

The Sun Is Also A Star

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Based upon the Novel by Nicola Yoon

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE BRONX - DAY - FANTASY

WE OPEN on a montage of varied ETHNIC COMMUNITIES from the different boroughs of NEW YORK CITY. CARS, PEDESTRIANS and CITY SOUNDS intersect and blend with the beat of the music.

EXT. CONCOURSE VILLAGE CO-OP - DAY - FANTASY

A door opens and a pair of BEAT UP CONVERSE KICKS step outside. They belong to NATASHA KINGSLEY, 17, beautiful, with an enormous afro. The sun on her face makes her smile.

NATASHA (V.O.)
I don't care what anyone says...
New York's the best city in the
world.

While on her phone, Natasha struts by local shops: a Pakistani restaurant with a line of CAB DRIVERS out the door, an Optimo cigar store, and a Taiwanese electronics store.

NATASHA (V.O.)
It's a place where 8.5 million
people coexist--

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY - FANTASY

Passengers rush down the stairs as she climbs up to the "D" train station at 167th. Thick Jamaican accents blend with Spanish and Haitian French. Natasha listens, smiles.

NATASHA (V.O.)
It's a lot to take in.

A train whizzes by revealing her on the platform.

EXT. FORT WASHINGTON - DAY - FANTASY

Natasha emerges from the "A" train at 175th. BEVERLY "BEV" RAMIREZ, 17, Dominican, waits anxiously. They're late. The girls rush off arm-in-arm.

NATASHA (V.O.)
But with a little luck you can find
a best friend.

EXT. THE UNITED PALACE THEATER - DAY - FANTASY

A number of SENIORS stand in line. "Congratulations Class of 2019 - The Bronx High School of Science" is on the marquee. Natasha and Bev squeeze in as the line moves forward.

NATASHA (V.O.)
It's a city where hard work and
determination are constants against
unknown variables in the equation
for success--

INT. THE UNITED PALACE THEATER - EVENING - FANTASY

Inside the ornate auditorium, velvet seats are filled with FAMILY and FRIENDS. The STUDENTS, now dressed in graduation caps and gowns, enter single file to Pomp and Circumstance.

INT. STAGE - EVENING - FANTASY

PRINCIPAL and FACULTY on stage. Natasha's poised at the edge. Like a runner in blocks. Her name is barely called when she marches across the stage to claim her diploma.

NATASHA (V.O.)
...And dreams can become tangible
when you reach out and grab them.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND BACKYARD - NIGHT - FANTASY

A Caribbean-American Graduation Party in full swing. Lights strung from corner posts. A Jamaican flag stretched across the fence. Jerk chicken and fish on the grill. Dishes with curried goat, oxtails, plantains, peas and rice. ADULTS in traditional garb. And TEENS on a makeshift dance floor. Find Natasha and Bev in the middle. Dancing. Laughing.

NATASHA (V.O.)
I wouldn't have wanted this perfect
night to happen anywhere but here:
the city I'm proud to call my home.

On Tasha's face, smiling as she looks at the night sky filled with fireworks and stars. Twinkling. It's truly magical.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NATASHA'S APARTMENT - DAY - REALITY

A NASA STAR MAP on a wall. Pull out to reveal Tasha in a small apartment, moving boxes everywhere.

NATASHA (V.O.)
Or at least a city I used to call
my home.

Behind her, a LITTLE HAND pulls back the bright blue curtain separating the room. REVEAL: PETER, 9 years old, chocolate with dreadlocks and a grin from ear to ear.

NATASHA (V.O.)
Unless a cataclysmic blunder is
corrected, the odds of me actually
graduating with my friends are
declining. Rapidly.

Peter whips the curtain closed, unseen.

NATASHA (V.O.)
You see, I'm an illegal immigrant
and my family is scheduled for
deportation. Tomorrow.

WHOOSH - Natasha pulls back the curtain. Peter is juggling a soccer ball on his knees in the next room. ZOOM in on Peter.

PETER
Look, Tasha!

Peter fumbles with the ball. The ball gets away from him, bumping into a neat stack of Natasha's books.

NATASHA
How many times do I have to tell
you not to practice in our room?!

Peter picks his nose and examines what he dug up.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Ewww! Peter, stop it. You'll never
get friends that way.

PETER
Doesn't matter. I'll make new
friends in Jamaica!

Natasha sighs heavily, the weight of her family's struggles on her shoulders. A key RATTLES in the lock.

MRS. KINGSLEY, Natasha's 40-ish, world-weary mother, drags in from work wearing a waitress uniform.

She sees a kitchen full of dirty dishes. **NOTE: Mr. And Mrs. Kingsley both speak with a heavy Jamaican accent and dialect.**

MRS. KINGSLEY

Tasha. How many times I'm gonna have to tell you to clean the dishes before I come home?

NATASHA

You haven't even closed the door yet and you're already yelling--

MRS. KINGSLEY

It's not enough to pick up dirty plates at work? I come home to pick up dirty plates too?!

NATASHA

Mom, please. I'll do it now.

Mrs. Kingsley heads to her bedroom. Natasha goes into the kitchen, draws soapy water and washes the dishes. Mrs. Kingsley emerges from the bedroom wearing a bathrobe.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

You work too much.

MRS. KINGSLEY

Somebody gotta keep a roof over all our heads, child. Who else gonna do it?

REVEAL: MR. KINGSLEY, late 40s, small frame, sad eyes, sitting in front of the TV. We haven't noticed him until now.

Mr. Kingsley watches as LAWRENCE OLIVIER performs a monologue from "Othello" on screen. He studies him intently.

NATASHA (V.O.)

My father's an actor. At least, that's why he came to America. But that's not exactly how it's worked out.

PULL OUT: Mr. Kingsley performs the scene along with Olivier. He's in perfect sync with the actor on TV.

NATASHA (V.O.)

It's his fault we're in this mess.

Natasha finishes the dishes. Mrs. Kingsley makes eggs.

MRS. KINGSLEY

You want breakfast?

NATASHA

I have an appointment at the
Immigration Office this morning.
It's at eight.

MRS. KINGSLEY

You don't think it's time for you
to give up now, Tasha? You don't
think what you're doing is futile?

Natasha grabs a piece of fruit off the table.

NATASHA

There's still time, Mommy. We have
today. And I'm going to use every
last second. Can't give up yet.

PETER

Don't think of it as giving up.
Think of it as embracing destiny.

NATASHA

I'd rather make my own.

Peter smiles, turns up Sister Nancy's "Bam Bam" and sings
along. Natasha rolls her eyes. She grabs her headphones and
her Physics textbook.

PETER

(re: textbook)

We leaving, Tasha. You don't have
to turn in homework. We're free!

NATASHA

I'll be back later.

MRS. KINGSLEY

You have a lot to finish here. I
still see open boxes in your room.

NATASHA

Mom, I really gotta go.

Natasha heads for the door, determined. She takes a deep
breath, opens the door and steps outside.

EXT. ELEVATED TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Natasha stops at a specific spot on the platform and checks
her phone: **6:55 AM**. She looks down the track-- nothing.

NATASHA

Ugh. Come on. Not today.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

DANIEL JAE HO BAE, 17, stands in front of a mirror sizing himself up in the suit he's wearing. He adjusts his red tie, clearly uncomfortable in what he's wearing.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Today's the day my whole life has
led up to...

From outside the room, his mother, MIN SOO, 40s, calls out:

MIN SOO (O.S.)
(in Korean)
Daniel! *I'm making you a special
breakfast. Hurry down.*

DANIEL (V.O.)
The day of my college interview for
Yale.

DANIEL
Coming!

DANIEL (V.O.)
The day that decides my future.

Behind him, shelves full of the world's greatest poets: Shakespeare, Shelly, Frost, Poe, Plath, Angelou, Hughes.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Normally I'd write a two-page poem
about something of this magnitude.
At least a haiku. But today, my
anxiety's holding me hostage.

Daniel grabs his writer's notebook, throws it into his satchel. Takes one final glance at himself.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Because I need every brain cell
focused on nailing this interview.

Daniel takes one final glance at himself, then exits.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Daniel's mother steams frozen dumplings. Daniel pours a bowl of Cap'n Crunch. She shakes her head disapprovingly. Min Soo speaks with a heavy Korean accent.

MIN SOO

Too much sugar. You need a sharp
mind today.

She grabs the bowl of cereal, replaces it with a plate of
dumplings, and pours the dry cereal back into the box.

DANIEL (V.O.)

I'm pretty sure I inherited my
mother's anxiety...

INT. JFK AIRPORT - CUSTOMS - FLASHBACK

YOUNG MIN SOO and YOUNG DAE HYN, nervous and afraid, present
their paperwork to the CUSTOMS AGENT.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Which started the day she uprooted
her whole life in Korea to come to
America. For most immigrants,
moving to a foreign country is an
act of faith. What if you can't
adapt? What if you're not welcomed?
What if you lose all sense of your
identity and culture?

INT. HOME - FLASHBACK - TWO YEARS LATER

FAMILY and FRIENDS crowd the apartment. Min Soo holds her
first born, CHARLIE, as ONE-YEAR-OLD DANIEL crawls toward
various objects: a stethoscope, pen, basketball, etc. Each
object represents a career or "fate." THIS IS A KOREAN
DOLJANCHI or "DOL" where the child "chooses their destiny."

DANIEL (V.O.)

So when my brother and I were born,
she gave us both an American name
and a Korean name. So we would know
where we were from. And where we
were going.

The family cheers as Young Daniel nears the stethoscope, then
grabs the PEN instead to his parents' dismay.

INT. KITCHEN - PRESENT

Min Soo interrogates her son between his bites of breakfast.

MIN SOO

How's your grade in math? You don't
like math.

DANIEL

B plus. But the rest are A's.

MIN SOO

Why no A in math yet, Daniel? Aigo!

It's time you get serious...

(then, in Korean)

Don't be like your brother.

Right as she says this, Daniel's brother, CHARLIE, 19, walks into the kitchen. Pretends he doesn't hear this, but his resentful demeanor gives him away.

MIN SOO (CONT'D)

I made mandu.

CHARLIE

Awww. Daniel's "special breakfast."

I'll pass.

Charlie strokes Daniel's hair. Daniel slaps his hand away.

DANIEL (V.O.)

My brother, Charlie, is an asshole.

Charlie grabs the box of Cap'n Crunch, then pours cereal and milk into a bowl and sits. He chomps loudly with each bite.

DANIEL (V.O.)

He's been at home the past semester because he failed too many classes at BU. An epic screw up that my parents can't accept.

MIN SOO

Close your mouth when you eat.

Charlie ignores her then SLURPS the remaining milk from the bowl. He stands, looks down at Daniel.

CHARLIE

Good luck with your day, little brother.

Charlie tries to touch Daniel's hair again and is batted away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Wouldn't want to disappoint Mommy and Daddy if you don't get into an Ivy.

Charlie exits, leaving his dirty bowl on the table.

DANIEL (V.O.)
I should hate Charlie, but these days, I mostly feel sorry for him.

MIN SOO
I just don't understand what happened to your brother. Why he can't behave, like you.

DANIEL
Umma, give him a break.

Daniel finishes the last of the dumplings. Grabs his plate and hand washes it in the sink.

Min Soo looks over her son, eyes honing in on his bun.

MIN SOO
You cut your hair before the interview.

Daniel groans, but Min Soo is not having it.

MIN SOO (CONT'D)
Too long. You look like a girl.

DANIEL
They let girls into Yale, too.

Min Soo scolds him with her eyes, then hands him a money pouch with deposit slips.

MIN SOO
Appa forgot this. You bring it to him. After you get a hair cut.

Daniel takes the pouch. Kisses his Mom on the cheek.

DANIEL
Alright, Umma. I'll get it cut.
(off her skeptical look)
I promise.

Daniel grabs his bag and heads for the door.

EXT. NORTHERN BLVD. - DAY

Daniel makes his way through his busy Queens neighborhood, passing a slew of restaurants, bars and vendors, etc., all written in Korean.

INT. USCIS - WAITING ROOM - LATER

Natasha frantically charges through the MULTI-CULTURAL RAINBOW of IMMIGRANTS. Heads over to the RECEPTIONIST. Sweating and short of breath.

NATASHA

Natasha Kingsley for Karen Whitney.

The Receptionist checks her appointment sheet, ~~and~~ shakes her head.

RECEPTIONIST

You're too late. You'll have to call the main USCIS line and make a new appointment.

NATASHA

No, you don't understand. I can't reschedule!

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry. You'll have to call the main line.

The Receptionist shrugs and looks down, dismissing Natasha. Natasha starts to panic.

NATASHA

I don't have time for that. This is an emergency. The trains were delayed.

(getting emotional)

Just-- could you please call Ms. Whitney? She told me to come back.

RECEPTIONIST

Your appointment was for 8 AM. It is now 8:15. She's seeing another--

NATASHA

Please. Just call her. Now!

Natasha's now hysterical voice rings through the reception area. The other applicants stare in her direction.

NATASHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I guess 'desperation' translates into every language.

The Receptionist nods at a SECURITY GUARD standing by the door. He sets his jaw and turns toward Natasha.

But before he can reach her, another door opens. A tall, thin, brown-skinned man beckons Natasha: LESTER BARNES, 40s.

LESTER
 (to the Receptionist)
 It's alright, Mary. I'll take her.

INT. USCIS - LESTER BARNES'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Natasha sits in front of an immaculately kept desk. Turns as Lester enters with a RED FILE in his hand.

LESTER
 My name is Lester Barnes.

NATASHA
 Hi, I'm--

He holds up a hand to silence her.

LESTER
 Everything I need to know is in this file. Do yourself a favor and stay quiet while I read it.

Natasha falls silent. Reaches across his desk and pockets one of his business cards. After a beat, Lester finally looks up.

LESTER (CONT'D)
 Why are you here?

NATASHA
 Karen--Ms. Whitney--told me to come back. She said maybe there was something--

LESTER
 Yeah, well Karen's new. Your family's last appeal was rejected. The deportation stands as is. You and your family will have to leave tomorrow.

He closes the file and pushes a box of tissues toward her in anticipation of her tears. Natasha shakes it off.

NATASHA (V.O.)
 I didn't cry when my father told us about the deportation orders. I'm not going to start crying now.

Natasha gathers her things. Heads for the door. But she stops with her hand on the knob, swallows her pride. Turns around.

NATASHA

So there's really nothing you can
do to help me?

He taps the closed file with his fingers.

LESTER

Your dad's DUI--

NATASHA

Is his problem. Why do I have to
pay for his mistake?

LESTER

You're still here illegally.

Natasha nods, on the verge of tears. She heads for the door.

LESTER (CONT'D)

I've been to your country. I've
been to Jamaica.

He smiles at the memory as Natasha turns back to him.

LESTER (CONT'D)

I had a nice time. Everything is
irie there, man. You'll be alright.

Natasha glares at Lester.

NATASHA

Where did you go?

LESTER

Negril. Very nice place.

NATASHA

Did you leave the hotel grounds?

LESTER

I wanted to but my--

NATASHA

But your wife didn't want to
because was she scared, right?

LESTER

No, it's just--

NATASHA

You listened to Bob Marley, and a bartender got you some pot and someone told you what *irie* means, and now you think you know something. That is not a country. That is a resort.

He holds up his hands, defending himself.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Don't tell me I'll be alright. I don't know that place. I've been here since I was eight years old. Now it's my senior year. I should be worrying about the same things my friends are-- like prom and graduation. But instead I'm worrying about being shipped to a country that's totally foreign to me. This is my home!

Natasha's tears finally pour out. Mr. Barnes slides the tissue box closer. She takes a handful, then heads to the door--

LESTER

Wait.

EXT. NORTHERN BLVD. - DAY

Daniel leans against a street light, checking his phone. JUMPS as someone WHISTLES loudly in his ear. He turns--

DANIEL

What the--?

Reveal OMAR HASSABALA, 19, Middle Eastern, raised on Hip Hop.

OMAR

I thought you were going to wait until right before the meeting to put the stick up your ass.

DANIEL

Don't be mad because I'm going to be part of the one percent.

Omar checks out Daniel's suit, laughing.

OMAR

You look like a Lebanese insurance salesman.

DANIEL

You're supposed to be making me feel better about going to Yale.

OMAR

That's what I'm doing. Easing your impending sense of doom with the use of comedy. It's a known tactic.

DANIEL

Well, try something else.

OMAR

You could just be like me and not go. How about that?

DANIEL

Unlike you, I actually care about what my parents think. And anyway, the interview's today. Too late to back out now.

Omar shrugs and leads the way down the subway stairs.

OMAR

You're supposed to wear black to a funeral by the way. Not gray.

Daniel playfully hits Omar and they descend into the subway.

EXT. USCIS - DAY

Tasha stares at a business card and dials the number on it. A WOMAN answers the line.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Mr. Fitzgerald's office.

NATASHA

Hi, I'd like to make an appointment with Mr. Fitzgerald as soon as possible, please.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Who am I speaking with?

NATASHA

Natasha Kingsley.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Hi, Natasha. What issue can I help you with?

Tasha hesitates, afraid to say the words aloud. Silence.

WOMAN (V.O., CONT'D)
Hello, ma'am? He does have a slot
at 11 A.M. Can you tell me your
issue?

NATASHA
I'm an illegal alien.

Tasha's heart races, afraid. We see the giant imposing
federal buildings surrounding her as she sits on the steps.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Daniel and Omar sit in the congested subway car. Daniel looks
at his reflection in the shiny metal subway door. Turns so he
can see his ponytail.

OMAR
You should just let me cut your
hair. I brought my pocket knife.

DANIEL
No, thanks.

OMAR
Your mom's right, you gotta lose
the man bun. You don't want to be a
virgin forever.

DANIEL
You know, if this interviewer's so
smart, he'll recognize a cool
haircut when he sees one.

OMAR
Or at least a desperate attempt at
cool.

The train COMES TO A SCREECHING HALT. The friends, along with
the other PASSENGERS, wait patiently for a beat. THEN, a
super CHIPPER VOICE over the loudspeaker...

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)
Looks like we got a slight delay,
folks. Track work on 68th.

A collective GROAN from the passengers.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)
I know you're all panicking,
thinking that you're late...
(MORE)

CONDUCTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

but look on the bright side, maybe
the universe is telling you
something.

GROANS again.

OMAR

I knew we should've taken the
express.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

Happens to me all the time.
Something goes off in my routine --
boom...must be the Universe. It's
full of unexpected blessings.

PASSENGER #1

Usually the nut jobs are on the
train, not driving it.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

Deli screws up my order.
Universe... Maybe I shouldn't be
eatin' deli sandwiches all the
time. Guess what? I switched it up
and lost twenty pounds. Thank you,
universe.

The train does a collective eye roll in complete disbelief.

OMAR

This guy needs a drug test.

The Conductor goes quiet. After a few more seconds in the
dark, the train finally pulls into Grand Central.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

We've reached the end of the line.
Ladies and gentlemen, back to your
regularly scheduled program.

Passengers breathe a sigh of relief as the DOORS OPEN.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

This train is now out of service.
But remember: The universe is
talking... So slow down and listen.

Omar rises from his seat and heads to the exit. Daniel SITS a
beat, taking in the conductor's words.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - MAIN CONCOURSE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel and Omar emerge from the train to find themselves in the main concourse of Grand Central Station.

DANIEL

How much time you got before work?

OMAR

'Bout an hour. Why?

Daniel looks to the walkways situated behind on the massive windows overlooking the terminal.

DANIEL

It's been a while since we went up.
Today's the perfect day.

Daniel starts to make his way through the diverse crowd of people rushing to their trains.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Come on!

Omar follows after Daniel, almost losing sight of him in the pedestrian traffic.

EXT. TASHA'S HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Tasha stands outside the fence of her school. Fighting tears.

NATASHA (V.O.)

It's still hard for me to believe
that after today I may never see
this school again.

INSERT SHOTS: She and Bev sitting down at the courtyard outside laughing, walking the hallways, gossiping, etc.

BACK TO SCENE: The real Bev walks up.

BEV

Please tell me you have good news.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Bev's the closest thing I have to a
sister. The longest time we've ever
been apart is two weeks.

NATASHA

I wish. I was late, so they
wouldn't let me see Ms. Whitney.

BEV
 (desperate)
 So what does that mean? You're
 leaving?! Isn't there someone else
 you can talk to?

Tasha pulls out the card.

NATASHA
 I've got one last shot. This guy
 Jeremy Fitzgerald. He's supposed to
 be some kind of immigration fixer.

BEV
 Oh my God! That's amazing!
 (then)
 Wait, why are you here? He should
 be "fixing" this! Go!

NATASHA
 I've got a few hours before my
 appointment with him.

BEV
 You should come to Chem Lab and
 mess with Mr. Busby. He's got on
 his polyester mom jeans again.

NATASHA
 My appointment's uptown. I don't
 want to rush. I'm just gonna hit
 the record store. Kill some time.

The bell rings.

BEV
 Text me the address. I'll skip out
 after my test and we can grab
 lunch.

NATASHA
 Perfect.

They share a look. Bev heads back inside. Tasha puts her
 headphones on and queues up Major Lazer album. We hear GET
 FREE and see it carry her worries away.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - GLASS WALKWAY - DAY

Daniel and Omar chill behind the oversized windows of the
 main terminal, overlooking the bustling crowd below. All of
 Grand Central's architectural glory in perfect view.

DANIEL

My life's gonna go one of two ways after today. If I don't get into Yale, it'll be Charlie all over again. And if I do...white jackets and picket fences from now until eternity.

OMAR

The American Dream.

DANIEL

Even if I win, I lose. What kind of future is that?

OMAR

If losing means you're rich, sign me up.

DANIEL

I just wish I could do something about it.

Daniel sighs. He turns over and lies face up on the walkway.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

There's gotta be something more to it all than this.

His gaze catches the gigantic mural of the Universe painted on the ceiling of the terminal.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You ever notice that before?

OMAR

Notice what?

Off Daniel's look, Omar joins him on the ground, eyes up. The majesty of the mural is on full display. Several constellations are recognizable.

DANIEL

It's a sign.

OMAR

Oh, see now, you're just making stuff up. We've passed this thing a million times.

DANIEL

Yeah, but have you ever seen it?
It's like the conductor said on the
train, maybe the universe is trying
to tell me something.

OMAR

Yep. "You're losing it, bro."

DANIEL

I'm serious, Omar. Of all the days
we've been here, today is the day
that I notice the most amazing
thing in all of Grand Central? It's
not a coincidence.

OMAR

Okay, then let's suppose this
conductor was right...the universe
is talking. What's it saying?

Daniel sits up, looking out into the main terminal. People
shuffle back through the concourse. He looks around, eyeing
everything in sight...nothing. A train pulls in.

DANIEL

I don't know yet.

OMAR

Go figure.

Daniel plops down on the ground, then... He spots HER in the
crowd. A young, Black woman with an enormous, curly AFRO and
almost-as-enormous PINK HEADPHONES. It's Natasha.

Her eyes are closed as she sways to her music, in complete
bliss. Omar notices Daniel's gaze and shakes his head.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Now what?

(looking out)

It's just a cute girl, Daniel.

Relax.

(double take)

Okay, she's real cute.

Natasha walks underneath them, moving her backpack to one
shoulder REVEALING the back of her jacket. It reads: CARPÉ
DIEM. Daniel's completely struck.

DANIEL

Look at her jacket! Carpé Diem.

OMAR
Carpé wha--

DANIEL
Carpé Diem... "Seize the Day."
(off Omar, unfazed)
It's gotta be a sign. C'mon on!

Daniel drags Omar off in the direction he last saw Natasha.

EXT. NYC STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel's eyes light up as he follows Natasha from a distance.

OMAR
This is stalker-ish, you know.

DANIEL
No, it's not. I'm maintaining a non-
creepy, half-block distance.

Tasha enters a record store. GALAXY RECORDS. Daniel stops in his tracks. Stares at Omar.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(re: the store's sign)
You gotta be shitting me! This is
definitely a Sign.

OMAR
Okay. Definitely ironic. I'll give
you that... And she is cute...

DANIEL
I want to know where this leads.

OMAR
Hopefully not to jail. But if it
does, don't call me.

INT. GALAXY RECORD STORE - DAY

Natasha enters the record store, smiling anyway.

NATASHA (V.O.)
If today were not today, I would
spend all day here.

Tasha enters the "Rap" section. Then she sees a COUPLE making out next to a poster of Madonna's *Like a Virgin*. She frowns.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Ugh. Of all the people to run into,
on today of all days, why did I
have to run into my ex? Why isn't
he in school? This is my place!

These two are ROB, 17, and KELLY, 17. Kelly snakes her hand
out and SNATCHES A RECORD. She slips it between their bodies
and into her bulky jacket. Tasha shakes her head, appalled.

DANIEL (O.S.)

She's just going to steal that?

Tasha turns to find Daniel standing right behind her.

NATASHA

I know! Doesn't anybody work here?
Can't they see what's happening?

DANIEL

Shouldn't we say something?

Tasha shakes her head.

NATASHA

(re: Rob and Kelly)
No. I know them.

DANIEL

Sticky Fingers is your friend?

NATASHA

She's my boyfriend's girlfriend.

DANIEL

How does that work exactly?

NATASHA

I mean ex-boyfriend. He cheated on
me. With her, actually.

NATASHA (V.O.)

TMI, Tasha. I didn't need to
volunteer that tidbit to a
stranger.

DANIEL

Great pair.
(beat, then)
We should tell someone.

NATASHA

No way! If I say something, it's going to look like I'm jealous and messing with them.

DANIEL

Are you?

NATASHA

That's kind of a personal question, isn't it?

DANIEL

We were having a moment.

NATASHA

Were we?

Rob pauses from making out, looks up to see Tasha and Daniel staring at them from a distance.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ bleeding on a popsicle stick...he saw me!

Rob gives Tasha a half-smile and a small wave. Tasha turns her back to him, facing Daniel instead.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Oh God...is he coming over here?

DANIEL

Yup.

NATASHA

Maybe we should make out or something. Like spies do in the movies.

Daniel blushes. Hard.

Tasha notes his blush and leans back.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I'm not serious. Obviously.

Rob approaches them.

ROB

Hey...

DANIEL

Why are you and your girlfriend stealing things?

Rob holds his hands up and takes a step back.

ROB

Whoa, dude. Keep your voice down.

DANIEL

This is an independent record store. That means it's family owned. You're stealing from real people. Do you know how hard it is for small businesses to survive when people like you just take stuff?

Tasha spots an EMPLOYEE approach Kelly.

NATASHA

Uh...don't look now, but I think your girlfriend just got busted.

Rob looks over at Kelly. EMPLOYEE #2 has now joined them. Rob shoves his hands into his pockets and walk-runs toward the front door.

KELLY

Rob!

But Rob doesn't stop. He bolts out, leaving her behind.

DANIEL

Damn, that was cold.

Kelly hands Employee Prince's "Purple Rain" from under her jacket. The employee snatches the record.

EMPLOYEE

Come back in here again and I will call the cops.

Kelly nods, then exits quickly.

DANIEL

Well, at least she has good taste.

NATASHA

Yeah, I guess if you're going to steal a Prince record, might as well be his best one, right?

DANIEL

I don't know if that's his *best* one. Solid top three, for sure.

NATASHA

Tell me, in your opinion, what is his best album?

DANIEL

Controversy. My mom used to play that song all the time when I was a kid.

Tasha smiles, impressed. Daniel stares at her, googly-eyed. Grinning.

NATASHA

Listen, Red Tie--

DANIEL

Daniel. My name is Daniel.

He sticks out his hand for a shake. Tasha shakes it. He holds it a beat too long. A moment passes between them.

NATASHA

It was nice meeting you, Daniel. But I really have to go--

DANIEL

Well, maybe I can walk you--

NATASHA

No, I'm good. Take care, Daniel.

Tasha puts her headphones back on and starts walking for the door quickly, leaving Daniel standing there kicking himself.

EXT. NYC STREET - DAY

Natasha walks out into the crowd and spots Rob and Kelly up ahead. Kelly cries as Rob gives his best half-ass explanation. Natasha moves past them unnoticed.

Daniel, ear to his phone, eyes Tasha in the distance as he follows her.

OMAR (V.O., ON THE PHONE)

Why didn't you just get her number in the record store?

DANIEL

Because she wouldn't give it to me.

OMAR (V.O.)

I think that's clearly a sign, don't you?

DANIEL

But it's not like she totally blew me off. She was nice. I'm telling you, there was a spark there.

OMAR (V.O.)

And following her like a serial killer is going to reignite that?

DANIEL

I'm not following her. She just happens to be going my way.

Natasha stops at the crosswalk ahead of Daniel.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Oh, shit, I'm getting close. She'd definitely think I was stalking her if she turned around now.

OMAR (V.O.)

Well, then whatever you do, don't --

Daniel hangs up in a panic. Strains, deciding whether to flee or say something as he approaches. Daniel takes a deep breath. He's about to veer off when--

A WHITE BMW flies down the avenue. The light turns red again and Natasha STEPS OFF THE CURB, not paying attention.

SHE'S ABOUT TO GET HIT when Daniel YANKS her backwards by her arm. They fall backwards onto the sidewalk.

Natasha lands half on top of Daniel as her phone and headphones CRASH AGAINST THE PAVEMENT. She looks down at the spider webs cracking across her phone's screen.

NATASHA

What. The. Hell?

DANIEL

You okay?

NATASHA

That guy almost killed me.

She looks up the block as the BMW sits on the side of the road with its blinkers on. Then looks to her headphones.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Do you know how long I've had these?

Natasha cradles her broken headphones in her hands.

DANIEL
I'll buy you another pair.

She shakes her head "no."

DANIEL (CONT'D)
It's the least I can do.

Tasha finally looks at him.

NATASHA
You already saved my life.

DANIEL
You wouldn't have died. A little
maimed, maybe.

Natasha stares back at him, unfazed. Her eyes fill with
tears.

NATASHA
I'm having just the worst day.
(a beat; realizing)
Wait. Were you following me?

DANIEL
Man, I knew you would think that.

NATASHA
You just happened to be right
behind me?

DANIEL
Maybe it was meant to be.

Natasha exhales deep.

NATASHA
I'm just gonna ignore that. Thanks
for your help.

DANIEL
At least tell me your name.

NATASHA
Natasha.

DANIEL
Nice name.

NATASHA
So glad you approve.

Daniel stares at her, inquisitive.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Why are you staring at me?

Daniel blushes again. Natasha stares at his face. His hair.

NATASHA (V.O.)
Observable Fact: The man-bun pushes
him from cute to kind of sexy.

DANIEL
Now you're staring.

Tasha blushes, then clears her throat.

NATASHA
Why are you wearing a suit?

DANIEL
I have an interview later. Wanna go
get something to eat?

NATASHA
What for?

DANIEL
Yale. Alumni admission interview. I
applied Early Decision.

Natasha shakes her head.

NATASHA
No, I meant why do you want to get
something to eat?

DANIEL
I'm hungry?

NATASHA
Hmmm. I'm not.

DANIEL
Coffee then? Or tea or soda or
bottled water?

NATASHA
Why?

Daniel shrugs.

DANIEL
Why not? Besides, I'm pretty sure
you owe me your life since I just
saved it.

INT. MOM AND POP COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Daniel and Tasha sit across from each other at a cozy table. Tasha checks the time on her phone: **10:00 A.M.**

DANIEL

Wait. Why aren't you in school?

NATASHA

(lying)

I have a doctor's appointment in an hour.

Tasha sips her coffee. Silence.

Daniel fidgets nervously. Blows on his cappuccino so hard a little foam flies up on his face. Tasha chuckles.

She then looks at his satchel, suddenly curious.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

What do you keep in there?

DANIEL

Not much. My notebook. I carry it pretty much everywhere I go.

Daniel pulls out a black notebook. Flips through it quickly. Tasha glances at it. Sees the handwritten blocks of text.

NATASHA

You're not a poet, are you?

DANIEL

No, I just kind of dabble in it. For fun. Next year I'll be pre-med.

Self-conscious, Daniel quickly puts the notebook back in his bag. Tasha notices, leans in.

NATASHA

(flirting)

So what are your poems about? Love?

DANIEL

Among other things. Yes, love.

NATASHA

I don't believe in love.

DANIEL

Well it exists, whether you believe in it or not.

NATASHA

Oh really? Can you prove it?

DANIEL

Thousands of love songs. Poetry.
The institution of marriage.

NATASHA

Words on paper. Never mind the fact
that eating large amounts of
chocolate has the same effect on
you as falling in love.

DANIEL

I love chocolate.

He laughs. Tasha laughs, too.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You say it's just words on paper,
but you have to admit all those
people are feeling something.

NATASHA

People just want to believe.
Otherwise they would have to admit
that life is just a random series
of good and bad things that happen
until one day, you die.

DANIEL

And you're okay with believing that
life has no meaning?

NATASHA

I'm okay believing in the things
that science can make sense of. If
love made sense, more than forty-
eight percent of all marriages
would make it.

DANIEL

Are your parents married?

NATASHA

Yeah, but if that's what marriage
is, it's not for me.

DANIEL

So no fate, no magic, no meant-to-
be for you?

NATASHA

Boy, please. Quantum Physics is all the magic I need.

DANIEL

I don't think I've ever met anyone so charmingly deluded.

NATASHA

And you find that appealing?

DANIEL

I find it interesting.

(beat, then)

What if I told you I could get you to fall in love with me scientifically? Without chocolate.

NATASHA

I would scoff. A lot.

DANIEL

I'm serious. It's a thing. The New York Times had an article about it. Researchers put a bunch of couples in a lab and had them ask each other a bunch of intimate questions. Also, they had to stare into each other's eyes for four minutes without talking.

NATASHA

That sounds ridiculous.

DANIEL

And yet, it's a real thing.

Daniel and Natasha stand in line at the register, waiting to pay. Daniel has his phone out.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

There are thirty-six questions. How about I choose ten randomly.

NATASHA

Knock yourself out. It's never going to happen.

DANIEL

Great. Question number one, what are the five key ingredients to falling in love?

NATASHA

I don't believe in love, remember?
 (off his look)
 Okay. Fine--mutual self-interest
 and socio-economic compatibility.

DANIEL

Do you even have a soul?

NATASHA

No such thing.

He laughs at Tasha as if she's kidding, but she's not.

DANIEL

Well, my ingredients are friendship
 and chemistry.

NATASHA

(patronizing)
 But, of course. Sorry, go on.

DANIEL

I think some kind of moral compass
 is important. And let's see...
 Physical attraction and the X
 factor.

NATASHA

What's the X factor?

DANIEL

Don't worry. We already have it.

He smiles charmingly. A strand of Daniel's hair falls into
 his face. He puts it behind his ear.

NATASHA

This quiz isn't going to make me
 fall in love with you, Red Tie.

DANIEL

It's Daniel. And give me today.

NATASHA

Can't. I have a doctor's
 appointment.

DANIEL

Okay. I'll walk you there.

EXT. NYC STREET - DAY

Tasha leads the way, darting in and out of pedestrian traffic, as Daniel struggles to keep up.

DANIEL

So, where are we headed?

NATASHA

I am heading to my appointment on the east side and you are, apparently, tagging along with me.

DANIEL

Yep. And while we're walking...

Daniel takes out his phone.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You ready for more questions?

NATASHA

You are relentless.

DANIEL

Persistent. Now, question number two: Would you like to be famous and how?

NATASHA

You first.

DANIEL

I'd be a famous poet laureate.

NATASHA

And you'd be broke.

DANIEL

Broke with money But rich with words.

NATASHA

What does a poet laureate even do?

DANIEL

Offers wise and poetic counsel.

Tasha makes some gagging sounds.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Be cynical all you want, but many a life has been saved by poetry.

NATASHA
You're not joking, are you?

DANIEL
What about you? What kind of fame
do you want?

NATASHA
Easy. I'd be a benevolent dictator.

Daniel laughs.

DANIEL
You know, all dictators think
they're benevolent. Even the ones
holding machetes.

NATASHA
Nope. Pure benevolence from me. I
would decide what was good for
everyone and do it.

DANIEL
But what if what's good for one
person is not good for another?

NATASHA
Can't please everyone. As my poet
laureate, you could comfort the
loser with a good poem.

DANIEL
Touché.

She glances at him, feeling a surprising connection. They
stop at a corner, waiting for the light to change.

We enter a MUSICAL MONTAGE of them walking through the city
as they get to know each other. The urban sounds melt away as
a wistful piece of music takes over. Natasha soaks up the
city she's about to say goodbye to and Daniel continues to
try and win her full attention.

Daniel pulls out his phone again and begins scrolling through
questions. Natasha watches him.

NATASHA
Tell me again why you're wearing a
suit?
(off his groan)
Come on, I get to ask questions
too.

DANIEL
Yale. Interview.

NATASHA
Really. Are you nervous?

DANIEL
I'm fine. My parents have only been prepping me for this my entire life.

NATASHA
They're immigrants, huh?

DANIEL
Yup.

NATASHA
Mine too. Do you even want to go to Yale?

DANIEL
It doesn't matter what I want.

NATASHA
It's your life.

DANIEL
And what about yours? You sound like you've got it all figured out.

NATASHA
I'm going to be a data scientist.
(off his look)
Data scientists analyze data and recommend actions based on the results. They're also very well-paid.

DANIEL
That's so practical. Have you always known what you wanted to be?

NATASHA
Well, it wasn't predestined. I did research on growing fields in the sciences. I chose one, and tada.

DANIEL
So, it's not something you're passionate about?

She shrugs.

NATASHA

I don't want to have to rely on anyone or wind up working night shifts just to make ends meet. I can't live off of passion any more that I could off of love.

They climb some steps and walk along an elevated walkway.

DANIEL

It's a long life to spend doing something you're only 'meh' about.

NATASHA

It's a long life to spend chasing dreams that aren't real. Do you know how many people want to be actors or writers or rock stars? A lot. Ninety-nine percent of them won't make it. Zero point nine percent of those left will barely make any money doing it. Only the last zero point one percent make it big. Everybody else just wastes their lives trying to be them.

DANIEL

Are you secretly my father?

NATASHA

Ha ha. Look, when you're a happy doctor making lots of money, you'll thank him that you didn't become a starving artist dreaming pointlessly about making it big.

Tasha notices the disappointed look on Daniel's face.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Wait, you're not serious about the poetry thing, are you?

DANIEL

Honestly? If I had my way, yeah. This track I'm on is too predictable. Yale. Medical school. Residency. Marriage. Children. Retirement. Nursing home. Funeral home. Cemetery.

(then)

People have big, beautiful brains! We invent things that fly. We are capable of anything under the sun. We are capable of big lives.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

How great would it be if we all
went after the things we actually
believed in?

Their eyes meet. She's inspired by his passion.

EXT. FITZGERALD'S BUILDING - DAY

Tasha stops in front of a glass high-rise building on 1st Ave. Its corporate design contrasts with the illustrious UN building on the opposite side of the street. She looks up at the building, knowing it may be her last hope.

NATASHA

So, this is me.

DANIEL

I can wait for you out here.

NATASHA

Daniel. You have an interview and I
have this... thing. This is where
we say goodbye.

Daniel falls silent for a beat.

DANIEL

Am I going to see you again?

NATASHA

There are eight and a half million
people in this city. Unless we just
happen to run into one another,
again the odds aren't in our favor.

DANIEL

Let's do that over. Do you want to
see me again?

A beat. Neither one moves...

Daniel doesn't wait for her reply.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Never mind. I can see that you're a
little stressed by this
appointment...like I was before I
saw you. Let's try something.

Daniel raises his arms laterally, away from his body.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Lift your arms like this.

Natasha obliges, reluctantly. Daniel inches closer and closer to her, arms out.

NATASHA

Ummm. What are you doing?

DANIEL

They say that something as simple as a hug can do wonders for stress.

NATASHA

Do they?

DANIEL

Mmmhmm, it's science.

Daniel stands face to face with Natasha, both of their arms outstretched, almost wrapping around one another. But they don't touch.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

If this is goodbye, then let this hug be my parting gift. Okay?

Tasha pulls him in. He holds her tight. Tasha lets her head drop onto his shoulder and her body relax into his arms.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Go, Tasha. Time to go.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Let go, Daniel. Let her go.

Daniel releases her. Tasha pulls back, smiles at him.

NATASHA

Nice meeting you, Daniel. Good luck with your interview.

Daniel nods. Tasha heads to the building.

DANIEL

(calling after her)

You really don't think we'll see each other again, do you?

She turns back to Daniel.

NATASHA

It's highly unlikely.

DANIEL

The odds were that we'd never meet
in the first place, you know. But
we did.

Daniel looks to the sky. Cracks a smile.

NATASHA

Why are you smiling?

DANIEL

Because I know this isn't our last
time together.

Daniel's naïveté upsets Tasha. Tears gather in her eyes.

NATASHA

Goodbye, Daniel.

Tasha turns away from him so that he can't see her face. She
walks through the large glass doors of the building.

INT. BUILDING - HALLWAY/FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - DAY

Tasha opens a door to find a partially built office. The
walls are half painted and bare bulbs hang from the ceiling.
Sawdust and paint splotches cover the tarped floor.

A woman, HANNAH, 30s, sits behind the desk. She smiles as
Tasha approaches.

HANNAH

You must be Natasha.

Tasha nods.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I have some bad news.

Tasha's stomach folds in on itself.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Jeremy-- Attorney Fitzgerald, was
in a car accident an hour ago.

Hannah continues the story as Tasha listens.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Turns out that BMW that almost hit
me had already done its fair share
of damage...

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - EARLIER

JEREMY FITZGERALD crosses the street.

NATASHA (V.O.)
My attorney-to-be was crossing the street, and without his own personal Daniel to save him...

BOOM. The WHITE BMW cruises through a stoplight and KNOCKS JEREMY TO THE GROUND.

NATASHA (V.O.)
A drunk and distraught insurance actuary hit him.

Jeremy crawls to the side of the street as other PEDESTRIANS help him up and call 911.

INT. FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - PRESENT

Hannah continues talking to Tasha.

HANNAH
His wife says he's fine, just a few bruises. But he won't be back until later this afternoon.

NATASHA
But that might be too late--

HANNAH
Didn't you hear what I said? He was hit by a car. He'll see you later.

Hannah pushes a sheaf of forms over to Tasha.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
In the meantime, I need you to fill out these forms.

Hannah points Tasha to an adjacent desk. She fills most of it quickly. Then pauses at the back page. The prompt: "PLEASE GIVE A FULL ACCOUNTING OF YOUR TIME IN THE UNITED STATES."

NATASHA (V.O.)
I have no idea what to write. So I give the facts: my family traveled to America on a tourist visa and we have not left the country since. We have committed no crimes, except for my dad's DUI.

Tasha jots this down quickly, then hands the papers back to Hannah. Hannah flips through it, then stops on the back page.

HANNAH
You need more here.

NATASHA
Like what?

HANNAH
What does America mean to you? Why do you want to stay?

NATASHA
Is that really--

HANNAH
Anything Jeremy can use to humanize you will help.

Tasha sits back down. The phone rings as she stares at the blank page. Struggling. Hannah talks as Tasha tries to focus.

A second phone line rings as Tasha works on the forms. Hannah hangs up and grabs the second line before it can ring twice.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Oh my God, Jeremy. Are you alright?

As Jeremy responds, a relieved smile crosses Hannah's face.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Thank goodness, I was worried sick!
(beat)
Yes, of course. I'll see you later.

Hannah hangs up the phone and comes back into the reception area, aglow with relief.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
He's alright.

NATASHA
That's great.

Hannah takes the forms from Tasha and reads through them.

HANNAH
I've seen lots of cases like this--
you'll be okay.

NATASHA
You think so?

HANNAH
 Jeremy never loses. I'm not
 supposed to say this...but just
 know there's hope.

Tasha exhales, a burden lifted.

INT. FITZGERALD'S BUILDING - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Tasha exits the elevator.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Hey!

Tasha turns to the voice. It's Bev.

BEV
 How'd it go?

NATASHA
 Good. I think.

BEV
 What does that mean?

NATASHA
 Well, it's not official yet, but...
 there may be something other than
 resigned dread in my future.

Bev squeals, then squeezes Tasha tight in a hug.

BEV
 That's amazing! Are you going to
 call your parents?

NATASHA
 And say what? A man who I don't
 know sent me to see another man I
 don't know. Then a paralegal, who
 is not a lawyer, whom I also don't
 know, says everything will be all
 right. What's the use in getting
 all our hopes up?

BEV
 Hope seems like a good substitute
 to whatever you've been feeling.

Tasha smiles.

BEV (CONT'D)

Don't tell me. Can you use the scientific method on it? Can you observe it, measure it, experiment with it and repeat your experiments?

NATASHA & BEV

You cannot.

They both laugh.

NATASHA

You know I can only take so much positivity.

(beat)

But there is something measurable I have to tell you. I met a boy...

BEV

Um, what? When? Deets please!

NATASHA

Okay, so I saw Rob up at Second Coming this morning...

As Tasha tells her story, INSERT FLASHBACK SHOTS of Daniel enhanced by her memory and favorable shades of lighting:

- Beautifully backlit after he saved Tasha's life.
- Getting foam on his nose at the coffee spot.
- Lovingly looking at her as he says "goodbye."

NATASHA (V.O.)

And as I gave Bev the full Daniel rundown, it hit me...

NATASHA

I didn't even get his full name!

BEV

What a fail.

NATASHA

I know! I should've gotten his number.

Tasha looks down to her phone. It's **11:35**.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I mean, what if this immigration nonsense does resolve itself? How will I find him again?

BEV

Maybe he waited for you. Wouldn't that be romantic?

Bev looks around the lobby, searching.

NATASHA

Don't be ridiculous. He had an interview. He's not still here.

In spite of herself, Tasha starts to look around the lobby too. Hopeful. But she can't find him. Her shoulders slump.

BEV

Ha! You're disappointed.

NATASHA

And how is that funny?

BEV

Because you really like this dude! I've never seen you like this.

NATASHA

(still searching the lobby)

Please. It's not like I think we were meant to be or anything ridiculous like that...just saying, it would've been nice--

Tasha finally sees Daniel. He's crossing the lobby, making a beeline for her. She covers her excitement.

DANIEL

Hey.

NATASHA

Hey. What happened to your interview?

DANIEL

No hug. No "I'm so happy to see you"?

BEV

You clearly don't know Tasha that well. Hi, I'm Bev. You must be "the boy."

Tasha cuts her eyes at Bev, deadly.

DANIEL

Actually it's Daniel.

BEV
 Nice to meet you, Daniel.
 (to Tasha)
 Okay. I'm out.

Bev hugs Tasha.

NATASHA
 I thought we were having lunch.

BEV
 I think you've got other plans.

Bev grins from ear to ear as she trots off. She types Tasha a text: **Call me later. PS, pls get the digits this time!!!**
 Tasha turns to a smiling Daniel.

NATASHA
 So?

DANIEL
 So?

NATASHA
 Your interview?

DANIEL
 Oh, that old thing? I postponed it.

NATASHA
 Are you insane? This is your life
 we're talking about.

DANIEL
 I didn't burn the building to the
 ground, 'Tash. I just moved it
 until later.

NATASHA
 'Tash? We're doing nicknames
 already?

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Tasha shivers a little and rubs her hands down her forearms
 from the cold. Daniel takes her jacket and helps her into it.

NATASHA
 Did you postpone for me?

DANIEL
 Absolutely.

NATASHA

What makes you so sure I'm worth it?

DANIEL

Instinct. How did your thing go?

NATASHA

Fine. I have to come back at 3:30.

Daniel looks at his phone: **11:45 AM.**

DANIEL

Looks like we have more time together.

NATASHA

Looks that way, huh?

The two of them exchange flirty smiles.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

So, what should we do now?

EXT. HARLEM - MLK BLVD DAY

The Manhattan skyscrapers have been replaced by small, closely-packed stores with bright awnings. Harlem feels less like a city and more like a neighborhood. Almost everyone's black. Tasha and Daniel walk down the street, talking.

NATASHA

Your father owns a black hair care shop called "Black Hair Care"?

DANIEL

Yep. Not the most creative name in the world, I'll give you that.

NATASHA

Hmm. I guess when you said 'store,' that's not what I was expecting. How'd they get into that?

INT. STILL PHOTO SEQUENCE - FANTASY

DANIEL (V.O.)

My family didn't enter the Black hair care business by chance.

A STILL PHOTO OF DANIEL'S FAMILY COMES TO LIFE.

DANIEL (V.O.)

When Dae Hyun and Min Soo moved to New York, Dae Hyun's cousin gave them a loan to open a Black Hair Care store.

A photograph of a Korean plane suddenly moves, the plane lands in New York City. A photo of Dae Hyun's COUSIN springs into action as he hands Daniel's parents some cash. A Hair Care Store frozen in time suddenly bustles.

DANIEL (V.O.)

His cousin had a similar store and it was thriving. As were stores other South Koreans had opened up.

A wide shot reveals the cousin in front of a store, he goes inside. A dozen other Black Hair Care Stores are alive and thriving on the block.

DANIEL (V.O.)

And South Koreans didn't dominate the Black hair care industry by chance. In the 1960s wigs made with South Korean hair were insanely popular in the African-American community.

Various photographs of BLACK WOMEN come to life. As they walk down the street, wigs of every style are on display.

DANIEL

So much so that the South Korean government banned the export of raw hair to ensure South Korean wigs could only be made in South Korea. That combined with the U.S. banning the import of wigs containing Chinese hair effectively solidified South Korea's dominance in the wig market. The wig business evolved to the more general Black hair care business. Of which South Koreans currently control 60-80%.

BACK TO SCENE - EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY

They finally stop in front of his father's store. Posters of BLACK WOMEN in all styles--afros, weaves, braids, etc., adorn the windows.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So this is it...

Daniel turns to Tasha, tugs his tie from side to side nervously.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
So, you should know that my dad's really...

NATASHA
Daniel. It's fine. I get it. All parents are embarrassing.

Daniel averts his eyes. Tasha reaches out for the door, but he stops her.

DANIEL
Maybe you could just wait out here.

Tasha lets the door go, stunned. Daniel reaches for the door.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

He sees the hurt in Tasha's eyes, feels awful.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, can I try that again?

Tasha gives him a big smile. Daniel opens the door for Tasha.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
After you.

INT. BLACK HAIR CARE STORE - DAY

A bell chimes as they enter. It's small and crammed with rows of metal shelves and products. Dae, DAE HYUN, 50s, is busy ringing up a customer at the register.

DANIEL
Well, this is it... You need to go to the bathroom or anything? There's one in the back.

Tasha shakes her head. He strangles the pouch with his hands. Nervous.

NATASHA
Want to show me around?

DANIEL
Not much to see. First two aisles are for hair.
(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Shampoo, conditioner, extensions,
dyes, lots of chemical things I
don't understand. Aisle three is
make-up. Four's equipment.

He glances at his dad, but he's still busy.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Do you need something?

Tasha touches her hair, suddenly insecure.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I didn't mean a product. We have a
fridge in the back with soda and
stuff.

NATASHA

Sure.

They walk down the hair dye aisle. Tasha stops in front of
some boxes with brightly colored dyes, picks up a pink one.

DANIEL

Pink?

NATASHA

Why not?

DANIEL

Doesn't seem like your style.

NATASHA

Shows how much you know.

DANIEL

I think you would look beautiful
with a giant pink afro.

NATASHA

The whole thing wouldn't be pink.
Maybe just the ends.

He reaches for the box and now they're both holding it and
facing each other in an aisle that only has space for one.

DANIEL

It would look like strawberry
frosting.

Daniel pulls a few strands of Tasha's coils. He smiles. She
smiles back. A small moment.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Oh, look. My little brother's here.

Daniel jerks his hand from her hair. They both let go of the dye at the same time, and the box clatters to the floor.

Charlie saunters down the aisle toward them, eyes filled with curiosity and a mischievous glee.

Daniel hands the dye back to Tasha.

DANIEL

What's up, Charlie?

CHARLIE

The sky is up, little brother.

(then, re: Tasha)

Who is this?

Charlie's eyes are on Tasha. Daniel takes a deep breath and readies himself to say something, but Tasha jumps in.

NATASHA

I'm Natasha. A friend of your brother's.

CHARLIE

Oh, I thought maybe he'd caught a shoplifter. We get a lot of those in a store like this. I'm sure you understand.

Tasha's eyes widen, stunned by his rudeness.

DANIEL

Jesus Christ, Charlie.

Daniel angrily takes a step toward his brother, but Tasha grabs his hand, pulling him back. Daniel stops, links his fingers with hers and squeezes.

Charlie makes a big show of looking down at their joined hands and then back up at them.

CHARLIE

Is this what I think it is?

He claps his hands together with a loud smack and does a laughing two-step dance.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This. Is. Great. Yes. You know what this means don't you? All the heat will be off me.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

When the 'rents find out about this
I'll be a boy scout again. Fuck
academic probation.

NATASHA

Wow. You're an asshole.

He smiles as if Tasha's paid him a compliment.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

(to Daniel)

Do your thing and let's get out of
here.

She squeezes his hand. They turn away and run right into his
father. Tasha pulls her hand away, but it's too late.

DAE

(in Korean)

What are you doing?

DANIEL

Mom said I had to bring you this.

CHARLIE

Want me to help translate for your
friend?

DAE

(to Charlie)

I thought you didn't understand
Korean.

Charlie shrugs.

CHARLIE

I get by.

DAE

(in Korean)

Is that why you failed out of
school? You only get by?

Charlie's smile lessens. Embarrassment showing.

CHARLIE

(to Tasha)

Don't worry, he's not talking about
you. Not yet at least.

Dae's face goes completely blank. He suppresses his anger and
feigns a smile at Tasha.

DAE
 You want something before you
 leave?

He clasps his hands, half-bends at the waist like he usually
 does for his customers.

NATASHA
 No, thank you, Mr.--

DAE
 Yes. Yes. You're a friend of
 Daniel's. Take anything you want.

He pats at his pockets until he finds his glasses and peers
 at the bottles on the shelf.

DAE (CONT'D)
 Not this aisle. Come with me.

Natasha and Daniel follow him helplessly while Charlie
 snickers. Dae finds what he's looking for one aisle over.

DAE (CONT'D)
 Here. A relaxer for your hair. To
 make your hair not so big.

He pulls a tub from a shelf and hands it to her. Charlie
 laughs long and loud.

NATASHA
 Thank you, Mr.--

DANIEL
 Bae.

NATASHA
 Mr. Bae. I don't need any--

DAE
 Your hair's too big.

NATASHA
 I like it big.

CHARLIE
 Better get a different boyfriend.

Daniel glares at his brother.

DANIEL
 We're leaving.

Daniel practically flings the pouch at his father. Then he reaches for Tasha's hand and leads her toward the door.

CHARLIE

Thank you, come again.

EXT. HARLEM - CONTINUOUS

CHYRON: 12:15PM

Daniel sighs as he tugs Tasha up the block. She shakes her head. Daniel finally stops, hangs his head.

DANIEL

I'm sorry.

Tasha's giggles turn into all-out laughter. She clutches her stomach as Daniel stares at her, unamused.

NATASHA

I don't think that could've gone any worse. Racist dad. Racist and sexist older brother. And the store! I mean the ancient posters of those women and your dad offering me a relaxer.

DANIEL

I'm glad you think this is funny.

NATASHA

Come on. Tragedy is funny.

DANIEL

Are we in a tragedy?

NATASHA

Of course. Isn't that what life is? We all die at the end.

DANIEL

I guess so.

He steps closer, takes her hand and places it on his chest.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Seriously. I'm sorry. I'm sorry about my family. I'm sorry about everything, about the whole history of the world and all its racism and the unfairness of all of it.

NATASHA

What are you even saying? It's not your fault. You can't apologize for racism.

DANIEL

I can and I do.

Tasha warms to his earnestness.

NATASHA

I get it. It's hard to come from some place or someone that you're not proud of... But you're not your dad. Or your brother thankfully.

DANIEL

Thank you.

(beat)

I feel like I need a palate cleanser now. What's your favorite place to go in the city?

NATASHA

Hmm. There's so many. But I guess if I had to pick one, I'd say the planetarium.

DANIEL

Really? Never been.

NATASHA

Are you serious? Not even the obligatory fourth grade field trip?

Daniel shakes his head. Tasha looks at her phone.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Then we have to go. There's a twelve-thirty show if we leave now, we can make it.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - LATER

Daniel and Tasha sit side by side.

DANIEL

So, you ready for the next question?

NATASHA

Oh boy...are we back to that?

DANIEL

I'll take that as a yes.

(searches)

Alright, here we go. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother and father?

NATASHA

You first.

DANIEL

Well. You met my dad...it's complicated. Of course I love him, but you can love someone and still have a not-so-great relationship with them, you know?

(shrugs)

Sometimes I feel like we're on opposite sides of a soundproofed, glass wall. We can see each other but we can't hear each other.

The train brakes suddenly and jostles them even closer together. She doesn't move away.

NATASHA

And your mom?

DANIEL

Pretty good. She's kind of like me. She paints.

NATASHA

So she's a delusional optimist too?

DANIEL

I guess so.

(then)

Now your turn.

Tasha rolls her eyes.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'll make it easy on you. You can just give me a thumbs up or thumbs down, okay?

She nods.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Mom?

Tasha gives the thumbs up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Way up?

NATASHA

Let's not go overboard. I'm
seventeen and she's my mom.

DANIEL

Dad?

Tasha gives the thumbs down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Way down?

NATASHA

(beat)

It's hard to love someone who
doesn't love you back.

Daniel and Tasha fall silent as a STREET MUSICIAN carrying a VIOLIN boards the car. She starts to play Prince's "*When Doves Cry*."

Daniel nudges Tasha.

DANIEL

She's playing Prince. Kind of a
coincidence, don't you think?

Tasha rolls her eyes.

The Musician is so passionate and the tune is so infectious that an ELDERLY PASSENGER starts to loudly hum along. As the song goes on, OTHER PASSENGERS hum as well.

Daniel smiles big at Tasha as he joins in.

NATASHA

You're so goofy.

The Musician finishes with a flourish and the car breaks out in applause. A true New York subway Moment.

The Musician takes a bow.

STREET MUSICIAN

Ladies and gentlemen, if you like
what you heard, I do accept tips.
Cash, credit or debit.

The Musician holds her hat in one hand and an iPhone with a card-reading square in the other as passengers head out.

Tasha stops, pulls out a dollar and puts it in her hat.
Daniel smiles and does the same.

INT. MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - HALL OF METEORITES - DAY

Tasha and Daniel wander through the minimal dark space. Spotlights shine on Meteorites. Natasha runs her hand across the metal-cold surface of a pockmarked rock and she closes her eyes, fingering the divots. Daniel comes close, watching her. She turns to him, her voice a whisper.

NATASHA

This rock is 4.5 Billion years old.
Almost as old as our solar system.

Daniel smiles.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Just think about that, before
humans ever existed, this object
was flying through the universe for
billions of years!

Daniel pauses, taken aback by her.

DANIEL

You're like a kid in a candy store.

NATASHA

Just think, humans have only been
around for at most two-hundred-
thousand years. This rock has been
around for five-thousand times as
long as all of human history
combined.

DANIEL

The way you talk about this stuff,
you should be pursuing astronomy.

Natasha walks off into the darkness of the exhibition space.

NATASHA

There's not a lot of jobs in
astronomy. Not like the other
sciences.

Daniel follows her, pauses in a pool of light.

DANIEL

But this is what you love.

Natasha stands in the darkness, just outside the spotlight.

NATASHA

Cliche as it sounds, love doesn't
put food on the table.

(then)

Isn't that why you're going to
Yale?

DANIEL

I don't know how it is with your
family, but in mine, my parents
have a lot of power. And they've
already decided my fate.

Daniel walks back into the blackness. Tasha follows him. She
looks at her watch.

NATASHA

Show's about to start.

INT. MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - PLANETARIUM THEATER - LATER

The night sky is projected on an ENORMOUS SCREEN. Tasha and
Daniel stare up at the stars, transfixed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The night sky... both beautiful and
mysterious.

Images of the Milky Way galaxy appear.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But the stars only tell part of the
story. You see this denser band of
stars? That's the Milky Way. It's
our galaxy.

Daniel's eyes go wide as he takes in the spectacle. Tasha
notes his reaction and smiles to herself.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's big. So big that even at the
speed of light it would take
100,000 years to travel across it.
And this galaxy of ours contains
only about 100 billion stars.

The two of them are so caught up that everyone DISAPPEARS
around them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Luckily the Milky Way is not the
only galaxy in the Universe.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Many of the stars we see are
actually in whole other galaxies
very far away.

Daniel eyes Tasha's hand on her lap.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There are about 170 billion
galaxies, comprised of hundreds of
billions of individual stars.

Natasha's elbow lightly brushes Daniel's arm. She notices and
they exchange a look, both embarrassed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There are more stars in the
universe than grains of sand on all
of Earth's beaches combined.

Daniel looks down longingly at her hand. Reaches his pinky
slowly towards hers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Some may find this vastness, this
unending darkness, proof of our
insignificance. But I see it a
little differently.

Daniel's pinky lightly touches her hand. A pause. Natasha
freezes. Daniel withdraws his hand quickly.

NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON appears on screen, as if he's standing in
the middle of the universe. He's our narrator.

TYSON (V.O.)

The most astounding fact to me is
the knowledge that the atoms that
comprise life on earth, the atoms
that make up our human bodies, are
traceable to the stars.

Daniel takes a deep breath, slowly brings his hand towards
Natasha's hand again.

TYSON (V.O.)

Stars that collapsed and then
exploded, they became the
ingredients for life itself.

Daniel's fingers lightly cover Natasha's fingers. A pause,
his hand on hers.

TYSON (V.O.)

So when we look up at the night sky, we aren't drawn in merely for its beauty...we're drawn in because whether we know it or not, we are all part of this universe, we are all in this universe, but more importantly, the universe is in us...

Natasha reciprocates at last. She pulls her fingers around his and their hands intertwine. The tension building...

INT. MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - PLANETARIUM THEATER - LATER

The lights are up. Daniel's still blown away by what they just saw. Tasha's distant. Both of them remain in their seats.

DANIEL

That was...really something.

Tasha doesn't hear him. She checks the time on her phone again: **1:01 PM**. She slides her hand away from Daniel's.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Did I say something wrong?

NATASHA

No, it's not you. Well, maybe it is...Don't you think it's weird that we've spent so much time together today? I mean, we just met. We're practically strangers.

DANIEL

Honestly, I don't think it's weird at all. Plus, you've met my family...we're definitely out of the stranger zone.

Natasha softens. At ease.

NATASHA

Yeah, I guess. It's just a lot to take in.

DANIEL

I don't know...I just feel connected to you.

A beat. Natasha's belly growls. Their laughter relieves the romantic tension.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You like Korean food?

EXT. KOREAN MARKETPLACE - DAY

Music plays as Daniel and Tasha make their way through the densely packed streets of Koreatown. Neon signs in Korean, street vendors, bicycles, and the smell of delicious food wafting in the air.

Natasha sees Korean people exiting a building dragging big suitcases. She SIGHS, the weight of the world on her shoulders. Daniel notices. She brushes it off, moving on down the street. They take a quick SELFIE together as the music ends.

NATASHA
So how come you call yourself
Korean? Weren't you born here?

DANIEL
People always ask where I'm from. I
used to say here, but then they ask
where are you really from, and then
I say Korea.

NATASHA
I don't think you should say you're
from Korea.

DANIEL
Why not?

NATASHA
Because it's not true. You're from
here.

DANIEL
I love how simple this is for you.

NATASHA
What do you mean?

DANIEL
Well, your solution to everything
is to tell the truth. I struggle
with my identity and you tell me
just to say what's true.

NATASHA
Why not? It's not up to you to help
other people fit you into a box.

DANIEL

Do people do it to you?

NATASHA

Yeah, except I'm really not from here. We left Jamaica when I was eight. The first time I saw snow, I was in homeroom and I was so amazed I stood up to stare at it.

DANIEL

Oh no.

NATASHA

Oh yes.

DANIEL

Did the other kids--

NATASHA

Yep. It wasn't pretty.

(shrugs)

But eventually this became home. I love it here. I could stay in New York for the rest of my life.

DANIEL

Well, you should.

Natasha deflects.

NATASHA

Well I'm not going to be around much longer... You know, if I don't get some food soon. Where are we going again?

Daniel stops in his tracks. Tasha follows his lead.

DANIEL

Turn around.

The pair stand at a nondescript doorway. Confused, Tasha looks to Daniel.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Trust me.

He takes her hand and they head inside, the sound of people greeting them in Korean "Annyeonghaseyo" echoes.

INT. KOREAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Daniel and Tasha sit at a booth in a small hole-in-the-wall joint. Tasha looks over the menu.

DANIEL
What do you think?

NATASHA
I'll eat whatever you tell me to.

Daniel rings the little bell attached to the table and a WAITRESS appears almost instantly. She gives Natasha a quick look, turns to Daniel.

WAITRESS
(in Korean)
How can I help you?

DANIEL
(in Korean)
We'll have two seafood soon dubu,
kalbi, and pa jun.

The waitress nods and then walks off.

NATASHA
There's a bell?

DANIEL
Awesome, right? It takes all the
mystery out of food service. When
will my waiter appear? When will I
get the check?

NATASHA
Do American restaurants know about
this? Bells should be mandatory.

Daniel laughs.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
No, I changed my mind. Can you
imagine some jerk just leaning on
the bell demanding ketchup?

The Waitress returns and places the soup and two uncooked eggs on the table. She tosses paper-clad spoons and chopsticks into the center of the table.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Oh, can I have a fork, please?

The Waitress gives her a disapproving look, then walks off.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Does this mean she's not going to
bring me a fork?

Daniel laughs.

DANIEL
Don't worry about her. Try this...

Daniel pulls the soup bowl towards him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
This is soon dubu.

Tasha watches as he cracks the egg into the soup. She does
the same, then dips her spoon in and takes a bite.

NATASHA
Mmm. It's delicious.

Daniel smiles as Tasha does a little happy dance. He watches
her eat, amused. A stream of traffic flowing through a door
in the rear of the restaurant catches Tasha's eye.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
What's going on back there? This
some kind of Korean mafia joint?

DANIEL
Oh, no. That's the norebang.
(off her look)
Korean karaoke.

NATASHA
Then why don't I hear any music?

DANIEL
They have private rooms. Koreans
are all about embarrassing
themselves in private.

A beat, then a mischievous look comes over Daniel's face.

NATASHA
Why are you looking at me like
that?

INT. NOREBANG - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

A small, dimly lit room. Plush, red leather couches. A large,
square coffee table sits in front of the couch. On it, a
microphone and a remote. Next to the door there's a large TV.

Daniel pours over the thick song book, he's been flipping for a while, agonizing over it. Natasha watches him.

NATASHA

Just choose a song.

DANIEL

This is norebang. You don't choose a song. A song chooses you.

NATASHA

How poetic.

DANIEL

Isn't it?

NATASHA

I don't know, most poems I've read are about three things: love, sex, or the stars. You poets are obsessed with stars. Falling stars. Shooting stars. Dying stars.

DANIEL

Stars are important.

NATASHA

Sure, but why not more poems about the sun? The sun is also a star and it's the most important one. That alone should be worth a poem or two.

DANIEL

Being the most important star doesn't make it the most poetic. Who wants to write about something so domineering? I'd rather ruminate on the romantic underdogs that play in the night sky.

NATASHA

Domineering? You've got it all wrong. The sun is a benevolent star. A giver...it's also our greatest symbol of hope.

DANIEL

How's that?

NATASHA

The brightest stars that we see at night are often the light from stars that have already died.

(MORE)

NATASHA (CONT'D)

It's sad, really. But the sun is different. Everyday it brings energy and life and hope to us. Without it, we'd all be lost. I think that's something worth writing about.

DANIEL

Hope, huh? I never pegged you to believe in something as intangible as hope.

NATASHA

Just a manner of speech. It only means that something is possible. The sun makes everything on earth possible.

DANIEL

You know what? You're right. I will only write poems about the sun from now on...

NATASHA

Good.

DANIEL

And sex.

Natasha rolls her eyes. He winks. Then starts flipping through the book. He pulls the rubber band from his hair and tosses it on the table. Tasha tries not to stare.

NATASHA

Are you a good singer?

DANIEL

Not gonna lie. I am kinda good.

He grabs the remote to key in his song choice. Tasha smiles.

The music starts and Daniel slowly settles into a dramatic slump: feet planted wide, hair obscuring his bowed head and microphone held high in the air, ready to rock.

The opening chords of "Kiss" by Prince fill the room. He puts a hand over his heart and croons the first verse. It's magnetic. As the song unfolds he embodies Princes' sexual power in a completely fun and charming performance.

As Daniel's sings, Tasha's imagination takes over. BEGIN FANTASY MONTAGE:

--Daniel and Tasha months down the road: lying in bed together laughing and eating cookies, Daniel playing Soccer with Tasha's brother, Daniel and Tasha wandering Ellis Island together holding hands. And then years down the road, Daniel on one knee holding a ring out to a glowing Tasha. Walking down the aisle, cooking breakfast pregnant, pushing a stroller down the streets of New York arm and arm. The fantasy is of a whole life with Daniel, a beautiful life.

Daniel leans in while the songs plays without him and a cheesy guide track keeps crooning. They kiss. IN the middle of the cheesiest and most epic tiny room in the universe.

ON CELL SCREEN: MEETING WITH FITZGERALD IN 30 MINUTES.

She pulls away and stares intently at the message. It fills her with panic and dread. She's not going to marry anyone. She's not going to have kids with Daniel. This is all a sham. Her life is over, not starting. Daniel see her shift in attitude.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

Tasha stares at him with fear and protective anger in her eyes. She almost whispers.

NATASHA
I gotta go.

She then bolts out of the room.

Tasha runs down the crazy hallways filled with colored lights and crazy patterns. Neon flashing in her face as she wells up with tears.

DANIEL
Hey - what are you doing?

NATASHA
I'm sorry. I gotta go.

DANIEL
Woah! Wait! What are you sorry for?

NATASHA
I just have to go. This all has to stop Daniel.

Daniel chases her down the hall and she starts to run harder when she eyes a door at the end of a long hallway. She slams into the door at full speed.

EXT. NOREBANG/NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Tasha and Daniel squint and shield their eyes as they crash out into the sunlight.

DANIEL
God, it's bright out.

NATASHA
Back to reality.

With tears still in her eyes Tasha strides down the sidewalk clearly to get away from everything.

DANIEL
Wait, what just happened?

NATASHA
Nothing happened.

DANIEL
Bullshit. You're acting completely different. What changed?

NATASHA
Nothing's changed.

Daniel catches up to her and Tasha looks away.

DANIEL
What are you so afraid of?

NATASHA
What are you talking about?

DANIEL
There's something real here. I know you feel it too.

NATASHA
Oh, you know how I feel? Do you? You don't know shit Daniel.

DANIEL
What's your problem?

NATASHA
This. You and me. This thing. Well this can't happen. It's over ok.

DANIEL
Hey don't I have a say in this. I know there's something here.

Natasha leans in and speaks low, with intensity.

NATASHA

Oh, well do you know that I'm not a citizen? Huh? So you know that my family is being deported tomorrow? Huh do you know that? Do you know that all this - whatever it is. It NOT meant to be. Do you know that part?

Daniel stares, silent. Totally blindsided.

DANIEL

What? You're leaving the country? Why didn't you tell me. It's like this is all a lie?!

NATASHA

I didn't lie to you. I just didn't tell you everything.

DANIEL

I postponed my appointment because of you!

NATASHA

I didn't ask you to do that.

DANIEL

But you didn't say you'd be living in another country in less than twenty-four hours, either.

NATASHA

It wasn't your business.

DANIEL

And it is now?

NATASHA

Look, Daniel. I told you not to fall for me, okay? I tried.

DANIEL

No, here's how you try. You open your mouth and you say the truth. Just say, "Daniel, I'm leaving the country." "Daniel, don't fall in love with me."

NATASHA

You think a few kisses mean something?

DANIEL

I think those kisses did.

NATASHA

Lets just end this. You have your plans and I have mine.

DANIEL

Sure. Whatever. I get it. Just like that. OK, Have a nice life.

Daniel grabs his jacket and strides away. Tasha watches him go.

INT. BLACK HAIR CARE STORE - DAY

Daniel walks into the store visibly upset. His dad's busy with a customer. Charlie's face goes into a full asshole smirk as he sees Daniel is alone.

CHARLIE

Where's your girlfriend? She dump you already?

DANIEL

Fuck you, Charlie.

Charlie stops smirking, takes a good look at Daniel, noting his tie and jacket are missing. Shirt untucked.

CHARLIE

Why. Are. You. Here. Little. Brother. Shouldn't you be interviewing for Second Best School today?

A beat. Daniel stares at Charlie, disgusted.

DANIEL

Why are you such an asshole? Seriously. What'd I ever do to you?

CHARLIE

Is that what you came back for? To whine about me being mean to you?

DANIEL

So you don't have an answer? That's just the way you're made?

CHARLIE

That's right. I'm stronger. And smarter. And better than you.

Daniel glares at his brother, anger building.

DANIEL

If you're so smart, what are you doing back here, Charlie? Big fish, small pond syndrome? Were you just a tiny douchebag fish at BU?

Charlie clenches his fists. He gets right in Daniel's face.

CHARLIE

You want to know why I don't like you? Because you're just like them. You and your mandu and perfect Korean. We're not even from the goddamned country!

DANIEL

Wait. You're mad because I like dumplings and I speak Korean? That's your beef?

Charlie steps closer, gets in his face.

CHARLIE

No, my problem is you don't have a spine. You've always done what they've told you to. You're their little golden boy. It's pathetic.

DANIEL

Wow. I'm not even angry at you anymore. I just feel sorry for you.

Charlie sees the pity in Daniel's face. He grabs Daniel by the collar.

CHARLIE

Fuck you. You think anybody's gonna care about that shit at Yale?
(then, smirking)
What? You think you're cool now because you brought some black girl in here--

Daniel PUNCHES Charlie in the eye socket, then recoils from the pain in his hand. Charlie stumbles back.

Charlie's face turns from pain to surprise to rage. He punches Daniel in the stomach, then keeps coming. Daniel tries to block his face, but it's no use. Charlie's fist splits Daniel's lip.

He rears back, ready to deliver another blow, but Daniel blocks his face and knees Charlie in the groin. Hard. Charlie falls to the ground in agony. Their dad runs over.

DAE
(in Korean)
What's going on here?

Their father eyes Daniel's disheveled clothes and busted lip.

DAE (CONT'D)
Get some ice for your lip.

He turns to Charlie.

DAE (CONT'D)
You hit your little brother? That's what you learn from America? To hit your family?

Daniel gets up and goes to the--

INT. BLACK HAIR CARE STORE - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grabs a coke and presses it against his lip. He sits on the floor with his back against the door, breathing heavy. Looks to a mirror on the wall.

A KNOCK on the door.

DAE (CONT'D)
Daniel, come out here now.

Daniel puts the can back in the fridge and tucks his shirt in. He opens the door. His father is right there.

DAE (CONT'D)
I don't care what your brother says. The only thing that matters is you go to school, you become a doctor, you be successful. You find a nice girl and have children and you have the American Dream. You don't throw your future away for temporary things you only want right now.

DANIEL
But Appa, what if I don't want the same things you want?

His father holds up his hand, silencing him.

DAE

Doesn't matter what you want. If you don't go to Yale and become a doctor, then you're on your own.

A standoff. They hold eye contact. Neither budging.

Finally Daniel grabs his crumpled suit jacket, throws it on and marches out the door. Busted lip and all.

INT. JEREMY FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - DAY

Hannah greets Tasha as she enters.

HANNAH

Perfect timing, Miss Kingsley.
Follow me, please.

Hannah leads Tasha into the back office, knocks lightly on the door. JEREMY FITZGERALD, 50s, opens the door, a small bandage above his eyebrow and another around his wrist.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Jeremy, Tasha Kingsley.

FITZGERALD

Come on in.

Jeremy smiles warmly at Tasha. Tasha enters hesitantly.

FITZGERALD (CONT'D)

(to Tasha)

Sit, sit, sit, sit. Sorry for the delay. I reviewed your file. Please, tell me how this all came to pass.

NATASHA

I'm not sure where to begin...

Fitzgerald leans in.

NATASHA (V.O.)

...so I start with the night my father ruined our lives.

INT. NATASHA'S APARTMENT - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Tasha, Peter and Mrs. Kingsley sit around the small kitchen table as Mr. Kingsley clears the Chinese take out and pulls an envelope out of his pocket.

MR. KINGSLEY

My family. Please do me the very great honor of coming to see me perform the role of Walter Lee Younger in the Village Troupe's production of "*A Raisin in the Sun.*"

He pulls out three tickets and proudly hands them out. But Mrs. Kingsley doesn't take hers.

MRS. KINGSLEY

You and your foolishness. You can keep your ticket. I'm not going anywhere.

Mrs. Kingsley storms out. A beat later a DOOR SLAMS down the hall. Peter slumps in his chair.

MR. KINGSLEY

Don't worry 'bout your mother. She don't mean it, man.

NATASHA (V.O.)

But she did mean it. She didn't go with us. Said it was a waste of her hard-earned money.

INT. OFF BROADWAY THEATER - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Tasha and Peter sit front row with an empty seat between them. Stare up at the stage.

NATASHA (V.O.)

I want to be able to say that my father was not good. That his talents were only mediocre. Mediocre would explain all the years of rejection...

ON STAGE Mr. Kingsley gives a command performance. The audience, including his children, are entranced.

NATASHA (V.O.)

But he was excellent. Transcendent. He belonged on that stage more than he's ever belonged with us.

LATER - The actors bow, with Mr. Kingsley center stage, soaking it all in.

NATASHA (V.O.)
 I've never seen him happier. And
 I'm certain he will never be that
 happy again.

LATER STILL - Mr. Kingsley stands center stage, staring off into the empty theater - save for Tasha and Peter. Peter breaks his father's trance.

PETER
 You ready, Pops?

Mr. Kingsley looks down at them with far-away eyes.

MR. KINGSLEY
 You children go on ahead. I'll see
 you later.

INT. BAR - FLASHBACK - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mr. Kingsley drinks with his cast mates. They down shot after shot, enjoying the evening.

NATASHA (V.O.)
 So instead of coming with us, he
 went out drinking with his "fellow
 actors."

Mr. Kingsley finally downs his last drink and stumbles toward the exit.

EXT. STREET - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS: Mr. Kingsley drives down the street recklessly. A POLICE CAR turns the sirens on and pulls behind him.

On Mr. Kingsley's face. Shit. He knows he messed up.

NATASHA (V.O.)
 And though he only had three beers,
 those three beers were enough to
 change everything.

The POLICE OFFICER approaches the window and asks for license and registration.

NATASHA (V.O.)
 In all the time he'd been here,
 he'd never had one run in with the
 law. But here he was, face to face
 with cops, without the proper
 paperwork to show.

INT. FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - PRESENT

Fitzgerald's still listening. Now puzzled.

FITZGERALD

Can't believe he'd get behind the wheel like that with so much at stake.

NATASHA

I don't think he was thinking about anything but how happy... how *free* he was in that moment.

On Tasha's face. There's more to it than she's saying.

NATASHA (V.O.)

That was part of it, but not the whole story...

INT. NATASHA'S APARTMENT - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Tasha leans her ear against the door of her parents' bedroom.
INSIDE Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley argue.

MRS. KINGSLEY

When we met you said all my dreams would come true. You remember that, Kingsley? You're a good actor because you make me believe all the pretty things you say.

MR. KINGSLEY

I'm tired of your dreams. What 'bout mine? If it wasn't for you and the children, my life would be better. If it wasn't for you and the children I would have all the things I want. I'd be doing the thing God put me on this earth to do.

IN THE HALLWAY - Tasha slumps down as her father's words hit her heart.

NATASHA (V.O.)

But I don't tell Fitzgerald that part-- that we are my father's greatest regret because we got in the way of his dreams.

INT. FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - PRESENT

Fitzgerald sits silent, hands steepled as he thinks.

NATASHA (V.O.)
I wonder how many stories like mine
has Fitzgerald's heard over the
years. How many hopeless cases he's
had to sit through...

Fitzgerald looks over one of the forms then gets a yellow
legal pad out of his desk drawer, then jots something down.

Then he sits in silence for a long beat. His expression very
hard to read. Tasha stares at him, nervously.

NATASHA (V.O.)
Each moment of silence is soul
crushing. I knew I shouldn't have
listened to Hannah. Shouldn't have
gotten my hopes up...

Then finally--

FITZGERALD
Miss Kingsley--

NATASHA
It's okay. I know I'm out of
options. Thank you for your time.

Tasha moves to get up. But Fitzgerald waves her back down.

FITZGERALD
You're never out of options.

NATASHA
What do you mean? Are you saying
you can fix this?

FITZGERALD
I'm going to go see a judge friend
of mine. He'll be able to get the
Voluntary Removal reversed so at
least you don't have to leave
tomorrow. After that we can file an
appeal with the BIA-the Board of
Immigration Appeals...
(checks his watch)
Give me a couple of hours. I can
make this happen. Just need to get
the judge to file by six o'clock.

Tasha's taken aback.

FITZGERALD (CONT'D)

I'll call you when it's all sorted out.

NATASHA

But you think you can sort it out?

FITZGERALD

Yes. I've done it many, many times before. You'll be fine.

He smiles at her confidently. Tasha's eyes light up. She throws her arms around him in a big, impromptu bear hug.

NATASHA

Thank you. You have no idea how much this means to me. My family.

NATASHA (V.O.)

I should call my parents and tell them, but right now, all I can think about is Daniel.

INT. DINER - DAY

Daniel sits at an empty booth. Omar sees him and walks over, looks him up and down.

OMAR

Dude, what the hell happened to you? Did you get robbed?

DANIEL

What?

(then realizing)

I got into a fight. With Charlie.

OMAR

Oooh! Finally! That dick's had it coming for a good ten years...

(a beat)

How'd your interview go?

DANIEL

Postponed it. For Tasha.

OMAR

Are you insane?

DANIEL

Yes. Probably. But then we got into it and now I've lost her, too--

Omar sits down across from Daniel.

OMAR

You're such a drama queen. It's just a girl, man. There's other girls.

DANIEL

No. Not like her. I didn't even get her number.

OMAR

So Facebook her.

DANIEL

I don't know her last name.

OMAR

So? If it's in the stars, nothing can stop it. Even your clumsy, no-game-having ass, can't fuck up this good thing if it really was sent down from Zeus or whoever.

DANIEL

Am I supposed to sit here and wait for her to walk in the door?

OMAR

No, but you can retrace your steps. Or, better yet, Do you know where she might be headed?

Daniel thinks. Then jumps up from the booth and runs out.

INT. 52ND STREET SUBWAY - DAY

Tasha walks down the platform and onto the UPTOWN train.

INT. 52ND STREET SUBWAY - DAY

Daniel sprints down the platform, barely making it onto the DOWNTOWN train as the door closes.

We pull out to REVEAL Tasha and Daniel are in the same place heading in opposite directions.

Natasha's on the UPTOWN TRAIN, back to the platform. Daniel's on the DOWNTOWN TRAIN facing it.

The trains start moving in opposite directions.

INT. BLACK HAIR CARE STORE - DAY

The bell on the door CHIMES with happy optimism as Tasha steps in. Looks behind the counter and sees Charlie on his phone. He barely looks up as Tasha approaches the counter.

NATASHA

Hey.

Charlie finishes with his text and finally looks up. His eye is red and swollen.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Wow! That thing's gonna be black and blue by morning.

Charlie raises his hand and touches his eye self-consciously. His knuckles are bruised too.

CHARLIE

Daniel's not here.

NATASHA

I know. I was hoping you could help me find him. Do you have his cell phone number?

Charlie leans back in his chair.

CHARLIE

You two get into a fight?

NATASHA

Do you have it or not?

He flips his phone end over end.

CHARLIE

What's your deal? You got a Korean boy fetish or something?

NATASHA

Charlie. Please. I have something important I need to tell him.

CHARLIE

Tell me why I should.

Tasha thinks...

NATASHA

Well, think about how much trouble I'll cause for your brother. He's in love with me.

(MORE)

NATASHA (CONT'D)

You give me his number, he chases after me and you can just sit back and enjoy the show while your parents freak out on him. It's like you said-- it'll take all the heat off you.

Charlie throws his head back and laughs.

CHARLIE

That's a pretty decent pitch.

Charlie takes a beat, considers this. Then he pulls up the number and shows it to a surprised Tasha.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET/EXT. HARLEM STREET - MINUTES LATER

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY:

Daniel stares down at a number he doesn't recognize on his phone. Answers it anyway.

DANIEL

Hello?

NATASHA

Is this Daniel?

DANIEL

Natasha?

NATASHA

Yes, it's me. Your brother gave me your number.

DANIEL

Charlie? Yeah, right. Who is this?

NATASHA

Daniel, it's me. It's really me.

Daniel stands up, moving away from Omar.

DANIEL

Why are you calling me?

NATASHA

Just give me a chance to explain.

Daniel is still hurt from their fight.

DANIEL

Are you sure I'm not a not a waste
of time?

NATASHA

Come on, Daniel. It's complicated.
Meet me somewhere. Please?

Off Daniel's look, he's softening.

EXT. 2ND AVE - MANHATTAN - DAY

Montage of Natasha and Daniel walking and talking through the city. Natasha is explaining her deportation situation to Daniel. Quickly cut, this scene is set to a bittersweet musical theme. Daniel digests her story.

DANIEL

And I thought my home life was
complicated. What's the good news
again?

NATASHA

Oh, a new lawyer thinks he can get
the order reversed...

DANIEL

Does that mean--

NATASHA

I *might* not have to leave tomorrow.

DANIEL

(beaming)
What? Seriously? No way!

Daniel LIFTS Tasha off her feet and SPINS her around.

NATASHA

He wasn't a hundred-percent sure,
but there's a chance.

DANIEL

I can't believe it.

Daniel holds Tasha. Their eyes meet. Daniel tilts forward.
Before he can kiss her, she pulls away with excitement.

NATASHA

I got an idea.

She takes his hand and leads him towards...

EXT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND TRAM STATION - MANHATTAN - DAY

The little Roosevelt Island tram car glides over the East River and into the station. Natasha and Daniel buy tickets.

INT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND TRAM - DUSK

The tram is empty but for Daniel and Tasha. All of New York is in view. A breathtaking panorama.

DANIEL

Last time I was on this thing was in second grade. And there was an old guy who smelled like tuna fish.

NATASHA

I hate tuna fish.

DANIEL

Right? Now I've got an idea.

Daniel scrolls a playlist on his phone and presses PLAY. We hear PURPLE RAIN by Prince:

Tasha smiles. He's cute. His striking looks illuminated by the setting sun. She looks awkwardly at the floor, then out the window, laughs. He takes her hand, pulls her close.

They dance slowly in the middle of the sky. The MUSIC PLAYS as We SWEEP around the car, all of New York City glimmering around them.

NATASHA

Is it gonna hurt if I kiss you?

DANIEL

It'll be a good pain.

She pulls him in. Then, a kiss like no other. Sparks fly. Tasha opens her eyes. She pulls back.

NATASHA

All our kisses aren't going to be like that are they?

DANIEL

Like what?

NATASHA

You know. Insane.

Daniel smiles.

DANIEL

I don't know... maybe we should try
it again and see.

They kiss again, holding one another as the music continues to play. The entire city lit up at night. Lights twinkling in the surrounding skyscrapers, like stars in the sky.

EXT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DOCK - NIGHT

Manhattan glows across the East River. Tasha rests on Daniel's chest, wrapped in his arms.

DANIEL

It's getting late. Are your parents
going to be worried about you?

NATASHA

They're okay...told them I was with
Bev tonight. What about your
parents?

DANIEL

I'll deal with them later.
Tonight's about us.

NATASHA

In that case...got any more of
those questions for me?

DANIEL

You're not in love with me yet?

NATASHA

(smiles)
Nope.

DANIEL

Don't worry. We've got time now.

Tasha nuzzles further into Daniel's warm body.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

How about the dinner guest
question?

NATASHA

You mean who I'd invite?

DANIEL

Yup.

NATASHA
Easy. Carl Sagan.

DANIEL
Who?

NATASHA
You'd like him...a scientist *and* a
writer. It was almost romantic how
much he loved the universe.
(then)
People think science is so cold,
but it isn't true. It actually
makes you appreciate your life.

DANIEL
Meaning...

Tasha smiles, shifts her gaze upward to the heavens.

NATASHA
Think about it...the universe is
99.99999% empty space. Nothing but
rocks and burning stars spread out
over a billion galaxies--and yet
here we are, the two of us
together, looking out at the
universe. We won the cosmic lottery
just by being born...the time we
have on this earth is
extraordinary. It's up to us to
make the most of it.

Daniel is speechless. Charmed by her words. They lock eyes.

DANIEL
I want to make the most of
everything...with you.

Daniel's instincts take over. He kisses her.

A SHOOTING STAR begins a TIMELAPSE of the night sky, ending
as the sun rises above the New York skyline.

EXT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DOCK - DAY

Tasha's already up, watching the sunrise. Daniel's ALARM goes
off, waking him. Tasha greets him with a kiss.

TASHA
Good morning.

DANIEL

I could get used to waking up like this. How long have you been up?

TASHA

I wanted to see the sunrise. It's a perfect morning.

Daniel joins her. They look out to the city together. A beat. Then, a hint of dread on Daniel's face.

DANIEL

I'd better go. My interview's in an hour.

TASHA

I'm coming with you.

EXT. FITZGERALD'S BUILDING - MORNING

Daniel hesitates at the entryway before going inside.

TASHA

Wait? What are we doing here?

DANIEL

My interview's in the same building as your appointment. Looks like we've traded places.

TASHA

Really? What are the odds?

DANIEL

I keep telling you--

TASHA

Don't say it.

DANIEL

I won't rub it in this time. Will you wait for me?

Of course she will. Tasha steps closer, straightens his tie for him. Daniel dusts off his pants.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

How do I look?

NATASHA

Like a poet in a suit.

Tasha pecks him on the cheek.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
You got this!

Daniel takes a deep breath and heads in. Natasha hangs back.

INT. FITZGERALD'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel taps on the door. Silence. He tries the handle.
Locked.

Daniel SIGHS. Almost relieved. Then...

FITZGERALD (O.S.)
Daniel Bae.

Daniel presses his ear to the door. Checks the handle again.

DANIEL
(into the door)
Hello?

FITZGERALD (O.S.)
Behind you.

PULL BACK to REVEAL Fitzgerald, watching Daniel talking to the door. Daniel looks back and straightens up.

DANIEL
Oh--Umm... Hi.

FITZGERALD
Jeremy Fitzgerald.

DANIEL
Mr. Fitzgerald. It's nice to meet
you.

Fitzgerald unlocks the door and opens it wide.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Sorry...I thought--

FITZGERALD
No, I'm late. Come in and have a
seat.

INT. JEREMY FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Fitzgerald looks over Daniel's application as he moves to his desk. Daniel sits and sees a file on the desk. "Natasha Kingsley." Daniel stares, shocked.

DANIEL
(interrupting)
Are you an immigration lawyer?

FITZGERALD
I am. Why?

DANIEL
I think I know one of your clients.

Daniel picks up Tasha's file and Fitzgerald immediately snatches it back.

FITZGERALD
Don't touch that. It's privileged.

He pulls it as far away from Daniel as possible.

DANIEL
Sorry. You...you saved my life.

FITZGERALD
What are you talking about?

DANIEL
I met her-- Natasha-- yesterday.
Just a handful of hours ago she
said she was being deported, but
then she met with you and you did
your lawyer magic, and now she's
going to stay.

FITZGERALD
And how did that save your life?

DANIEL
She's The One.

FITZGERALD
Didn't you say you just met her
yesterday?

DANIEL
Yup.

FITZGERALD
And you know she's the one?

Fitzgerald stares at Daniel skeptically.

FITZGERALD (CONT'D)
Why are you here?

DANIEL

Um, I'm here for my admission interview?

FITZGERALD

No, really. Why are you here? You obviously don't care about this interview. You postponed it and now you show up here in wrinkled clothes, looking like you've been in a brawl. It's a serious question. Why did you come here?

Daniel takes a deep breath.

DANIEL

Honestly? My parents made me. So I guess I have to be here.

FITZGERALD

No, you don't. You can just get up and walk out that door.

DANIEL

I owe it to my parents.

FITZGERALD

Why?

DANIEL

(sighs)

My parents are immigrants. They work all the time so my brother and I can have the American Dream. Nowhere in the American Dream does it say you can skip college and become a starving artist.

FITZGERALD

It says whatever you want it to.

DANIEL

Not in my family it doesn't. If I don't do this, I get cut off. No funds for college. No nothing.

FITZGERALD

Would they really do that?

Daniel FLASHES BACK to the image of HIS FATHER'S FACE as he gives Daniel the ultimatum.

DANIEL

Yes. He would.

FITZGERALD

So I guess you have to be sure this
artist life is worth it.

DANIEL

Haven't you ever done something
only because you're obligated to?
Just because you made a promise?

Fitzgerald's eyes drift away.

FITZGERALD

Meeting your obligations is the
definition of adulthood, kid. And
today, I have to make a call that I
didn't want to have to make.

He pulls out Natasha's file.

FITZGERALD (CONT'D)

I couldn't do it.

DANIEL

Do what?

FITZGERALD

Stop her deportation.
(off Daniel's look)
Your Natasha...she's going to be
deported today. I'm sorry, kid.

Daniel stares down at the file, incredulous.

FITZGERALD (CONT'D)

I tried everything--

DANIEL

You didn't try hard enough.

FITZGERALD

Listen, I know you're upset.

DANIEL

It's not her fault her dad messed
up. She's been here all of her
life. America is her home!

FITZGERALD

I wish there was something I could
do. I'm planning on calling her
after you and I are done here.

DANIEL

You're just going to call her and tell her over the phone?

FITZGERALD

Does it matter how she hears it?

DANIEL

Of course it matters. I don't want her to have her heart broken by someone she barely knows.

Daniel walks out, into the empty reception area. Fitzgerald follows.

FITZGERALD

So that's it? No more interview?

DANIEL

You said it yourself. I don't really care about Yale.

FITZGERALD

Look, Daniel, Yale's a big deal. Going there could open a lot of doors for you. It did for me.

DANIEL

And you're still not happy.

FITZGERALD

What's another half an hour to finish this interview?

DANIEL

Time counts, Mr. Fitzgerald... But you know that already.

Daniel storms off in search of Natasha.

EXT. FITZGERALD'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Daniel walks through the sliding glass doors. His face is grim. Tasha takes notice.

NATASHA

What happened?

A beat.

DANIEL

I really love you.

NATASHA
Daniel, what's wrong?

DANIEL
You don't have to say it back, but
I really do. I just want you to
know it.

Tasha's phone rings. It's Fitzgerald's office.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Don't answer it.

NATASHA
I have to--

DANIEL
Please don't.

His tone alarms her. Tasha lets it go to voicemail.

NATASHA
What happened in there?

DANIEL
You can't stay here...
(beat, then)
My interviewer was your lawyer.

NATASHA
Fitzgerald?

Daniel nods.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
What did he say?

DANIEL
He couldn't get the order
overturned.

NATASHA
But he said he could do it!

Daniel's squeezes her hand and tries to pull her in, but
Tasha pushes him away.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Are you sure? Why were you even
talking about me?

DANIEL
Your file was on his desk.

He grabs her hand again. Tasha pulls it back forcefully.

NATASHA
Stop. Just stop!

DANIEL
I'm sorry.

NATASHA
Just tell me what he said. Exactly.

DANIEL
He said the deportation order stands. You and your family have to leave. Today.

Tasha sits on the edge of the fountain. Daniel joins her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What are we going to do?

NATASHA
I should go home. Flight's this afternoon.

DANIEL
I'll go with you.
(off her look)
I mean to your house.

NATASHA
I don't think that's a good idea. My parents are there and I have too much to do. You'll just get in the way.

He stands up and holds out his hand for hers.

DANIEL
Here's what we're not going to do. We are not going to argue. We are not going to pretend that this isn't the worst thing on earth, because it is. I'm going with you to your parents' house. I'm going to look at the place where you sleep and eat and live and wish that I'd known just a little sooner that you were right here.
(beat, then)
Is that okay with you?

Tasha nods yes. They start walking toward the subway station.

INT. NATASHA'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Daniel fidgets with his suit. Tasha feigns a smile.

DANIEL
Should I take my jacket off? I feel
like an idiot.

NATASHA
You don't have to be nervous.

DANIEL
I'm going to meet your parents.
Now's as good a time to be nervous
as any.

He unbuttons the jacket but doesn't take it off.

NATASHA
The good thing is, you can screw up
all you want. You'll probably never
see them again.

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INT. NATASHA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

33

Tasha cautiously steps in, followed by Daniel. Peter packs suitcases as he sways to loud dancehall music.

MRS. KINGSLEY
Turn that music off.

Peter does just that as Tasha's Mom sees her.

MRS. KINGSLEY (CONT'D)
Lawd, 'Tasha. I been calling and
calling you for--

Mrs. Kingsley notices Daniel and pauses.

MRS. KINGSLEY (CONT'D)
Who's this?

NATASHA
This is Daniel.

Mrs. Kingsley zeroes in. Examines Daniel more closely.

DANIEL
Sorry to meet you under these
circumstances, Mrs. Kingsley.

Daniel shakes Mrs. Kingsley's hand, then Peter greets him.

PETER
 (smiling wide)
 'Tasha's never brought a boy here
 before.

Mrs. Kingsley waves Tasha to the side.

MRS. KINGSLEY
 'Tasha, I need to talk to you.

NATASHA
 Is it about Daniel? Because if it
 is, we can just do it right here.
 He's my boyfriend.

Mr. Kingsley walks in as the words leave Tasha's lips.

MR. KINGSLEY
 Since when do you have a boyfriend?
 That's what you been doing all day
 and night instead of helping your
 family pack up?

NATASHA
 No. What I was doing was trying to
 fix your mistakes.

MR. KINGSLEY
 It don't look nothing like that to
 me.
 (turns to Daniel)
 You know the situation?

Daniel nods.

MR. KINGSLEY (CONT'D)
 Then you know that now's not the
 time for strangers to be here.

NATASHA
 He's not a stranger. He's my guest.

MR. KINGSLEY
 And this is my house--

NATASHA
 Was your house. You weren't
 responsible enough of a father to
 keep it, remember? Or maybe you
 couldn't handle the responsibility
 of being a father at all...

MR. KINGSLEY
 What's that supposed to mean?

NATASHA

I heard what you told mom after the play--

MRS. KINGSLEY

Baby. There's no point in rehashing all this now.

MR. KINGSLEY

No, man. No, man. I want hear what she has to say to me.

Just as father and daughter square off. Daniel interjects.

DANIEL

Tasha, you don't have to--

Mr. Kingsley pushes Daniel back.

MR. KINGSLEY

Say what you have to say, Tasha!

Tasha looks at Daniel, she wants to do this. She steps up to her father.

NATASHA

I heard what you said about me and Peter... That we were your greatest regrets. How could you say that about your own children?

The steam comes out of Mr. Kingsley's engine. He searches futilely for words...

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry that life didn't give you all the things you wanted.

MR. KINGSLEY

I didn't mean it 'Tasha. It was just talk. All of it was just--

She holds up her hand to stop him. Tears pool in Mr. Kingsley's eyes.

NATASHA

Maybe you were right. Maybe you weren't meant to have us. Maybe you really were cheated.

MR. KINGSLEY

(shaking his head)
Was just talk 'Tasha. I really didn't mean nothing by it.

NATASHA

It doesn't matter if you meant it or not. Hearing you say those words spoiled all the good memories I did have of us. Made me wonder, did you regret my existence when we were watching cricket matches together? Eating mint chocolate chip ice cream after school? What about the day I was born?

Tears stream from Natasha's face. Daniel holds her. She pulls free from him, continuing.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

But I decided, you don't get to regret us. People make mistakes all the time. Small ones, like getting in the wrong checkout line. And big ones like giving up... I saw the play. That night, on stage you were incredible. But in real life, all you've done is quit on your family. Leaving the rest of us to pick up where you left off.

Mrs. Kingsley's crying now too. Peter walks into her arms for a hug.

MR. KINGSLEY

'Tasha, I'm sorry. You should have never heard those words from my mouth. When we came here, it was supposed to be different... but America has never been what they said it was gonna be for me. I can't stand seeing your mother work her fingers to the bone day in and day out anymore than I can stand the holes in your brother's sneakers. We're immigrants, Tasha. How can I be a man when the rest of the world says that I am not?

Tasha wipes her brother's face. Comforts him. Replies.

NATASHA

You decide who you are, that's how. That's why we came here, not for handouts, but to make our own lives.

Mr. Kingsley holds his head in his hands. Ashamed. Tasha approaches, gently laying a hand on his shoulder.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Dad, I know what it cost you to bring us here. But just because it got hard, doesn't mean we don't still need you. When we get to Jamaica, you can't give up. You can be a father. A husband. And an actor all at once. It's up to you.

She hugs him. Mrs. Kingsley and Peter join in.

NATASHA (V.O.)

It wasn't exactly the ending I was hoping for this morning, but at least we were on our way to being a family again.

Tasha sniffs, then motions for Daniel. Together as one, they embrace.

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EXT./INT. CAB - DAY

34

Peter looks out from the back of a cab as it drives off with Tasha's family. On the curb, a CABBIE loads Tasha's suitcase into the trunk of another cab. Tasha finishes a FACETIME with Bev as Daniel climbs into the backseat.

BEV (ON THE PHONE)

I'm booking my flight now!
Christmas in Jamaica is a thing,
right?

NATASHA (ON THE PHONE)

(laughs)
Yes, I believe so.
(beat)
I'm so sorry, Bev. It all happened
so fast.

The cabbie gets inside the car.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I have to go. I'll call you soon as
I land. Love you.

Tasha hangs up, then gets in the cab.

INT. CAB - DAY

Natasha looks out the window, soaking up her Bronx neighborhood one final time. Then she lays her head on Daniel's shoulder.

NATASHA

Do you think we would've worked out
if I stayed?

DANIEL

No question. Do you?

NATASHA

Yes.

Daniel smiles.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

How hard would it have been for
your parents?

DANIEL

It would take them a long time.
Longer for my dad. I don't think
they'd have come to our wedding.

NATASHA

I have something to tell you.

DANIEL

What's that?

NATASHA

You shouldn't go to Yale and be a
doctor if your heart's not in it.
If you want to be a poet and write
your heart out, do that. There's
still time.

DANIEL

What about doing the practical
thing?

NATASHA

Practicality is overrated.

DANIEL

Does that mean you don't want to be
a data scientist anymore?

NATASHA

I don't know. Maybe not. You got me
thinking. It'd be nice to do
something I'm actually passionate
about, like study the stars.

Daniel turns to her, surprised.

DANIEL

What a difference a day makes.

They're silent for a long beat.

NATASHA

So, how many more questions do we have left?

He takes out his phone.

DANIEL

Just one. And we still have to stare into each other's eyes for four minutes.

NATASHA

We could do that or...we could just make out instead.

CABBIE

You guys know I can hear you, right?

(through the rearview mirror)

I can see you too.

He laughs. Tasha and Daniel join in.

DANIEL

Okay, last question. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find the most disturbing, and why?

NATASHA

My dad.

DANIEL

Why him?

NATASHA

Because he's not done yet. What about you?

DANIEL

Yours.

NATASHA

I'm not your family, though.

DANIEL

Yes, you are. In some other universe maybe we're married, with two kids, or maybe two cats.

NATASHA

You always find the right words.

(beat)

You'll make a great poet.

Daniel takes this in. The cab pulls to the curb.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Tasha and Daniel stand at the curb, trying their best to keep it together. Prince's "I Would Die For You" starts playing on the radio inside the cab.

DANIEL

You hear that?

Tasha cracks a somber smile.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Three times in one day...what are the odds?

Daniel winks. Tasha softens.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So...are you ready for the finale?

Daniel sets his phone timer for FOUR MINUTES then takes both Natasha's hands in his.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm not sure if we're supposed to hold hands during this part but -- why not.

The clock runs. They stare into each other's eyes, giggling a little at first. Tasha looks away but Daniel squeezes her hands just enough to get her to focus. As she stares in his eyes...

NATASHA (V.O.)

Daniel believes this is fate... that everything aligned for us to be in the right place at just the right time. I don't know that this is fate.

(MORE)

NATASHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But I do know that a lot of events
had to transpire for us to be
standing here, right now, in the
middle of this vast universe.
That's amazing.

They continue to stare, less self-conscious. Their smiles
drift away as they catalog each other's face. Tasha relives
all the moments that led them here:

NATASHA (V.O.)

Because if I hadn't been late to my
appointment, I wouldn't have met
Lester Barnes. And if he hadn't
said the word 'irie,' I wouldn't
have had a meltdown. And if I
hadn't had my meltdown, I wouldn't
have eventually met Daniel.

As she speaks, we see GLIMPSES of the day.

NATASHA (V.O.)

And if I hadn't met Daniel, I may
have never known this feeling
that's taking over me right now.
This feeling that can only be--

The phone timer BUZZES, bringing Tasha BACK TO REALITY.

NATASHA

Love.
(beat, then)
I love you, Daniel Bae.

DANIEL

I guess the questionnaire worked.

Tasha's phone RINGS. She looks down. It's her mom.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You have to go...

She nods. But neither one of them moves.

NATASHA

I don't know how to say goodbye.

Daniel's eyes mist.

DANIEL

Then don't...

On Tasha's face, she has to.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

This day can't be all there is. It
just can't--

Before he can finish, Tasha pulls him into a long, final hug.
Then she reluctantly lets him go.

NATASHA

Bye, Daniel.

Tasha turns and walks off, leaving Daniel looking on,
heartbroken, as she disappears inside the airport.

INT. CAB - DAY

Daniel gets in a cab and shuts the door. Slumps in his seat.

CABBIE

Where to?

DANIEL

I don't care. Just drive.

INT. AIRPORT - TICKET COUNTER - DAY

Natasha and her family check their bags.

MRS. KINGSLEY

Get out your ID's.

Tasha searches her purse, absentmindedly. Her heart still
with Daniel.

INT./EXT. AIRPORT - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

The cab approaches two paths: one to exit the airport, the
other to return to the terminals. Daniel looks back and forth
between the two paths. Then suddenly sits up.

DANIEL

Can you please circle back?

CABBIE

Did you forget something?

DANIEL

Yes, sir. Something really
important.

The cabbie takes the terminal exit and they circle back.

INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Natasha and her family enter the long TSA security line.
CLOSE ON her ticket. ONE WAY.

EXT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

The taxi pulls up to Tasha's terminal. Daniel hands the cabbie a few bucks and then takes off running.

INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Daniel sprints through the airport, searching for Tasha.

TICKETING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Daniel panting heavily, hair in his face. No Tasha. He looks up...

ON THE DEPARTURES BOARD

Countries from all over the world. He finds the flight to Jamaica. Daniel notes the gate. DARTS off.

INT. TSA SECURITY CHECKPOINT - CONTINUOUS

Tasha and her family wait their turn in the TSA line.

ON DANIEL

Searching the crowded line for her. No Tasha. Then finally...

He spots a familiar AFRO in the crowd of people. He slows to a brisk walk, fixes his hair, then ducks under the stretched barriers, cutting the line.

CLOSE ON NATASHA

She's lost in her own world, head down. Forlorn. Then...

DANIEL (O.S.)

'Tasha!

She turns at the sound of her name.

ANGLE ON DANIEL

His eyes go WIDE...

It's TASHA! She looks on at Daniel, in disbelief.

NATASHA
What are you doing here?

DANIEL
Marry me. Then you can legally stay.

NATASHA
Marry you? You can't be serious.
(off his look)
You are.

DANIEL
You love me, right? Isn't that what you just said?

NATASHA
I do, but--

DANIEL
So we'll elope and we'll move somewhere cheap... I'll get a crappy job and write at night... and you can finish school and graduate with your friends and then become a data scientist or-- an astronomer! You can do whatever you want, Tasha. Just stay.

NATASHA
Daniel... listen. I do really love you. But we have to be smart. We've only known each other for a day. A day. You keep saying we're meant to be, but what if we're not?

An ANNOUNCEMENT drowns her out.

GATE AGENT (V.O.)
(loudspeaker)
This is the boarding call for flight 436 to Jamaica...

Time's up. Tears gather in Tasha's eyes. She takes Daniel by the hand.

NATASHA
Right now, this is real life. The plane waiting on the tarmac to send me and my family back to Jamaica is very real. I tried to stay...
(MORE)

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I tried everything and I failed,
and now that's it. I have to go.

Tasha lets a single tear fall down her face. Daniel wipes it off. They stand face-to-face in the security line.

DANIEL

I don't want to lose you.

NATASHA

What happens next is up to us. We
decide our fate. There's Facetime,
emails, Skype... we'll figure it
out. We're not going to give up,
okay?

Tasha plants a final kiss on Daniel's cheek, then rejoins her family in the security line. Daniel looks on, distraught.

INT. TASHA'S PLANE - DUSK

Tasha stares out the window as the sun begins to set. Her mother pats her arm reassuringly.

MRS. KINGSLEY

It's going to be okay, Tasha.
You'll see...

Tasha manages a small smile. The plane ascends into the night sky. Tasha looks out the window watching the city fade.

NATASHA (V.O.)

From up here, the city lights look
like earth-bound stars. And I know
one of those stars is Daniel...

INT. AIRTRAIN - DUSK

Daniel sits on a train, watches a plane take off. Is it Tasha's? He takes out his notebook and starts to write.

DANIEL (V.O.)

You come to me from another world.

He looks out the window as the airport fades into the distance.

DANIEL (V.O., CONT'D)

From beyond the stars and void of
space. Transcendent. Pure. Of
unimaginable beauty.

INT. TASHA'S PLANE - DUSK

Natasha looks out the window at the city below. The plane climbs higher and higher, into the clouds.

DANIEL (V.O.)
 You are the master alchemist. You
 light the fire of love in earth and
 sky in heart and soul.

INT. AIRTRAIN - DUSK

Daniel gazes out the window at all the buildings lit up with people inside, in their homes.

DANIEL (V.O.)
 Through your star... All opposites
 unite. More than a star.

INT. TASHA'S PLANE - DUSK

Natasha's face looking out at the horizon. The glow of the sun hits her face just as it sets.

DANIEL (V.O.)
 You are my sun.

EXT. AIRTRAIN - NIGHT

Drone shot of the little train snaking through Queens at night. The Manhattan skyline glimmers in the background.

DANIEL (V.O.)
 My mom's gonna be pissed when I get
 home. And that's fine. Because this
 time next year, I'll be someplace
 else. I don't know where, but not
 here. And not Yale either. Am I
 making a mistake? Maybe. But it's
 mine to make.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

SPLIT SCREEN: The two share stories of their day via SKYPE.

NATASHA (V.O.)
 Over the next year, we tried hard
 to make it work...

INT. KINGSTON HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tasha's TEACHER hands her an exam back. It's an "A." Her new JAMAICAN BESTIE sees the "A" and gives Tasha a smile. In her bag, her phone lights up. A missed call from Daniel.

NATASHA (V.O.)
But time and distance are love's
natural enemies.

EXT. HUNTER COLLEGE - DAY

Daniel sprints from the building, hops on his bike and pedals furiously.

NATASHA (V.O.)
And the days are full.

INT. NYC RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Daniel runs in, throws on his waiter apron and gets ready for his shift. Nods to Omar who's taking a dish out into the dining room. In his bag, his phone rings. A Facetime request from Tasha that goes unanswered.

DANIEL (V.O.)
It's not that I wanted to let her
go...I had to.

EXT. JAMAICAN TOWN - NIGHT

Tasha and her NEW FRIENDS walk through a small town, having a good time. They're surrounded by little stores and merchants selling their wares. She laughs at a CUTE BOY'S joke.

DANIEL (V.O.)
It wasn't possible for her to live
in two worlds simultaneously. Heart
in one place, body in another.

INT. BOOKSTORE OPEN MIC - NIGHT

Daniel, now in his early 20's, new hair cut, still sexy, stands at the mic, visibly nervous, reading his poem.

DANIEL
You are the master alchemist. You
light the fire of love in earth and
sky in heart and soul.

NATASHA (V.O.)
I let go of Daniel to avoid being
ripped apart.

INT. ASTROPHYSICS LAB - DAY

Tasha, now in her early 20's, engages her CO-WORKERS in a
passionate discussion at work.

DANIEL (V.O.)
And as more years passed, we both
entered the adult world of
practicalities and
responsibilities...

EXT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Daniel reads a rejection letter from a publishing company.
He's heartbroken.

NATASHA (V.O.)
When my mom died, I thought of
him...

INT. TASHA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Later, still wearing her black funeral dress, Tasha looks at
the norebang selfie of her and Daniel.

NATASHA (V.O.)
The magic of that day...

INT. SECOND COMING RECORD STORE - DAY

Daniel walks in.

DANIEL (V.O.)
...all the little coincidences it
took to get us to meet and fall in
love.

Daniel peruses the aisles.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Tasha often talked about the number
of events that had to go exactly
right to form our universe. She'd
said falling in love couldn't
compete.

Daniel picks up Lou Reed's "Transformer," smiles.

DANIEL (V.O.)
But I've always thought she was
wrong about that...

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

CHYRON: FIVE YEARS LATER

A FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT walks down the aisle checking on passengers. In the b.g., We SEE a pair of headphones atop a BIG CURLY AFRO that's been dyed PINK at the ends.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Maybe our Universe was just taking
longer to form...

We MOVE IN. It's Natasha, sitting in the aisle seat. A LITTLE GIRL (6) colors in her book of the COSMOS next to her.

The girl meticulously details an image of a STAR with a yellow crayon.

We HEAR Prince's "Purple Rain" coming from Tasha's headphones. The Little Girl taps Natasha's shoulder.

LITTLE GIRL
What are you listening to?

NATASHA
Just something I like to play when
I travel. Do you want to hear it?

The girl NODS. Tasha puts the headphones over her ears.

Natasha HUMS along to the music. A YOUNG MAN seated in front of them turns around. He peers back at them, his face obscured by the seat.

After a verse and a chorus or so, the Little Girl gives the headphones back to Tasha.

LITTLE GIRL
It's nice, but I prefer Beyonce.

NATASHA
(laughing)
It reminds me of someone.

The CUTEST SMILE you've ever seen from the Little Girl.

LITTLE GIRL
Is it a boy?

NATASHA
Maybe...

LITTLE GIRL
Do you love him?

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)
Of course she does...

Tasha looks up. REVEAL Daniel Bae standing there, five years older, staring her right in the face.

NATASHA
Daniel?

Natasha smiles WIDE. Daniel smiles back.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Daniel.

Their eyes meet as both Tasha and Daniel keep beaming. Neither believing what they're seeing is real. But it is. Despite the odds, this was meant to be. It was in the stars.

FADE OUT.