.

He takes her in, and he reads her sincerity.

FELIX

My brother.

MAYA

Fuck.

FELIX

You're not the only one with a story.

She nods, regretful. After a beat, tender--

MAYA

What was his name?

FELIX

Leon.

(he softens)

Thank you for asking. People don't--

MAYA

I know. My husband was Charlie. Do you want to get another drink? Or just keep walking for a while?

EXT. CAIS DE SODRE - NIGHT

Maya and Felix meander down to the river.

FELIX

I remember feeling terrified for the grief to fully hit.

MAYA

Yes. Bracing for it--

FELIX

But it sort of just seeped in everywhere, and then it's like the air, all around you. For so long.

MAYA

How long? Forever?

He hesitates. In his eyes, she reads the answer: yes, and no.

FELIX

People say the dumbest shit. "He's in a better place now." "He's alive, in you." What the fuck? What does that do for me?

(she laughs)

How were your friends and family?

MAYA

Can I tell you something? Sometimes I wish I could forget. But I remember everything. The way he chewed his pencils. The way he'd make friends everywhere, literally everywhere, walking across the street, in line at the DMV. How smart he was, how hopeful.

(then)

I'm not special. I just got lucky. I found this person who made everything bright and funny and special. It's the thing everyone wants and I... I got it... I won the lottery... and then...

A meager shrug. Poof. She looks at him, suddenly shy.

MAYA

Sorry.

FELIX

What for?

She nods, grateful. They walk on in comfortable silence.

EXT. CAIS DE SODRE - NIGHT

We watch from some distance as Felix and Maya stop. Their bodies tilt together. They kiss. And then, like a switch flipping, feverish and wild, they make out in the street.

INT. FELIX'S FRIEND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Felix and Maya tumble through the door of a guest room, pulling at clothes, kissing aggressively, it's sticky and messy and drunk, fast and urgent, intense. On Maya: as he pulls off his shirt, her breath catches in her chest, he's almost overwhelmingly attractive to her. It's exhilarating.

LATER

Barely dawn. Maya eyes Felix, asleep beside her. She rises to go, collecting her clothes, quietly. Until... he stirs...

FELIX

You're off?

MAYA

Yeah.

She halts. Perhaps wanting him to object, but he just smiles.

FELIX

Lovely to meet you.

MAYA

Don't forget to change that
dressing.

He peers down at his hand as she slips out the door.

INT. RENTED ROOM - DAY

In front of her computer, an exhausted, hungover Maya--

MAYA

And what color is your mucus?

She chugs a glass of water, listening to her patient.

LATER

Maya doom-scrolls on her phone.

LATER

Maya reaches to the windowsill where her Walkman is carefully set aside. With some ceremony, she uncoils its cord and puts the headphones over her ears. She hits PLAY, and the sound of Charlie's tape rolls through her consciousness.

By now, the notes are only hanging on by a thread. The loops are dwindling. She closes her eyes, listening to this hum...

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

This SOUND continues as Maya walks the street. She passes the glass-windowed front of the dance studio. She lingers on the corner. Then: stubs out her cigarette, and changes direction.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Maya fills out a little form before a desk. A pert, young, DANCE TEACHER, brimming with pep, helps her--

TEACHER

Level one contemporary, every other Saturday... ah it's full. But... we have Salsa, starting right now--

MAYA

Oh, now? I don't know if I--

Maya hesitates, looking down at her clothes.

TEACHER

No, no, you're perfectly fine. Come come, you'll love it.

Before she can object, the teacher ushers her into the class.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Maya, bare feet, jeans rolled to her ankles, stands against the mirror. The teacher, speaking in Portuguese, demonstrates some basic moves. Maya peers around, a little embarrassed.

A simple two step, a shimmy of the hips. A foot pressed forward, and then back, and then planted with attitude...

TEACHER

(in Portuguese)

Now, let's get in pairs, we'll mirror each other.

Everyone couples up immediately, and Maya panics as the group splits. The only other person left behind is BEATRIZ, 80s, five feet tall, in a colorful headscarf. She gives Maya a sheepish smile. Maya returns it.

LATER

Maya mirrors Beatriz, who moves extremely slowly. The effect is somewhat intimate as Maya tries to stay synchronized.

TEACHER

(in Portuguese)

Now: left leg back. Hip. Pause for
a beat, stay with your partner--

Maya glances back at the teacher, unsure of herself.

MAYA

(to Beatriz in Portuguese)

I'm sorry, my Portuguese is so-so.

BEATRIZ

I speak English.

(then)

Don't worry. Just follow me, I've
taken this class before.

Maya nods, appreciative. Off Beatriz, sliding her hips...

EXT. GINJINHA - DAY

Maya and Beatriz lean against a white-washed building,
overlooking a cobblestone square. They drink afternoon
ginjinhas-- cherry liqueur cocktails.

Local CHARACTERS-- old timers and artists-- buzz around,
enjoying their drinks. Across the square, a SINGER, 20s,
performs a Fado song, an aching ballad of lost love.

BEATRIZ

I used to hate Fado.

MAYA

How come?

BEATRIZ

Salazar loved fado, fado, fado. So
it reminded me of that time.

Maya turns to her, curious, but cautious...

MAYA

What was it like, before the
revolution?

BEATRIZ

Pff. You couldn't make art, you
couldn't talk politics, you
couldn't kiss a boy in the streets.
Heroin was cheaper than cigarettes.
(off Maya's look)

If you were...

(MORE)

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)
(she gestures: slumped)
You couldn't fight the dictator.

Maya processes this. Beatriz relaxes, watching the singer.

BEATRIZ
But I see these young beautiful
people, taking up the traditional
music. They make it new again.
(she beams at the singer)
And now, I think I like it.
(she turns to Maya)
You, too.

MAYA
Sorry?

BEATRIZ
So young and beautiful. Your whole
life ahead of you. Isn't it
wonderful?

Maya mulls this, a pang in her heart.

EXT. LISBON - NIGHT

Maya passes a chinquillo court, full of graphic tile. Elderly
MEN behind the chain-link fence ARGUE about a point scored...

When Maya turns the corner, she can't help but crane toward
the BAR where she met Felix. After a moment, she walks on.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Another class is about to begin, and Maya, dressed
appropriately this time, looks around as the students
assemble. But there is no sign of Beatriz. Maya deflates.

The teacher notices this as the other students pair off...

TEACHER
(in English)
That's okay. A solo salsa is *very*
good, *very* sensual, Maya.

Maya swallows.

LATER

On Maya's reflection in the mirror across the room. She
studies herself as she attempts to salsa. She's mortified;
she's not very good. But above all, she's lonely.

EXT. EXPAT BAR - NIGHT

Maya turns down a familiar corner. She stops in her tracks when she sees, outside the bar... Felix is waiting.

Their eyes lock from across the street. He smiles. So does she. They move toward each other, this tense, primal pull.

INT. RENTED ROOM - NIGHT

Felix and Maya tumble into Maya's place. Frenetic and eager. He pushes her to the wall. Every cell in her body is on fire as he kisses her neck, her chest. She rips off her clothes--

LATER

They lie in bed. He turns to face her, leaning on his elbow.

FELIX

I'm going to the Algarve for a week. There's a dance festival. I'm photographing it. And then I go to Paris to see my kid. Why don't you come with me, to the beach?

(she's surprised)

It's just a week...

She brims with longing, but she holds herself back.

FELIX

I mean if you're waiting to die, why not have some fun?

He kisses her shoulder, and goosebumps bloom on her skin.

FELIX

Think about it. I'm on the train tomorrow at noon.

I/E. LISBON ORIENTE STATION - DAY

Maya emerges onto the train platform, beneath the sweeping awnings overhead. She scans the passengers, and spots Felix leaned against the wall, smoking a cigarette.

His mouth falls open. He clutches his heart and staggers back dramatically, as if struck by the sight of her. She smirks.

I/E. TRAIN - DAY

The scenery whips by out the window -- a verdant blur.

EXT. THE ALGARVE - DAY

QUICK CUTS of this stunning region: Red limestone cliffs... Sea caves... Grottos... a tiny fishing village with a bustling market... Arabic and Roman architecture: gleaming domes, white facades... Chic hotels... Stunning white-sand beaches, a turquoise sea lapping at the shore...

I/E. LAGOA TRAIN STATION - DAY

Maya and Felix head down the platform, ready to change trains, when Maya points, noticing something...

MAYA

I think it's the Feast of St. Anthony.

He turns. In the town beyond: a party fills the streets. Music reverberates. Felix looks at her, mischievous.

FELIX

Let's go.

MAYA

Should we stop at the house, first?

FELIX

We'll stash our stuff here, catch a train later. Come on.

His spontaneity is infectious, and they tear off, excited--

EXT. STREETS OF LAGOA - DAY

We follow Maya and Felix through the swirl of a raucous street party... Sardines sizzle on a grill... Lanterns illuminate the square... People in colorful, traditional dress DANCE the Corridinho... food vendors line cobblestone alleys... paper garlands hang between buildings.

Maya tips her head back and smells the air.

MAYA

What is that...?

They turn, discovering rows of MANGERICO on a stand-- small, decorated pots of fragrant basil. A tissue paper carnation pokes out of each pot, along with a tiny flag with a short love note, a verse in Portuguese.

She reads a little sign, doing her best to translate:

MAYA

Mangerico... known as the
Valentine's herb... St. Anthony...
the matchmaker saint...

VENDOR (O.S.)

You have to buy one for your
girlfriend!

The vendor turns-- she's a teenage girl in a crop top with a paper carnation tucked behind her ear, zeroed in on Felix.

FELIX

Of course. I must.

He pulls out his wallet, pays. As the vendor counts change--

VENDOR

The gift of Mangerico around Saint Anthony's was, traditionally a commitment as strong as a marriage proposal.

She passes them the plant, clocking their faces.

VENDOR

Not anymore, don't worry.

The vendor winks, wry, fucking with them. Felix and Maya laugh. And he hands Maya the pot...

LATER

On Maya: in ecstasy. They feast on seafood: ruby-pink langoustine, drizzled in olive oil... licking their fingers, pulling mollusks out of spiny shells... they crack crab with mallots... washing it all down with Sangria. They sop up the butter and garlic with crusty Portuguese bread.

I/E. LAGOA TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Maya and Felix grab their luggage from a locker and RACE down the platform, just in time to catch the night's final train.

I/E. TRAIN - NIGHT

Maya, tipsy, rests her head on Felix's shoulder. She unfolds the tiny paper-- the little love verse-- in her Mangerico. She reads it to Felix, MOS.

EXT. STREETS OF FERRAGUDO - NIGHT

Maya and Felix, LAUGHING and JOKING, haul their luggage through the sleeping village. It's a tiny, serene town. Red-roofed buildings, chipping paint, quaint shops, all closed for the night. The crash of the sea echoes beyond.

EXT. HOUSE - FERRAGUDO - NIGHT

A sweet cottage. Felix hunts for the key, checking under the woven mat, beneath a terracotta urn, above the doorframe.

FELIX

Fuck.

He's dialing his phone for the umpteenth time. He cradles it in his shoulder as he searches. Maya roots around too.

FELIX

Enrique, it's Felix-- I do believe
we're locked out.
(his phone beeps)
And my phone is going to die...

Maya creeps around the side of the cottage, where there's a small window looking into the kitchen. She tries to wedge it open, but it's locked from the inside. Felix eyes her.

MAYA

I could maybe fit, if we could get
it open...

But she's not so sure, really... Felix laughs.

FELIX

Thank you, but no way.
(an inspired)
I have a thought.

EXT. BEACH PATHWAY - NIGHT

A sheet, tethered to a clothesline, billows in the breeze. Felix tugs it down. Maya borrows a couple of towels, undoing their pins. She and Felix traipse off, lit by the moon.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

A stunning arced cove. Maya and Felix are entirely alone on the sand. With a piece of driftwood, he's created a little tent with the sheet, the towels laid out underneath.

MAYA

Wow. This is kind of impressive...

FELIX

Used to do this all the time as
kids in Brighton. Me and Leon.

They stretch out under the tent, limbs entwined. When the sheet quivers in the breeze, a shock of sky is revealed, and the stars, sharp pinpricks of light, are breathtaking.

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

Maya stirs, Felix asleep beside her. She rises. Pulls her knees to her chest, and peers out at the sunrise. CUT TO:

AT THE SHORE

Maya's clothes lie atop a towel at the water's edge.

She swims. The water is crystal clear-- and cold, but she doesn't mind. The beach is tinged golden by the sunrise, and the surf is gentle.

She looks up and sees Felix, who waves from the sand. She lies on her back and floats. He watches her. Admiring her. She soaks in the moment; so present and alive in her body.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S YARD - DAY

Maya and Felix quietly return the sheet and the towels.

EXT. HOUSE - FERRAGUDO - DAY

Felix peeks under the mat. An envelope has been left for them. He holds up the key, triumphant and relieved.

INT. FERRAGUDO HOUSE - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS of this seaside escape

--LIVING ROOM. Maya and Felix slough off their stuff, throw open the shutters, pull sheets off the furniture.

--BEDROOM. Felix and Maya fall into a white canopied bed... Hot with anticipation... On Maya: a sharp intake of breath...

--BASEMENT. Felix twists a red light bulb into a socket. Maya helps lay out trays for chemicals, creating a darkroom.

--PORCH. Felix and Maya drink wine, talking and laughing into the wee hours of the morning, inhaling the salt air.

--LIVING ROM. Maya does telehealth sessions on her laptop. Felix, wearing only a towel, fresh from the beach, sets a perfect cappuccino just out of frame of her camera.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Felix photographs a raw performance at the dance festival, contemporary and avant-garde. Maya stands back, watching him work, watching the dancers move, swept away. She lets the beauty wash over her. Felix turns around surreptitiously and SNAPS Maya's photo. She's so engrossed, she doesn't notice.

INT. FERRAGUDO HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Bathed in a red glow. Felix shows Maya an image, a 5x10 in the developer bath. At first, she almost doesn't recognize--

MAYA

It's me.

FELIX

You're a very captivating subject.

(then)

It's yours. The photograph, I mean.
You should have it. When it's dry.

She's touched by this. Shimmering under the fluid, the image of her FACE is stunning. Felix turns, then remembers--

FELIX

Oh. Anna called earlier. They're staying a bit longer with her parents in Aix.

(casual)

Enrique says the house is free if we want to stay a couple weeks.

Maya accepts this offer with a grin, surprising herself.

INT. HOUSE - FERRAGUDO - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maya stirs a pitcher of Sangria, adding fresh fruit. Beside her, Felix smears butter across a crusty baguette, and places a piece of chocolate inside. He holds it out for her to try--

FELIX

Noelle calls this a goûter. The snack French kids eat after school.

Maya takes a bite. A crunch. She closes her eyes--it's good.

MAYA
I can tell you like being a parent.

FELIX
I do. And her mum and I have a
pretty good setup--

MAYA
How did you two meet?

FELIX
At art school in the UK. We had a
class together. Digital media, I
was awful. And she was this
wickedly talented graphic designer,
she went on to start her own firm
back in Paris, so that's why I'm
there, when I'm not traveling for
work. Actually, this is the longest
I've been away from Noelle.

Felix hears himself going on, and he changes course--

FELIX
Did you two ever talk about kids?

MAYA
Oh. A little. I wanted to wait as
long as possible. Now, I wish...

FELIX
You wish you'd done it?

MAYA
I wish he'd pushed harder, yeah.
Maybe I needed that. I'd have
something... left, now...

This hangs in the air between them.

MAYA
I used to think it was narcissistic
to have kids at the end of the
world. But I don't know. Maybe it's
some kind of hope.

FELIX
Noelle was...
(he searches for the word)
Unplanned. So I didn't have to
tangle with all that. But she is a
hope. It's true.

INT. HOUSE - FERRAGUDO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maya lies with Felix, naked, talking in bed.

MAYA (V.O.)

There are moments with you when I
feel like I'm living again, but
it's someone else's life.

INT. HOUSE - FERRAGUDO - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maya, headphones in, works a shift. She looks up over her laptop and sees Felix choosing his photographs by lamplight. She watches him, so handsome, flipping his pages.

FELIX (V.O.)

How does it feel? Being this other
person?

It's so domestic, so settled. It overwhelms her.

MAYA (V.O.)

It's a fantasy.

EXT. CLIFFS - FERRAGUDO - DAY

Maya hikes the craggy outcroppings overlooking the sea. She collects wildflowers, growing, impossibly, from the brush. She looks around, struck by the beauty. In moments like these, the sensuality of Europe feels available to her, and it's confusing, and, in a strange way, a little sad. To be happy, even peaceful, feels like a shift, or a betrayal of her truest self. She mulls this as she peers at the ocean.

She lets the flowers float from her hands into the wind.

FELIX (PRELAP)

I have to leave tomorrow.

INT. HOUSE - FERRAGUDO - NIGHT

Maya's curled in the reading nook by an open window, crickets chirping, Felix standing over her. She peers up, jarred--

FELIX

Noelle has a cold, they're headed
back to the city... I told her I'd
be there when they got back.

MAYA

I understand. I--

FELIX

I don't imagine you want to come...

MAYA

To Paris?

Maya grapples with this. Before she deflects or objects--

FELIX

We can say goodbye now.

(he shrugs, sexy)

But I don't want to do that.

On Maya: neither does she. And we CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF PARIS - DAY

QUICK FLASHES as Felix and Maya wander the Marais, arm in arm. Winding along the Seine...pulling their coats around their bodies... peering up at the Centre Pompidou... sharing a falafel pita in a Renaissance square... They peek into a boucherie, cured meats hanging from the ceiling... They explore an iconic bookstore... They linger outside a church.

INT. BAR HEMINGWAY - THE RITZ - NIGHT

Felix and Maya are tucked into a dark booth in the lush, old-world bar, touristy but obligatory. He sips his cocktail--

FELIX

Speaking of, I think we should take the train to the Marché aux Puces--

Her face changes. Her jaw steadies. She squints at him, not listening. Something has distracted her, across the way.

FELIX

What, what is it?

A guy in a baseball cap has walked in. The way he moves, his gait, the scarf hanging around his shoulders-- his very presence seems to announce that he's American and this snags her attention. Then: it's surreal.

Her body recognizes him before her brain does. It's Jason.

MAYA

Oh my god.

It almost seems as if he is looking for her. Glancing around. She tries to draw her shoulders in, as if to hide...

FELIX
Maya, what's wrong?

Hearing her name, Jason turns. Now, standing before them--

JASON
Maya.

The blood drains from Maya's face.

MAYA
Hi.

JASON
Oh my god. It's so good to-- God--
You're-- How are you?

MAYA
What are you doing here?

She stares down at the table.

JASON
I've tried for so long to get in
touch with you, Maya--

MAYA
Yeah, I haven't been reachable.

Her coldness is clear, and yet he can't quite accept it.

JASON
I'm here for work. I was just
headed to a dinner, and...

He trails off, studying her...

JASON
Do you live here?

MAYA
No.

Awkward, prickly silence. Jason waits for her to expound, but she can barely look at him. She writhes in her chair. Felix's eyes dart between the two of them.

JASON
Sorry. I'm completely shocked.

Despite her steeliness, Jason still half expects her to invite him to join them. The pressure mounts on Maya. She vibrates with anxious energy. Felix, with a twinge of discomfort, makes eye contact with Jason.

FELIX
I'm Felix.

JASON
Oh, hi, hey, man.

Felix absorbs Jason. His boxy suit, his big expressions...

MAYA
This is Jason. My friend from Boston.

Jason's jaw drops, incredulous.

JASON
Your best friend. Since college. We spent holidays together, what, like twelve Thanksgivings, I gave a toast at your wedding--

FELIX
Did you-- want to join us--?

MAYA
No. JASON
I'd love to.

MAYA
I'm sure you need to get to your dinner.

Jason's blown back. He squints at her, his eyes boring into hers. She peers away. When he cocks his head, she notices, for the first time, a shiny scar running down his face.

JASON
Seriously, Maya? What the fuck?

He's raised his voice a bit, and PEOPLE turn.

FELIX
Whoa.

JASON
That's all you have to say to me?

MAYA
I don't know what you want. But I think you should just--

JASON
(snapping)
You left! You fucking left and didn't say a word.

He's fuming now, and growing louder. On Maya, mortified, desperate to interrupt--

MAYA
All right--

JASON
You didn't let anyone know you were okay or where you went. Do you know how long I spent trying to get in touch with you, to see if you were--

MAYA
No one asked you to do that.

JASON
We were like family.

A wave of shame hits her, and she reacts. Razor-sharp--

MAYA
I didn't want that anymore. I
don't. Just leave me alone.

A pall falls over the bar. Jason blinks. His voice wavering--

JASON
Why are you being so cruel?

MAYA
(snide)
Oh, please, Jason. Get out of here.
Go have a drink or ten, you'll
forget all about this.

Hurt, he bucks back. In disbelief. Finally, he slinks off.

We stay with Maya, who closes her eyes, trying desperately to disassociate. She feels the attention of PEOPLE in the bar. She is trembling, horrified, she looks physically ill...

MAYA
I need to leave.

EXT. TUILLERIES - NIGHT

Maya sits on a bench, on the periphery of the abandoned park. Felix is beside her, listening, though she stares past him.

MAYA
I put the shit that I needed in two suitcases. I took his computer. His passwords. His birth certificate.
Spare keys.
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

And I put those in an envelope and I put the envelope in a Stop n' Shop bag and I left that outside Jason's door. I got in my car and drove to an AirBnB. I quarantined there until I could get a drive-through Covid test so I could get on a plane. My phone was ringing constantly, I mean like hundreds and hundreds of calls. I didn't answer. Even his mom. I thought: no. I thought: *run*. Get as far away as fucking possible. To be entwined with these people, his people, forever? Who will hate you, and blame you? Who will compete with you, for who's the most hurt? No. The worst had happened to *me*. I was done. And *my* people, like Jason... I... I just couldn't. No. I left my phone in a trashcan at the airport. A month later, from Europe, I called a task rabbit to pack up all of the stuff in the apartment and put it in a storage bin. It's still all there, I guess. I don't know. I haven't been back. It's insane.

(a rueful chuckle)

It kind of worked. At first. It's clarifying to have no one. To just eat and drink and sleep and fuck and float around like a useless piece of matter, in the void.

(then)

They say you can't run away from your life? They're wrong. You can. It just makes you a monster.

(humiliated)

I'm sorry for not telling you.

He studies her. She feels him assessing her. And then he takes her in his arms.

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

We move through Felix's studio, full of art, to the bathroom, where Maya lies in the tub. He comes in, brings her a cup of tea. She sits up, a little embarrassed, and takes it.

MAYA

Thanks.

He moves to leave, but then he stops in the doorway.

FELIX

What if we acknowledged that there was something really here. What if we took that risk...

She thinks on this.

FELIX

He was the love of your life. But who's to say you only get one?

Off Maya...

INT. BRASSERIE - DAY

CLOSE on Maya as she moves through the door of the dark restaurant, a neighborhood spot in the 10th. She ventures through, assuming a casual attitude.

She scans the tables until she spots Felix, on the same side of the booth with four-year-old NOELLE, glasses, sparkly painted fingernails, sitting cross-legged in her tights and Mary Janes, scribbling intently on a napkin and telling a long, convoluted story out of our earshot.

Maya pauses, at a distance, to watch them for a moment. As Noelle prattles on, Felix nods, asks questions, and hangs on her every word. This touches Maya in a way she didn't expect.

Felix notices her and waves her over.

FELIX

Maya.

Maya sinks down in a chair across from them. Noelle, wide-eyed behind her glasses, regards Maya, newly shy in the presence of this interesting stranger.

MAYA

Hi.

FELIX

Noelle, this is our friend, Maya.

Noelle eats a french fry and stares at Maya for an intense, uninterrupted moment. Maya holds her gaze as long as she can.

MAYA

Hello. Hi. Well...

Noelle wriggles onto her dad's lap, unsure. Felix tucks his chin and gives Maya an encouraging little smile.

FELIX

Do you know where Maya is from?
 (Noelle purses her lips)
 America.
 (nothing, then)
 Do you know what's in America?

Noelle peers back and forth between them. Something dawns on her, and she lights up in amazement.

NOELLE

La Californie?

FELIX

California, yes.

Maya cocks her head. Felix leans in and explains--

FELIX

We're going through a bit of a phase.

MAYA

Hollywood?

FELIX

Specifically, the Hollywood *sign*.

Noelle straightens and grins, thrilled at its mention.

MAYA

I get it. The big letters, just, sticking out of the hill? Like a giant put them there. I've never actually seen it in person. But I've always wanted to go to California.

Noelle tips her head, deciding that she likes Maya. She tugs on her dad's jacket and starts whispering rapidly in FRENCH.

FELIX

En Anglais, s'il te plaît.
 (to Maya)
 She's always switching back and forth... with me and her Maman...
 (then, to Noelle)
 Oh, it's a secret? Okay...

Maya's amazed by his ease with her, his confidence, all that he does. Noelle tells him more through cupped hands.

FELIX

Oh, honey, I don't know. We'll see,
okay? We'll talk about it later.

Noelle accepts this deeply and then cuddles closer to Felix.

NOELLE

Papa, now you eat a frite.

FELIX

Okay.

Noelle presses a soggy french fry into Felix's mouth and he chomps. Noelle laughs at this, so does Maya.

NOELLE

Maya?

Noelle offers her a fry.

EXT. PARISIAN STREET - DAY

Maya and Felix duck down an alley, they're laughing, talking--

MAYA

What did she say, when she whispered to you?

FELIX

She invited you to her birthday party.

Felix reads Maya's quiet as panic, or hesitation--

FELIX

If it's too much...

MAYA

I'll be there.

EXT. TENTH ARRONDISSEMENT - NIGHT

Maya and Felix walk along the Canal Saint-Martin. She simmers, plummeting down the rabbit hole in her mind.

INT. ANNA'S FLAT - DAY

A sweet CHIME as Felix rings the bell of Anna's apartment. He peeks over at Maya, beside him, holding a wrapped present.

FELIX
It's a mousetrap.

Deep in thought, she snaps up.

MAYA
What?
(then, realizing)
Oh.

FELIX
Not a real one, like, for kids.

She nods, nerves jangling. As she braces herself, we CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S FLAT - KITCHEN - DAY

KIDS scamper around the exquisitely decorated, light-drenched apartment. It is a HOLLYWOOD SIGN themed birthday party, complete with photos, games, and a beautiful cake...

ANNA, late 30s, adds the finishing touches to it. She's all curves, braless in a shift dress, barefoot and vivacious. She licks a bit of green frosting from her hand, talking quickly, warmly, to a group of gorgeous FRIENDS filling her kitchen. They drink wine and help her arrange sugar cookie letters.

ANNA
(in French)
Okay okay did someone see where I
put the backup Y? This Y is not
structurally sound, look, how sad.

Her friends laugh as Maya and Felix sneak in. Anna immediately rushes over, switching to English to greet them--

ANNA
Ah, Felix.
(she double kisses)
And Maya. Come, come. Welcome.

Maya presents her cheeks, instantly captivated by this stunning, effortless woman. She clocks the flat, the perfect mix: antique chandelier, lucite table, textured wallpaper.

ANNA
Everyone, say hello to Maya, this
is Genevieve, Mariko, Rachelle...

Maya's heart pangs. She feels a twinge of loneliness, thrust into this beautiful, appealing community.

MAYA

Hi, so nice to meet you all.

ANNA

It's lovely to have you. You're probably well aware of our particular theme.

(she holds out her hands)

Oh, thank you...

She takes the gift and locks eyes with Felix, who's off kissing friends' cheeks and getting a glass of wine for Maya.

ANNA

Good job, Papa. I know exactly what this is.

Felix winks. Anna sets the gift atop a tower.

MAYA

This cake is unbelievable.

Anna buzzes around looking for her backup 'Y' cookie.

ANNA

Eh but the grass... is it too green? It tastes good I can promise, if you like a strong vanilla bean-- I have the pandemic to thank. I taught myself to bake, it's all I did. I admit: I loved the quarantine.

This hits Maya like a gut-punch. She weathers it.

A NANNY sweeps in to ask Anna a question, and Maya looks around for Felix, who's been roped into a conversation...

LATER

Children's voices and adult laughter echo down the hall as Maya, glass of wine in hand, ventures down a crisp cedar-paneled hall, desperate for a refuge.

A door opens a crack, and Noelle peeks out, startling Maya.

MAYA

Oh!

She realizes that Noelle's crying. Her face is red, she's breathing heavily, her tiny chest heaving beneath her dress.

MAYA

Oh, Noelle. Are you okay? Do you want me to take you to your mom?

Noelle shakes her head. She peers down the hall toward all the chaos, then, retreats back into the bathroom.

MAYA

Hey wait wait wait.

She presses her ear to the door.

MAYA

Is it too many people? Too much attention? I understand. Really, I do. Do you think I could come in?
(honest)
I could use a break too.

Maya waits for a long moment until the door opens...

BATHROOM

Noelle and Maya sit on the floor of the bathroom together, side by side. Maya is so grateful for the escape.

MAYA

We don't have to go back until you're ready.

Perhaps sensing that Maya needs comfort, Noelle rests her head against Maya's shoulder. Maya melts.

INT. ANNA'S FLAT - LATER

On Noelle's hands, ripping open a present. She's on Felix's lap, feeling better now. As she cackles with joy, we CUT TO:

LATER

Maya helps Anna collect dirty plates and glasses.

ANNA

Oh just leave them by the sink.

Maya peeks over her shoulder at Noelle.

MAYA

Do you ever worry that something will happen to her?

Anna's eyebrows rise. What a strange thing to say. Maya regrets it the second it leaves her mouth.

MAYA

Sorry. What I mean is, do you love
her so much that--

Anna, staring off, suddenly laughs.

ANNA

No, no, I understand the question.
(then, deeply)
All the time.
(she turns to Maya)
It's abject terror. That's love, I
suppose.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Everyone but a few stragglers have left the party. Maya chats with a chic, animated WOMAN, leaning on the kitchen island.

Maya notices, in the living room beyond. Anna, Felix, and Noelle, huddled on the couch, talking and joking as they set up Noelle's mousetrap. They're so perfectly comfortable. Happy, and at ease: an ideal domestic tableau.

Maya wilts, peering at the three of them.

EXT. PARISIAN STREET - NIGHT

Maya trails Felix, thoughts churning, head fuzzy from the wine. An unshakable angst has settled over her like a cloud.

FELIX

There's an amazing kebab shop up
here--

She scans the residential buildings around them, suffocated.

FELIX

Or if you're still full from the--

MAYA

I can't.

She stops walking.

MAYA

I can't do this. I'm sorry.

FELIX

What?

He realizes that she means: this. Them.

FELIX

Why are you saying this?

MAYA

I can't... I can't get entangled in someone else's life. Not again, not in this way. It's just too much.

He shakes his head, reeling--

MAYA

Maybe I just need a break, or I need to be alone right now--

FELIX

I don't understand. It was the party?

MAYA

It's everything. All of you. You're a family.

FELIX

Are you fucking-- no, you're not--
(he sees she's serious)

So what is it you want? The two of us, the Algarve? That's it?

Maya's hands clench into fists, eyes trained on the ground.

MAYA

I don't know.

FELIX

You want to be alone? You're so full of shit. You don't want to be alone. This whole story about eschewing human connection, when it's obviously the only thing you want, it's so clear--

Maya, at a loss, shouts--

MAYA

I just can't!

A COUPLE across the street, returning from a date, stares.

MAYA

I'm sorry.

He's crushed by this, and exhausted, and perhaps, convinced.

FELIX
You mean this?

She nods, yes. And then she pivots, turning away from him.

FELIX
You-- Literally, right this second?
Right this fucking second?

He's incensed that she doesn't intend to walk home with him. He scoffs, shakes his head. Hardening...

FELIX
Fine. Go. I'm not going to chase
you.
(as she flees)
I'll leave your shit outside the
door.

On Maya's face: heartbroken, but determined, compelled by this deep instinct, she moves in the other direction.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Maya travels alone

--TRAIN. Maya rides through the German countryside.

--MUNICH. Maya wanders, taking in a street of brutalist architecture, newly awake to all that is around her.

--DINING ROOM. Maya sits in a beautiful Bavarian restaurant, dripping in garland, eating Christmas dinner alone.

--AIRBNB. Maya sits in bed, laptop on her knees. The Grief Therapist appears on her screen.

GRIEF THERAPIST
Maya. It's been a while.

--NIGHT CLUB. Maya dances by herself, trying to access some feeling of release.

--MUSEUM. She wanders through a contemporary art exhibit. She pauses before a large-format PHOTOGRAPH of a woman: full of movement. It reminds her of Felix's work.

--RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD. Maya peers in windows as she ambles along. People in silhouette go about their evenings... go about their lives...

--SQUARE. Maya smokes a cigarette, glaring at a COUPLE making out. A church bell TOLLS, but they don't stop kissing. Maya, with a hit of resolve, stubs out her cigarette and rises.

I/E. METRO - PARIS - DAY

An unseasonably hot Spring day, and Maya's uncomfortable, sticky. She futzes with her shirt, roots in her bag: nervous. She peers up, awaiting the right stop.

EXT. PARK - 10TH ARRONDISSEMENT - DAY

Maya, on a bench, stares at her phone. She lifts her head--

MAYA

Hi.

Felix approaches. Her pulse quickens. He frowns, seemingly worried, and moves to her cautiously. He kisses both of her cheeks. Tender, but restrained. Still wounded, perhaps.

FELIX

It's been-- what, six months?

MAYA

Has it? God. I don't understand time anymore.

FELIX

You look well.

MAYA

I've been in Munich. And a little bit in the Alps.

FELIX

(terse but polite)

Wow.

MAYA

How are you?

He breathes through a clenched jaw. She can't quite read him: he seems both weary and like he has something to say.

MAYA

I've had a lot of time to think. About what I'm ready for, what I--

FELIX

Maya...

MAYA

I've been working on myself. I feel more present... and more available.

Her vulnerability softens him. He sinks down on the bench.

FELIX

That's really good.

MAYA

So I'm just going to say what I
need to say to you before I... I
don't know, implode.

She looks at him, eyes shining.

MAYA

I don't want to give up. On us, or
on myself--

FELIX

Maya, wait.

His tone is abrupt. He shifts to face her.

FELIX

You were gone for a long time.

She blinks at him, trying to process what this means.

MAYA

Oh.

This horrible reality settles over her.

FELIX

Anna and I, we...

Her eyes flutter closed. She nods. She understands. But he
feels awful, and he grows a little defensive--

FELIX

You weren't here. You and I, we'd
gone round and round... And now you
just call me, out of the blue...I
don't know what you want me to...

MAYA

I wasn't ready.

FELIX

I know.

MAYA

I'm not angry at you.

She's angry at herself. She's crushed, in fact, and he
recognizes this. She doesn't want to cry in front of him, so
she buries her pain and forces a rueful chuckle.

MAYA

But this is what I get. Nothing.

FELIX

Oh Maya, stop feeling sorry for yourself.

Her head whips to him, and he eyes her, kind--

FELIX

Just because we didn't... just because we couldn't... doesn't mean...

(serious)

This was not nothing.

His voice low, he grows a little emotional.

FELIX

And if in one year, or two, or five, if you need to call me and make sure, I will tell you that it was something.

MAYA

That's really nice of you.

(a lump in her throat)

I won't do that, but...

His phone rings. He quickly silences it. A tense beat.

MAYA

If you need to--

FELIX

They're just back from the shops, probably wondering where I am...

MAYA

Oh, they're here.

He nods. A wave of adrenaline hits her. She forces herself to breathe. She gathers her bag, rises. And then, with great effort, she really looks at him.

MAYA

I want to thank you...

She struggles to finish the thought: thank you for the joy and the fun, for bringing her back to life, for helping her to heal.

MAYA

For everything.

He smiles, affected by this. His voice cracks--

FELIX

Thanks to you, too. Maya.

She bows her head and walks away. We hold on her face as she tries not to break down within his eyeshot.

FELIX

Hey.

(she turns back)

You say you don't want to give up.
So don't give up.

Maya takes this in. If she speaks, she will fall apart.

EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

Maya moves down the street, propelled by some internal shift, past people going about their lives, some noticing her, some not, everyone in the throes of their own personal tragedies and triumphs and banal mundanities. She regards them with curiosity, feeling more connected to them than before.

She crosses a MOM wrangling a pram. A couple having a TENSE conversation. A DELIVERY GUY struggling to start his moped. Through a WINDOW, she sees an ikebana class in progress, a group of elderly WOMEN. It touches her, almost makes her laugh, or cry-- she's so raw-- but she doesn't stop moving.

She hears something, faint... She moves around a corner and peers up to a balcony... where music is playing...

Filtering down the street is a song-- "The Waters of March," a duet in Portuguese, Jobim and Elis Regina.

A strange laugh escapes Maya, she's so struck by the absurdity of hearing this fucking song.

She leans against the building. Her eyes close. WE HOLD ON HER FACE, she takes in this bizarre moment, this brutal day, destroyed, and yet, okay-- and then, we CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

A laugh, a whisper--

YOUNG WOMAN

You're the love of my life you're
the love of my life you're the love
of my life.

I/E. AIRPORT TRAM - DAY

CLOSE ON: the face of **Maya, early 40s. Another swath of years have passed.** She stares off, contemplative, her mouth held in a soft smile, her eyes creased at the corners. Hair cropped, loose crepe t-shirt. She sways: on a slick, fast-moving tram.

Reverse to find: she's watching a YOUNG COUPLE, two women, 20s, across from her. They're leaning into each other and touching and kissing, so effortless and sexy.

Perhaps they've just reunited, or maybe they're saying goodbye. This question stirs Maya. She wonders...

But the tram slows. A soothing PING announces a stop. Maya rises. She peels herself away from these people...

INT. LAX - DAY

Maya moves through the Los Angeles International Airport of 2030: perpetually under construction. She rides a silent moving sidewalk. On the wall is a digital poster, rotating through tourist information and ads. A sign reads *Welcome to Los Angeles*, with a weather meter, a smiling sun: 95 degrees.

Maya observes the people around her: FAMILIES hustling, yelling and wrangling children, talking loudly, clutching food court sodas in giant compostable cups. Americans. She observes them with nostalgia and a twinge of affection.

She hasn't been home in a long time.

Another digital frame lingers on a stunning photograph of a grove of California Redwoods: it glitches, stuck.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

Maya stands at a translucent glass podium before a room of medical professionals. She steadies herself, nervous. She scans the audience. She takes a long sip of water, then--

MAYA

I was asked to present this next bit, about self-care... I know, cue the eye roll, another self-care slideshow...

(scattered laughs, then)

Because I was an EC nurse during the first few months of COVID.

Before I flamed out and switched to TeleHealth.

(the room falls quiet)

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

A lot of you remember what that time was like.

(there are sighs, murmurs)

Some of you weren't even practicing then. Some of you joined the field because of the pandemic, because of what you saw.

(she smiles, vulnerable)

In some ways I think we're just beginning to process the ways that burnout, that trauma, affected us, and continues to affect us, as a profession and as individuals. Not to mention the personal loss so many of us experienced...

Her voice wavers. But she feels solidarity in this room.

MAYA

So I'm here to help us remember some of the tools that are available to us as we manage this mental and emotional toll, whatever specialty you're in.

A projected presentation appears on a wall behind her.

LATER

Maya moves through the swirl of people, exchanging greetings. She pauses to fill a mug at an automatic espresso machine set at the back of the room. A moment to herself...

She takes her phone from her pocket.

MAYA (V.O.)

Hi. I don't even know if this is the right number.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

--HOTEL ROOM. Maya leaves, dressed for the day in a blazer.

MAYA (V.O.)

But it's Maya Balcerak.

--BALLROOM. Maya listens to the conference's KEYNOTE SPEAKER.

MAYA (V.O.)

I know it's been so long. I'm um... I'm in the States at the moment.

--POD. Maya tries out a sensory deprivation chamber, floating. Her eyes shine in the darkness as the light dims.

MAYA (V.O.)
I'm actually on the West Coast. And
I... well, I don't know if...

The water sloshes. She tries to relax her body, but her mind hums as she's plunged into total darkness.

MAYA (V.O.)
Maybe, just give me a call back. If
you want to.

--TRAIL. A sweltering sunset hike. With some other CONFERENCE ATTENDEES, Maya trudges up a dusty, sun-scorched path. They reach a plateau with a close view of THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN.

MAYA (V.O.)
I understand if not.

She smiles, bittersweet, and snaps a photo of it.

--HOTEL BAR. Maya has a drink at the with some WOMEN from the conference. She listens as they talk and laugh. Sips her California red, and sets down her glass.

MAYA (V.O.)
I hope you're well.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

Find Maya, in a breakout session with a bunch of other ATTENDEES. Her phone vibrates in her pocket. She rises--

MAYA (INTO PHONE)
Hello?

JASON (THROUGH PHONE)
Where are you?

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - DAY

A sweaty Maya hops out of the back of a DRIVERLESS UBER. She slams the door and it takes off. She looks at the time, shit. She picks at her dress, feeling for pit stains, fluffing up her hair, wiping below her eyes where makeup may have bled.

She peers back over her shoulder. She considers bolting. But instead, she breathes and heads inside.

INT. SUNSET TOWER HOTEL - DAY

Maya spots Jason, seated at a booth.

She stalls, getting her bearings, covertly taking him in from some distance.

He looks like an entirely different person: tan, filled out, with longer, salt-and-pepper hair, a bit of scruff, a more down-to-earth, rugged version of himself. He's wearing a crisp white tee-shirt. He looks older: grown up.

His head snaps up. They make blistering eye contact. And Maya smiles, sheepish, caught.

He lifts his hand and offers a cautious smile. A jolt shoots through her as she recognizes that playful, sideways smirk.

MAYA

I'm so sorry. I'm late. I'm not used to how far apart everything is. And I--

JASON

Maya.

She wonders if he'll rise to hug her, but the table is tight, and he's tucked in at the booth, and he just beholds her as she sinks down, obviously anxious.

MAYA

I need to apologize to you.

JASON

It's fine, you don't, I truly just got here--

MAYA

No. I mean apologize for everything.

(he takes this in)

But can I, first, I just--

(she looks up and a server swings by)

Yeah. Could we have some water?

The SERVER pours water and Maya drinks eagerly. She's drained her glass by the time the server has moved on to Jason's.

MAYA

Also, could we put in drinks?

She's scanning the cocktail menu.

JASON

Oh, just-- this is fine--

MAYA

I had a Tempranillo last night.
They grow it in Napa now because
it's gotten so hot. But we should
do martinis, let's do martinis, old
Hollywood, right? With all the
accoutrements, please, the like
little onions and pickles-- two--

JASON

Maya?

Her eyes dart to him. She scans his face, arrestingly
handsome, this new version of him.

JASON

I'm sober.
(to the server)
Just a sparkling water for me,
thanks.

The server nods, sensing the charge, here. She glances
between the two of them with curiosity before scampering off.

MAYA

I... wow. Sorry.

He stifles a chuckle.

JASON

That shocking, huh?

MAYA

Well... oh god, I don't know. We're
different people, now, I guess.

JASON

Are we?

MAYA

Yes. I mean look at you.
(she covers)
I mean look at me, have you ever
seen me so--

JASON

You look wonderful.

MAYA

I was going to say squirrelly,
like, blah-blah-blah. You'd think
I'd spent the last ten years alone,
in a room, talking only to myself.
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

(then)

I haven't.

He lets her ramble, cool, calm, and patient. She grows self-aware, and looks up to see him smiling at her. She notices, as she studies his face, a raised scar running from his temple to his jaw.

MAYA

Why are you so quiet?

JASON

It hasn't been ten years.

She realizes what he means. She frowns.

MAYA

I know.

Her drink arrives, with its accompanying pewter dishes of gherkins, extra olives, and glistening pickled onions.

MAYA

Oh, will you look at that.

JASON

"All the accoutrements."

Before she loses her nerve, she rests her forearms on the table, as if braced, and peers straight into his eyes.

MAYA

Jason, I'm so sorry. For how I treated you in Paris. I was awful. I was like a caged animal. Just desperate and mean. That guy I was with, I didn't want him to know, I was so ashamed--

JASON

I figured. After the fact.

MAYA

And for everything before that...

She peers at the ceiling, blinking.

MAYA

You were such a good friend to us. To me. To leave you like that, was... beyond fucked-up. When I think about what I did and what I was like, I feel so small. I feel pathetic.

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

(then)

I've spent a lot of time thinking about how the pain made me want to run and how the running gave me this shame and I just... I was destructive... and I think on some level I wanted to obliterate all the love in my life so that I couldn't be hurt... even though I was hurting so much, I mean *because* I was hurting so much. I'm still working to figure out how much was the pandemic, and how much was *what happened*, and I'm in a lot of therapy now, and I probably always will be, but I want you to know: I am so mortified, and just, so fucking sorry.

Her voice catches in her throat so she stops abruptly. He waits a moment to be sure that she's finished.

JASON

I understand being destructive because you're in pain.

MAYA

You've lived a whole life I don't even know about.

JASON

So did you.

She nods, thinking on this.

JASON

And mine wasn't that interesting. I mean, you can use your imagination.

She chuckles, trying to read him, trying to make sense of this gracious, calm person and to extrapolate what he means.

MAYA

I don't want to be presumptuous but... will you forgive me?

JASON

I already did. It's part of my program.

MAYA

You're not angry.

Jason shakes his head.

MAYA

Okay, but... look I'm not saying
forgiveness for yourself isn't real-

JASON

It is real--

MAYA

Of course it is.

JASON

But...

He squints at her, daring her to finish the thought.

MAYA

I don't want the kind of
forgiveness you'd give a serial
killer.

JASON

Are you a serial killer?

She rolls her eyes. He's smirking at her, trolling her.

MAYA

I don't want the 'I can be cordial
with an old basket case college
buddy' kind of forgiveness. Is what
I'm saying.

JASON

Then what *do* you want?

He leans in. She can see the tiny chain beneath his t-shirt,
and she can smell his sandalwood sent. Instinctively, the
hairs on the back of her neck stand up.

MAYA

I want... your friendship. Again.
Please. If you would consider it.

He takes his time. He picks up a tooth-pick and places it
between his teeth, sliding off one of her olives. He chews.

JASON

Look at you, so vulnerable.

He spears another olive and rolls it around in his mouth.

MAYA

Oh my god.

JASON

What?

MAYA

You're-- ooh, your smile! You're
enjoying-- You love me groveling.

He laughs, and his face changes: she glimpses that
mischievous glint in his eye. The devilish boy she knows.

MAYA

You're sick.

He laughs, harder now.

JASON

I told you. We're the same people.

Maya shakes her head, and allows herself a laugh, too.
Relieved. She opens her menu.

MAYA

Okay, asshole. Let me buy you a
ridiculously over-priced steak.

He leans in and whispers, savoring this:

JASON

I'm vegan.

She drops her menu.

MAYA

You are fucking kidding me.

We pull back, watching them from a distance as they laugh and
argue, MOS, a couple among many others on this night. Beyond
their table, over the pool outside, is a majestic, perhaps
unnerving, technicolor sunset. They don't notice, they're so
focused on each other. And we CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Maya and Jason stroll a car-less stretch of Sunset Boulevard.
People walk or weave through the street on newfangled
electric scooters. Maya licks an ice cream cone. A hot breeze
blows, and her dress clings to her body.

JASON

And so once I was able to fully get
out, I cashed in my package, and I
bought these properties up north.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

We turned them into transitional homes... "sober houses" yeah, but more than that, communal living. Four of them are totally self-sufficient and sustainable, gardens, water--

MAYA

You have more than four?

JASON

Six and a seventh property that we're about to close on in Humboldt county.

(then)

It sounds kind of corporate but it's really not, just an excuse to use some real estate acumen... And for me to get better at gardening...

She ponders him, impressed.

JASON

My partner, Leon, he'd been in non-profits for years, and he's really the heart of the whole thing... anyway... it's been able to help some people...

MAYA

Who are you?

(he chuckles)

This is still so surreal.

(she sits with this feeling)

When I saw you my first thought was, wow, you looked so much older.

JASON

Jesus!

MAYA

No, I don't mean it like-- Obviously you look-- I mean you must know...

He smiles, flattered, a bit embarrassed, and she catches herself, tries to reset.

MAYA

No what I'm saying is, it made me realize how much older I am, too. We're adults now.

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
It just happened to us.
Unwittingly. We are in *middle age*.

JASON
Oh my god, no no, don't do that--

MAYA
It's objectively true. We aged
faster than Gen X, and now they say
Gen Alpha will live to over 100.
Not us.

She sort of wishes she hadn't gone there-- death-- as they
walk along, past a throng of KIDS in their 20s.

JASON
Do you really think I'm so
different?

She sweeps her tongue across her melting ice cream.

MAYA
You seem calmer. More serious. You
have this peace about you now. Like
you really know who you are.
(she cocks her head)
Do you?

JASON
I think so. I think as we get
older, we get out of our own way.
Don't you?

Maya sighs and stares off, contemplating this. Instead of
answering, she seizes on a distraction: she hears
something... It's SALSA MUSIC, spilling from an open door.

MAYA
Come here.

She peers through a stained-glass window. He follows, over
her shoulder. They peek in. Watching the DANCERS inside.

JASON
Don't you kinda wish you could do
that?

MAYA
I can. Sort of.

INT. SALSA CLUB - NIGHT

Crammed into a tight, dark space, music BLASTING, find...

Maya and Jason, in the mix. She shows him her rudimentary salsa moves. His recent years of working out haven't added to his coordination, and he's all limbs, gangly, trying to mirror her. Shouting over the music, impossible to hear, she demonstrates the idea of isolating one's hips, and he mimics her, but it's hopeless and hilarious.

Maya doubles over laughing as he throws himself into it, flailing around. There's such great confidence in his movements-- he's ridiculous, but winning.

A LADY, 60, a regular here, smiles, moves to him for some instruction... He meets her and they begin dancing together.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Maya and Jason stagger down the sidewalk, loose and sweaty. Maya's laughing hysterically as they relive the night--

MAYA

I thought you were going to shut the place down, if I--

JASON

Whoa, watch out--

Jason presses his hand on the small of her back, steering her aside as a DELIVERY ROBOT vrooms jauntily between them.

MAYA

These fucking things. They outlawed them in Europe, thank god--

JASON

I love them.

MAYA

You love them? No.

JASON

You can ask them questions.

MAYA

Oh, spare me--

Jason scoffs at her, and moves to intercept the robot.

JASON

Excuse me, forgive my friend's rudeness-- I just-- I wanted to know... do you believe in fate? Like, are the events of our lives destined to happen the way they do?
(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

(Maya huffs)

Put another way: do you believe we have free will? Not we as in you, sorry, I mean we as in humans?

(Maya sighs)

Wait, no, put another way: do you think we, humans, have any power over how our lives turn out? Do our decisions affect our lives?

The robot, motionless, seems to weigh this question. Or perhaps it has short-circuited. Maya crosses her arms.

MAYA

This is absurd--

DELIVERY ROBOT

Yes, humans' decisions affect their lives, but not always in ways that humans can discern. Humans often ascribe meaning retroactively, and human myopia limits awareness of the nuances of reality.

(then, very fast)

This is just my personal feeling, it in no way reflects the views and values of BearRobotics or UberEats.

With that, the robot rumbles away. Jason turns to Maya: see?

MAYA

You realize that was probably some guy in a room with an X-Box controller.

JASON

So what?

On Maya, endlessly exasperated and amused by her old friend.

MAYA

I can't believe you happened to be in LA.

JASON

I didn't happen to be in LA, Maya.

Her head turns to him. Her lips part. She's stunned, both by her misunderstanding and by her own innocence. He shrugs.

JASON

You called, and I got in the car.

(he checks the time)

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
And I have to be back in San
Francisco in like thirty-six hours.

Her cheeks grow hot. She can no longer deny it, now: there is electricity, an undeniable spark between them.

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maya and Jason weave through the lobby, stalling, still not done saying all they want to say to each other--

MAYA
And I have a little place now, in
Luxembourg. Just a tiny apartment,
easy to AirBnB when I'm not there.

JASON
You never came back.

Her mouth twists: nope. He presses the elevator button.

JASON
And that guy, the one you were
with?

MAYA
Oh. Yeah that didn't work out. But
it was good, it was... important.

A thought nags at her as she reflects on that time.

MAYA
I always wondered. Did we really
just run into each other in Paris?
Or did you find me somehow?

They step into the elevator.

JASON
I was walking through the lobby and
I thought I saw you. I wasn't sure
until I ducked into the bar, and...

He trails off. She breathes, shame settling over her again.

JASON
To be fair I thought I saw you
everywhere back then. Walking down
Comm Ave. At Penn Station when I
went on a trip to New York. At the
airport...
(then, careful)
(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
I don't know how to talk about this
without talking about him.

MAYA
Oh--

JASON
We don't have to.

MAYA
No. I want to. He used to be,
literally, all that I talked about.
Even inside my own head.

JASON
I still miss him.

MAYA
Me, too.

The elevator doors open. They move down the hall, lingering
outside Jason's room. Both anticipating the goodbye.

MAYA
So this is it.

He hesitates, making a calculation. Then: fuck it.

JASON
Is it?

Her spine straightens. His eyes shimmer.

JASON
I'm asking you.

She bites the inside of her cheek.

MAYA
I don't know. It's so overwhelming.

JASON
I know that I-- fuck.

MAYA
What?

JASON
No.

JASON
It's going to have to be you. Who
has to say it. You understand.

She does understand. She licks her lips, wanting to. Her body thrums. But she just cannot put herself out there.

MAYA

No. You. Say what you're thinking.

He reels. He runs his hands through his hair and cradles his head, frozen in this posture, all shoulders and biceps...

MAYA

Say it.

They stare each other down in this way, on the precipice of something... She fixes him with her eyes... daring him...

JASON

I'm very attracted to you.

Her pulse quickens. She feels so awake. She takes a step toward him. Another. Their faces close, now.

JASON

Can I kiss you?

MAYA

Yes.

Very slowly, he moves past her lips and kisses the side of her jaw. And then her neck. And then her temple. And then, finally, as she quivers, wanting it... he brings his mouth to hers. She pushes into him, kissing back with ferocity. It builds quickly, but he pulls away, leaving her breathless.

JASON

Is this...?

A bad idea? He checks in with her. Sees that she's sure, thank god. He takes a deep breath, and they give in...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, she shoves his shirt over his head. She runs her hands down his body. He takes her in, and she relishes his attention-- she feels so powerful, it's a rush.

The light pollution that seeps in through the gauzy curtains, a sort of artificial moonlight, bathes him in its glow. She unwinds herself from her silk dress, warm from her body. He pulls her close to him and inhales her, her skin, her hair. He's overcome. She looks up at him, agog. Then: with sudden urgency, as if the moment will pass, they deal with everything else-- kicking off shoes, undoing snaps and buckles, ripping back the sheets on the bed-- fast--

MAYA
I can't believe we're doing this.

His lips curl into a smile.

JASON
We've done it before.

MAYA
What?
(she remembers)
Oh my god--

JASON
After that Halloween party--

MAYA
Sophomore year. JASON
Sophomore year.

JASON
Except I, uh... I don't know if you
remember... But I didn't...

MAYA
You were really drunk. I mean, so
was I...
(she laughs)
Sort of the beginning of the end
for us.

JASON
Or just the beginning.

The way he says it is playful, sexy. She laughs.

He moves to her. She's awed by him: so steady and sure of
himself. On Maya: a sharp intake of breath, and we CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Maya and Jason lie in bed, tangled in the sheets, spent and
happy. She peruses the room service menu on the nightstand.

MAYA
So you never fuck around?
(he eyes her)
You never cheat?

JASON
What?

MAYA
Your "veganism."

He considers this with a dangerous little smirk.

MAYA
Remember Late Night?

Off his devilish look, we CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Jason, towel wrapped around his waist, stands over the nightstand, hotel phone pressed to his ear.

JASON (INTO PHONE)
And how many pieces come with the
mozzarella fritti?

LATER

A gorgeous platter of dairy-filled room service rests on the foot of their bed. Jason bites into a crispy, golden mozzarella stick, stretching its cheese. Maya watches him.

JASON
(mouth full)
Oh my god what the fuck is wrong
with me, this is so good.

LATER

They lie in bed in the dark, too wired to sleep.

JASON
What would Charlie say about this?

MAYA
He'd probably love it. He was so...

JASON
Unflappable.

MAYA
Yes! So freaking buoyant. It was
annoying.

JASON
It really was.

MAYA
The few times that he got panicked
or freaked out or really negative?
I kinda loved it. It was exotic. To
be the optimistic one.

Jason laughs. Maya curls on her arm, turning to face him.

MAYA

Can I ask you something? Did he ever tell you if it was true, that thing he used to say, about seeing me in class at BU?

Jason thinks for a moment...

MAYA

I always wished I'd pressed him more on that. Like, quizzed him. How long was my hair? Did I take notes on a laptop. I dunno. Stupid--

JASON

I bet it was true.

(this gives her pause)

If I had to guess. It's so Charlie: the coincidence, the symmetry, the twist of fate.

This touches something deep in her heart.

MAYA

He would love hearing that.

It's bittersweet: a good memory; a tiny mystery. She rests her face on his bare chest. It feels unbelievably natural.

MAYA

What's so strange is that I know -- I know-- that if he were alive we would still be together. We would've grown up together. We'd have children by now. It's this other life out there that I didn't live... but I can imagine it.

(she catches herself)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to--

JASON

No, Maya. I can imagine it, too.

There's something so strange and comfortable about this.

MAYA

What did you say, thirty-six hours?

He checks his watch.

JASON

More like twenty-four.

MAYA
 You drove?
 (he nods)
 What if I went with you, up to San
 Francisco. I can fly back from
 there.

On Maya: a quivering look. She turns away, a little anxious
 about how this gesture will be received.

JASON
 You're serious.

MAYA
 Why not?

He hesitates. He wants this, but he sizes her up, perhaps not
 trusting it, afraid to be disappointed or hurt.

MAYA
 We're just two really good, fuck-up
 old friends. And we have more to
 catch up on, don't we?

JASON
 Yeah, I'm not done with you.

He overtakes her, and off her delighted laugh, we CUT TO:

I/E. JASON'S CAR - DAY

Score pulls us through a SERIES OF SHOTS as they head north:
 -The car wends up the PCH, the ocean glistening beyond.
 -In traffic on the 101, Maya and Jason talk and talk, MOS.
 -Maya rolls down her window to feel the crisp, cool air.
 Jason peers over at her, full of longing, as she inhales it.
 -A sign off the freeway, and Jason points at it.

EXT. REDWOOD GROVE - DAY

Maya peers up, standing amongst the ancient trees.

Behind her, Jason offers unsolicited advice to a PARK RANGER
 who has sold them tickets, leading their small TOUR.

JASON
 You should really consider
 increasing the suggested donation.
 (MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

I mean this place is incredible--
you do such a great job-- people
who can afford to will pay-- and
it's just a suggestion after all...

Maya chuckles and tunes him out, enjoying her private moment with the redwoods. She closes her eyes. Listening. For what?

A BREEZE passes through the leaves like a breath. Her spine tingles. At some point, she senses Jason has joined her.

JASON (O.S.)

Want to dance?

Maya blinks open her eyes and darts him a look.

JASON

I'm serious. I've been practicing
what I learned--

MAYA

Since last night?

JASON

Yeah, in my head.

(then)

Please?

Endlessly surprised by him, she give him her hand... he takes it, and they dance... a sort of slow, sweet salsa. It's so ridiculous, Maya shakes her head, but a feeling sweeps over her: she feels so connected to him in this moment.

A bunch of PEOPLE, beyond, on another tour, APPLAUD. Maya laughs, and they dance on, until... THUNDER growls. It starts to rain. Jason doesn't care, until the sky really opens up.

MAYA

Let's go.

They run, shrieking, through the storm.

I/E. CAR - DAY

Rain pummels the windshield as they drive.

JASON

Did you ever reach out to Ruth?

Unconsciously, Maya bristles at this. Jason notices.

MAYA

No. Did you?

JASON

Did I? I mean, yeah, we keep in touch. You ever think of going to see her, when you're here?

Maya simmers, quiet. And something occurs to him.

JASON

You haven't asked about this.

She runs a hand along the scar on his face.

MAYA

What is it?

JASON

Car accident.

MAYA

In California?

He's surprised by the question.

JASON

You didn't notice it, in Paris?

(she shakes her head)

This was back in Boston. Storrow Drive. That sharp turn by the river.

MAYA

Oh, Jay.

JASON

There was a motorcycle... he cut me off, or I thought he cut me off... I accelerated... I was pissed.

And...

(he swallows)

And I'd been drinking... I'd drank so much I didn't even feel it until I woke up in the hospital.

(he cringes)

The car flipped over the guardrail. I broke my jaw and my clavicle and dislocated a shoulder.

(he looks at her)

It is a fucking miracle that I didn't hurt anyone.

This lands deeply on Maya.

JASON

I got sober after that.

She nods, her thoughts churning. Her jaw tightens.

JASON
Are you going to ask when it was?

MAYA
It sounds like you want me to.

JASON
It was the day after Charlie's
funeral.

Maya stares straight ahead, gutted by this. She tries to move through the feeling, but her armor is going up. She is quiet.

The rain grows so intense that Jason hits his blinker and exits the freeway.

JASON
I don't need you to apologize, and
I don't want to cause you pain, but
I do need you to understand
something: after you left things
got really fucking bad for me.

MAYA
Jason you drank too much in
college, and after college. And--

JASON
I don't think you understand. I
imploded. I fucking...

MAYA
I understand what it is to implode.

JASON
Listen to me. This isn't about you.
You need to hear this, and you need
to be able to handle it. If we're
going to do this, if we're going to
try to be something--

MAYA
Who said we're going to be
something?

It's sharp as glass. And exactly what he feared. Maya instantly feels terrible, but before she can correct it--

JASON
You know what fuck you and your
fucking "change" and self-work--

MAYA

You are angry at me. I knew it--

JASON

You're a walking fucking defense mechanism--

MAYA

And I have done work--

JASON

What did you get some bot therapist, some fucking app--

MAYA

Guess you're the arbiter of such things. Holier-than-thou *program cliche*--

JASON

Stop. Just, stop!

He raises his voice for the first time, shocking them both. He pulls the car over, slams it into park. They're on the edge of a small village, a cluster of shops. He peers at her, brow crumpled, eyes welling.

JASON

You broke my heart when you left. Because I lost both of you.

His words hit her: she never thought of it quite this way.

MAYA

I didn't know... I... I didn't know we meant that much to you.

JASON

(with compassion)

Of course not. Because you had him. How could you even see anybody else?

This is uncomfortable, and true, and crushing for both of them. They sit in silence as the rain hits the windshield.

MAYA

I'm sorry.

Maya gets out of the car.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Maya stumbles into a tiny shop to escape the rain-- not quite realizing that it's a record store until she clocks the vinyl bins, and the midcentury turntable, where you can listen before you buy. She's the only patron here, and she nods to the SHOPKEEPER, a hip, friendly woman in overalls, early 30s.

Maya peruses. She finds herself before an eclectic section: "Vintage, International." An idea strikes her. She thumbs through. She finds what she's looking for. She puts it on.

JOBIM (SINGING)
*A stick, a stone, it's the end of
 the road...*

It's "The Waters of March," but this version surprises Maya.

| | |
|--|--|
| JOBIM (SINGING) <i>It's the rest of a stump, it's a little alone// It's a sliver of glass, it is life, it's the sun// It is night, it is death, it's a trap, it's a gun.</i> | MAYA Oh-- it's in English-- I didn't-- |
|--|--|

The shopkeeper perks up, behind the counter.

SHOPKEEPER
 Yeah, this is a really rare
 recording.

| |
|---|
| MAYA I've only ever heard the Brazilian one. I mean the one in Portuguese-- |
|---|

SHOPKEEPER
 So Jobim wrote both. But he tweaked these lyrics-- same central metaphor, the swirl of everyday life, the progression toward death. But our seasons are different, right? So in the English version March is spring, not winter... this song is all about rebirth after the rainy season. It's about coming back to life.

A chill reverberates through Maya's body. She is astonished.

MAYA
 Wow.

JOBIM (SINGING)

*It's the wind blowing free, it's
the end of the slope// It's a beam,
it's a void, it's a hunch, it's a
hope.*

The Shopkeeper notices Maya is experiencing something emotional, something intense. She offers a thoughtful smile.

SHOPKEEPER

(as she heads to the back)
Listen as long as you like.

Off Maya, grateful and rapt...

EXT. HALF MOON BAY - DAY

Maya steps out of the shop to find Jason, leaning on a railing, drinking a coffee. The rain has ceased, and the sky is golden. They have a view of the ocean beyond. He sees her eyes are glassy, and something has shifted in her.

MAYA

I couldn't listen to music right after Charlie died. Not just music he liked: any music. Shitty top 40, DJ-club-electronica-whatever. Songs in car commercials... they crushed me.

(she half-laughs, then)
There was too much emotion. I'd never felt so much, and music was a fucking bridge too far, it pissed me off, made me feel like my stomach was collapsing, and I just wanted to scream or run away.

She peers out over the horizon, the water gleaming.

MAYA

Sometimes I still get that phantom anger, that fury, that need to run. I'm sorry.

JASON

But you can listen to music now.

MAYA

Yeah, I can.

She holds up the record she bought, in its thin paper bag.

MAYA

Doesn't it suck. To get joy, you
have to be willing to risk pain...

JASON

Or feel both at once.
(a resigned shrug)
Maybe the most human thing of all.

She thinks on this. She likes it.

JASON

And that's not even from the
program.

MAYA

(a laugh)

I'm sorry I made fun of the
program. I think the program is
great--

JASON

That was an original, okay, for the
record, that one was all mine.

They smile at each other, as the sun slips lower in the sky,
bathing them in a soft post-storm glow.

I/E. JASON'S CAR - DAY

They drive, quiet, ensconced in their own private thoughts.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - DAY

Jason pulls up to the passenger unloading curb. They don't
quite know what to say to each other. It's clear that
whatever Maya's doing, whatever path she's on, she's not
finished with it yet.

She looks at him. It's time. He tries to lighten the mood--

JASON

What's it gonna take to see you
again? I'll have to bump into you
in five or ten years, in some
museum in Marrakesh or some
teahouse in Osaka--?

She smiles. A pang of grief hits her.

MAYA

Guess we'll see.

They don't know whether to kiss or hug. Ultimately they hug.

She gets out of the car. He seems like he's waiting for more, but he understands that she cannot give it to him.

She walks to the entrance with her suitcase. For a long moment, she tries with all her might not to look over her shoulder as she heads to the automatic doors.

When she finally caves and peers back, her eyes scanning the curb where she left him, Jason is gone.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - DAY

Maya walks through the terminal, her mind whirring.

EXT. HULL HOUSE - DAY

A taxi pulls down a sandy street, stopping in front of a gray shingled house. Maya steps out of the cab.

She peers up at the house, noticing the differences. The shutters were repainted some time ago. The crab grass has overtaken the small lawn. There's no sign of Wilma the dog.

Ruth lumbers out of the house. And Maya does not breathe.

Ruth stands, poised on the steps, looming over Maya. She's in a big jean shirt, her gray hair in a braid, and she's wearing a medical BOOT on one leg. Two Bud Lights in hand, gripped by their necks. She lets out a laugh, rueful and gruff--

RUTH

Well after a hundred years she
finally shows up.

Maya tenses, biting her cheek. She knows she deserves this. Her eyes sting. Everything she planned to say evaporates.

MAYA

I'm sorry.

Her voice is small. She scrounges resolve, clears her throat.

MAYA

I'm so sorry, Ruth.

Ruth softens ever so slightly. She's been angry for years, but seeing this wounded person in front of her triggers a maternal instinct in her. Still, she stays cool.

RUTH
Want one?

She offers Maya a beer, inviting her to talk. And we CUT TO:

LATER

The women sit on the steps.

RUTH
Do you know what it was like to
have to get his...
(a second of hesitation)
...body released? There was so much
paperwork. Because you were "next
of kin" and you were fuckin' AWOL--

MAYA
I thought I'd sorted all that out
for you, left you what you needed--

RUTH
It was a nightmare. On top of a
nightmare.

Maya hangs her head, letting this really hit her.

MAYA
I am so unbelievably sorry, Ruth.
Fuck.

Ruth's eyes dance over Maya, content that she's punishing
herself enough. Then, very matter-of-fact--

RUTH
I'm sorry for having a conniption
in the street outside your home.
I'm sure I said some terrible
things.

Ruth slugs her beer. Maya looks at her and nods deeply.

MAYA
I shouldn't have left like that.

Ruth shrugs. It's clearly not okay with her, and probably
never will be, and she may never understand it.

MAYA
Did you ever like me?

This catches Ruth by surprise. She decides to be honest.

RUTH

I didn't want to not like you.

MAYA

But you didn't.

RUTH

Oh, fuck, I don't know.

(then)

Maybe at first I thought you seemed too uncomfortable, and then a little too comfortable, I don't know. The wedding threw me. I felt rejected by you. It's absurd as I say it.

MAYA

I wanted you to like me.

Ruth absorbs at her in a suddenly tender way: open.

RUTH

Did you like me?

MAYA

I loved you.

On Ruth: this is a jolt, and her reality shifts a bit. Maybe she's looking back, assessing her own actions and decisions here... They stare off, contemplative, silent... Until... Ruth reaches for a chopstick she has placed on the ledge nearby, and uses it to scratch inside her boot.

MAYA

What's this?

RUTH

Oh. Ankle surgery. Went fine but...

MAYA

It itches? Careful with that.

RUTH

Driving me crazy. Almost drove back to Boston today for the doc...

Maya's about to say more, but Ruth bats away Maya's attention. Maya lets it go. Then, after a long, quiet moment--

MAYA

Oh, god. I loved him so much.

RUTH

I know.

MAYA
It's brutal, isn't it?

Ruth pulls in air. She sets down the chopstick.

RUTH
Grief is never finished. It's never done. But neither is love.

MAYA
I'm such an idiot that I keep trying.

RUTH
Trying?

Ruth looks at Maya with sudden interest.

RUTH
Why are you an idiot? You experienced something wonderful, and you want to know if there's more of it?

Maya shrugs.

RUTH
You know, you don't know what the you of 50 or 60 or 70 or fuck even 80 will say about your life, or any of the choices you make, or whether you did the right thing. You don't get to make meaning out of it until it's all over, and then it's too late.

Maya sags. It's a paradox.

RUTH
But that's why you need to stay in love with your own life. That's what I would say to my own kid: try to love your life while it's happening, whatever it throws at you.

(then)
Maybe you're a romantic. So keep trying. Let yourself try.

(then)
I sound like a fucking Valentine's Day card.

MAYA
Charlie liked Valentine's Day.

RUTH

Even as a little boy. He always
came home with a million of those
tear-off cards. Doilies. Reese's
hearts. He was a romantic, too.

Maya smiles.

RUTH

So what now. More traveling, or
will you come home?

Maya ponders. Where is home?

MAYA

Yeah. I'm not finished yet.

Ruth regards Maya, something sad about this. Ruth reaches for her chopstick on the ledge and scratches her leg.

MAYA

Let me take a look at those
stitches for you before I go.
(not a question)
I insist.

Ruth is about to decline, but she softens, changes her mind.
In Ruth's eyes is humility, gratitude, and a little fear.

RUTH

Okay.

I/E. TAXI - DAY

Maya sits in the back of a cab. She gives a little wave to Ruth, teetering on the porch in her boot, as the car pulls away. We hold on Maya's face as the neighborhood disappears behind her. It's quiet. A moment passes. She rolls down the window. She feels the breeze, inhales the smell of the sea.

And then everything hits her at once, like a dam breaking.

She brings a hand to her mouth, but she doesn't fight it--
she can't. She lets herself SOB in the back of the cab.

INT. BOSTON LOGAN AIRPORT - DAY

Maya walks through the terminal: her face a little puffy, she's cried out, but restored. She passes a gate with a flight to SAN FRANCISCO. A flight to PARIS. A flight to SYDNEY. A twinkle in her eye we haven't seen in some time. We follow her along, not sure where she'll go...

EXT. PUBLIC GARDEN - OSAKA, JAPAN - DAY

We find Maya beneath the cherry blossoms where we first encountered her, her gaze trained on something unseen. Around her, FOLKS-- couples, families, locals and tourists-- have picnics on the grass, enjoying the end of sakura season.

She's staring at the SWAN BOATS gliding by on the glassy lake. Time and place are so strange, so abstract; for all she knows, she could be in Boston, and it could be years ago.

The sounds of the park give way to a gentle swell: the LOOPS OF CHARLIE'S TAPE, the notes just barely holding on.

The last gasps of the tape carry us through QUICK FLASHES--

--On the swan boats in Boston, Young Maya rests her head on Young Charlie's shoulder, peaceful. We hold on her face for a lingering moment: this feeling of joy.

--Maya and Charlie stand in their freezing cold bath on the night of their wedding, naked and laughing.

--Jason makes Maya laugh at a potluck at her house.

--Felix and Maya sleep under the stars in the Algarve.

--Maya ponders the incredible photo of her that Felix took.

--Maya and Jason dance under the redwood trees.

--And then, our image shifts, a different grit and grain: In a COLLEGE LECTURE HALL, Maya peers over her shoulder. A cute, nerdy guy, wearing a hoodie, chewing the end of his pencil, smiles at her. It is Charlie. She doesn't notice him.

BACK TO MAYA, in the present. Awash in all of these moments that have brought her here. Our sound dissipates-- THE TAPE HAS DIED-- and we are just left with white noise. Until...

Maya pulls out her phone...

MAYA (INTO PHONE)
Hi. So... look... I don't want to
leave it to chance.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - OSAKA - NIGHT

Maya's tucked in a dark corner of a boutique lobby. Periodically, she lifts her head, eyeing the door as it opens. She sips her whiskey. And then: she straightens.

Jason is standing before her, duffle bag over his shoulder.

MAYA

You made it.

JASON

I... I can't believe it.

MAYA

I didn't want to wait another five
or ten years.

(she shrugs)

Life's too short.

(eyes shining)

Come here.

He goes to her, and she kisses him deeply. We CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. HULL HOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC draws us to... Ruth's porch. We float over a small party, and discover... Ruth, Matt and Colin, all their kids are here... So is Kerry, in a wheelchair, with a NURSE... It's a remembrance party for Charlie, but it's just like the old days, a tangle of voices, chaotic and vibrant and messy.

Find Jason, holding court, as Ruth passes out Long Island Iced Teas to the drinkers in the group. MOS, they all CHEERS. People sip... and shudder... no one likes them.

On Jason, laughing. He turns his head to see: Maya, mid 40s, arriving. She walks up the steps. She's got a kid by the hand, her DAUGHTER, whom she's adopted since we've last seen her. **We realize, now, that several more years have passed.**

RUTH

You're late--

MAYA

Sorry! We stopped for sparklers.

The little girl runs to Jason and jumps into his arms.

DAUGHTER

Dad!

Maya gives Ruth a kiss on the cheek. Ruth hands her a drink. Across the porch Jason smiles at Maya, the way he always has.

LATER

The group lights sparklers on the lawn. Kids shriek and laugh. We find Maya as her own sparkler's flame dances in the night. It's magical, unpredictable, crackling as it dwindle. Maya smiles. And just before it burns out, we CUT TO BLACK.