

HER TURN

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FADE IN**INT. MEL'S APARTMENT, LOS ANGELES/CA - MORNING**

Sunlight filters through half-closed blinds.
Music bursts from a small radio – *Selena Gomez*, "Single Soon."

MEL (MELANIE, 27) in pajamas, dances out of her bedroom, messy hair bouncing.
She sings into a toothbrush like it's a mic.

MEL

(singing)

I'm picking out this dress, trying on
these shoes...

She spins toward the living room, carefree, alive – until her eyes land on an old photo on the shelf.
A picture of her and her ex. His face is slashed with a thick black X.
Mel freezes. The music fades in her mind.

MEL (Cont'd)

Guess you're still haunting the place, huh?

She runs a thumb across the X – half tender, half disgusted.
Then rips the photo in two.
Beat.
Music surges back. Mel twirls into the bathroom and tosses the photo into the trash.

MEL (Cont'd)

(singind, louder now)

We both had a lot of fun, time to find
another one...

She brushes her teeth on the beat, hair flying, life forcing
itself forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH, LOS ANGELES - SAME MORNING

Waves crash, sunlight gleams.
Surfers carve through water – one stands out.

DAN (28), tanned, magnetic, alive.
He rides the waves with reckless joy, shouting into the ocean air.

DAN

(shouting)

Yeah! Oh, I missed this!

A powerful wave washes over him – he falls.

But then he laughs when he resurfaces. He looks around, enjoys the view, and runs one hand through his thick hair. He feels free. Untouchable. For now.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - CAR - SAME MORNING

Traffic is gridlocked. A sleek black convertible weaves aggressively between lanes.

Inside: KEVIN BURHAM (55), suit sharp, temper sharper. Bluetooth in his ear, frustration simmering beneath control.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Yes, Nancy, I got it. Don't start without me.

He glances at his watch. Clenches the wheel tighter.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

Tell him to wait. He owes me that much.

He accelerates, cutting through the chaos, the sound of horns behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. BEVERLY HILLS - VILLA, LIVING ROOM - SAME MORNING

A pristine Beverly Hills street. A luxury home straight from a magazine.

Inside, NATHALIE (48) vacuums the marble floor. Her face is calm, practiced — her eyes say otherwise.

Behind her, MRS. CLARK (40s), perfectly groomed, glides in with a crystal glass in hand.

MRS. CLARK

(overly precise)

Nathalie, the windows — spotless, please. Everything has to be perfect for tonight.

Nathalie stops, takes a deep breath and forces a polite smile.

NATHALIE

Of course, Mrs. Clark.

Mrs. Clark leaves the room. Nathalie rolls her eyes so hard it's almost audible. She mutters under her breath.

NATHALIE (Cont'd)

Perfect... sure.

Nathalie resumes vacuuming, slower, letting resentment hum under the noise of the machine.

BACK TO:

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - MORNING - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Steam fogs the mirror. Mel steps out of the shower, towel wrapped around her. She reaches for her clothes when her phone BEEPS on a small cupboard within arm's reach. Mel freezes. A long sigh. She glances at the screen - already expecting the sender.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN**Message preview**

EMILY: Hey Mel babe, pick me up?
Running late ☐ ☐

Mel's jaw tightens. She pulls on jeans and a shirt, fussing with her hair, eyes flicking to the phone.

MEL

(under her breath, exasperated)
Ten minutes. She lives ten minutes away!

She exhales sharply, head back, jaw clenched. Her fingers hover over the keyboard.

MEL (Cont'd)

(half whisper, to herself)
Just say no.

She stabs at the keys, clipped and fast. She pauses briefly. Her hands are trembling. She shakes them out briefly, takes a deep breath, and types.

ON SCREEN - MESSAGE SENT

MEL: Okay. I'll come by as soon as I leave.

Mel sets the phone down on the cupboard. She lingers, staring at the screen, then shakes her head with a bitter smile before leaving the bathroom.

CUT TO:**INT. MEL'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - SAME MORNING, FEW MINUTES LATER**

Mel looks at the clock - almost 8. Her eyes widen.

MEL

(in shock)
Perfect. Maybe if I start waking up at four, I'll finally get a minute for myself.

She spots a foil-wrapped loaf on the counter, tears out a single dry slice, holds it up.

MEL (Cont'd)
(sarcastic, to the bread)
You'll taste amazing.

She bites the bread, winces, grabs her bag, storms out.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mel throws the bread into her bag, shrugs into a light jacket — one arm half in, the other flailing. She grabs her keys from a wooden bowl and bolts out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. MEL'S CAR - SAME MORNING

Mel speeds down the freeway.
She holds the dry slice of bread in one hand and the wheel in the other hand.
Her body tenses, her eyes narrow in pain. She breathes through the pain and her exhaustion. Then she takes a bite, grimaces, tosses the rest onto the passenger seat beside her handbag.

She rummages through the bag, eyes are still fixed on the road. Fingers fishing with practiced ease, because has been able to improve her skills in recent years.

MEL
(muttering)
So... where are you... ah, got you.

Mel holds her phone in her hand, balancing it against the wheel, in such a way that she can steer and look at her phone at the same time.
She types a message to EMILY and tries to look at the street.

ON SCREEN - MESSAGE
I'll be at your door in 5 minutes.

Mel puts her phone on the passenger seat, takes the bread again and eats it as she drives.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. MEL'S CAR - IN FRONT OF EMILY'S APARTMENT - SAME MORNING

Mel sighs annoyed, while waiting in the driver's seat, drumming her fingers on the wheel. The passenger door opens.
EMILY (~25) glides in, dressed provocatively. Her expression is joyful, in contrast to Mel's tired gaze.

EMILY
(singing, cheerful)
Good morning!

Mel forces a small smile.
Emily leans in, bubbling with excitement.

EMILY (Cont'd)

Hello, my pretty one!... You missed something on Saturday! It was soooo hot. I met this amazing guy - we talked for hours. He lives in a Beverly Hills mansion. Isn't that exciting?

Emily looks at Mel with joyful anticipation.
Mel's smile fades into flatness. She mutters:

MEL

Okay... Sounds almost like last weekend.

Mel turns her head to the left to check the road, eager to drive off, and rolls her eyes.

EMILY

No, really. I'm telling you - he's THE one.

Mel exhales through her nose, barely hiding her irritation.

MEL

Yeah. Just like last weekend's "one."

EMILY

Everything okay?

MEL

Sure... why not?

Emily senses the tense atmosphere, but just rolls her eyes and continues smiling happily.

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY HILLS VILLA - KITCHEN - SAME MORNING

Nathalie wipes down the counter. The quiet is broken as MR. CLARK (50s) strolls in, suit jacket slung casually over his shoulder. He winks.

MR. CLARK

Morning Nathalie. Lovely as always. Don't let my wife drive you crazy. The place looks perfect.

Nathalie straightens, forces a polite smile.

NATHALIE

Thank you Mr. Clark. That's kind.

Mr. Clark comes closer and takes an apple, lying in a bowl right next to Nathalie's hand. For a moment, he's far too near. Nathalie stiffens, holding her breath. Then — he turns away, casual, as if nothing.

MR. CLARK

Oh, and... tell my wife I'll probably be late at the office tonight.

Nathalie only nods. Mr. Clark leaves, grinning to himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - DENTAL OFFICE - SAME MORNING

The glass front gleams with oversized posters of smiling Hollywood stars — pompous advertising everywhere.

Mel fishes out the keys, unlocks the front door. Behind her, Emily is buried in her handbag.

MEL (O.S.)

(clears throat)

Emily shifts her gaze up and smiles sheepishly.

EMILY

Hm? Oh... yeah, I somehow can't find my key.

Mel is already inside the dark practice. She waves Emily in with a flick of her hand.

They exchange a grin — a routine by now.

MEL

(quietly to herself)

Yeah, sure.

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE - CONTINUOUS

Mel shuts the door, hits the light switch. Both squint as the practice floods with brightness.

Emily drifts straight toward the changing room.

Mel plants herself at the reception desk, firing up the computer. She shoots Emily a look — irritated, but silent. The computer boots up. Mel exhales, slams the mouse down a little too hard, then heads down the hallway.

MEL

(annoyed, whispering)

Take your time to get ready... I know how to prepare everything on my own... Don't rush!

Mel disappears toward the treatment rooms.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, TREATMENT ROOM - SAME DAY

Mel sits ready beside her BOSS (DENTIST, 50s) as a PATIENT, a well-known basketball player, points to his upper front teeth.

PATIENT

(points)

Yeah, he elbowed me... I think it hit these teeth.

The patient winces.

The dentist looks at the patient and listens carefully.

PATIENT (Cont'd)

It's been really painful since then.

Mel already knows what's coming. Before the dentist can speak, she swivels her chair to the work surface, grabs a sponge and cold spray, returns, and hands the prepared sponge to the dentist.

The dentist smiles at her – a silent "thank you" for her precision and dedication. Mel returns a sheepish grin, then prepares the tools for whatever comes next.

Suddenly, Mel's stomach GRUMBLES. She flinches, hoping neither dentist nor patient heard.

The dentist positions the cold sponge in front of the patient's teeth.

DENTIST

(to patient, calm)

Sooo... It's getting cold now. Let me know if you feel anything.

The sponge touches the first tooth. The patient jumps, almost out of the chair.

PATIENT

Aaaahhhh!

Mel flinches at the scream, staring at the patient's chair. The dentist's eyes widen – he didn't expect such a reaction. Mel bites her lip to stop herself from laughing and continues quietly preparing the next tool.

EXT. VENICE BEACH, CA - DAY/NOON

Dan carries his surfboard onto the sand, dries off. He spots a group of women in the distance, one striking singing bowls.

DAN
(smiling)
Crazy hippies.

Emily and Mel walk along the beach, lunch in hand. Emily suddenly points.

EMILY
There... Dan! What's he doing here?

MEL
Who?

Mel tries to follow Emily's gaze.
They both walk over to Dan. Emily beams at him.

EMILY
Dan... Wow. What a coincidence.

DAN
Emily?... Yes... what a surprise.

Mel observes quietly, impressed. Emily introduces her.

EMILY
Oh, sorry... Dan, this is Mel. We work together.

Dan smiles at Mel and shakes her hand, making hers wet. His gaze keeps drifting to Emily.

MEL
Oh hi... Wet.

DAN
Yeah, sorry. I just got out of the water.
Feels great... the water on your skin,
doesn't it?

MEL
Yes, normally.

Mel smiles and wipes her wet hand on her pants. Dan smiles back at Mel.

EMILY
(to Dan)
What are you doing here?
I thought you were pursuing law?

DAN
I was... I thought I had my life figured out. Then my mom got sick — and suddenly nothing made sense anymore.

Dan pauses briefly - this moment awakens memories.

DAN: (Cont'd)

I got tired of pretending I was okay. Tired of feeling stuck.

(pauses)

I just didn't want to end up alone one night, wondering *what if*.

Emily looks around, curious. Mel nods thoughtfully.

EMILY

Oh... I hope your mom's okay.

DAN

She is already feeling better.

EMILY

(to Dan)

Okay, that's good. And where do you work now?

DAN

I work in a club close by... Unfortunately it's at night, but at the moment I need any time to be with her... And mornings free.

EMILY

Great, maybe see you there sometime. Send my regards to your parents.

DAN

(smiles)

Thanks Emily... Yes, I'll do that.

EMILY

Unfortunately, we have to go back. You know how it is...

Emily rolls her eyes.

EMILY (Cont'd)

Otherwise the boss will get nervous...

MEL

(to Dan)

It was nice meeting you.

DAN

(to Mel)

Likewise.

Emily and Mel turn to leave. Mel smirks at Emily.

MEL

He's really nice. Perfect for you, huh?

Emily opens her eyes wide.

EMILY

Whaaat? Dan? No! He's hot, sure, but... I need a real man.

Emily looks a little thoughtful.

MEL

(laughing)

Better than the usual ones, though.

They laugh and walk off.

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, SAME DAY - EVENING

Mel cleans the last treatment room, flips the light off. Emily appears, dressed and ready to go.

Mel is silent and presses her lips together.

EMILY

Mel? Mind if I leave? Everything's closed. All you have to do is lock the door behind you.

Mel masks disappointment with a fake smile.

MEL

Yeah sure. Go ahead.

Emily smiles, blows a playful hand kiss, and leaves.

Mel stands in the doorway, thinking. She recalls Dan's words at the beach.

MEL (Cont'd)

(to herself)

Too many bad decisions... yeah, too many.

She sighs, turns off the last light, and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. DENTAL PRACTICE - EVENING

Night has fallen. Mel steps out, locks the door behind her. She pauses, turns her face up to the sky. The warm night is filled with stars, city lights glowing faintly in the distance.

Mel closes her eyes, breathes in deeply, lets her shoulders sink.
When she opens them again, her gaze lingers on the sky – tired, almost wistful.
She adjusts her bag, heads to her car.

MEL

(muttering to herself, half-sarcastic)

Four more days... Yeah, Friday better come with something stronger this time.

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT, FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Keys rattle (O.S.). Mel enters, exhausted. She drops her heavy work bag on the floor, tosses her keys in the bowl, and kicks off her shoes.
Without thinking, she peels off her clothes, leaving them behind, and heads straight to the bedroom in her underwear.
While Mel is undressing, she starts to get upset and says:

MEL

I'm basically running the damn practice.
Impressions, sterilization, patients... Meanwhile he cashes in and I get a "good job" once a month.

She arrives in the bedroom, takes jogging clothes out of her closet and puts on her sweatpants.

MEL (Cont'd)

Whatever... Normal people light candles to relax. I improvise.

Mel puts on a sweater and stops for a moment with her head stuck. She sighs angrily.

MEL (Cont'd)

Aah, what's wrong with today?

She storms into the kitchen, opens the fridge. A half-empty bottle of red wine waits for her. Mel stares at it.

MEL (Cont'd)

(speaking to herself)

You know what? I need this now... And...
I'll drink it now.

She grabs the bottle, moves to the living room, pours a full glass, and raises it.

MEL (Cont'd)
(sarcastic, louder)
This one's for you, boss.

She takes a long sip. Too long.

MEL (Cont'd)
Cheers to doing everything right... and
still being invisible.

She drains the glass. A bitter smile creeps across her face.

MEL (Cont'd)
Maybe... Dad was right.

She stares at the glass, then at the bottle.

MEL (Cont'd)
Is there more?

She lifts the bottle, peeks through it like a telescope, shakes it. There's still some in the bottle, so she pours the rest and takes a smaller sip this time.

KNOCK.

Mel flinches. She freezes, wipes under her eyes quickly, annoyed by the interruption.

MEL (Cont'd)
Seriously?

Mel opens the door.
ISABELLA (27-30), stands there - casual clothes, hair messy but beautiful, holding a pizza box and a paper bag.

ISABELLA
I figured you wouldn't open if I called.

Mel tries to smile - fails.

MEL
I'm fine.

Isabella's eyes flick to the wine bottle inside. Then back to Mel. No judgement - just truth.

ISABELLA
You're drinking alone. You hate drinking alone.

Mel exhales. Cornered. Not ready to talk.

MEL

Isabella, I'm not really in the mood.

ISABELLA

Then good thing I didn't come here to ask
what mood you're in.

She walks past Mel without waiting for an invitation. Normal between them. Isabella sets the pizza down, starts unpacking without making a big deal out of anything.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

Alright. You're going to eat something.
Then you can go back to pretending
everything's great.

Mel stares at her - mixture of defeat and relief.

MEL

Why are you here?

Isabella glances at her - not dramatic, just honest.

ISABELLA

Because I know you. And when you
disappear, it usually means you're not
fine. So... here I am.

Mel blinks away sudden tears. Looks down, voice small:

MEL

The sips became bigger and bigger

ISABELLA

Yeah. I saw that coming.

Beat. They share a quiet moment. Safe.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

You know what? Fine. Tonight we fix your
mood. No work talk, no drama - just bad
decisions and pizza grease.

MEL

Bad decisions? Last time we tried that you
dyed my hair orange.

ISABELLA

Yeah, and you rocked it. People thought
you were European.

MEL

People thought I didn't own a mirror.

They laugh. The tension from earlier melts away. They grab slices of pizza.

ISABELLA

I missed this. Us. When did we stop having stupid fun?

MEL

Around the time life turned into... emails, bills and emotional exhaustion? And when we both got jobs that slowly killed our souls.

ISABELLA

Hey — my job is not *that* bad.

MEL

You literally work until sunrise.

ISABELLA

True. But at least I get to make movies. So technically I'm dying for something I love.

MEL

So dramatic.

ISABELLA

I work in film. Drama is literally in my contract.

They laugh. The job information is spot on. It seems lighthearted, not preachy. They clink glasses and we can see them both laughing and eating pizza.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT, NEXT MORNING - 7 AM

Night turns into day. Daylight pushes through the curtains. Mel lies on the floor, squints against the sun, and drags herself up.

On the sofa: Isabella, still asleep.

Mel shakes her gently.

MEL

(tired)

Isabella? Get up, it's already 7.

Isabella groans, blinks — then bolts upright.

ISABELLA

(panicked)

What?? Seven already? Oh no, I didn't mean to crash here.

Isabella quickly gathers her things and gives Mel a kiss on the cheek.

Mel, hungover, just stares at her.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

(softer)

Hey... you've been hitting the wine a lot lately. Not judging - but I've got a better idea. Meet me at the beach today. I'll send you the details.

MEL

(skeptical)

Yeah... okay. Let's see what you're up to this time.

Isabella smiles, grabs her bag, waves, and is gone.

Mel looks after her and then at the closed door.

The trashed living room around her looks worse in daylight. She looks just as lost.

INT. OFFICE - SAME DAY

Mel is alone in a large office - still a little drunk. She stands in front of the massive desk made of solid wood and carefully touches a small sculpture that stands there on the desk.

Her eyes drift - to a framed PHOTO on the window ledge.

She doesn't recognize who is in the picture, so she moves closer.

Suddenly she stops.

Mel recognizes herself as a child, her father beside her.

And behind them - an older man. Her GRANDFATHER.

Mel's face tightens.

The room seems to darken, sound fades.

FLASHBACK: A sudden, vivid fragment from childhood begins to surface.

CUT TO:**MEMORY - CHILDHOOD****INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Little Mel sleeps, twitching in a dream.

The door creaks.

GRANDFATHER, 60s, slips in, bends over and lightly touches Mel's arm to wake her up.

GRANDFATHER

Honey, are you okay?

Mel stirs, blinks.

MEL

(tired)

Grandpa?

He lifts the blanket, slides in beside her.

GRANDFATHER

Shhh... everything is fine, my darling. You were dreaming. Grandpa is here.

Mel's eyes widen, uncertain.
The image starts to blur.

END MEMORY

BACK TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mel jolts as a hand taps her shoulder.
Her father, Kevin Burham, stands behind her.

KEVIN

Mel? Are you okay?

The words echo.
Mel stiffens, breath quickening. She steps back, almost afraid—
then forces herself to pull it together.

MEL

Ah... Dad. No, everything's fine. You wanted to give me something?

Kevin picks up a small box from the desk.

Inside: old mementos, a half-visible photo frame.

KEVIN

Yes. Thanks for coming on such short notice. You know your mother... forgiving isn't her thing. I found these while cleaning. Thought you could... give them to her... If she doesn't want them, she can throw them away.

He pauses, lets the words hang.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

I just... don't want to screw up again.

Mel's eyes flick to the box, then back to her father.

She swallows, caught between frustration and understanding. A long beat.

MEL

That still takes two, Dad. But... I'll give it to her.

KEVIN

I know I wasn't a good husband. And I wish I had understood sooner what she needed.

(pauses)

You know how many times I asked her for forgiveness. Sometimes I think you inherited her stubbornness, darling.

Mel's expression hardens.

MEL

Nothing else, Dad?

Kevin sits back down in his leather chair behind his desk, puzzled.

KEVIN

No, darling, that's all.

MEL

Okay Dad. Always a pleasure.

She rolls her eyes, turns to the door and is about to walk out with the box.

KEVIN

Oh darling... dinner, remember?
The table's already reserved.

Mel no longer turns around. As she walks out, she answers:

MEL

(disappointed)
Yes, Dad. I'll be there.

EXT. BEACH, WEEKEND - SUNSET

The horizon glows. Waves drown out most voices.

Ten WOMEN spread mats toward the sea, chatting in small groups, excited, smiling.

At the front, a woman kneels by a big bag. She pulls out SINGING BOWLS.

She turns - it's KAT (KATHRYN, 30-35). Beautiful, magnetic, with colorful hair strands, crop top and loose jeans.

People can't help but look twice.

Kat arranges the bowls in a semicircle, then stands.

KAT

Hello everyone. Welcome!

She greets with palms pressed together. Applause.
Mel and Isabella both smooth out their mats and sit down on them.

ISABELLA

(to MEL)

That's my work colleague Kat.

MEL

What? Her? With the bowls?

Mel studies Kat, intrigued despite herself.

ISABELLA

Yep. She's amazing. She does tarot, too.
You should try it.

MEL

(surprised)

Wait! You? Tarot? Didn't see that coming.
I'm completely surprised by you.

Isabella just smiles toward KAT.

KAT

Wow, I'm so happy that the group is bigger today. Thank you all for coming to bring a little peace to your evening.

A short break.

KAT (Cont'd)

Please, lie down. Get comfortable.

The women stretch out on their mats, covering themselves.

Kat moves among them, checking gently.
She rests a hand on Isabella's shoulder.

Isabella looks up, into Kat's eyes.
Mel is surprised and enchanted when she notices Kat.

ISABELLA

Oh... hi.

Kat nods with a smile, then returns to her blanket.
She sits cross-legged, strikes the first bowl.
Everyone is quiet. All you can hear are the waves and the singing bowl.

Eyes close. Breathing slows.

KAT

(softly)

With every sound... your breath deepens.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - 20 MINUTES LATER, END OF SESSION

The last hum of the singing bowls fades.
Kat's voice carries calm but steady.

KAT

Slowly wake up again... move your fingers,
your hands.

Kat sets the mallets down.
Women stretch, yawn.
On her mat, Mel blinks heavy-eyed, stretches, lets out a long
yawn.
Next to her, Isabella sits up, watching her.

ISABELLA

So? How was it?

MEL

Wow... really relaxing. Haven't felt this
good in a long time.

Isabella takes Mel by the hand and they both move toward Kat
together.

KAT

So. You must be Melanie.

MEL

(surprised)

What? How do you? Can you... can
you read minds too?

Kat looks lovingly at Mel and smiles.

KAT

No. Isabella mentioned you.
And that you need a tarot reading.

Mel shoots a glance at Isabella.

MEL

Sounds like her. I'm... open to it.

KAT

Wonderful. Let me know when you have time
and I'll tell you more about your future.

Isabella beams at Mel.

ISABELLA

I'm so happy for you.

Mel looks at Kat, a bit surprised. Maybe this *is* what she's
been searching for.

MEL

(to ISABELLA)

Perfect. I need a change.

ISABELLA

(excited)

Yes! Let's do it.

The two laugh, squeeze hands, almost hopping like kids.
Kat watches, smiling.

KAT

Great. You will see - you will like it and
it will open your eyes.

Several consecutive scenes that show MEL'S everyday life at work

SCENE 1: INT. DENTAL OFFICE - MORNING

Mel is already in full work mode and visibly stressed.
She rushes through the hallway, from one treatment room to the
next.
Mel opens cupboard after cupboard, searching.

Finally, she finds what she needs, grabs it and hurries back
inside.
The door closes behind her.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE - DAY, SAME DAY

The reception is crowded with patients.
Mel steps out of a treatment room, sees the chaos - and freezes.
Her face says it all.
She slips into the next room, squats down, tears in her eyes.

MEL

(whispering)

What am I doing here?... I can't ...
anymore.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, BREAK ROOM - SAME DAY

Mel hastily bites into her sandwich, clearly on edge.
Emily enters, pauses.

EMILY

Everything okay? You look... stressed.

Mel looks at Emily disappointedly as she continues eating her sandwich.

Awkward silence.

Emily grimaces, retreats out the door.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, TREATMENT ROOM - AFTERNOON

Mel stands in a treatment room and readies it.
She keeps holding her stomach with one hand, face tight with pain. She breathes in, out, forces herself to keep going.

The dentist sticks his head in and doesn't notice Mel's complaints.

DENTIST

Melanie, the next patient is waiting. Done here?

MEL

(snaps, through clenched teeth)
One moment. I'm hurrying.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Mel reaches for impression material but pauses — her stomach cramps hard. She grips the counter, grounding herself until it passes. She breathes through it, silent, practiced. This isn't new.

Emily enters, catches just enough to worry.

EMILY

You're doing that thing again.

Mel forces a casual tone.

MEL

What thing?

Emily gestures gently to Mel's hand still on her stomach.

EMILY

The "I'm fine but I'm not" thing.

Mel drops her hand, puts a lid on it fast.

MEL

Just stress. It'll pass.

Emily hesitates, concerned.

EMILY

Maybe you should get that checked out.

Mel grabs what she needs and dodges the subject.

MEL

I don't have time to be dramatic today.
Room two is waiting.

Mel is annoyed and quickly goes back to the treatment room.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Mel quickly swallows a pill with tap water. She winces. She hides the blister pack deep inside her bag just as Emily walks in.

EMILY

You okay?

Mel forces herself upright. She takes her cup of coffee and cups it in her hands - a little too tightly.

A sharp pang in her stomach - she flinches briefly. But she hides it with a smile.

MEL

Yeah. Just... too much coffee. Not enough sleep.

Emily isn't buying it.

EMILY

Mel... I've seen you tired. That wasn't tired.

Mel avoids eye contact, keeps busy to dodge the topic.

MEL

I said I'm fine.

A beat. Emily changes tactics - lighter now.

EMILY

Then come out with me Friday. New club opening. Music, drinks, people who don't talk about root canals.

Mel laughs weakly – but she fends it off skillfully and kindly.

MEL

I... actually already said yes to something. Sound healing. Don't laugh.

Emily blinks – surprised, and a little disappointed.

EMILY

You? Sound healing?

MEL

(soft)

Yeah. I just... need something different right now.

Emily tries to smile but it doesn't reach her eyes.

EMILY

Sure. Guess I'll find someone else then.

MEL

Emily... another time. I promise!

Emily shrugs it off, casual but hurt.

EMILY

Whatever. Those guys aren't going anywhere.

Emily exits.

Mel exhales.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS – EARLY AFTERNOON

Mel stands in front of a villa in Beverly Hills with the box from her father, Kevin.

She spots a familiar car in the driveway, heads straight around the house.

At the glass door, Mel sees a woman cleaning inside. She knocks and waves.

Nathalie turns towards the sound of the knocking, lights up when she sees her daughter, puts the cleaning things aside and opens the door.

NATHALIE

(delighted)

Mel... What are you doing here?

MEL

Hi Mom. Can I come in?

NATHALIE

Of course. I'm alone right now.

They walk to the couch and sit down.

MEL

Dad asked me to give you this.

Mel hands her mother the box.

NATHALIE

(sighs)

Sure. He never comes himself. Always through you. What's in it? Old memories, I guess?

(beat)

So... this is the last of it, huh?

MEL

Yeah... And don't worry, he's no different with me.

Nathalie studies her daughter, sad.

NATHALIE

What's going on with you and your father again?

MEL

Nothing... I don't know... it's just so exhausting.

NATHALIE

Well... I lived alongside him for so many years and forgot about myself in the process...

I don't want you to end up like that too.

Mel distracts from the situation and looks around - admires the furnishings of the Villa.

MEL

Shit! The Clarks changed the place a lot since I last came. Must be going well for them.

NATHALIE

(stern)

Mel! Watch your language. I didn't raise you that way.

MEL

(laughing)

Sorry, Mom.

Nathalie leans in, gentle.

NATHALIE

You didn't only come for the box and the furniture. What's really on your mind?

Mel hesitates, then:

MEL

Uh... Isabella recently took me to something new: Sound Healing. And there she introduced me to her work colleague.

Nathalie's eyebrow lifts slightly – curiosity mixed with caution.

NATHALIE

(puzzled)

That sounds nice. But what's the worry?

MEL

The woman – Kat, she also does tarot. Said she could read my future. I don't know... everything feels so difficult lately.

Nathalie thinks about how she can find the right words.

NATHALIE

I remember when you were little, your room full of paintings. You never dreamed of mouths and drills. Your job pays well, yes... but you're not happy. I can see that.

MEL

Dad pushed me to make something out of my life, which I'm grateful for. But it was never my dream.

A silence. Nathalie takes Mel's hand.

NATHALIE

I don't believe in tarot. I believe in God. But if it helps you find yourself, then do it. Just... take care of yourself, Melanie.

MEL

Maybe it can help me figure out what I want or what to expect.

NATHALIE

Ok, darling, then do it. I'll be happy for you if you find something that's good for you. But still take good care of yourself!

Mel gets up and wants to leave.

MEL

I will. Love you, Mom.

NATHALIE

I love you my angel!

Mel kisses her cheek and leaves.

Nathalie remains by the glass door, watching her go, sadness in her eyes.

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE - DAY

Mel sits with her boss (the dentist) in front of a PATIENT. Veneers are being glued to the front teeth. Mel's stomach growls. She shifts uncomfortably, trying to hide it. The dentist notices.

DENTIST

(whispering to Mel)

Mel, are you okay?

Mel paints glue on a veneer, hands it to him, forces a small smile.

MEL

(whispering, embarrassed)

Yes everything is fine.

The dentist turns to the patient.

DENTIST

(to Patient)

You know...?

Mel notices what the dentist is doing and stares at him.

DENTIST (Cont'd)

... Mel is the best when it comes to this work. Precise. Reliable. Makes it easy for me to focus fully on you and deliver an excellent result.

The patient looks the dentist in the eyes. He tries to smile with his mouth open.

Mel glances at the dentist. For a brief moment, both share a smile - the tension eases.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, SAME DAY - SOME TIME LATER

Mel comes out of the treatment room, bolts straight into the bathroom.

After she's done, she moves into the small kitchen next to it and drinks a glass of water, trying to calm down.

Emily appears, relaxed – she didn't have much to do while Mel was with the dentist.

EMILY

(cheerful)

Mel... what happened? Why did it take so long? Any problems?

Mel looks annoyed, but tries to remain polite and cracks a smile.

MEL

No... the boss is just very precise. But now I'm tired, and hungry.

Mel says "hungry" on purpose, hoping Emily will take over so she can get a break.

Emily doesn't move.

EMILY

Yeah. So... what is this sound healing actually like?

Mel brightens at the memory.

MEL

Ohh... it's so amazing... As you lie there on the beach, feeling the sand beneath you... you feel like you're falling into a kind of trance. When you wake up, it's as if everything is simpler and more beautiful.

Mel thinks about this sound healing for a moment and smiles.

MEL (Cont'd)

(soft)

There's another sound bath next Sunday – you should come.

Emily hesitates.

EMILY

Maybe another time... you know, I'm on a mission right now.

MEL

(smiles)

Yes, I know that too well. So, how's it going with your Mr. Perfect?

EMILY

(a little unsure)

I think he's really serious about me. Even if he... sometimes doesn't reply. He's under a lot of stress. Successful men are stressed, you know?

Mel looks skeptical but says nothing.

Emily goes back to the door, pauses in the doorway, turns back.

EMILY (Cont'd)

Oh - the boss asked about you.

Emily leaves, door closes.

The silence after her is deafening.

Mel lifts her glass but doesn't drink. She stares at her own reflection in the window.

MEL

(under her breath)

Of course. Why should today be different.

She forces a sip of water, puts the glass down - too hard.

MEL (Cont'd)

(quiet, raw)

This can't be it. Not my life.

INT. KAT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mel and Kat sit on cushions around a low round table. The apartment is vibrant - crystals on shelves, suncatchers hanging in the windows, incense drifting in the air.

Mel's eyes widen; it's colorful, chaotic, alive - exactly the kind of world she doesn't know, but craves.

Kat shuffles the tarot cards with calm focus. She smiles at Mel, handing over the deck.

KAT

Take the cards, let your energy flow into them. Ask the universe a question in your mind. Anything - love, money, family... whatever you want to know.

Mel clutches the cards, excited and nervous.

MEL

Okay... wait. I can ask anything? I just... think it?

KAT:

Exactly. No mistakes. Keep your question in mind as you shuffle. Just like at home.

Mel looks at Kat with wide eyes.
Then Mel closes her eyes and begins shuffling. She opens them, unsure what comes next.

Kat wants to take away Mel's excitement and continues speaking in a calm voice.

KAT (Cont'd)

(calmly)

Perfect. Now place the deck face up in the middle.

Mel does.

Kat lays out the cards silently.

Mel grows tense, reading Kat's expressions.

KAT (Cont'd)

Hmm... big changes coming. Could be good... or not. Something about being trapped, and your parents are involved.

Mel's eyes widen, mouth slightly open.

MEL

Trapped? What...?

KAT

Don't worry, we'll see more. Usually it looks worse than it is.

Kat gives Mel a sure look and smiles.

Mel exhales, still uneasy.

MEL

(worried)

Yeah... tell me something I don't already know.

KAT

I see you're frustrated with work, your colleague... but she will lead you to the man of your dreams. Really. Possibly even cause it.

Mel, now very interested, leans closer.

MEL

Oh! Keep going!

Mel sits upright and leans slightly towards the cards so that she can look at them herself.

Kat points to cards, explaining.

KAT

This man... wealthy, very interested in you. Could lead to something serious – maybe even a proposal. Your choice, of course.

Mel blinks, overwhelmed.

MEL

A proposal? Really? Do I at least get a warning first?

KAT

(giggling)

Oh I love this part... The cards have more to reveal. Let's look further.

Kat studies the remaining cards, her finger tracing symbols.

Mel watches eagerly.

KAT (Cont'd)

Oh... okay, so I also see an illness... a hospital... your parents involved. Hard to say more, but physical and emotional strain.

Mel stiffens, nervous.

KAT (Cont'd)

(standing, walking to shelf)

Wait, I'll give you something.

Kat kneels again, opening a small wooden box. Inside: bundles of sage, shimmering stones, a delicate rose quartz pendant that catches the light.

KAT (Cont'd)

For cleansing... and for protection.

Mel leans closer, curious but unsure.

Kat lifts a large crystal, slowly circling it through the air – her movements calm, almost ritualistic.

KAT (Cont'd)

Light the sage, let the smoke move through your rooms. It carries away what doesn't belong. This — (she gestures to the crystal) — keeps your energy clear. And the necklace... wear it close to your heart. It draws in what's meant for you.

Mel watches, caught between wonder and disbelief.

MEL

Okay... And does it this help with the sickness too?

Kat meets her eyes — steady, knowing.

KAT

When the heart clears, the body follows.

Mel closes the box and looks up at Kat — something in her eyes lighter than before.

MEL

(quiet, sincere)

Thank you... I didn't expect this to make sense. But somehow... it does.

Kat smiles — warm, grounded.

KAT

Don't overthink it, Mel. Just follow what feels good. Joy clears the way faster than struggle.

A beat. Mel absorbs that.

KAT (Cont'd)

And about your parents... that will untangle too. One step at a time.

Kat opens the door for her.

MEL

(soft determination)

I guess.. I can't hide forever. Something has to change.

(smiles)

Thanks for today. Really.

KAT

We only just started.
You know... You're holding so much inside you... it want to come out.

Kat smiles softly.

KAT (Cont'd)

Also... there are simply things that are meant for you, and you just have to open yourself up enough. And you don't have to do that alone.

Mel leaves, holding the rose quartz necklace, a spark of hope in her eyes.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The floor looks like a boutique exploded. Dresses hang from chairs, shoes everywhere. Emily stands in front of the mirror in a towel, hair half done, humming to the music.

She holds up two dresses - one classy, one dangerously short.

EMILY

(to herself, debating)
Good girl or heartbreaker?

She smirks, grabs the short one.

EMILY (Cont'd)

(grinning at her reflection)
He won't know what hit him. Perfect.

She slips into the dress, strikes a pose - turning, checking every angle.

EMILY (Cont'd)

Alright, Mel... you didn't want to come.
Your loss.

She grabs her party bag, slides into ten-centimeter heels. Before leaving, she studies her reflection - a flash of doubt flickers, quickly buried under a confident smile.

EMILY (Cont'd)

(quietly)
Let's make it count.

She heads out, the sound of her heels echoing.

INT. DISCO, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Emily is standing at the bar. Loud music drowns out people's voices.

Emily leans over the bar, spotting Dan working behind it.

Dan's back is turned.

EMILY

(loud, excited)

Hey Dan... I made it!

Dan turns to Emily, surprised but happy.

DAN

Emily! You found it! How are you?

EMILY

(smiling)

Looks like, yeah.

They share a brief smile. Dan winks at her as he wipes a glass and steps closer.

DAN

Great outfit. What can I get you?

EMILY

(smiling, teasing)

Thanks. Surprise me – something cold.

Dan pops open a beer, slides it across the bar. Their fingers almost touch. A brief glance between the two.

DAN

(clearing his throat)

Alone tonight or is Mel with you?

Emily pauses – just a heartbeat too long. Then she forces a small laugh, takes a sip.

EMILY

Mel? She had... other plans.

(pauses, then lighter)

She's been in a different mood lately.

Guess it's just me tonight.

Dan nods – watching her a moment longer than necessary. Suddenly he points toward the dance floor.

DAN

Wait... isn't that Mel?

Emily freezes, scanning the crowd. Then Mel appears in front of her, surprising her.

Emily notices something different about Mel – confident, radiant, mysterious.

EMILY

(stunned)

What? Uh... Mel?

Mel leans in, kisses Emily on the cheek.

MEL

(to Emily, then Dan)

Hi Emily! Glad I saved your message,
finding this place was tricky... Oh, Dan!
You work here? Nice to see you!

Mel leans over the counter, giving Dan a flirtatious look.

DAN

(surprised)

Hi... Mel.

MEL

(smiling)

Can I get a beer too... and two tequila
shots for Emily and me?

Dan stammers, taken aback.

DAN

Y-yeah... sure.

Mel fiddles with her necklace from Kat, almost trance-like.
Emily watches, amused.

EMILY

Mel? I thought you didn't want to come...

MEL

Yeah... I changed my mind. Time to step
out of my shell. Otherwise, nothing
changes, right?

Dan places the drinks.

Mel takes her beer, holding it in one hand, playing with the
necklace with the other, scanning the crowd for her "dream man."
Emily, still puzzled, grins and starts dancing on her chair,
enjoying the music.

INT. DISCO - CONTINUES - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mel and Emily sit at the bar. Empty shot glasses litter the
counter – both women have clearly enjoyed themselves.
A catchy song starts. Mel looks at Emily, grabs her arm.

MEL

Ohhhh... Come on, we have to dance to this!

Mel pulls Emily onto the dance floor.

EMILY

(laughing)

What? Wait... I can't anymore.

They dance wildly, sexy, moving with abandon. Mel scans the crowd, searching for something. Emily leans in.

EMILY (Cont'd)

(shouting in MEL'S ear)

What are you looking for?

Mel grimaces, turns away slightly.

MEL

Nothing... I thought there'd be hot, rich guys here. I know you're just here to have fun, but... I don't see any. Not even for a quick fling.

Mel continues dancing, shoulders hunched, smirking – teasing Emily.

Emily nervously looks at her phone and searches the crowd – in vain. She immediately distracts.

EMILY

(smiling)

Oh really? That's how you see me? Maybe this is just the wrong disco. Or today isn't a hot-guy day.

They laugh, shrugging off the disappointment, and dance together freely.

Mel feels liberated, months of stress melting away. She swings her hips, dancing close to Emily.

Dan watches from behind the bar, amused but slightly concerned.

DAN

(to himself, chuckling)

Oh... if you two don't have a killer headache tomorrow.

INT. RESTAURANT, LOS ANGELES – LATE AFTERNOON

An elegant restaurant. Kevin, Mel's father, sits at a table with a young, attractive woman, ANGELA (30s), wearing a short dress and has an elegant smile.

They toast with champagne.

In the distance, Mel enters, struggling slightly in a tight dress and high heels – holding her head, slightly hungover.

Mel almost bumps into a little nervous WAITER (20s), then steadies herself on a nearby couple's table.

THE COUPLE looks at Mel in shock as Mel puts her hand on the table to keep from falling.

Kevin doesn't notice Mel yet and laughs exuberantly with Angela.

MEL

(to the couple)

Oh... excuse me. You should try the crème brûlée. It's really good.

She straightens her dress and walks to her father's table, surprise and anger on her face.

MEL (Cont'd)

Dad? I thought we were eating alone today.

Kevin stands nervously.

KEVIN

Mel? Uh... this is Angela. Sorry, I forgot to mention someone special would join.

Angela smiles, stands, and shakes Mel's hand.

ANGELA

I'm so happy to finally meet you. Your father has told me so much.

Mel doesn't want to be rude and shakes Angela's hand.

MEL

Does he?

(beat, to Kevin)

That must've been... recently.

Mel glances at Angela, then disappointedly at her father.

MEL (Cont'd)

Hm. I guess things changed since last time we met.

KEVIN

Well... Angela really wanted to meet you. I thought you wouldn't mind.

Mel sits down with a fake smile, unsure what to say. She notices Angela looks almost her age and wonders how long this relationship has lasted.

The waiter sets down a glass of champagne in front of Mel. She takes a sip, trying to stay composed.

KEVIN

So... how's Jack?

Mel freezes. The glass stops mid-air. A quiet laugh – disbelief, not humor.

MEL

Jack?

Kevin shrugs, casual – too casual.

KEVIN

Well... it was never really over, so I thought you were still together. Four years don't just disappear.

Mel sets the glass down. Carefully. Controlled.

MEL

They do, when one person keeps lying.

A hint of tension lands on the table. Angela shifts, sensing it.

KEVIN

(sighs)

You've never made it easy on yourself, Mel. Or anyone who tries to help you.

There it is – the judgment dressed as concern.

MEL

Right. Of course. Your favorite story.

Mel leans back – she's had enough.

MEL (Cont'd)

So what is this really? A relationship update? Or are we back to my life choices? Because I thought tonight was about dinner – not another evaluation.

Kevin straightens, caught.

Angela pretends to admire the silverware.

KEVIN

(softening, but it stings)

I just want to see you stable. A real career, a reliable partner...

Mel's smile cuts like glass.

MEL

And you brought an audience this time. Impressive.

Mel stands. The waiter approaches cautiously.

WAITER

Miss... should I come back later?

Mel takes her purse and looks at her father.

MEL

No. Take the order. But I'm leaving.

Mel turns to Angela.

MEL (Cont'd)

Angela, it was nice meeting you... but there's a lot you don't know about our family. Hope you stick around long enough to find out.

Mel storms out. Kevin smiles sheepishly.
Angela looks at Kevin questioningly.

EXT. SANTA MONICA / VENICE BEACH - MORNING

Mel walks barefoot along the beach, toes sinking into the sand. She closes her eyes, savoring the feeling, a memory from childhood.

MEMORY MEL'S CHILDHOOD**EXT. BEACH - DAY**

Six-year-old Mel builds a sandcastle. Her father, Kevin Burham, arrives with a bucket of water. He dumps it, splashing both Mel and the castle.
Mel bursts into laughter. Kevin joins in.

CUT TO:

INT. MEL'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - EVENING

A cozy room covered in Mel's drawings.
Young Mel colors on the floor, humming to herself.
Her mother, Nathalie, enters and smiles warmly.
Mel proudly holds up a drawing.

MEL

Mom! This is for Dad. Then he won't be so sad anymore.

Nathalie takes the picture and looks at it, touched.

NATHALIE

Wow darling. That's beautiful. I'm sure Dad will love it.

Mel beams.

END MEMORY

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA / VENICE BEACH - MORNING

Mel stands on the beach and looks out to the ocean.
She smiles and tears escape her eyes, which she immediately wipes away.
She looks around, if anyone might have seen it and suddenly, her crystal necklace lies on the sand.
She kneels, puzzled, picking it up.

MEL

How... What is happening here?

The clasp is broken. A soft breeze brushes her face. She closes her eyes, breathes deeply, feeling a fleeting happiness.
Her phone buzzes in her belt bag. She checks the message — it's from her mother.

TEXT (ON SCREEN)

Honey, how are you? Your father told me you left the restaurant upset. Call me if you want to talk. Love, Mom.

Tears spill down Mel's cheeks. The pressure she's buried for years finally breaks through.

MEL

What am I even doing? I'm not alive. I'm on autopilot. And I'm so damn tired of being okay with that.

She drops to her knees.

MEL (Cont'd)

(whispers)

I can't give up. Not now.

She forces herself back up and keeps walking along the beach.

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, BREAK ROOM - LUNCH

Mel and Emily sit at the small lunch table, each with a plastic bowl of to-go salad.
They laugh between bites, still buzzing from the wild night before.

EMILY

When are we going out again? Mel, that was hilarious! Who knew you could dance like that? Should I be worried?

Emily laughs. Mel smiles sheepishly.
Then Mel straightens her back and looks at Emily with a serious look. There's something different in her eyes now.

MEL

(dramatic, twirling her fork)
I'm done living the same old way. So...
get used to the new me. Tell me when and
where – count me in.

Mel laughs and takes another bite.
Emily pauses, a little thrown by Mel's new energy.

MEL (Cont'd)

(determined)
I want to meet those great men you keep
talking about. A man I don't have to
pretend with. I'm tired of this – unhappy
relationships, a job that eats me alive.
I'm done just surviving. I want to live.

Mel gestures emphatically, hands in the air.
Emily studies her, surprised – but kind of impressed.

EMILY

(smiling)
I get it, Mel. That's a lot... and a lot
of crap, too. So I say – what are we
waiting for, sister?

They both dig into their salads again.

MEL

That makes me happy, at least someone
believes in me.

EMILY

Of course. I'm always here for you. And
honestly? I like this side of you.

They share a laugh. Something has shifted between them, and
inside Mel.

TWO SCENES – MEL'S NEW LIFE

SCENE 1: EXT. CALIFORNIA BEACH – SUNSET

A golden sky. Waves roll gently against the shore.
Mel lies on her mat, eyes closed, breathing deeply.
Beside her, Isabella smiles, equally serene.

Kat, surrounded by glowing crystal bowls, draws her reamer
across the rims.

The tones shimmer through the evening air.

Around them, a circle of people sink into deep relaxation, the beach turning into a sanctuary.

Mel's face softens – she looks truly at peace.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE – DAY

Mel, much more alert, active and happier at work.
Mel moves quickly and confidently from room to room.

In the treatment chair, she's one step ahead of her boss (dentist).

She places the next instrument in his hand before he even asks. The dentist glances at her, wide-eyed, impressed – then gives a subtle, approving nod.

Mel smiles radiant, as she strides down the hallway. Staff and patients alike return her warm greeting. She is lighter, sharper, finally alive.

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT – EVENING, AFTER WORK

Mel is curled up on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket. She is holding a hot tea in one hand and the remote control in the other. She's trying to make herself small, safe. She winces, presses a hand to her belly. The tea goes down on the coffee table. She rubs her stomach, breathing shallow. Her phone lies on the dresser across the room. Mel watches it, torn – call or wait it out?

MEL

(soft, to herself)

Aw... no... I can handle this.

A few minutes pass. Her face tightens; the pain grows. She reaches for the phone with slow, reluctant movements, thumb shaking as she dials.

INSERT – PHONE SCREEN: "ISABELLA"

Mel puts the phone to her ear.

MEL (Cont'd)

(voice trembling)

Hey... could you maybe come over?

(beat)

I need you. Can you come?

Silence as she listens. Mel closes her eyes, relief softening her face.

CUT TO:

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mel is still sitting on the sofa. Tears completely smeared her makeup.

The doorbell rings. Mel puts the blanket aside and goes to the door. She opens it.

Isabella stands there, worried. Mel exhales, a sound of relief. Isabella steps in; Mel closes the door behind her.

ISABELLA

(concerned)

What's going on? You didn't tell me much on the phone.

Mel doubles over and returns to the sofa, sitting down slowly, clutching her stomach.

Isabella follows and stops in front of her.

Mel looks up at Isabella and starts to cry.

MEL

(through tears)

I don't know... my stomach - it's so bad. It usually passes, but today it's unbearable.

She gasps for breath.

MEL (Cont'd)

And it feels like it's getting worse... the tea didn't help, and the pills - nothing.

Mel looks at the pill bottle on the coffee table, then back at Isabella, pleading.

ISABELLA

(firm, worried)

Mel... you have these attacks often, right? If it's this bad, we can't wait.

Mel continues crying, head bowed.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

(decisive)

Fine. You don't have to like it - but you're coming with me.

Mel rubs her face with one hand - exactly what she feared. Isabella watches her, sadness and resolve on her face.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - EVENING

Mel lies in a hospital bed, an IV in her arm. She stares at the ceiling, eyes hollow; the IV pricks in her crook makes her wince. The pain looks heavier now, made worse by helplessness.

Isabella sits on a chair beside her, holding Mel's hand, trying to keep calm.

ISABELLA

(soft)

How are you doing?

Mel looks at her, pained and bewildered.

MEL

(whiny, tearful)

What kind of question is that... it hurts.

Mel tries to scratch at the arm with the IV, awkward and upset. Her voice trembles.

MEL (Cont'd)

(agonizing)

My arm... why did I come? I should've just taken another pill.

Mel collapses back onto the pillow, exhausted and defeated. Isabella sits there, searching for words – but there are none.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, ENTRANCE / RECEPTION - SAME EVENING

Nathalie enters, nervous, scanning the counter for a nurse. She clutches her handbag tightly. Behind Nathalie, footsteps. Kevin enters, stops directly behind her.

KEVIN

Nathalie?

Startled, Nathalie turns quickly. The sight of her ex-husband deflates her.

NATHALIE

Of course. Where there's trouble, you show up ten years late.

Kevin stiffens, jaw tight.

KEVIN

I'm her father, Nathalie.

NATHALIE

Since when?

Kevin steps closer, voice low but sharp.

KEVIN

So... What about Mel? Why is she here?

NATHALIE

(flat)

Take a guess. She keeps pushing herself until she breaks. Some things don't change.

Kevin begins pacing, agitation building.

KEVIN

(frustrated)

I told her this would happen. I told her to quit that damn job – she could've taken the position at my company. But no. She always has to do everything the hard way.

That hits Nathalie hard. Her voice rises; her patience snaps.

NATHALIE

Don't do that. Not now.

KEVIN

What?

NATHALIE

Blaming her. Turning this into a lecture. She's lying in there scared and in pain – you think what she needs is you being right?

Kevin exhales harshly, bracing a hand against the wall, conflicted.

KEVIN

I'm trying to help.

NATHALIE

Then help. Be her father. Just this once – be what she actually needs.

Kevin exhales sharply, loosening his tie, shaking his head. He looks wounded – but also defensive, caught between pride and genuine worry.

BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, MEL'S ROOM - SAME EVENING

The door opens. Kevin and Nathalie step inside, stopping at the foot of the bed.

Mel freezes, jaw dropping.

Isabella, sitting nearby, stiffens.

MEL

(surprised)

Mom? Dad? What... what are you doing here?

Mel whips her head toward Isabella, eyes wide, a daggered look. Isabella shrinks in her chair, shoulders hunched.

Mel turns back to her parents, bracing herself. She's tired, fragile - not ready for a lecture.

NATHALIE

(worried)

Honey, how are you?

KEVIN

I know you didn't expect us... but we had to come. We love you. We're just worried.

MEL

(sighs)

Yeah... you're right. I didn't expect you two. Together, I mean... I'm fine. Really. It's just... one of those weeks, I guess.

She shifts uncomfortably, shooting Isabella another dirty look.

MEL (Cont'd)

Isabella overreacted. You're all worrying way too much.

The door opens again. A DOCTOR (58), enters with a YOUNG WOMAN at his side.

DOCTOR

(smiles)

Well, hello... wow, quite the audience this late at night.

Everyone turns to the door. The doctor steps closer, scanning Mel's chart.

DOCTOR (Cont'd)

(to Mel)

So.. How do you feel?

MEL

(trying to sound casual)
I'm fine. I've had this before.
My friend just insisted I come.

Another pointed look at Isabella.

DOCTOR

(serious)
Well, your friend was right.

That throws Mel.

The doctor studies the file, then looks back at Mel.

DOCTOR (Cont'd)

Your bloodwork shows mild inflammation.
Best if you stay overnight, so we can
watch you.

Mel's eyes widen. She wasn't expecting that.

DOCTOR (Cont'd)

Inflammation of the stomach lining isn't
trivial. Left unchecked, it can get
serious.

MEL

Inflammation? How... can this happen?

The doctor gestures toward the YOUNG WOMAN (DR. HARD, 30s).

DOCTOR

There are different causes.
This is Dr. Hard, our senior psychologist.
She'll talk with you tomorrow, maybe give
you some tools for daily life.

Mel looks at Dr. Hard, baffled. She pushes herself up, hands
raised.

MEL

Wait — so... is it bad?

DR. HARD

(reassuring)
Not necessarily. Don't worry.
Stress alone can trigger symptoms. I'd
just like to understand your routine and
see how we can ease it.

Mel exhales, sinking back.
Her parents also relax.

MEL

Okay.

DOCTOR

Good. Now rest. We'll talk tomorrow.

MEL

(disappointed)

Yes. Thank you, Doctor.

NATHALIE

Thank you so much, Doctor.

The doctor exits. Mel watches him leave, then looks at her parents, a flicker of vulnerability in her eyes.

KEVIN

(soft, trying to sound reassuring)

So, darling. We'll come back tomorrow.
We'll get you back on track.

Nathalie leans down, kisses Mel on the forehead. Her touch is warm but carries the weight of unspoken things. She exits with Kevin.

Isabella leans down, kisses Mel's cheek.

ISABELLA

Take it easy, Mel. You don't have to fix anything tonight. And your mom will call your boss. You'll need a few days off.

MEL

(embarrassed)

Great... just like back in school.
But... thanks.

Isabella leaves. Mel waves after her, secretly relieved she came. Mel presses her free hand to her stomach, sighs.

MEL (Cont'd)

(ironic)

Perfect. I'm definitely the favorite at work now.

INT. HOSPITAL, MEL'S ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Dr. Hard sits on a chair beside Mel's bed.

Mel lies in bed and nervously waits for what is coming next.

DR. HARD

How are you this morning?

MEL

Good... uh, better.

DR. HARD

Glad to hear that. I just have a few questions.

Dr. Hard scans her questionnaire, finger tracing down the page.

DR. HARD (Cont'd)

Do you experience stress in your daily life? At work, for example?

MEL

(half-joking)

Yes... and yes.

Dr. Hard smiles politely, then moves on.

DR. HARD

How long have you felt this way? How do you usually cope?

MEL

(voice low, almost defiant)

Well... Stress has been my shadow for years now. I work in a dental office — always the only one in the treatment room. Six years maybe... I've learned to live with it.

DR. HARD

And what about lately? How do you handle it?

MEL

(quick laugh, shrugging)

I used to just put up with it. Went out a lot, tried to distract myself. Lately I've found something new — sound healing on the beach. I also meditate at home. So... you see, I'm already working on it.

DR. HARD

(nods)

That's good. You also mentioned going out a lot. Does that include alcohol or other substances?

MEL

(fidgeting)

Maybe a little alcohol... but I know my limits... mostly.

DR. HARD

Still, it can worsen your symptoms. Avoid alcohol, spicy or fatty foods for a while.

Mel shifts uncomfortably. She knows she's had more drinks than she wants to admit.

Dr. Hard takes a brochure from under her papers and hands it to Mel.

DR. HARD (Cont'd)

Here – take a look. Not just for depression or anxiety – stress, trauma, art therapy, even animal-assisted therapy.

Mel looks at the brochure for a few seconds and then flips it toward Dr. Hard.

MEL

(skeptical)

No. I don't think I need something like that.

Dr. Hard lowers the brochure, softens her tone.

DR. HARD (Cont'd)

You don't have to do this. But when I saw you, I thought this might be just the thing for you. I have sent some of my patients there and seen extraordinary results... Just take it with you and think about it.

Dr. Hard offers the brochure again. Mel hesitates, then takes it without a word. Mel glances at the cover.

CLOSE ON: The bold title: AMEN

MEL

(whispering quietly)

Amen...

Mel blinks. The word shifts before her eyes.

INSERT – BROCHURE: The actual name reads *AMEND*.

MEL (Cont'd)

(quietly)

Strange.

She flips through, her face falling when she sees the fine print: **a private clinic.**

Mel wants to give the brochure back to the Dr. Hard.

MEL (Cont'd)
(disheartened)
No... I can't afford this.

DR. HARD
(quickly)
Keep it anyway. Who knows what might happen.

Dr. Hard smiles, making a note on her sheet.
Mel sets the brochure on the bedside table, as if planning to toss it once she's alone.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SCENES – MONTAGE OF MEL TRYING TO CHANGE

SCENE 1: INT. MEL'S APARTMENT – DAY

Mel sits cross-legged on a bright, round cushion. She holds the smoldering white sage from Kat's kit, eyes closed, sweeping smoke around her aura.

Spiritual music drifts through the open window. Her apartment feels warmer, more colorful – small signs of the "new Mel" everywhere.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2: EXT. BEACH – LATE AFTERNOON / SUNSET

Mel and Isabella lie on their mats among the group.

Kat plays crystal and purple singing bowls; the tones wash over them. The sun lowers, the sea glows.

Mel breathes in, looks calmer – for a moment, truly present.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3: EXT. SANTA MONICA BOARDWALK – DAY

Mel drags Emily into boutiques, giggling, trying on scarves and little things that match her new look.

Dan tags along, amused, rolling his eyes but smiling.

The three of them laugh, light and easy – a rare, real day out.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4: INT. MEL'S KITCHEN – MORNING

Mel in a cozy, colorful robe.

She opens a small white blister pack, takes a pale pill, drinks water.

The label on the box reads: painkillers / for gastritis.
She swallows, closes her hand around the glass, and forces a breath.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE - DAY

Mel rummages in a drawer, blinking back tears.

Emily slips in, senses it, and places a gentle hand on Mel's shoulder.

Mel musters a pained smile – she's on the edge, trying to hold it together.

CUT TO:

SCENE 6: INT. MEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight slices the room.

Mel thrashes in bed, gasps awake from a nightmare. She props herself up, drinks from a glass on the nightstand, and scans the room.

Tears come quietly – confusion, fear.

Mel whispers to the dark:

MEL

(soft, broken)

Why isn't this getting better?

She curls up, the new colors around her suddenly too loud, as the montage ends.

INT. DISCO - NIGHT

The club is packed. Music pounds, lights strobe, shadows blur. Dan weaves through the crowd with a tray, scanning faces, eyes narrowed. He's tense.

Then – a flash of blue rhinestones. Emily's glittering tank top. Relief.

Dan approaches, taps her shoulder.

DAN

(loud, urgent)

Emily, Emily!!

Emily spins around, nearly spilling her drink.
Her hand goes to her chest.

EMILY

(shocked)

What? Oh man, Dan!

(beat, then laughing)

You scared me, maaaann!

DAN

(apologetic)

Sorry. I couldn't see you, I was worried.

EMILY

(grinning)

It's fine. Better view from here.

Emily glances toward a group of men.

Dan follows her eyes — ONE MAN, MR. CLARK, is locked on Emily.

Emily keeps looking back. Dan stiffens.

Before Dan can say anything, Mel staggers into the scene, dancing wildly, glassy-eyed.

MEL

(drunk, playful)

Daaaan! Come dance with us!

Mel sways into him.

Dan, embarrassed, gently holds her back.

DAN

(laughing, uneasy)

Okay, Mel... that's enough.

Emily just laughs, amused by Mel's antics. Emily thrusts her glass toward Mel.

EMILY

(teasing)

Mel, you're killing me. Here — one more, come on!

Before Mel can grab it, Dan snatches the glass away.

DAN

(firm, low)

Emily. Enough.

Emily rolls her eyes, but Mel freezes, the fun draining from her face.

Then suddenly — Mel laughs again, louder this time. Too loud. Her heel slips — and she hits the floor hard.

MEL

(laughing through pain)
Ow... okay, who spiked that drink? That
was *not* wine.

She tries to sit up, waving at Emily, eyes glassy.

MEL (Cont'd)

(slurred, to Emily)
You know, Emily... that guy... keeps
staring at you.
(pause, squints)
Wait... it's Mr. Clark. My mom works for
him — and his wife.

Emily's smile collapses. Her eyes dart toward the man (Mr.
Clark) across the room.
Mr. Clark looks away.

Dan helps Mel up, steadying her. Her laughter fades into a quiet
sob.

DAN

(gently)
Hey, hey... it's okay. You're okay.

Dan nods. Emily disappears toward the bar.
Dan braces Mel as she sways.

DAN

(soft to Mel)
Oh, Mel... I should've kept a better eye on
you.

MEL

(weak smile, tears mixing with
laughter)
I... I think I'm just tired. Really tired.

Mel leans against Dan, half-conscious.
Emily stands frozen, guilt and panic flickering behind her
smile.

EMILY

(softly, shaken)
I'll get some water. Just... keep her
upright, okay?

Dan nods, his hand steady on Mel's back.

MEL

(mumbling)
I wanna go home...

Suddenly, a DRUNK MAN stumbles past, shoving Dan.
Dan loses his grip.

DAN

(snaps)
Hey, careful!

DRUNK MAN

(apologetic)
Sorry, man!

The drunk man staggers off. Dan turns back –

Mel is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. DISCO – BAR – NIGHT

Bass thunders. Lights flash red-blue across Emily's face as she grabs a glass of water.

She takes a breath, still shaken from Mel's fall – when a *hand* lands on her lower back – too familiar.

She freezes. Turns – **MR. CLARK.**

Perfect smile, wedding ring catching the strobe.

EMILY:

(sharp)
Stop it. Take your hand away!...
You don't want your wife to find out, do you?

Mr. Clark freezes. He quickly withdraws his hand.

MR. CLARK

(stuttering)
Emily, I... I can explain.

Emily takes a step back – angry.

EMILY

(cutting him off, sharp)
Don't. Not here.

He hesitates, his charm flickering.

MR. CLARK

Please... let me explain!

EMILY

Explain what? That you forgot to mention the wife? Her name's Claire, right?

His face drains.

EMILY (Cont'd)

Yeah. I figured it out.
You should probably take your hand off
me... before she does.

A beat.

He slowly pulls back, ashamed – or scared.

MR. CLARK

Emily, it's not what you think.

EMILY

(laughs, bitter)
Oh, it's *exactly* what I think.

She slams the empty glass on the counter – the sound sharp
against the bass – and disappears into the crowd, heels
clicking, shoulders squared.

Mr. Clark stays frozen.

The lights flash – red, then blue – and his smile is gone.

BACK TO:

INT. DISCO – DANCE FLOOR – NIGHT

The crowd pulses under flashing lights.

Emily makes her way to Dan – water in her hand, but anger in her
eyes.

DAN

(nervous)
Emily, finally! Mel's gone.

EMILY

(alarmed)
What? Gone? What do you mean, gone?

DAN

I just turned for a second – she was right
here.

Emily spins, shouting over the pounding bass.

EMILY

Mel?!

No answer. Just bodies, music, chaos.

A STRANGER GUY (mid-30s), tipsy, slightly amused – taps Dan on
the shoulder.

STRANGER GUY

Hey, do you mean the brunette who almost
fell off her high heels?

DAN

(tense)

Yeah, have you seen her?

STRANGER GUY

Yeah, she said something weird... like she was done with "all this noise."

Something about going back to where things were still good... with her dad, I think?

He shrugs, laughs to himself.

STRANGER GUY (Cont'd)

Didn't sound too sober, man.

The stranger guy drifts off, already forgetting.
Emily freezes, mind racing.

EMILY

(to herself, low)

Back to where things were good...

EMILY (Cont'd)

Dan - she told me once, when everything gets too much, she goes to the beach. It's her calm place. The sound healing spot.

DAN

You think she went there?

EMILY

(nervous, panicked)

Yes. And if she's as bad as she looked tonight - she shouldn't be alone.

Without a word, Dan immediately reaches for his car keys behind the bar.

DAN

Then we don't wait. Let's go.

Both rush out into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA - HILL ABOVE THE BEACH - NIGHT

Dan and Emily jump out of the car. They scan the dark shoreline, frantic. No sign of Mel.

Wind whips through Mel's hair. The ocean below roars, the moonlight spilling across her face.
She's on the edge - trembling, small against the vast dark.
Then Dan spots movement above.

DAN

(pointing)

There! She's up there!

EMILY

(panicked, searching)

Where?!

DAN

(insistent)

On the hill — look!

They scramble up the incline, breathless by the time they reach the top.

Dan slows, cautious, not wanting to startle her.

Emily hangs back, frozen in fear.

DAN (Cont'd)

(gently)

Mel? ... Hey. What are you doing out here?

You scared us.

Mel turns toward him. Her eyes are swollen, broken.

MEL

(tearful, desperate)

I just needed to breathe.

(beat)

Everything feels... too loud.

Back then, when I came here with Dad, it was quiet. Simple.

Now it's just —

(she gestures helplessly)

Noise.

Dan steps closer, slow. He crouches beside her.

MEL (Cont'd)

I'm just... so tired, Dan.

Everything hurts. Even trying.

Dan reaches for her hand, locking eyes with her.

DAN

(soft, steady)

My mom used to say that too.

That she was fine... until one day she wasn't.

Mel stares at him, hanging on his words.

MEL

Your mom? What happened?

Dan takes a breath – the confession heavy on him.

DAN

My dad found her before it was too late.
Took her somewhere safe.
(beat)
She hated him for it –
(soft)
– until she didn't.

Suddenly, Mel sways. Her eyes roll back. She collapses into Dan's arms.

DAN (Cont'd)

(alarmed)

Mel!

From behind, Emily bursts through the dark, sees them – and screams.

EMILY

(horrified)

Mel!!

The world slows – sound distorts.
Emily scrambles to them, face pale with shock.

EMILY (Cont'd)

(shouting)

What's wrong with her?!

DAN

(yelling, urgent)

Call an ambulance!

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL – MEL'S ROOM – DAY

MEL'S POV:

Mel's eyelids flutter. A blur of sterile white. Shapes shift above her.
She blinks – once, twice – the light is harsh, vision still swimming.
The muffled sound of voices bleeds in, growing clearer.

EMILY (O.S.)

Mel? ... Mel? Hey, are you awake?

DAN (O.S.)

Mel? Can you hear us?

BACK TO SCENE:

Emily and Dan hover at the foot of the bed, anxious. Mel stirs, struggling to open her eyes. She mumbles, disoriented.

MEL

(murmuring)

Mmmhhhh... Em... Emily?

EMILY

(relieved, bright)

Yes! Thank God. Mel, we were so worried about you.

Dan leans closer.

DAN

Mel, do you remember anything?

Mel forces her eyes open. The brightness stings. She shields her face with her hand.

MEL

(weak, slow)

I don't know.

The door opens.

The doctor enters – same one from before – white coat, patient file in hand.

DOCTOR

Hello everyone. Ah, I see the young lady is awake.

(to Mel)

How are you feeling?

Mel turns her head, dazed.

MEL

What am I doing here?

DOCTOR

(to Mel)

You were brought in by ambulance last night. We found a high level of alcohol in your blood.

A beat. The doctor's tone sharpens, eyes fixed on her.

DOCTOR (Cont'd)

It's only been a few weeks since your last admission. And I'm sure Dr. Hard advised you – no alcohol, and to address the root of your symptoms instead of fueling them.

Mel drops her gaze, shame flooding her. She says nothing.

The doctor looks past her, a silent signal to Dan and Emily. They exchange worried glances, then quietly step out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - OUTSIDE MEL'S ROOM - DAY

Dan and Emily step out of Mel's room, the weight of the moment hanging heavy. They exchange a worried glance. Down the hall, Kevin (Mel's father, stern, tightly wound) strides toward them. His eyes lock onto Mel's room — and then onto them. Emily stiffens. She tugs nervously on Dan's arm.

EMILY

(low and urgent)

Dan! Look!

Dan turns — sees Kevin coming closer, jaw tight, gaze burning.

DAN

(muttering)

Oh crap... You texted Isabella about Mel being here, right?

EMILY

(nervous)

Yeah. And she must've called her dad.

(swallows hard)

God, I wish her mom was here instead. Come on, let's just get out of here.

Kevin closes the distance fast, pointing a sharp finger at them like an accusation.

KEVIN

(angry)

You two — stop right there. Were you with my daughter?

DAN

(defensive)

Hey, sir, relax. We brought her in. She's safe.

Emily

(scared, stumbling over her words)

Yes — she just drank a little too much.

I... I should've stopped her, I know.

But she's awake now, you can... you can go in.

Emily points quickly toward Mel's room, eager for him to leave. Her voice trembles; she only wants to disappear.

Kevin glances at the door. His anger simmers into something harder, heavier – worry. Without another word, he turns and walks toward the room.

At the doorway, Kevin stops. The doctor is inside, speaking quietly with Mel. Kevin hesitates, then steps back into the shadows of the hall. He lingers – hidden – listening in.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM – SAME MOMENT

Mel lies against the pillow, pale and worn. The doctor stands at her bedside, chart in hand.

DOCTOR

Do you remember what happened that night?

Mel thinks hard, struggling.

MEL

No. To be honest... all I remember is that we celebrated and I... I don't know exactly.

(beat, frustrated)

We had a fun evening... I don't know!

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY – OUTSIDE MEL'S ROOM – DAY

Kevin leans stiffly against the wall, eyes fixed on Mel through the doorway. He listens intently, jaw tight, lost in the words inside.

From down the hall, Dr. Hard strides forward – calm, confident, purposeful. She spots Kevin before he notices her.

DR. HARD

Oh, hello. It's good you're here.

Kevin startles, caught off guard. He quickly straightens, as if he's been doing nothing wrong.

KEVIN

(embarrassed)

Oh – hello. Yeah, um... I didn't want to interrupt the conversation.

Kevin casts a quick glance into the room, trying to justify himself.

DR. HARD

(with a small, knowing smile)

I understand.

(beat)

But I'd like to speak with your daughter first. Just wait here — I'll bring you in shortly, alright?

Kevin exhales, nods stiffly. He takes a step back, retreating further into the hallway shadows.
He positions himself so Mel can't see him through the doorway.

Dr. Hard adjusts her coat, then steps into Mel's room with quiet authority.

Kevin lingers outside — pacing, waiting.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM — DAY, SAME SECOND

The doctor stands at Mel's bedside, jotting notes into her file.
Dr. Hard steps in with quiet authority.

The doctor notices her presence immediately.
He straightens slightly, acknowledging her with relief.

DOCTOR

(to DR. HARD)

Ah, good that you're here.

Dr. Hard gives him a short nod, then turns her full attention to Mel.

DR. HARD

Melanie. It seems you're not feeling any better after our last conversation.

MEL

(ashamed, sarcastic)

Well... it looks like not.

Mel folds her arms, shutting down, defensive.
She doesn't want another lecture — not today.

DR. HARD

We've already discussed your situation.

Dr. Hard glances at the doctor, signaling their alignment.

DR. HARD (Cont'd)

And we would really encourage you to visit this facility. You remember the brochure I gave you?

MEL

(gesturing, defensive)
Yes, but I already told you I can't afford
that place. Besides — I have obligations.
What am I supposed to say to my boss?
That I just need a break?

Mel's words tumble out sharper than intended.
Her shoulders hunch, body language screaming refusal.

Suddenly, Mel's father, Kevin, steps in.
His presence lands like a thunderclap.

Mel stares at him, wide-eyed, stunned.

MEL

Uh, Dad?

KEVIN

(quiet)
Mel... I, uh — I heard what you and the
doctor were talking about.

Mel freezes, shame flushing her face.
She never wanted him to know how bad it really was.

KEVIN (cont'd)

I knew things weren't great, but... I
didn't know it was this bad.

Mel looks away, biting her lip. Kevin takes a breath.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

I'm not good at this... talking thing.
But I don't want to just stand here and
watch you fall apart.

Mel opens her mouth to protest, but her father cuts in, stronger
this time. He takes a small step closer.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

That place the doctor mentioned — maybe
it's worth a try. You don't have to decide
now. Just... don't shut the door on it.

Silence.
The weight of his words hangs heavy in the room.
Dr. Hard watches, her eyes soft with concern.
Kevin's gaze is just as piercing, though lined with paternal
fear.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

Maybe... it's time to let someone help.

MEL

(quiet, hesitant)

Yes... but ... I can't afford a stay like that. It probably costs as much as your car.

KEVIN

(calming, steady)

Don't worry. I'll take care of it.

Kevin steps closer, rests a hand on Mel's shoulder. It's tender, almost foreign to her.

Mel forces a small smile, nods faintly. She doesn't know how else to respond.

MEL

Okay. When you really think that's what I need.

The moment lingers – fragile, uneasy – but for the first time, there's a hint of surrender in her eyes.

EXT. AMEND FACILITY, MALIBU – DAY

A sleek black convertible winds its way up a coastal hill. The hum of the engine blends with the sound of crashing waves below.

The sun blazes overhead, bathing the road in gold. Mel leans her head slightly out, eyes wide, taking in the endless Pacific view.

The car slows. Ahead, a massive wrought-iron gate looms. It creaks open, revealing a private drive lined with manicured gardens.

The convertible glides forward and pulls up before a striking house – modern yet warm, surrounded by radiant blooms, as if the sunlight itself was spotlighting it.

The car engine cuts. Silence, except for birdsong.

Mel steps out, clutching a large travel bag. She shuts the door gently, staring up at the house that will soon hold her secrets. She breathes in deeply – steadying nerves. The trunk thuds shut.

Kevin emerges with a suitcase, his eyes scanning the grounds.

KEVIN

So! Here we are.

Kevin trails off, overwhelmed by the serene beauty.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

Looks impressive.

MEL

(nervous, hesitant)

Yes! Very impressive.

I just hope they don't think I'm a crazy person.

Kevin turns to her, confused – or pretending to be.

KEVIN

(turns to her, puzzled)

Why would they do that?

MEL

(shrugs, guarded)

I don't know. Places like this... people come here when they're really falling apart. I just... had a bad week.

(beat)

Maybe a bad year.

Kevin studies her – the cracks behind her sarcasm.

KEVIN

You've been saying that since you were ten. Every time things got hard – "just a bad week."

Mel looks away, uncomfortable. She grips her bag tighter.

KEVIN (Cont'd)

(softly, almost pleading)

Mel, nobody's judging you here. Not this time. You don't have to keep pretending everything's fine.

A silence stretches.

MEL

(flat, barely above a whisper)

Pretending's kind of my thing, isn't it?

Kevin exhales – half a sigh, half surrender.

He shifts the suitcase, nodding toward the entrance.

KEVIN

Come on. Let's get you settled.

Mel finally moves forward, trailing a few steps behind Kevin, her bag dragging slightly, as the two head toward the glowing house.

CUT TO:

INT. AMEND FACILITY, CORRIDOR - DAY

Mel and her father, Kevin, stand in a wide, sunlit corridor. The walls are bright, lined with modern art and fresh flowers. They glance around, uncertain of where to go.

From around the corner, a YOUNG WOMAN approaches – elegant and warm. This is OLIVIA TRAIL. She smiles as she heads straight toward them.

OLIVIA TRAIL

Hello. You must be Melanie?

Olivia Trail extends her hand. Mel shakes it politely.

MEL

Yes, that's me.

(gestures)

And this is my father. He brought me here.

Kevin sets down the suitcase, then takes Olivia Trail's hand.

KEVIN

Good morning. Kevin Burham.

OLIVIA TRAIL

Good morning, Mr. Burham. Olivia Trail.

Olivia Trail turns her focus back to Mel, her smile brightening.

OLIVIA TRAIL (Cont'd)

It's wonderful you're here.

First, I'll show you your room and give you a quick tour.

The others are finishing breakfast – you'll meet them soon.

And... we actually have another young woman here, close to your age. Anna. I think you two will get along well.

Mel exhales in relief, a faint smile appearing.

OLIVIA TRAIL (Cont'd)

(kindly to KEVIN)

Mr. Burham, I'll ask you to say goodbye to Melanie here. You're welcome to call this evening. She'll be well looked after.

KEVIN

(smiling to MEL)

Of course. Darling, you can call me anytime. I'll let your mother know you arrived safely. She'll be relieved — she was a bit harsh with me on the phone yesterday.

MEL

(smirks knowingly)

Really? Yeah... that doesn't surprise me.

Kevin rolls his eyes, amused.

KEVIN

I'll call her right away, so she won't worry, and you can focus on getting well again.

MEL

(softly)

Okay Dad. Thanks.

Kevin leans down, kisses Mel on the cheek. He shakes Olivia Trail's hand once more before turning to leave. At the door, he glances back at Mel, lingering just a moment, then exits.

OLIVIA TRAIL

(picking up the suitcase)

So, Melanie... I have a very enchanting room for you. I'm sure you'll like it.

Mel nods nervously but follows. Together, the two walk down the hallway, heading deeper into the facility.

EXT./INT. AMEND FACILITY, MALIBU - BALCONY - DAY

A warm Pacific breeze.

Mel stands on a sunlit balcony, gazing at the garden and the ocean beyond.

She leans on the railing, closes her eyes, breathes deep — a long, audible exhale of relief.

For the first time in a long while she feels lighter.

A voice behind her interrupts.

ANNA (O.S.)

Beautiful, isn't it?

Mel flinches — not from fear, but from being caught off guard in a rare moment of calm.

Mel turns, blinking against the light.

MEL

Oh – hi. Yeah... it's unreal. Almost too peaceful.

ANNA (26), steps into view – young, direct, oddly calm. She holds out her hand.

ANNA

You are new here, right? I'm Anna.

MEL

Oh yeah, Mrs. Trail mentioned you.
I'm Mel.

ANNA

(warm)

Welcome. On behalf of everyone.

Anna bows and makes an elegant gesture, relaxing the situation. Mel smiles, visibly relieved.

MEL

Thanks. If it stays like this, I might actually want to stay.

ANNA

So... you came willingly?

MEL

(careful)

Not exactly. I thought people came here by choice.

ANNA

(shrugs)

There's that way – and there's the other way.

Mel hesitates, then asks.

MEL

The other way?

ANNA

Look... I'd had enough of pushing. I couldn't take another kick from life.

Anna turns her wrist, revealing bandaged scars. Mel instinctively draws back, unsettled.

MEL

(quiet)

Oh. I'm... sorry.

ANNA

You know, there are things in life that pull you deeper and deeper if you keep closing your eyes to them. It starts small and eventually swallows you up like a waterfall. You can't even breathe anymore until it's... almost too late.

(beat, then slightly wry)

My parents didn't want me to go to a special place, so they sent me here.

Anna gestures at the facility with a wry smile.

Anna (Cont'd)

(more serious)

Different stories, same pattern. It builds until you face a choice: change something, or give up.

MEL

Yeah... that's right.

Anna studies Mel for a beat, then smiles gently.

ANNA

Good that you're here. You look like you haven't given up on yourself yet.

Mel absorbs that — gratitude softens her face.

MEL

My friends and family didn't give up on me. They pushed me to come.

Anna senses Mel's discomfort at the honesty of the talk and reaches for her hand.

ANNA

(light)

Come on — I'll show you around.

Mel laughs, a small, relieved sound. Together they head back inside, walking toward the facility's warmth.

EXT. BEACH, CALIFORNIA — DAY

The sun glitters on the waves.

Dan and Emily stroll along the shoreline, barefoot in the sand.

They laugh together, easy and warm.

DAN

Have you heard from Mel?

EMILY

(slightly sad)

Yeah. She texted me a couple of days after she got there. Said she's doing okay... and that she's grateful to have good friends like us.

DAN

Then why the long face? I'm glad she agreed to go. That night she collapsed –
(beat, softer)
– scared the hell out of me. Brought back old memories.

Dan stares down at the sand, heavy.

EMILY

Yeah... me too.

(beat)

But I can't shake the feeling that I pushed her too hard. I knew she wasn't happy and I made it worse. And then she goes and calls us "good friends"? I don't feel like one.

DAN

Hey – don't do that to yourself. Yeah, things got messy. But you didn't mean any harm. Mel's an adult.

Dan suddenly leaps in front of her, pulling a goofy face to break the tension. He nervously runs his hand through his hair.

Emily jumps, startled – then laughs.

EMILY

(laughing)

What... are you doing?

DAN

(grinning, playful)

I'm saying – we actually helped her. Made her see something was wrong. That counts. So... we're still on "good friend status", right? What do you think?

EMILY

(thoughtful)

Yeah, maybe you're right.

Dan takes both her hands, holding them tightly. His eyes linger on hers – longer than usual. The playfulness fades into something more charged.

DAN

And...

(a pause)

...I don't recognize you at all, not like you have been the last few days. The way you're worrying about Mel...
...that shows your true heart.

EMILY

Usually, others only see my appearance.

DAN

I see you.

Emily freezes, caught in the moment, a nervous smile tugging at her lips. Finally, someone sees something more in her.

Dan inches closer. For a second, Emily almost leans in – but he pulls back, lets go of her hands. Unsure.

Emily's smile falters. She looks down, disappointed, shaking her head slightly as if she misread everything.
They continue walking, side by side. Their pace slows.
The surf creeps close, washing over their feet.

Emily gasps at the shock of cold water, laughing.

Dan grabs her hand and they run from the waves together – laughing, carefree again.

INT. AMEND FACILITY, MALIBU - ART THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Rows of easels fill the sunlit room. Heads bob and shift as brushes sweep across canvases, but from the front, no one can see who paints what.

MRS. LANG (mid-40s), calm yet passionate, paces slowly between the easels.
She holds a long paintbrush like a conductor's baton, her voice carrying with gentle authority.

MRS. LANG

(encouraging)

Feel the brush. Let your hand move freely... Release what weighs on you.
This hour is yours – to pour out whatever lives inside. No rules. No perfection.
Just... letting go.

The soft *swish* of brushes fills the room.
Behind one easel – Mel. She's lost in her work, her movements quick, almost urgent. Colors spill across her canvas – wild, chaotic, yet somehow harmonious.

Mrs. Lang begins her quiet rounds, pausing briefly at each painting with a nod or smile. She finally stops at Mel's easel. She lingers. Eyes widen, impressed.
Mel, still focused, doesn't notice – until she senses someone behind her. Mel startles, whipping around.

MEL

(breathless)

Uh... Mrs. Lang... you scared me.

MRS. LANG

(soft smile, impressed)

Melanie, this is... beautiful. Have you painted before?

MEL

(surprised, thinking)

Oh – thanks. Um, only as a kid. More like... doodles. But I did love it.
My mother loved to cover my walls with my drawings.

Mel laughs at the memory. A thoughtful smile follows.

MEL (Cont'd)

(whispering to herself)

I forgot how this feels... like breathing again.

MRS. LANG

That's wonderful. You know, on Family Visit Day we showcase work from the group. I think your paintings belong there. If you'd like, you could even do more.
You have a gift, Mel. It deserves to be seen – beyond just your own walls.

Mel tenses, lowering her brush.

MEL

But Mrs. Lang... I wouldn't exactly call myself an artist.

MRS. LANG

(chuckling softly)

Ah, that's for others to decide, my dear. You just keep creating – and let them wonder how you did it.

Mel gives a short, self-conscious laugh, avoiding her eyes.

MEL

Yes... or how bad it is. I'd rather not be the joke on family day.

MRS. LANG

(smiling, patient)

Trust me — no one's laughing at honesty. That's what your work is, Mel. Honest.

(beat)

Let's show them what that looks like.

Mrs. Lang pats Mel's shoulder and moves on, leaving Mel staring after her.

Mel stares at her painting — then at Mrs. Lang's retreating back.

She dips her brush again, slower this time. Mel almost drops the paintbrush. She looks around with pursed lips and a laugh, wondering if anyone has noticed her clumsiness.

All the other heads are hidden behind the easels, and so Mel tries to concentrate further.

The colors on Mel's canvas begin to blend in softer, more deliberate strokes.

INT. AMEND FACILITY - MEL'S ROOM - EVENING

A luxurious, cozy room. Mel lies on her stomach on the bed, surrounded by pillows.

In her hand, she turns over the CRYSTAL NECKLACE from Kat. Mel studies it, lost in thought. She breathes in deeply, exhales slowly.

From the doorway —

ANNA (O.S.)

Rough day? Or are you summoning spirits?

Mel startles, looks up.

MEL

Oh... hi. What do you mean, summoning?

Mel sits up.

Anna steps in, eyes catching on the necklace.

ANNA

(points at it)

That little charm. People wear those when they need... protection.

Mel glances down at the necklace, then back up, smiling.

MEL

This? It was a gift. I'm not in a cult or some witchy circle, if that's what you mean.

Anna grins, leaps playfully onto the bed.

ANNA

Okay, okay... But that's what we all say before it starts whispering to us.

Mel laughs — Anna's humor is disarming. They sit across from each other, smiling.

ANNA (Cont'd)

I heard about your art session today. Mrs. Lang couldn't stop smiling — that's new.

Anna takes the necklace gently, rolling it between her fingers.

MEL

(confused)

Really? I thought she was just being polite.

ANNA

You think too small. She said your work *felt* like something.

(pauses, eyes on the necklace)

Maybe that's what scares you.

Mel's smile falters.

MEL

What? Oh, I don't think she meant it seriously. I mean, the only people who ever thought my art was great were my parents.

Anna sets the necklace back down, eyes locked on Mel.

ANNA

You may only see color in your art, but I see truth and pain.

(beat)

I also had to learn to change my perception of myself and my life. It might not be easy, but it's worth it. Just trust what your heart tells you, not what you're used to.

Mel lowers her eyes, touched and saddened.

MEL

(sincere, soft)

Maybe... I hadn't seen it that way before.
I guess... coming here wasn't the worst
idea. Who knows what would have become of
me if I hadn't been able to listen to your
wise words.

They both laugh.

ANNA

Yes... exactly. Thank God you were led
here.

Mel frowns slightly at that.

MEL

Funny you say that. My mom always told me
the same – that God helps us, gets us out
of bad places.

ANNA

Wise woman.

(beat, then lighter)

It's late. I'll let you sleep.

MEL

Oh... okay.

Anna hops off the bed, heading for the door. She pauses, turns
back.

ANNA

By the way... That necklace... it might do
more than you think. But maybe not in the
way you expect.

Mel freezes, looking at the necklace in her hand, then back at
Anna. Before Mel can respond, Anna slips out.

The door shuts.

Mel stares at it, unsettled, clutching the necklace.

INT. AMEND FACILITY, MALIBU - THERAPY ROOM - AFTERNOON

The cozy room grows dim as the afternoon light fades.
Mel sits in a deep chair, fidgeting—hands brushing nervously
along the armrests, shifting in her seat.

Opposite her, Mrs. Lang, calm and steady, organizes her papers
on a clipboard. She clips them neatly, then looks up with a warm
smile.

MRS. LANG

There. All set.

Mel forces a smile, still tense.

MRS. LANG (Cont'd)

So, Melanie. Have you been able to settle in so far?

MEL

(nervous)

Um, I guess so. Maybe.

MRS. LANG

(smiles, gentle)

Take your time. We don't have to rush anything today.

MEL

(takes a breath)

Okay... yeah.

A pause.

MRS. LANG

The work you did in art therapy...

(beat)

...there's a lot in those paintings. If you feel like talking about any of it... I'm here.

MEL

I don't know. I just painted.

I... used to do that a lot as a kid.

MRS. LANG

Tell me what that was like - back then.

Mel pulls her sleeves over her hands.

MEL

My mom worked late. I'd sit and draw until she came home.

It felt... safer that way.

Mrs. Lang notes the word *safer*, but doesn't comment on it.

MRS. LANG

And your father?

A small flinch from Mel - almost invisible.

MEL

He wasn't there.

I saw him sometimes. Never long enough.

Mrs. Lang waits - no pressure.

Mel's eyes drift off, somewhere far away.

MEL (Cont'd)

I guess I just got used to missing people.

Mrs. Lang lets that sit. She doesn't interpret. She simply sees her.

MRS. LANG

That must've been a lonely way to grow up.

A long beat. Mel swallows.

MEL

Yeah.

(quietly)

It still is.

Mrs. Lang folds her hands - no notebook between them now.

MRS. LANG

Sometimes... childhood patterns follow us into adulthood.

Not because we choose them - but because we survived with them.

Mel's breath hitches - she knows exactly what that means.

MEL

(trying to keep it together)

There are things I don't remember clearly.

Just feelings.

Flashes.

Mrs. Lang stays very still - deliberately not leaning in.

MRS. LANG

You're safe here, Melanie.

You can take your time.

Mel's voice trembles.

MEL

I'm scared of what I might remember.

Mrs. Lang's face softens.

MRS. LANG

Whatever it is... it wasn't your fault.

Mel looks down - tears forming, but she holds them back.

MEL

(whispers)

I never told my parents. I thought...
saying something would break us even more.

Mrs. Lang lets out a small breath - recognition, not pity.

MRS. LANG

You tried to hold everything together.
A child shouldn't have to do that.

Mel covers her face. Tears escape.

Mrs. Lang quietly slides a tissue box closer - not touching her.

A moment.

Mel is breathing heavily.

The room seems quiet - almost too quiet.

MRS. LANG (Cont'd)

You know... pain has a way of convincing
us we're alone. But no one carries it
without guidance - not truly.

Mel looks up. The sentence hits a nerve.

MEL

Guidance?

Mrs. Lang smiles - warmly, but with too clear a knowing look in her eyes.

MRS. LANG

Some call it intuition.
Some call it strength.
For me... it's God.

(beat)

He has a way of bringing people exactly
where they need to be.

A subtle shiver runs down Mel's spine - not unpleasant, just unexpected.

MRS. LANG (Cont'd)

When you're ready.. we can look at what
you want your life to feel like.
Not the life you had to survive.
The one you choose now.

MEL

(exhales shakily)

I want...

I want a life that feels like mine.

Not borrowed.

Not forced.

Mrs. Lang nods slowly.

MRS. LANG

That's a good place to begin.

Mel fiddles with a ring on her finger - stalling.

MEL

Well... there are a few things I've tried.

MRS. LANG

That's great!

MEL

To be honest, I was more trying to be
someone else.

Someone louder.

Braver.

Whatever I thought people wanted.

Mrs. Lang doesn't interrupt.

MEL (Cont'd)

I kept saying yes to things that felt...
wrong. Going along with stuff just because
it made me feel... needed. Or seen.

Mel looks away, ashamed.

MRS. LANG

And did it help?

A beat. Mel shakes her head.

MEL

I just got lost.

Like I was borrowing a life instead of
living mine.

Mrs. Lang studies her - gentle, but perceptive.

MRS. LANG

Sometimes we try on masks because the
world never let us develop our own.
That isn't failure, Melanie.
It's survival.

Mel's eyes water again - relief mixed with grief.

MEL

I don't want masks anymore.
I just don't know who I am without them.

Mrs. Lang leans in slightly - enough to be grounding, not intrusive.

MRS. LANG

Then that's the work we'll do.
Not to fix you - but to help you hear your
own voice again.

Mel exhales, almost collapsing into the chair - released.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMEND FACILITY, MALIBU - GARDEN - DAY

The garden is alive with chatter and laughter. Families mingle, admiring colorful paintings, sculptures, and a sprawling buffet. Sunshine floods the scene - perfect weather, like the day itself was made for healing.

CUT TO:

INT. AMEND FACILITY - ROOM WITH GARDEN ACCESS - SAME DAY

Mel stands with her parents, Nathalie and Kevin Burham, near the glass doors leading to the garden.
Mel looks radiant, different - lighter. Her parents notice.

MEL

(to her parents)
Thank you both for being here. It really
means so much.

Mel hugs her parents.

KEVIN

Of course honey. We love you. We'll always
support you.

NATHALIE

(smiling, emotional)
And look at you... You're glowing. How
have you been?

MEL

(beaming)

Better than I've felt in years. Coming here was the best decision.

(at first shy, then gaining courage)

Dad... thank you for doing this for me. I know it wasn't easy to watch me fall apart.

(to her mom)

And Mom - you stayed right next to me... although I didn't always share your opinions, ultimately your words never left my mind.

Nathalie cannot suppress her smile in this serious moment. Mel briefly holds her breath - and at the same time holds back her tears of joy.

MEL (Cont'd)

I'm sorry for the chaos. For not knowing how to ask for help.

(voice softens, more vulnerable)

I'm... learning now. And I promise - I'll keep trying to show you the real me. Even if I'm still figuring out who that is.

Nathalie tears up, touched.

Kevin stands there, deeply moved, unable to utter a word - he swallows and smiles at the same time.

NATHALIE

My darling... that's all we ever wanted.

(grinning)

Now - show us your art! I can't wait to see what my talented daughter has created.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMEND FACILITY, MALIBU - GARDEN - DAY

Mel and her parents step out into the sunlit garden. She leads them toward a corner where the residents' artworks are displayed. Small name cards hang from each piece.

Nathalie moves closer to Mel's paintings, eyes wide.

NATHALIE

Incredible, darling. They're beautiful.

Nathalie instinctively reaches out to touch one.

MEL

(laughing)

Mom! Don't — one's still wet.

They both laugh. At that moment, MR. HILLMANN (60s), the director, approaches.

MR. HILLMANN

Melanie! Wonderful work!

Mr. Hillmann shakes Mel's hand warmly, then greets her parents.

MEL

Mr. Hillmann... Thank you very much.

MR. HILLMANN

I'd like you to meet someone.

Mr. Hillmann steps aside to reveal NOAH JONES (32) — tall, dark-haired, striking in a tailored suit.

Mel blinks, surprised she hasn't noticed him before.

MR. HILLMANN (Cont'd)

This is Mr. Jones. He admired your paintings and asked to meet the artist.

NOAH

(shy)

Hi. I'm Noah. Noah Jones.

MEL

(smiling)

Mel. Melanie Burham.

They shake hands, holding eye contact a beat too long. Nathalie nudges Kevin, whispering.

NATHALIE

(to KEVIN)

Come with me... I saw something delicious to eat there.

Nathalie smiles at her ex-husband. Kevin smiles back — knowing what Nathalie intends. Then they slip toward the buffet.

NOAH

(looking at MEL paintings, impressed)

These are... intense. In a good way.

You're not just playing around, are you?

MEL

(laughing it off)

Oh, no — it's just therapy... I'm actually in teeth, not art.

NOAH

(grins, curious)
Teeth?

MEL

Dental assistant. I save teeth, not souls.
And sometimes I polish crowns. No big
tragedies.

NOAH

That sounds like a very important job for
me.

(beat, pointing toward the canvas)
But this? ... You could heal hearts with
it. Just like you heal other people's
teeth.

MEL

(blushing slightly, takes him in)
Yeah?

NOAH

Yeah.
(then, casually)
Do you ever show your work publicly?

MEL

No. Why would I?

NOAH

(shrugs mischievously)
Maybe because someone with a gallery is
telling you they should be on a wall.

MEL

(caught off-guard)
Wait... You're joking?

NOAH

(hands her a business card)
Not even a little. My dad owns it, I run
it. We've never shown anything like this.
(eyes her with admiration)
Until now. Your paintings don't try to
impress. They're honest.
(beat)
That's rare.

Mel laughs, nervous. She fiddles with the business card.

MEL

You know — my dad manages companies. Very
serious stuff. This —
(gestures toward the canvas)
This would probably confuse him.

NOAH

(gentle grin)

Then maybe it's time he walked through a gallery and got confused.

Mel looks at him — really looks.

MEL

(after a beat)

Okay... I'll think about it.

NOAH

(pleased)

That's all I wanted.

Noah leans in slightly, tone sincere.

NOAH

I'm glad I came today. Honestly? Didn't expect to be...

(beat)

My aunt was right. As always... these therapists. She knew I would understand your art better than my father.

MEL

Your aunt is a therapist here?

(thinks for a moment)

Sounds like you and your dad don't have the same taste.

NOAH

We don't... have the same outlook on life. But that's okay. Eventually, you get to see things for yourself. And... I'm glad I got to see this.

Mel blinks at him — butterflies. He smiles and walks off — to his AUNT — MRS. LANG.

Mel looks surprised and smiles when she realizes who Noah's aunt is.

KEVIN (O.S.)

(calls out to Mel)

Mel! Cupcakes! Before your mother eats them all!

MEL

(smiles to herself, breathes out)

Coming!

She glances one more time in Noah's direction — but he's gone. She slips the business card into her pocket and heads toward her parents, eyes bright with possibility.

INT. DENTAL OFFICE - MORNING

Mel, energized and glowing, preps a treatment room. She wipes instruments, sets out trays. The rhythm of her movements is calm, purposeful.

The dentist enters — cheerful at first.

DENTIST

It's so nice to see your smile again here.
How are you doing?

MEL

(forcing a smile)
Thanks. I'm... better. Who would've
thought I'd need something like this? But
it really helped.

DENTIST

Don't worry. A friend of mine did
something similar once. Nothing wrong with
that.

Mel's smile falters. She nods politely, wishing he'd stop.

MEL

Right. Thanks.

The dentist pats her on the shoulder, then leaves.
Mel exhales, rolling her eyes.

MEL (Cont'd)

(whispering)
What was that?

INT. DENTAL OFFICE - AFTERNOON, SAME DAY

The practice hums with stress.
Mel and Emily hurry down the hall, juggling supplies. Both
rummage through drawers, searching.

Their eyes meet — a flash of humor between the chaos.

Emily finds the missing material first, handing it to Mel with a
grin.

EMILY

(whispers, slightly boastful)
Got it. See? I don't fall apart just 'cause
you're gone.

MEL

(surprised and awestruck, quietly)
Thanks... where did you...?

Emily winks. For a second, it's like old times.
Mel takes a deep breath – a mixture of tiredness and inner strength.

MEL (Cont'd)

Honestly? It's weird being back. I feel like...
(she stops, smiles)
...like I'm a better version of me. And I want to keep it that way.

EMILY

(honest)
I noticed. I've been changing too. Less drama. I'm fed up with these pointless affairs. The men who promise so much... and in the end – only lies.

MEL

(teasing, with warmth)
Wow. Okay... I'm happy for you.
Then maybe we're both finally waking up.

They share a smile, about to move on when –

DENTIST (O.S)

(shouting, bossy)
Ladies! Faster! Rooms don't clean themselves. Go, go!

The dentist storms past, gesturing at Mel to hurry.

Mel freezes, eyes wide. Then something shifts – anger, resolve. Without a word, Mel walks into the treatment room the dentist just left.

Emily stands stunned, watching her friend.

INT. TREATMENT ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Mel alone. Her hands tremble slightly. Then she grabs the disinfectant spray bottle – and sprays it almost instinctively. Scrub. Scrub. Scrub.

MEL

(low, whispering)
That's enough. I'm not doing this anymore.
I want... I deserve more than that.

She tosses the wipe into the bin – her decision already forming.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE - EVENING, SAME DAY

The last lights dim.

Mel shuts off a treatment room lamp, pausing in the doorway. From down the hall, Emily emerges, drained and panting. She joins Mel.

EMILY

What was that today? The whole day was a nightmare.

And then... him! What's wrong with him?

We're not animals.

Mel stays quiet, her anger simmering beneath the surface. Her hand presses against her stomach. A sharp breath.

EMILY (Cont'd)

(worried)

Are you okay? You just got out of the facility and then this...

MEL

(calm, firm)

Yeah... but this can't go on anymore. I'm ending this. Now.

Before Emily can react, Mel strides toward the office. Determined.

EMILY

(whispering after her)

Mel? Meeel? What do you mean? Wait!

But Mel doesn't stop. She knocks on the boss's office door. A brief moment of silence.

DENTIST (O.S.)

Yes - come in!

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The dentist, stressed, is typing. He looks up, half irritated, half expectant.

His smile is practiced, mechanical.

DENTIST (Cont'd)

Mel? Everything okay?

Mel steps in, shuts the door. A deep breath.

MEL

I don't think we see this place the same way anymore.

DENTIST

Well – I'm listening.

MEL

I'm just back, and already I feel like I'm drowning. Again.
I won't go through that cycle one more time.

The dentist swivels his chair toward Mel, scrambling.

DENTIST

Mel, it was one hectic day, okay? Things settle down. They *always* do.
You're one of my best.

Mel smiles – for the first time it's genuine, but sad.

MEL

That's exactly the problem.
You *know* what this place does to people.
And you let it happen – every day.

The dentist blinks. Hit. And then: small talk mode.

DENTIST

(confused, defensive)
Well... you know how patients are. This is our job. It's just the way it is. I can't change that.

Mel interrupts. No energy for excuses.

MEL

Are you serious? Of course you can change things.
But you know what?
(beat)
I've changed. And I'm not breaking myself anymore just to keep up.
I quit.

The word hangs in the air. The dentist freezes, pale.

DENTIST

Mel – wait. Hold on. We'll reassign tasks. Better schedule.
You don't have to –

MEL

It's not about schedules. It's about me.
And I'm choosing something better.

A pause. Mel doesn't seem angry - she seems free.

MEL (cont'd)

You will receive my written resignation.
But this chapter is closed.

She turns around and opens the door - this time without hesitation.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily is waiting, wide-eyed.
Mel breezes past, smiling - almost glowing.

EMILY

What happened? What... what did you say?

MEL

(light, with inner fire)
I just said it. I quit.

Mel disappears into the locker room.
Emily remains frozen in the hallway, stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE, OFFICE - SAME EVENING

The dentist sits frozen behind his desk.
The cursor blinks on the computer screen, waiting.
But he doesn't type. Doesn't move.
He just stares - pale, wordless, deflated.
The weight of Mel's words lingers in the empty room.

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - SAME EVENING

The door clicks shut. Silence.
Only the low hum of the refrigerator.

Mel stands in the hallway, almost motionless.
Then she drops her keys - a clink. Her bag follows - a dull thud.
Everything happens in slow motion. She walks through the apartment as if through water - sluggishly, detached.

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mel sinks onto the bed. No grace. Just falling.
Stares at the ceiling - then closes her eyes. A long breath.
And suddenly - a broad grin. Snorting. Laughter. LOUD.

MEL

(to herself)

I can't believe I did that.

She sits up slowly, laughter fading into thought.

MEL (Cont'd)

Oh shit... what now?

She rubs her forehead, nerves creeping in, but a strange calm lingers beneath it.

Still half in a trance, she walks to her dresser and starts rummaging through a drawer filled with underwear, not really knowing what she's looking for.

Her hands stop. At the back of the drawer sits an old box. She pulls it out carefully and examines it – twisting it in her hands.

MEL (Cont'd)

(to the box)

How did you get in here?

She opens it. Inside lies a delicate gold chain with a small, beautiful cross.

She runs it through her fingers, mesmerized.

MEL (Cont'd)

(mumbles)

Wow. Beautiful. It must be from Mom.

Weird... I've never seen it here before.

Something stirs inside her – an idea, a memory.

She sets the box down on top of the dresser and returns to the bed holding the necklace.

She sits, clutching the cross with both hands in front of her face, eyes closed.

MEL (Cont'd)

OK. I'll just try it now.

What do I have to lose.

She takes a breath.

MEL (Cont'd)

Okay, God... if you really exist, please help me... The job that paid my bills but almost destroyed me is now gone.

If you exist and you can help me, please, please. Please help me.

She opens her eyes slowly, still holding the cross.
Her gaze flickers left and right, waiting for a sign, a sound, a
something.

Nothing. Silence.

Her hands drop to her lap. She exhales, disappointed.

MEL (Cont'd)

What was I thinking? Like God just showed
Himself to me like a white figure or
something.

She stands and walks back to the dresser. She's about to return
the necklace to the box – but hesitates.
She looks up at the large round mirror above the dresser.

MEL (Cont'd)

Whatever.

She slips the necklace over her head.
In the mirror, the last rays of the sun shoot through the
window.
For a split second, the light seems to blaze directly onto Mel –
bright, almost blinding.

Mel flinches, closing her eyes.
The light vanishes as quickly as it came.
She opens her eyes again, stunned, and turns toward the window.
She looks down at the street. Empty. Normal. No cars, no
reflection.

MEL (Cont'd)

What was that?

Mel's hand touches the necklace at her chest.

INT. DENTAL PRACTICE – DAY

The hallway is quiet.
The dentist passes Mel without a word, head lowered, his face
full of shame.
Mel watches him go, unimpressed. She shakes her head and pulls a
mocking grimace.

Just then, Emily leans against the wall beside her, arms
crossed.

EMILY

It's crazy how he's acting towards you
now, isn't it? Like a child.

MEL

Yeah... I'm trying not to stress about it.
He can carry on like this. But my decision
is clear!

And this...

(looks towards the dentist)

... makes it easier for me – and just
proves I'm right.

EMILY

You are right. But I don't want you to go.

Emily glances in the direction the dentist disappeared.

EMILY (Cont'd)

Maybe I'll quit too.

Mel bursts out laughing.

In that moment Emily notices Mel's necklace.

EMILY (Cont'd)

(astonished)

Wait... wasn't there a crystal there
recently? You're... wearing a cross?

Mel touches the chain at her neck.

MEL

Yeah... I thought all that "energy" stuff
would help. Heal me. But it just felt
like... noise.

Made me anxious. Made me drink more.

EMILY

(with a soft smile)

You're right. You were acting kind of...
crazier than usual.

I didn't know where you were going.

Mel gasps playfully and nudges Emily on the shoulder.

MEL

Whaaaat? Me crazier?

You were way worse!

Both laugh loudly.

But Mel suddenly raises a finger to her lips.

MEL (Cont'd)

Shhhh... Not so loud.

Or the boss will freak out again.

EMILY

Uh.. yeah... we don't want that!

They exchange a grin, then peel off in opposite directions, trying to look serious as they return to work.

INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Weekend silence.

Mel is cocooned in a blanket on the sofa, flipping through TV channels.

MEL

Boring. Boring. Boring.

She groans, tosses the remote aside.

MEL (Cont'd)

I stay home for one weekend... and this.
Great!

Her eyes wander - to the coffee table. A small white card rests there. She leans forward, picks it up.
It's Noah's business card.

Mel blinks, sits up straighter, staring at it.

A door opens - Isabella comes in, a to-go coffee in each hand.

ISABELLA

Hey. It's handy to have your spare key -
especially if you don't hear the doorbell.

MEL

(slightly distracted)
Oh. Yes... sorry.

Isabella sits down next to Mel and studies her.

Mel seems frozen.

ISABELLA

(Silent realization)
That's his card, right? The art guy.

Mel nods. Wordlessly.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

And... do you want to call him?

Mel snorts. Hesitantly.

MEL

(uncertain, vulnerable)
 And what if he lied?
 What if I make a fool of myself –
 documented, officially?

Isabella takes the card from Mel's hand. Holds it up like something precious.

ISABELLA

Do you know what I see?
 Not the Melanie who was acting strangely.
 But the one who is feeling again. Who is
 taking risks again.
 The one who is about to call a man who has
 seen her art.

Mel looks at her. Silently. Touched, but still uncertain.

MEL

(tries to downplay it)
 It all sounds so... big. Not like me.

ISABELLA

(soft)
 It's big. But you can do it.

Mel smiles. A small, genuine moment. Then she picks up her phone.

Isabella pushes Noah's card closer.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

(Whispering, with a wink)
 Come on. I'm staying here.
 If you click away, I'll make sure you
 regret it.

Mel laughs briefly. Swallows. Dials.

The silence during the ringing fills the room – thick, full of tension.

MEL

(into phone, hesitantly, then more
 boldly)
 Hi... Noah? It's Mel.
 Yes – I got your card... and... I think
 I'm ready.

Silence. Then a bright light in Mel's face.

MEL (Cont'd)

(Pure surprise, quietly)
 In two weeks? Really? Yes – I'll do it.

Mel hangs up – and freezes. Then... an explosion of laughter. Disbelief and Freedom.

MEL (Cont'd)

(to Isabella, excitedly)
Oh God, Isabella – I said yes!

ISABELLA

(smiling, triumphantly)
Yes. And I saw it.

Mel tears herself out of the blanket, throws it away – rummages for her canvases.

CUT TO:

DIFFERENT SCENES:

SCENE 1: INT. MEL'S APARTMENT – DAY

Mel sits on the floor, an old, stained cloth beneath her. In front of her: a large canvas. She paints with concentration, irritatedly brushing strands of hair from her face with the hand holding the brush. Paint stains on her face. Paint drips on her jeans.

MEL

(frustrated, then laughing)
Oh no... yeah, crap. This is what I get for trying to be an artist.

Nevertheless, she continues painting. Her eyes are fixed on the picture, searching for the next stroke.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2: EXT. BEACH, CALIFORNIA – DAY

Mel walks barefoot along the shore with her mother, Nathalie. Nathalie carries her sandals in one hand.

MEL

...and in two weeks it's happening.
My first exhibition.

Nathalie stops dead in her tracks.

NATHALIE

(bursting with joy)
What? Mel...!
I knew this day would come.

MEL

Yeah... crazy, right?

Nathalie drops her sandals, throws her arms around Mel.
The hug almost knocks Mel backwards. They laugh.
Nathalie grabs her shoes, shakes the sand out, then takes Mel's
hand proudly.
Like kids, they skip forward together.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3: INT. DENTAL PRACTICE - EVENING

Mel and Emily stand in a treatment room.
Emily hugs her tight.

EMILY

(quieter, honest)
Wow... this is amazing.
You really did it, Mel... You got out.

MEL

Thanks. Just a few more days...
You'll come, right?

EMILY

Sure. Wouldn't miss it.

Mel absentmindedly touches the little cross around her neck.
A quiet moment. This isn't luck – and she knows it.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4: EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Mel, Emily, Dan, and Isabella laugh as they climb into the
Ferris wheel.
Dan and Emily take one cabin. Mel and Isabella take the next.

The wheel turns. At the top, it stops for a moment.

Isabella chats and giggles. Mel stares off, eyes closed, face
tilted toward the sky.

ISABELLA

Mel? Are you sleeping?

Mel blinks, then she smiles.

MEL

Sorry... just speechless.
This all feels like a dream.

ISABELLA

Hard to believe you were crying on your
couch a few months ago.

MEL

And now I'm here... with paint under my nails... about to show my work.

Then Mel glances down — freezes.
Below, Dan and Emily are holding hands.

MEL (Cont'd)

What... What are you doing?

Dan and Emily laugh, embarrassed.
Mel turns to Isabella, wide-eyed.

MEL (Cont'd)

Did you see that?

Isabella smirks.

ISABELLA

Well... you were gone for a while.
They've gotten closer somehow.

Mel shakes her head, then bursts out laughing.

MEL

I don't believe this!
But hey, I knew they'd be a good match.

Everyone laughs. Only Emily glances nervously toward Mel.

EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

Mel is sitting with her mother, Nathalie, on the café terrace at a small round table.

The atmosphere is calm and warm, but Mel seems slightly distracted, stirring her tea thoughtfully with a spoon.

NATHALIE

Everything okay, honey?

Mel is about to answer when she suddenly sees Isabella and Kat standing in front of her.

ISABELLA

(smiling)

Mel. Oh, hi. What are you doing here? I thought you were busy with your art.

KAT

Oh yeah... Isabella told me about your amazing news.
But you look kind of... flustered.

Mel unconsciously straightens up.
Nathalie, on the other hand, watches Kat suspiciously.

MEL

Um... yeah, I... just have a lot on my mind today.

Kat nods, as if she knows Mel's thoughts and if she can read her aura.

KAT

(confidently)
The exhibition?
(short pause, then quieter)
Are you really sure you're ready for this?

Mel swallows. The words hit.

KAT (Cont'd)

Do you remember our last session?
The cards were clear...
(tilts her head)
... and I mean, your future looked very different. Especially when I look at you now. I wouldn't rush into anything if I were you. Not after everything you've been through.

Mel can't get a word out. Her breathing becomes shallow.

ISABELLA

(rolls her eyes in annoyance)
Kat... could you please not be so dramatic?

Isabella looks at Mel with an apologetic glance.

ISABELLA (Cont'd)

Mel, don't let it drive you crazy. Really, don't.

Kat places a hand on Mel's shoulder — kindly, but firmly, almost controllingly.

KAT

I just don't want you to get carried away.
(smiles thinly)
Just think about it again. Okay?

Kat and Isabella leave.
Mel remains seated, almost lost in thought.
Nathalie immediately places her hand on Mel's.

NATHALIE

(with clarity)

I don't like this woman at all.

Mel looks at her mother, in surprise.

NATHALIE (Cont'd)

She talks like she knows you. But she doesn't.

(gently)

You're doing the right thing, Melanie. I can see it in you. You've been glowing for weeks. I haven't seen you like this in so long.

And this Kat... she just doesn't fit in anymore.

Mel fights back tears, nods slowly – but the doubt runs deep.

MEL

What if she's right?

NATHALIE

I beg you, darling. Even if it doesn't work out, at least you tried. It would be much worse if you didn't even try!

Mel takes a deep breath. This is the beginning of the decision.

INT. ART GALLERY, LOS ANGELES – EVENING

The gallery buzzes. Guests wander among paintings, photographs, sculptures. People murmur, champagne glasses clink.

Only Noah is pacing nervously. He keeps checking his phone. Next to him are empty spaces on the wall – Mel's paintings are supposed to be hanging there.

Noah presses his lips together, exhales deeply – trying to stay calm.

NOAH

(quietly to himself)

Come on, Mel... where are you?

The door opens:

Heads turn as Mel enters.

Mel - breathless, but looks radiant - like a new woman.
In a long blue dress, rhinestones catching the light.
Her arms are full of her paintings - breathless, her expression
already apologizing.

MEL

Noah, I'm so sorry. I... I really
considered not coming.

Noah immediately goes to her and takes a painting from her hand
so she can breathe.

NOAH

Why?

Mel looks at him honestly, vulnerably.

MEL

Because I was scared. And... uncertain.
(a moment)
I thought, maybe that's not me. The
paintings... this exhibition.

Noah pauses for a moment - takes a deep breath, but speaks
calmly - with some emphasis.

NOAH

Mel...
(carefully puts the picture down)
Even if nothing sells today, even if not
everyone understands what's in your
paintings -
(softly)
- you're here. You came.
And that takes more courage than most
people muster in their entire lives.

Noah smiles.

NOAH (Cont'd)

And I'm proud of you.
Really.

Mel breathes freely - for the first time today. A small smile
forms.

MEL

Then... let's hang up my paintings.

Noah nods. They both walk together to the empty walls.

INT. ART GALLERY - EVENING - CONTINUOUS - SOME TIME LATER

Mel breathes deeply in and out, nervously tugging at her dress. She keeps glancing towards the door and the crowd in the gallery.

Across the room, Noah sees her. Nervous, he moves toward her.

Mel adjusts one of her canvases, unaware. She turns - Noah is suddenly right there. Mel is startled.

MEL

Holy -

Mel clutches her chest, exhales, then laughs in relief.

MEL (Cont'd)

Noah, you scared me.
Don't do that again!

Noah touches her arm, apologetic.

NOAH

I'm sorry. I just... wanted to
congratulate you.

Mel tugs at her dress, flustered.

MEL:

Thanks. But we only started an hour ago...
I hope you can't see my trembling hands.

Her wide eyes beg reassurance.

NOAH

You don't need to be nervous! At least not
anymore!

MEL

Not any more? Why?

NOAH

I knew it was right to ask you to exhibit.

MEL

(leans closer, unsure)
What do you mean?

Noah rests a hand on Mel's shoulder, smiling.

NOAH

(lowers his voice)
Look.

Mel follows his gaze - she blinks as if she has missed something.

NOAH (Cont'd)

We've already sold half your paintings.

Pause. Mel stares at him.

MEL

(quiet)

Wait. What?

NOAH

Sold.

MEL

(looks around, speechless)

Like... people paid money? For *my* stuff?

NOAH

(real, warm)

A lot of money.

Beat - then Mel bursts into unfiltered laughter, full of relief and disbelief. She lightly taps herself on the forehead.

MEL

Holy - I almost didn't come tonight. I...
I thought maybe the dress was wrong. Or I
looked wrong. Or my decision was wrong.

NOAH

(gently blocks it)

Everything is right.

Mel exhales - the emotion steals her voice.
She throws her arms around Noah full of joy. He lifts her
effortlessly, spinning her.

MEL

This is insane.

Her laughter dies down as their eyes meet.
A beat.
The noise of the gallery seems to fade away.

MEL

(softly)

Noah...

Noah brushes a strand of hair from Mel's face, his hand
lingering at her cheek.

NOAH

You have no idea how proud I am of you.

MEL

(deeply moved, whispering)

Don't... make me cry in front of all these people.

They're close – too close.

Neither moves at first. Their breathing slows.

NOAH

(softly)

Is this okay?

MEL

(smiles, breathless)

Yes.

Mel's lips part slightly. She searches his eyes, almost trembling.

Then, with a quiet certainty, she leans in.

Their lips meet – slow, tender, and full of everything unspoken. The kiss deepens. Mel melts into him, her hands sliding behind his neck.

For a moment, it's just the two of them, the world shut out.

When they finally part, Mel keeps her forehead resting against his.

She exhales, overwhelmed but smiling.

MEL (Cont'd)

I don't believe this... any of it.

Noah smiles, holding her as if he doesn't want to let go.

NOAH

Believe it.

A still moment.

Then reality presses in. Mel steps back, flustered.

MEL

Um...

NOAH

Okay.

I'll, uh... check on the others.

Noah straightens his suit, retreats quickly into the crowd.

Mel watches him go, confused. Then – her face lights up.

At the entrance, Mel's parents finally arrive, followed by Emily, Dan, and Isabella.

MEL

(running over, thrilled)

Guys! You missed something!

Warm hugs. Laughter.

Emily clasps Dan's hand. As she looks around, she catches sight of Mr. Clark across the room.

Mr. Clark stands with Mrs. Clark and another couple, but his (Mr. Clark's) eyes lock on Emily.

Emily kisses Dan on the cheek — a clear message.

Mr. Clark's eyes widen. He yanks his wife's arm, pulling her away.

Emily smirks, then softens, smiling at Dan.

Mel, glowing, shows her parents and friends the paintings. Her laughter fills the gallery.

3 MONTHS LATER

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY, LOS ANGELES - EVENING

The Griffith Observatory glows against the night. The sky is clear, stars shining brightly.

Mel and Noah walk hand in hand along the entrance, dressed elegantly. Mel gazes upward, enchanted.

MEL

(impressed)

Wow. Do you see that?

Mel points toward the sky.

MEL (Cont'd)

That star there. So far away and still shines so beautiful.

Noah glances up, nervous but smiling.

NOAH

Yeah...

(beat)

Like someone I know.

Mel gives Noah a playful look, narrowing her eyes with a grin.

MEL

There you go again.

Mel smiles, but her expression becomes serious as she looks up at the sky.

MEL (Cont'd)

Sometimes I still can't believe any of this is real.

NOAH

(soft, almost whispering)

Me neither.

Noah pauses briefly, as if gathering himself internally, then leads her on - wordlessly, but with a gentle tension in the room.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - BACK TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

Ahead: dozens of candles on the ground, forming a giant HEART. Tall vases overflow with red roses.

Mel stops dead, stunned.

MEL

(surprised)

Noah... what is this?

Noah gently leads Mel forward.

NOAH

(nervous)

Come with me.

Step by step, Mel realizes. This is for her. She slows, trembling. A hand flies to her mouth.

MEL (Cont'd)

Noah... are you serious? I'm shaking.

NOAH

Good. Me too.

In the center of the glowing heart, Noah takes both of her hands.

NOAH (Cont'd)

(breathing deeply)

I know you're shocked... maybe even a little overwhelmed.

Mel is unable to speak. A few tears fall.

NOAH (Cont'd)

But... I've been overwhelmed since the day
I met you.

Noah relaxes his posture. A brief, vulnerable glance.

NOAH (Cont'd)

I'll never forget the first moment I saw
you.
You stood there with that confused smile -
like you weren't sure if you should
stay... or run.

Mel laughs through her tears because it's true.

NOAH (Cont'd)

You made a joke about saving teeth, not
souls... and I thought:
Who *is* this woman?
So brave and so lost and so full of light.
All at the same time.

A change of gaze. Mel sobs softly, but smiles.

NOAH (Cont'd)

In just three months, you've turned
everything upside down. My plans, my
routine... even my crazy little habits.

MEL

(laughs nervously, tears in her eyes)
You need new plans now.

NOAH

(smiling slightly)
Yes... But that's exactly how it should be.

MEL

So what do we do now?

Noah takes out the ring, his gaze becomes serious, he trembles
slightly.

NOAH (Cont'd)

Mel... I want to be with you. Not just for
the good days.

Noah pauses briefly to find the right words.

NOAH (Cont'd)

For the messy ones too. For all of it.
Mel... will you marry me?

Mel bursts into tears of joy – laughing and crying all at once. She jumps into his arms.

MEL

(screaming with joy)
Yes! Of course I will!

Noah spins her in the air, just like in the gallery. They kiss – long, passionate, and full of certainty.

Noah puts her down again and looks into her eyes.

NOAH

(laughs)
Perfect. You've won my heart amidst the chaos – and it feels so good.

Mel smiles – full of joy and freedom.

EXT. OBSERVATORY – FRONT ENTRANCE – MOMENTS LATER

Hand in hand, Mel and Noah return to the entrance. A CROWD erupts – family and friends leap up, shouting.

EVERYONE

Congratulations!

Mel gasps, overwhelmed. She runs into their arms, hugging her parents, Emily, Isabella, Dan.

Isabella hugs Mel tightly, both crying.

ISABELLA

Mel... I'm so happy for you.

They part, hands still locked.

MEL

Thank you Isabella. It means so much to me that you're all here.

ISABELLA

I've never seen you this happy. Congratulations, Mel. You truly deserve this.

MEL

Thank you.

ISABELLA

(smiling through tears)

I want that too... a life like yours.
How did you do it? How did you change so
much?

Mel looks at her, and instead of just answering, she places a
hand on Isabella's shoulder.

MEL

I stopped trying to control everything.
And I let myself be... held.

A beat.

Isabella understands more than Mel says.
She hugs Mel.

MEL

Come. I'll tell you everything.

They walk together as —

Above them, a STAR flares brightly in the night sky, as if the
universe/God itself is celebrating.

FADE OUT