

FINGERNAILS

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"The earliest signs of heart problems are often found in the spotting, bending, or discoloration of fingernails."

Unknown Scientist

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

A music room. In a school. Filled with elementary students. Around 12 years old. They all look happy.

At the front of the class are a few students with their musical instruments. The rest of the class is looking at them.

A teacher is seated at the piano, trying to set the tempo.

They are playing "Something Stupid" by Frank and Nancy Sinatra. Or at least they are trying to get synchronized. Even though they are not succeeding, the whole room is overcome with the majestically romantic tone of the piece. The children move a bit to the song's rhythm.

The music bleeds through the window-wall, to the corridor outside. ANNA, a young woman around 33 years old, watches through the window. She smiles.

She turns and gazes at a poster next to her on the wall. It is a poster with the image of Adam and Eve in Paradise. They both look very calm and happy. Adam is giving her an apple. Below the picture, there is a text. Anna begins to read it and smiles.

Suddenly, something grabs her attention, and she turns her head to look. She starts walking towards the opposite side of the corridor.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Anna sits across the desk from the SCHOOL PRINCIPAL (45). She is reading Anna's CV. One of her fingers is bandaged. Anna watches.

PRINCIPAL

I was sorry to hear about St. Leonard's closing down last month so unexpectedly. It was a good school.

Anna nods, sadly.

ANNA

It was unexpected.

PRINCIPAL

You've worked mainly in the third grade.

ANNA

Mhmm. Plus one year in the fifth and a couple in the fourth.

Principal nods, impressed. Anna smiles to herself. Principal goes to write a note. But she struggles to write due to her finger bandage. After wincing a few times, she switches hands and tries with her left. Anna

ANNA (CONT'D)

Can I help?

PRINCIPAL

Um... Ok. Yes. Could you write:
"versatile"?

Anna smiles politely, leans across the desk and writes the note on her own CV. As she's writing:

ANNA

How did it go?

She nods at Principal's finger. The Principal raises her eyebrows.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Sorry, that's really personal...

PRINCIPAL

No it's ok. Errr. It didn't go so well actually. But it's... fine, I'm used to it by now.

Anna nods and pushes the CV back across the table.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

What about you? Have you tested?

ANNA

Uh... yeah I have. Me and my boyfriend are positive.

Anna feels a little awkward admitting this after Principal's bad news. Principal swallows her sadness:

PRINCIPAL

Oh. That's nice.

Principal returns to Anna's CV.

INT/EXT. STREET - DAY

Anna is in the driver's seat of her car, singing along as "Total Eclipse of The Heart" plays over the radio.

She interrupts her singing occasionally, as she watches the cars pass by:

ANNA

Blue.

Five seconds later, a gray car passes by.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Fuck. Hmmm, red.

After a while, a green car speeds past her. Anna is a little disappointed.

DJ (THROUGH RADIO)
That was Bonnie Tyler. Now, we're going to a caller request. Hello there, Craig. Which song would you like today?

CALLER (THROUGH RADIO)
Can you play "Another Brick In The Wall" by Pink Floyd? It's my favorite song.

Anna takes a turn onto a small road with two-story houses.

DJ (THROUGH RADIO)
Uh, sorry, we only play love songs on this show, Craig.

Anna parks in front of a house that is all lit up.

CALLER (THROUGH RADIO)
Ugh. Errr... "Stairway To Heaven"?

DJ (THROUGH RADIO)
Um... Stairway to Heaven? The lyrics are.. Is that a love song?

Anna turns off the engine.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

ANNA and RYAN (a good-looking man in his mid-30s) have a bath together. Ryan's back is on Anna's chest. Anna is washing his body with shower gel. They both look very relaxed. Eventually:

RYAN
I was reading an article today that said astronauts aren't allowed to masturbate in space.

ANNA
Oh, that's sad.

RYAN
I know. I'll never go to space.

ANNA laughs, she is playful and smiling.

ANNA

Would you like a hand job before we go to dinner?

RYAN

Mmmm... That would be nice. Where will I cum, though?

ANNA

I don't know... The water?

RYAN

Is that safe?

ANNA

What do you mean?

RYAN

You know... What if my cum goes places?

ANNA

I think it's fine. Sperm dies very quickly in water, no?

RYAN

What if my sperm is stronger than average?

ANNA

I don't think so.

ANNA and RYAN are both smiling and teasing each other.

RYAN

Okay, but what if?

ANNA lowers her hand under the water and reaches for RYAN'S penis. She whispers, still smiling, in his ear.

ANNA

I think we should take the chance.

She starts giving Ryan a hand job. Ryan relaxes into it. He loves it.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Anna lies dressed in her casual clothes in bed. She is throwing a stress ball at the ceiling, as she tells Ryan a story. She is very good at this since she always catches the ball. As if she is doing it quite often. Ryan is getting ready for the dinner.

ANNA

She looked at the tree and thought:
 "Wow, these apples look so tasty."
 And he looked at her and said:
 "Yeah, they do. We should eat one
 together."

RYAN

Mmm...

ANNA

And so, they picked an apple off
 the tree, split it and share it,
 while gazing into each other's
 eyes. And then - this is word for
 word - "it was peaceful in paradise
 for there were no animals around to
 disturb Adam and Eve or their love
 for each other."

Ryan turns on the hairdryer.

RYAN

That's what the poster said?!

ANNA

Yep. That's what they're teaching
 these kids.

RYAN

That is too far. I don't like that
 they changed a story that old.

Anna doesn't reply and continues to throw the ball at the
 ceiling.

ANNA

(quietly - talks to
 herself)

Why? Did it even really happen?

Then the phone rings downstairs.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Through the kitchen door we see Anna jog down the stairs to
 get to the ringing phone. She picks it up.

ANNA

Hello? Yes, this is she... Yes...
 (she looks enthusiastic)
 Yes, I came by and left my CV a few
 times... Yes, tomorrow at noon
 works... Thanks... Duncan? Yes.
 Have a nice evening.

Anna puts the phone down. Ryan comes down the stairs fully-dressed and ready to go. She hovers by the phone a moment, an intrigued expression on her face.

RYAN
Another interview?

Anna nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Where's this one?

ANNA
(after a small pause)
Somerville. School.

RYAN
Is it good?

ANNA
(after a small pause)
Yes. They have like an amazing
reputation.

RYAN
Really? Like famous people?

Anna Nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Like?

ANNA
Um.. Marie Curie. Albert Einstein.

Ryan isn't sure if she's joking or not.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Ginger Spice.

He gives her a tiny laugh.

INT/EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Anna drives. Ryan in the passenger seat.

RYAN
I forgot to tell you, the guys have
invited Garth and his new
girlfriend.

ANNA
That might be interesting.

After a while:

ANNA (CONT'D)

Gray.

(Small pause)

Fuck. Okay, your turn.

RYAN

Oh... I dunno.

ANNA

Come on, just pick a color.

RYAN

Okay... White.

Four seconds later, a red and white VW beetle.

ANNA

Does that count?

RYAN is a little bored with the game but..

RYAN

I won.

Anna smiles at him.

INT. ANDY AND CARRIE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

They're at a dinner party with Ryan's friends from work and their partners. ANDY and CARRIE (mid 30s) stand over a neatly-laid dining table serving couscous and sea bass.

There are several framed family photographs with their son positioned around the room.

GARTH and LIANE (early 30s) sit on the other side of the table. They smile gratefully as Andy serves them.

GARTH

I was telling Liane that Andy is a great cook.

ANDY

Thanks. It's a Spanish recipe.

LIANE

Have you ever been there?

ANDY

No, but I always wanted to go to San Sebastian. I heard the food is great there.

RYAN

Yes, that's what I heard too.

LIANE
 We're trying to save for a vacation
 at the moment and we were thinking
 of going to Spain.

Garth smiles.

ANDY
 Carrie was there once. Before she
 met me.

CARRIE
 Yes, I was in Madrid with one of my
 exes. Thousands of years ago.

A short pause.

ANNA
 How did you guys meet?

Everyone adjusts to the new topic of conversation.

GARTH
 Oh um... we met at a wedding.

LIANE
 Yeah a friend's wedding. We were
 both sitting at the singles table.
 It was us, an eighty-year-old
 fireman and.. and a nerdy biology
 student and three young women. So,
 a tough choice.

She laughs. As do the others.

ANNA
 How long ago?

LIANE
 Umm... it's been...

GARTH
 ...three months?

LIANE
 94 days.

ANNA
 Oh...Nice. Are you thinking of
 testing?

GARTH
 (casually)
 We're not really into that. In the
 whole crisis over-reaction thing.
 You know my opinion.

A tiny, awkward pause. Anna looks at them and even if she wants to ask 100 questions she stays silent.

CARRIE
 (to Andy)
 Can you get the salad dressing?

INT. ANDY AND CARRIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A while later, Carrie and Andy stand in the middle of the living room dancing slowly to an old loungey love song.

Anna, Ryan, Liane and Garth watch from the couch.

Carrie and Andy sway their hips slowly - they're not great dancers but they've clearly recently taken some lessons.

After a while Garth gets up.

GARTH
 The bathroom...?

Carrie points down the hall, without letting it affect her dancing. Garth goes.

After a moment, Liane takes a big sip of wine and leans over to Anna and Ryan. She speaks quietly, keeping an eye on the door for Garth's return.

LIANE
 Can I ask... Have you guys taken the test?

RYAN
 Uh... Yes. Around three years ago and it was positive.

LIANE
 Nice. And how did it feel? I mean when you got your results.

RYAN
 Uh. It felt... great?!

ANNA
 (nodding)
 It felt really good.

RYAN
 I suppose most of all, we felt relieved... Like a weight had lifted.

Andy and Carrie continue dancing.

CARRIE
 What are you guys talking about?

Liane doesn't respond to Carrie.

LIANE

You know that Garth doesn't believe in the test. He says he doesn't need a certificate to tell him if we are in love. He thinks that the test has created more doubts and people are lonelier than ever.

ANNA

And you? What do you think?

At the same time Andy and Carrie join them.

LIANE

(unconvincingly)

I agree with him. I mean.. You know.. Since the love institutes opened last year and more and more friends of mine took it, I thought maybe we could also. But he was still against it.

RYAN

Anna wanted us to go to an institute this summer to do just the exercises, but I thought it was utterly unnecessary.

Anna looks at him. She doesn't know if it was appropriate for Ryan to share this information.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I think the fact that we tested positive without the extra help means the result is even stronger.

Anna smiles awkwardly at Ryan.

We hear the sound of a toilet flushing from the other room.

CARRIE

I completely understand. We did the test when it was created but especially when you have a four-year-old child, it's really hard to decide to retest.

Carrie looks at Andy.

ANNA

Will you do it again?

ANDY

Err, no, not really. But even if we do, there's no way the result will be different. Didn't you see us dance just now?

Everyone smiles. Garth arrives in the room. Everybody stops talking.

INT. ROAD - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan drive home. Ryan is looking out the window.

After a few moments, a light on the dashboard starts flashing and beeping. Anna and Ryan peer at it. It's not one they recognize, and they exchange a confused glance.

ANNA

Probably nothing.

Ryan shakes his head.

RYAN

We should book it in for a service.

Anna sighs.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - RECEPTION - DAY

Anna sits awkwardly in the cramped waiting room with several other nervous interviewees.

The MAN next to Anna is looking over his notebook and whispering to himself - last minute, pre-interview revisions.

Anna peeks over at his notes, and the man withdraws them cagily. Anna raises her eyebrows.

She takes everything in. The walls are covered in posters:

- One reads: LOVE SYMPTOMS - Stomach aches, Heart palpitations, Sleeplessness, Singing.

- The biggest poster is a close-up diagram of a single fingernail reading: "HEART SYMPTOMS FIRST APPEAR IN THE NAIL." Arrows point to the bottom of the nail where the cuticle meets the skin. A snake-pit of tender nerve endings writhe beneath the hardened shell of the nail. Vulnerability and its shield.

There is also a strange noise - it sounds like it's raining. But there are blue skies visible through the window. ALEXANDRA, Duncan's assistant, comes.

Alexandra passes Anna a clipboard of paperwork

ALEXANDRA

This is for you. Fill this out and Duncan will see you shortly.

Anna leafs through a couple of pages. Alexandra tidies papers on her desk.

ANNA

Uh. Sorry, is it raining?

Alexandra points at a small speaker in the corner of the room. Anna leans her ear to it. It's pumping out the sound of rain.

ALEXANDRA

They pump it through the whole building. Rain makes people feel romantic.

ANNA

Oh. Right. Yes, it does.

ALEXANDRA

I keep asking them to turn it down. It just makes me want to pee.

Anna nods seriously.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - DUNCAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A small office. Papers piled high on the desk. DUNCAN, the boss (mid 50s), sits opposite Anna, making notes. He's a sensitive, thoughtful man who appears to live in his own world. Anna is nervous and fidgety.

DUNCAN

Ok. That's clear. But could you repeat what you last said?

ANNA

Oh, his happiness. I often put it before my own.

DUNCAN

Alright. An example?

Anna thinks about it for a moment.

ANNA

Um. Well. When we have ribeye for dinner, I know that he likes the fatty bits, so I cut them off from mine and give them to him and pretend I don't like them. But actually, I love them. they're my favorite part.

Duncan nods thoughtfully.

DUNCAN

And you've been together for...?

ANNA

Three and a half years. Well, just under.

DUNCAN

Oh. So, not very long...

ANNA

No, but we got our positive result almost three years ago and moved in together right away. So we're very settled.

DUNCAN

And do you still have strong feelings for him?

ANNA

Yes.

(a small pause - she thinks)

I love him.

Duncan nods approvingly. He turns to a large dossier on his desk and opens it.

DUNCAN

So you didn't go to an institute?

ANNA

No.

DUNCAN

Well, most of our recent applicants have been in an institute as clients. They know what it's like to do these exercises as a couple.

ANNA

Ok, we didn't have that chance but the thing is I really want to learn how the exercises help you connect. And you guys are the best.

Duncan blushes a little. Clears his throat.

DUNCAN

It's not east, but we try.

Duncan checks her cv.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

But Anna since you are a teacher,
don't you prefer to work in a
school?

ANNA

I really wanted to work here.

DUNCAN

Can you tell me what you think you
would bring to the role that
someone else wouldn't?

She takes a deep breath and summons up some courage.

ANNA

Well, as a teacher, I'm... a good
listener, and I've got very good
communication skills... and, um. I
like.. I like helping people a lot.

Duncan considers Anna. After a pause:

DUNCAN

We're hiring four new employees.
And we're asking them to start
immediately.

ANNA

(jumping in)

I can do that. I would absolutely
start tomorrow.

DUNCAN

The truth is, I cannot disregard
the fact that you are a teacher...
With a certificate.

Anna looks up at him, hopeful.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE DAY

That evening, Anna returns home. She walks in slowly and
tries to figure out where Ryan is. She doesn't seem very sure
yet of what she is going to tell him.

Ryan is in the dining room.

Anna sees him and smiles at him. She goes to the back of the
room to take her shoes off and leave her handbag.

RYAN

(without looking at her)

I cooked shrimp pasta to celebrate
your new job.

Anna turns a little surprised and looks at him.

ANNA

How do you know that?

RYAN

They called two hours ago. And since you weren't here, I told them to leave a message. The school secretary wants you to go in tomorrow to talk details.

Anna freezes for a moment. She understands immediately what Ryan means.

ANNA

Fuck. I didn't realize you were talking about the interview the day before yesterday. Because today I went to Somerville school and they hired me on the spot.

Ryan turns, looks at her, and smiles. Anna is getting close to him.

RYAN

That's great. And did you take it?

ANNA

Umm... Yes.

Ryan hugs Anna. Anna seems a bit frozen, but she hugs him back after a while. The fact that she is hiding something makes her agitated.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. Ryan is asleep on the bed. Anna lies beside him. She can't fall asleep, thinking about the next day.

She holds a stress ball and throws it at the ceiling as quietly as possible. Trying not to disturb Ryan.

After a few times, she mis-throws and the ball lands on Ryan's body. She reaches out to catch it, but it's too late. The ball is already rolling down slowly on the floor.

Ryan moves slightly but doesn't wake up.

Anna lies still, trying not to wake him. She tries to fall asleep.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - PARKING - MORNING

Anna parks her car at the institute parking. She takes a box of stuff for her desk and walks towards the institute.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - STAIRWELL - MORNING

Anna walks up a gray concrete stairwell carrying a box of stuff for her desk.

Up ahead two people are maneuvering a large painting down the stairs. It is a print of Rene Magritte's "The Lovers". The painting is large enough that it's difficult to carry down the tight-cornered stair case. The group are struggling.

AMIR (35) is going down the stairs. He directs the others to move out of the way to let Anna up the stairs.

Anna nods her thanks. She notices an "INSTRUCTOR" badge on a lanyard around his neck.

She nods gratefully at them all as she edges past. Then they resume trying to get the painting down the stairs.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - ORIENTATION ROOM - DAY

A small presentation room. Stackable chairs arranged in five rows to face a desk. Duncan stands at the front.

Anna sits in one of the chairs with two other employees next to her.

Duncan is mid-speech, explaining the origins of the institute and its core values. At the same time he is looking for something under a desk. After a lot of effort he finally turns back to the new employees, holding a playmobil.

DUNCAN

Oh, sorry about that.. Ok where was I..? Oh yes. Um.. What we offer to our clients - the reason they come to us - is to take the risk out of love. And that's precisely what we do for them. No more uncertainty. No more wondering if you've chosen the right partner. No more divorce.

(small pause - he looks at them without talking)

As you all know, they developed the test five years ago in order to define relationships because there was a concern about people not falling in love. Love was no longer a priority in our society. However, what they didn't anticipate is that 90% of people that took the test got negative results. Relationships broke up and many people suffered. So, I developed the institute to make sure that couple's bonds of love are at their strongest before they take the test.

(MORE)

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

We are not here to teach our couples how to fall in love, we are here to bring them closer together. And of course, we were the first who bought the machine so our couples can take the test in house. The success rate is still low, that's true. But, thanks to our institute - and others like us who... imitate us - it is slowly increasing. And the test is more popular than ever. As an instructor here? You have to respect that people are searching for answers, even if it's not the one they want to hear.

Suddenly, someone opens the door. It is another new employee. He walks in very slowly and goes to sit in his chair. No one is speaking, and everyone is staring at him.

NEW EMPLOYEE #1

Sorry, I'm late.

Duncan nods.

DUNCAN

Now, as new employees, I ask all of you to learn our entire roster of exercises from the materials we gave you. And to always keep your minds open to new possibilities. Every month we change the courses so the couples don't know the structure of the program.

Duncan moves towards a presentation table covered in a collection of playmobil maquettes. He indicates that the new employees should get up from their seats and gather around the table.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

One of our instructors, Amir, was kind enough to build these maquettes illustrating the exercises in our program. Here are our latest additions:

Maquette 1: a doll gives itself an electric shock as another doll walks out of a door.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

When one partner leaves the house, the other partner gives themselves a small electric shock with the equipment provided.

(MORE)

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Eventually they will associate the pain of the shock with the pain of their partner leaving the house.

Maquette 2: two couples playing doubles tennis.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Couples engage in a series of pair-based competitive activities in the hope that they are bonded together - either by the thrill of victory or the shame of defeat.

All new employees nod.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Also, we've been thinking about, but haven't had the chance yet to implement, creating a small, controlled fire in a movie theater, where our clients will be gathered. In any case, we ask them to watch romantic movies now. But, with the fire, we'll see their reactions and how protective they are of their other half. And lastly, we've recently acquired the rights to use a compilation of classic love songs in their French version in our musical exercises.

Duncan nods to Alexandra. She hits play on a CD player, and Yazoo's "Only You" in its French version comes on. Duncan starts to dance along to the song subtly.

Anna's lips start to mouth along with the lyrics absentmindedly in English.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - TESTING ROOM - DAY

A poster on the wall reads:

"100% = Both members of the couple are in love.

50% = One member of the couple is in love, the other is not.*

0% = Neither member of the couple is in love.

*PLEASE NOTE: In the event of a 50% result, the testing machine cannot identify which member of the couple is in love and which isn't."

Anna wears a set of big, oversized headphones. She takes them on and off, trying to understand how they cancel out all the sound from the testing room.

The new employees are wandering around the testing room, checking it out. Seeing how it works. It's a strange, clinical room with two chairs, a hatch and a booth.

Duncan is answering their questions. We hear glimpses of it as Anna takes the headphones on and off.

NEW EMPLOYEE 3

Do people ever get 50 percent?

DUNCAN

Not a lot but sometimes. And they're often the hardest cases - when only one person is in love. And especially since the machine cannot identify which member of the couple is in love.

NEW EMPLOYEE 1

Do they ever come back and retest?

DUNCAN

Sometimes. But it usually ends in disappointment and doubt. Results can go from 100% to 0%, but in general they rarely improve. One trust is gone...

NEW EMPLOYEE 1

And one more question I've been wondering. What do you do if somebody doesn't have arms?

DUNCAN

Hmmm... To be honest, I have no idea.

Anna picks up a small wooden stick and looks at it curiously. There are tooth marks on it.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - HALLWAY - DAY

Alexandra walks Anna through the institute.

ALEXANDRA

So, you'll be shadowing Amir. He's been here just a few months, but he's already our most successful instructor.

Anna nods.

They stop in front of a brochure stand stocked with guides that explain the exercises for the clients. Alexandra grabs one and gives it to Anna. It's about drawing.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)

It's something we give to our clients. This one explains the exercise where they have to draw one another.

Anna checks the guide, which describes some techniques for drawing your partner.

ANNA
That's interesting. Can I ask you something?

Alexandra nods.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Why are the songs in French?

ALEXANDRA
(in bad Français)
Il Francais est la language plus erotique, no?

Anna smiles at her bad French and nods politely.

They reach an area where Amir is taking a photo with a HAPPY COUPLE, holding their certificate showing a positive result. Amir notices Anna and the receptionist and gestures "one second";

AMIR
I'll be right there!

ALEXANDRA
(pointing)
Amir's office is over there. Let me know if you need anything else.

ANNA
Thanks.

Alexandra nods and leaves. Anna after observing Amir and the couple for a moment, heads to the office.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - AMIR'S OFFICE - DAY

Anna enters Amir's office and sits down. She picks up a file and starts reading it studiously.

Amir enters.

AMIR
Hi. I'm Amir.

Anna greets him with a handshake.

ANNA
Hi. I'm Anna. I'll be shadowing you this session.

AMIR

Cool. Just so you know, you're my first trainee ... so I'll do my best.

Anna nods.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Did they give you the folder with all the information about how this works?

ANNA

Yes, I'm really excited to get going.

AMIR

Great. We are going to spend this week on the intake interviews with the new couples. Let me just find their files...

As Amir rummages around in his cabinet, Anna notices a framed photo on Amir's desk of Amir and his partner NATASHA smiling arm-in-arm on a park bench.

ANNA

Is that your partner?

AMIR

Natasha.

ANNA

You look great together.

Amir glances up at Anna.

AMIR

Thanks.

(small pause)

We've been together for two and a half years.

ANNA

Oh that's nice. How did you meet?

AMIR

(playful)

We met at the video store. We both wanted to rent Breakfast At Tiffany's but there was only one copy left so we watched it together.

ANNA

Oh wow, that's amazing.

AMIR
I'm joking, we met normally.

Anna smiles. Amir hands her a few files.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Here you go.

ANNA
Thanks.

Anna sits down and begins to read through the files. Amir looks pleased at her studiousness. He returns to his desk and pulls out a notebook, and they both focus on their work.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Anna and Amir sit across the desk from a boring couple in their forties, JOHN and MARIA.

Amir is looking at their file. Anna is sitting beside him taking notes.

AMIR
You have been together for six months?

JOHN
Yes.

AMIR
And you both work at the same accounting office.

JOHN
Yes.

AMIR
Good. It's nice that you have the same interests.
(small pause)
Accounting.
(another pause)
Okay, first I'd like to ask you, John, what do you love most about Maria? Why do you think she's the ideal partner for you?

Maria turns and looks at John.

John goes blank. He looks at Maria. Then, at Amir.

JOHN
That's the first question? I'm supposed to answer that now?

Anna, even though she knows that this is supposed to be the first question, feels their discomfort. Amir continues, calming them;

AMIR
Take your time, and reply from your heart.

ANNA
(aside, to Amir)
Isn't it a little early for this?

AMIR
(aside, to Anna)
This is the order that we always do it in.

Anna and Amir look at each other. Anna questioning, Amir looking back, a bit strict.

AMIR (CONT'D)
(to Anna)
There is a whole logic and reason behind them.

JOHN
(interrupts them)
I love her hair. It's...soft. And her.. voice. Yes, her voice even more. It soothes me.

Maria smiles.

Anna and Amir look at each other, pleased. An acknowledgement that the process works. Amir jots down some notes, Anna follows.

AMIR
That's a nice answer John.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Anna and Amir are sitting at the same desk with a different couple, two young women. They are in the middle of their conversation.

YOUNG WOMAN 1
All that sounds great, but can we take the test now? Instead of going through the whole program?

Amir looks at both of them. The couple, and Anna, all wait for his reply.

AMIR
Yes of course. Anna can you bring the equipment here, please?

Anna looks confused.

ANNA

Here?

Amir looks at Anna. He shakes his head meaning no. He changes his tone a bit.

AMIR

Look, you can do it that way. But it'll be over like that. It's for that very reason the institute advises completing the program. Time spent working together significantly increases your chances of testing positive.

Amir delivers this speech in a sensitive, caring voice. He wants to reassure the couple.

The couple exchanges glances, weighing Amir's advice.

After a short pause, Amir continues...

AMIR (CONT'D)

I know it's scary, but there is no second chance. No one wants to fail.

Amir delivers this line more seriously than the rest. Is he talking about the couple? Or himself?

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Anna is at one end of the institute hallway. She stands in front of an open window, slightly tired. She's peeling and eating a tangerine. The painting, "The Lovers", that we saw at the stairs earlier is hanging in the hallway.

Down the hallway, countless couples are waiting patiently for their turn. Some are filling out applications.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Another day. Dusk. Anna is working studiously beside Amir. ROB and SALLY (both 21) sit across the desk, holding hands. They are very affectionate with each other.

SALLY

Rob is also a great dancer. But he never dances with me at parties. He feels embarrassed in front of other people. But it's fun, 'cause at home, he puts on music and dances alone for hours.

Rob squeezes Sally's hand and smiles at her.

Anna smiles after hearing this. Amir gestures to Anna, letting her take the lead with the questions this time.

ANNA

Rob?

ROB

I think I am a good dancer.

ANNA

No, I mean how sally makes you feel?

ROB

Oh.. Well, when we are together, I feel as... if I'm... invisible.

ANNA

Great.

AMIR

(almost at the same time
with Anna's line)

"Invisible"? What do you mean?

ROB

Umm, yeah... I feel like - Normally ... like people are always looking at me and I'm always aware of that feeling. Outside. Apart. But I um... I don't have that when we're together. I just blend in to her.

Sally looks at him, captivated by his words. Anna and Amir look on, happy with what they have heard. Amir quickly jots down everything that Rob's just said.

AMIR

Okay. I think that's good for today.

Rob and Sally nod.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - AMIR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The institute is almost empty for the evening.

Anna's in Amir's office. She is talking on the phone with Ryan in hushed tones.

ANNA

Yes... No, I won't be too late... I don't want to but it's my first week and all the teachers asked me to go... oh?

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

Really, they're playing tonight?
Yeah go rock out and I'll see you
later... love you.

She hangs up and is packing her bags as she walks out and absentmindedly bumps into Amir, who is entering, focused on his notebook.

AMIR

Sorry, I thought everyone had gone.

ANNA

I'm meeting them at the bar. Are
you coming?

AMIR

I can't. I said I'd go to Natasha's
work drinks tonight. It's her
colleague's goodbye party. But I
might try to swing by after?

ANNA

Okay. Well, I'm off...

Amir looks up at her.

AMIR

By the way, Anna. Great job this
week.

ANNA

Thanks. Maybe see you later?

Amir nods. Anna walks down the corridor.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The bar is dark and empty, apart from a dozen or so workers from the office.

Anna and Alexandra throw darts at the board.

KARAN (late 30s), CLEO (late 20s), MARCUS (mid-30s), and one other of the new employees sit and drink next to them.

Anna throws the dart very far from the target.

ANNA

Fuck.

She turns to Alexandra.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I thought I had great aim.

ALEXANDRA

But no..

Anna smiles.

ANNA

No.

Cleo joins them.

CLEO

What do you want to drink? Marcus wants to pay for the next round. One of his couples tested positive today... and let's just say it was... unexpected.

ANNA

Why?

CLEO

Well, the guy is a community librarian, and she's a drummer in a heavy metal band.

ANNA

Wow.

CLEO

That's always the way, though.

ALEXANDRA

I'll have a gin and tonic.

ANNA

Me too.

Cleo nods and leaves to order the drinks.

Anna turns to Alexandra.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Shall we continue?

Alexandra nods and throws a first dart. She's not happy with her throw.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Amir said he might come by later.

ALEXANDRA

Oh, he always says that. He never comes for drinks.

Anna nods. She picks up the drink in front of her and takes a sip.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Anna opens her front door and shuffles in, slightly tipsy.

ANNA
 (calling out)
 Ryan?

She waits. No answer. He's not in.

She goes to the kitchen and fills a glass with water.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna sits on the sofa. The folder full of institute exercises is open on her lap. She sips her glass of water and reads carefully.

INT. SWIMMING POOL OVERLOOKING - DAY

Anna walks down a long hallway at a swimming pool. She is carrying two cups of coffee. She is wearing a robe.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Amir sits on the bleachers next to a large swimming pool, reviewing his notebook. Next to him, a couple in their 30s are wearing their swimsuits. Filling the bleachers are the rest of the couples from the institute, all sitting in their swimsuits waiting for their turn.

Anna approaches, with two cups of coffee. She hands one to Amir.

AMIR
 Thank you.

ANNA
 Did you want milk and sugar?

AMIR
 No, it's okay.

ANNA
 Oh... It has both.

AMIR
 (deadpan)
 You're fired.

Anna smiles. They start walking towards the pool.

Sally, in swimsuit and cap, approaches Anna and Amir and interrupts them.

SALLY

Excuse me. Um. Sorry to disturb. I just wanted to ask: is this task based on a movie? It reminds me of something.

AMIR

(very seriously)

Yes. It's from Jaws. First scene.

Sally looks at him strangely. Not getting the joke. Anna gets it and laughs quietly to herself.

AMIR (CONT'D)

I'm joking. I don't think it's based on a movie.

SALLY

Okay. Thank you.

Sally moves away and goes to sit back down next to Rob.

Anna watches the young couple. Sally says something to Rob and he laughs.

Anna turns to Amir.

ANNA

They seem so good together. I may be wrong, but I think they have something real.

AMIR

Let's not get carried away.

Amir has revealed his gut reaction, he doesn't want to get his hopes up. He recalibrates.

AMIR (CONT'D)

It's difficult to make your first big love last. People change.

ANNA

I know they are just twenty one, but you never know. It's possible for people to change together.

Amir looks at Anna. She's seems hopeful for this to be true. He considers this.

AMIR

Maybe you are right. But..

(he tries to say something more personal but he stops)

We're almost ready to start.

(MORE)

AMIR (CONT'D)

As I told you, just try to focus on whether their eyes are open, how much they're moving around or how still they are. And whether or not they've drowned. We don't want anyone dying on us.

Anna nods.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

A few moments later:

Anna is sitting with her legs in the pool. A couple is already in the pool waiting to start. Anna wears her goggles. Amir stands next to the lifeguard.

AMIR

Ready?

They both nod.

AMIR (CONT'D)

So, as we said, your goal is to hold eye contact and try to stay underwater for one minute. You are in this together.

They nod. They each take a deep breath and plunge beneath the surface of the water, where they stare intensely into each other's eyes. Anna does the same, observing them.

They remain under the water for as long as they can.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Anna is going towards her car in the parking lot. She notices Amir, bent over his car, fiddling with the passenger side window. Anna looks at him curiously.

She walks over to him.

Amir is crouched at the passenger window. The window seems to be stuck half-open. He's attempting to coax it upwards with his fingers.

ANNA

What happened?

AMIR

It's stuck.

ANNA

Here, let me.

She moves next to him and puts her hands on the window. They try to pull the window upwards together.

The window pane comes out of the track and half of it falls into the door, leaving just a triangle of window in the frame. As they try to pull it out, Anna shifts her grip and her hand touches Amir's accidentally. They both move their hands away. Being so close feels awkward, too intimate, maybe a bit electric. Even if they don't realize it yet. Amir cuts the intimacy with a joke.

AMIR

Actually, it looks cooler now. I'll leave it like that.

Anna smiles.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Thanks for your help. I'll just take it to the garage tomorrow.

ANNA

Okay. See you tomorrow.

She flashes a polite smile then turns and goes back to her car.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Anna parks outside a restaurant. She turns off the engine but doesn't get out immediately. She stays there thinking of something. A glowing sign reading "HAPPY HOUR FOR COUPLES IN LOVE" shines through the restaurant window.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan sit at a table for four in a fancy restaurant. Anna watches Ryan, who is focused on the menu. She observes the other people in the restaurant. She points at a couple who sits three meters away from them. They just sit and look down without talking. Almost like what most of the couples are doing with their phones.

ANNA

Do you think they are lonely together?

RYAN

I have no idea. Maybe.

ANNA

I know we can't judge from one image. But there is something really...I don't know.

RYAN
Should we order drinks while we wait?

ANNA
(under her breath)
D'accord, mon amour.

RYAN
What?

ANNA
Nothing.

She immediately returns to the menu.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I think I'll have the spaghetti carbonara. Or wait... they have ribeye with caramelized onions.

RYAN
Are you sure? You only ever eat half of it. Why don't you get the...

He takes the menu and scans it.

Suddenly Carrie arrives alone. She has a bandage on her fingernail. Ryan notices it first.

CARRIE
Sorry for being late.

ANNA
Hi.

RYAN
(pointing at her finger)
What's that?

Carrie sits down.

CARRIE
Andy.

ANNA
What?

CARRIE
We took the test again. I need a drink.

A stunned silence.

Ryan makes a signal to the waiter. The waiter comes.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Can I have a glass of red wine please?

RYAN

Three glasses please.

The waiter nods and leaves.

CARRIE

Make it a bottle. Andy is parking the car.

The waiter nods and leaves. Carrie smiles.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

It was positive.

ANNA

Fuck you. That wasn't funny.

At the same time Andy arrives.

ANDY

Hey.

RYAN

Congrats, man.

ANDY

Yes. That was a big relief.

After a small pause.

RYAN

Why did you test again?

CARRIE

Well, we've been having some arguments. And Andy thought it would be good to know for sure again even if I told him that there was a lot of risk. Anyways, how is your new job?

ANNA

Uh... Nice. Thank you.

INT. CINEMA - MORNING

We are in a movie theatre. The light from the screen falls on the faces of the audience, mostly the institute's client-couples. They are scattered around the room.

Anna and Amir are also amongst them.

Anna sits on her own in the back row, holding a fire extinguisher. She has tears in her eyes and stares at the big screen.

Anna sees an USHER approach Amir, who's sitting several rows in front of her, and whisper in his ear.

EXT. CITY ROAD - MORNING

Anna exits the theater and joins Amir on the road outside. At the marquee of the theater -

Now Playing:

Hugh Grant: No one understands love more.
Don't miss our retrospective of his Romantic Filmography.

AMIR

Let's go this way.

Anna and Amir walk down the street together.

ANNA

The fire was such a good idea

AMIR

Yeah, the cinema owner got cold feet.

ANNA

Yes, I guess it was a bit dangerous.

AMIR

Everything is so much easier in films. So much simpler than real life, you know?

They walk a little further.

ANNA

Do you like romantic movies?

AMIR

I prefer horror ones.

After a moment:

ANNA

Like Jaws?

He smiles. They both enjoy their banter.

INT. DANCING ROOM - DAY

ROB (blindfolded) leans towards Sally's neck. He sniffs a few times. They're both in their underwear.

In the room, there are half a dozen couples, all stripped down to their underwear, waiting nervously. Amir and Anna (fully dressed) watch on. After a few sniffs, Rob turns to where he thinks Anna and Amir are. He nods.

AMIR
Have you got it?

ROB
I think so.

AMIR
Okay. Sally - step back. And let's go.

Sally steps away from Rob to join the other couples. Then, everyone in the room starts to move around. Switching positions. Shuffling the deck, so to speak. Rob stays where he is.

Anna and Amir observe. Then, after a few moments of movement:

AMIR (CONT'D)
Okay, stop.

Everyone stops.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Rob? Go.

Rob begins sniffing and stumbling around. He is trying to sniff out his girlfriend and make his way over to her. Sally is a fair distance (and several other bodies) away from him.

Everyone watches him go.

Rob reaches his arms out in front of him as he goes. Amir and Anna follow him from a small distance.

He gets very close to an older gentleman wearing only a pair of white briefs but at the last minute, decides to keep moving.

He reaches Maria (from the first interview) and seems to think this may be Sally. He reaches his hands out and touches Maria's back and chest.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Oh my god. Rob!
(smiling)
No touching.

Rob lowers his arms. He turns away from Maria and stumbles on, taking in slow, longer sniffs now. Really drinking it in.

Then slowly, he starts to get it right. He's heading in Sally's direction. Anna's eyes widen in anticipation.

He sniffs at a couple of people as he passes them, but quickly dismisses them as possibilities. He winds his way through to Sally and sniffs her shoulder. Anna moves closer. Amir puts his hand on her arm, pausing her, they watch breathlessly.

ROB
I think I've found her.

Amir and Anna smile. Success.

ANNA
Wunderbar.

Amir hears this and glances at Anna curiously.

ANNA (CONT'D)
It means wonderful.

AMIR
Oh. I haven't heard that before.
(back to Rob)
Rob, take off your blindfold.

Rob does so, sees Sally, and looks very relieved, as does she. Anna glances at Amir. She thinks for a moment, then summons up some courage:

ANNA
Can I try something? I have an idea.

AMIR
(he is not sure)
Ok.

Amir is curious to see what Anna will suggest.

She heads towards Rob and Sally, who are being quietly congratulated by the other couples.

ANNA
Uh. Excuse me?

They turn to her. Amir stands a few feet back, watching.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I know that we asked you not to shower for the last few days in preparation for this exercise. So I was wondering if maybe you want to try to take a shower together? At home later. Maybe you already do that, I don't know.

SALLY
Not really.

ANNA

Okay. It can be very intimate to wash each other's bodies. I think it might help deepen your connection.

Amir's eyes widen a bit at this comment.

ROB

Okay, we'll do it.

Sally nods.

AMIR

(to the whole room)

Okay! Let's take a break.

Rob and Sally and the other couples mill around and chat amongst themselves.

Anna turns to Amir, who is looking at her.

ANNA

Ryan and I bathe together all the time. Don't you and Natasha?

Amir looks a bit uncomfortable for the first time. And Anna notices this, his vulnerability, for the first time.

AMIR

(avoiding her question)

It can't hurt for them to try.

Amir looks away, to his notes.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan are sitting on the couch watching TV. They're watching a nature documentary about wildlife in the tundra.

They're sitting about a foot apart from each other. Anna glances across at Ryan. He's holding a mug of tea in his hands. Ryan notices Anna looking at him and flashes her a smile.

They turn back to the TV. An injured caribou is hobbling across the ice.

RYAN

These things always make me cry.

Anna smiles affectionately. Ryan shuffles over to her and tries to snuggle up to her a bit. She smiles at him, but there is some uncertainty behind her smile.

They sit there for a moment.

Then, an idea hits Anna.

ANNA
 Could I? I'm running an art project
 at school, where everyone draws a
 member of their family.

RYAN
 Nice.

ANNA
 Can I draw you?

RYAN
 Really?

ANNA
 Yeah... it'll be fun...

Ryan is thinking about it.

RYAN
 Now?

ANNA
 Yeah. You don't have to do
 anything.

RYAN
 Can I keep watching the
 documentary?

ANNA
 Of course.

RYAN
 I really wanna know what happens to
 the caribou.

ANNA
 That's fine, I'll just get my set
 up...

She looks at the area between Ryan and the TV.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna is sitting between Ryan and the TV with a big
 sketchbook. She is halfway through a drawing of Ryan on the
 couch.

She focuses on his face. His ears. She tries to really
 examine his face. She's using the institute's exercises to
 attempt to fix what's missing in her and Ryan's relationship.
 She glances up at him and adds a bit more detail to his face.

Ryan looks quite moved by the documentary.

ANNA
Do you want to draw me? After?

RYAN
Uh...

Ryan looks very confused. And also he doesn't want to draw Anna.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Tonight? Why?

Anna smiles reassuringly and shakes her head.

ANNA
No. Don't worry.

RYAN
Why? Is that part of the project?

She draws on. We slowly fade to black.

EXT. LOVE INSTITUTE - MORNING

Anna parks her car in front of the institute. She notices that one more warning icon is flashing on the dashboard. She sighs.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - ORIENTATION ROOM - MORNING

Since Anna is alone in the building, she goes to the orientation room. She observes the whole room.

She first sees the Playmobil maquettes that Duncan has prepared. She picks up some Playmobil figures and examines them. She smiles.

She goes near the CD player. She sees the French CDs and some papers with French lyrics. She picks up one CD and puts it in the CD player. She hits play, and the French version of Yazoo's "Only You" starts to play.

She holds a paper and sings in French. She tries, at least. And she does it very well.

At the slightly opened door, Amir appears, a bit confused by the song. Without Anna noticing, he observes her. He stands there for a while without interrupting her.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - TEST ROOM - DAY

Amir and Anna lay out two sets of objects on a pair of metal trays.

Bandages. Pliers. A wooden stick for biting. Noise-cancelling headphones.

Anna glances at Amir nervously. This is her first test.

The room is small and slightly more clinical-looking than the rest of the office. There are two chairs side by side and a metal hatch in the corner with two little Petri dishes inside.

Next to the hatch is a door leading to the results booth.

Amir places his metal tray beside one of the chairs. Anna places hers beside the other one.

AMIR

Ready?

ANNA

Yes. I just clamp down and pull?

AMIR

Yes. Press hard. And pull it out, not up.

Amir demonstrates. He grips his finger to his thumb and then pulls his elbow backwards, towards himself.

ANNA

This.

Anna copies him.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Not this.

Anna presses finger to thumb and then flicks her arm upwards as if throwing something over her shoulder.

AMIR

Exactly.

Anna nods nervously. Amir looks at her.

AMIR (CONT'D)

You'll be okay. You have very steady hands.

Anna smiles.

ANNA

Thank you.

He gives her a nod of encouragement.

AMIR

Okay, we're ready.

He ushers Maria and John into the room.

AMIR (CONT'D)

So... you're both clear on how the tests work?

They glance at the results poster and nod.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Okay. How are you feeling?

JOHN

I think we're feeling pretty confident after the exercises.

MARIA

We've been having sex every night this week. For at least an hour each time.

John nods.

AMIR

Great. Well, this will be quicker than that. Shall we?

Amir takes Maria to her seat. Anna shows John to his.

Anna puts the wooden stick between John's teeth.

ANNA

(quietly, comforting)
There you go.

Anna glances at Amir.

Anna puts her big noise-cancelling headphones round her neck and gives to Amir his.

AMIR

(Quietly to Anna)
I don't need them. Also, they rarely scream.

Anna nods.

Then she turns to John:

ANNA

Have you chosen which nail?

John points to his little finger on his left hand. Anna nods encouragingly. She straps his left arm down to the arm of the chair.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Good choice.

Amir is having a similar conversation with Maria.

AMIR
(turning to Anna)
Ready?

ANNA
Yep.

Anna puts her headphones over her ears but she looks at Amir and she takes them off. Then they each pick up a pair of pliers and yank a fingernail off their respective clients.

The couple tries to smile at each other through the screams.

Anna and Amir immediately start bandaging up their fingers, they wrap the bandage around the missing nail and seal it with a pre-cut bit of tape. Blood seeps into the bandages, and they slowly grow red.

Anna and Amir deposit the nails in the two Petri dishes. They lower the hatch and turn the machine on.

AMIR
(gesturing towards the
results booth)
Anna, do you want to...

ANNA
Oh, yes, thank you.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - RESULTS BOOTH - DAY

Anna enters the dark booth. She crouches in front of a computer screen. It reads: RESULT: _

Anna waits, heart in mouth. The underscore flashes as she listens to the machine whir.

Then, the sound cuts out. And, behind the hatch, the machine glows with a sudden burst of flames as the nails are incinerated.

The underscore keeps flashing.

Then, Anna's expression falls in disappointment.

RESULT: 0%

Through a window in the booth, she glances back into the testing room. Maria, John, and Amir are all facing the booth waiting for the result. The couple is holding hands. They look so full of hope.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - AMIR'S OFFICE - LATER

Anna and Amir eat lunch at Amir's desk in sullen silence.

They eat in silence for a while.

AMIR

You're going to have to get used to this.

ANNA

To what?

AMIR

Zero percents.

ANNA

Did you think they would get a positive result?

AMIR

No, not at all. But even if you know that they are not right for each other, at least they are trying. Worse is when they seem perfect for each other and they test negative.

Anna nods.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Don't worry, next time we'll nail it.

They laugh. After a moment Anna offers her sandwich to Amir.

ANNA

You want some?

AMIR

Thanks. But I can't eat gluten. I have an intolerance. If I eat it, I'll die from pain.

ANNA

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

AMIR

No, it's ok. It means I have to eat healthier. Even if I do miss the taste of some things.

Anna nods.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Is there anything that you have to live without?

Anna wasn't expecting that question from him.

ANNA
I can create a list. Two pages.

Amir smiles.

ANNA (CONT'D)
No everything is fine.

AMIR
Nice.

They continue their lunch.

INT. ANNA'S CAR / EXT. PARKING LOT - DUSK

Anna starts the car. It splutters to life.

Anna runs her hands through her hair, weary from a long day. Then the same strange icon on her dashboard starts to flash and beep again. Flickering and trilling faster and faster.

Anna groans. She presses a few buttons, trying to stop the sound.

Then suddenly smoke starts to stream out of the car hood.

INT. BUS / EXT. CITY ROAD - DUSK

Anna sits at the back of a bus, staring out the window.

The city's neon lights dance across her face.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE KITCHEN - MORNING

Anna is in the kitchen making a tea.

After a while Ryan arrives.

ANNA
Do you want coffee?

RYAN
No thanks.

He grabs a banana and starts eating.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Oh, how are you gonna get in?

ANNA
Oh um. Taking the bus is really easy. Straight to the school gates.

RYAN

Great.

(small pause)

Have you found any kids who could become famous? Any new Elvises?

ANNA

Err..

(small pause)

Maybe. There is a boy who is very good at ping pong.

RYAN

Are there any famous ping pong players?

ANNA

Hmmm... Yes. No? Let me think.. I am sure there must be someone famous in ping pong.

Anna is thinking.

A slightly-loaded pause. Ryan gazes at her. He smiles softly.

RYAN

You look nice today.

ANNA

Really? These pants don't really fit.

RYAN

Oh no, I think they make your um... your butt look... really nice.

Anna grins. She looks down at her butt, surprised. Juts it out a little, jokingly.

ANNA

Really? I think it looks normal.

Ryan nods, a little bashfully. Anna smiles. She puts the dishes down. Coyly:

ANNA (CONT'D)

How would you feel about being a little late for work?

She approaches him. He kisses her on the cheek.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Sincerely?

He kisses her for real.

RYAN
I've got a team meeting first
thing. I'm sorry.

Anna looks disappointed. But nods, understandingly.

ANNA
Okay.

Ryan leans in, pulls her to him and kisses her passionately.
Then he pulls away.

RYAN
I'll see you later.

Anna nods.

He gets ready, takes his bike and leaves the house.

RYAN (CONT'D)
(throwaway)
Love you.

Anna watches him go. Happy, confused, slightly melancholic.

Then she makes a decision. She hurries into the living room.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Anna takes a small device out of a drawer and fastens two
sticky pads to her chest. The Device has a big red button on
it.

She looks at the window at Ryan who leaves with his bike.

Her thumb hovers over the button.

Anna presses a button on the device. The electric shock hits
her.

We see her face, bracketed by the bathroom door and the
doorpost, wince in pain This is Anna practicing the exercise
Duncan mentioned in the presentation earlier. Hoping it'll
help.

She breathes deeply, getting through the pain .Her expression
falls: "What am I doing?"

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - HALLWAY - DAY

Anna walks down the institute hallway. Duncan is stapling a
small poster to the noticeboard.

Anna smiles at Duncan politely as she passes him. Then she
glances at the poster, reading it.

It's an announcement for a staff party celebrating the one-year anniversary of the institute.

DUNCAN

The institute's one year old today.
So I thought we should have a party
this weekend.

Anna smiles at him, ambiguously.

ANNA

Happy Birthday.

DUNCAN

You'll be there? I know it's last
moment notice.

ANNA

Uh. I usually spend weekends with
Ryan.

DUNCAN

Bring him along! I'd love to meet
him.

ANNA

(lying)

Oh uh. Ryan will actually be away
at a conference this weekend.

DUNCAN

Oh so you're...

ANNA

And I'm going with him. You know...
trying to be a supportive partner.

Duncan smiles.

DUNCAN

That's nice.

Anna nods at him then starts to move away.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

I also wanted to tell you that you
are doing great. Amir has been very
pleased with your work these last
few weeks.

Anna looks up, a bit surprised to hear this.

ANNA

Thank you.

She continues down the corridor.

EXT. LOVE INSTITUTE - DAY

Anna exits the institute.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - DAY

An uncrowded karaoke bar. A gay couple (in their 30s) is in front of the karaoke screen.

The woman warbles her way through Alain Barrière's "Elle Était Si Jolie". His partner sits in front of him, a little bit embarrassed, and tries to avoid eye contact.

Anna is late. She walks into the bar. She goes and sits next to Amir.

ANNA

Can I ask you something?

AMIR

Yes, what?

ANNA

Do you know any famous ping pong players?

AMIR

What? Err... Forrest Gump.

Anna smiles and shakes her head.

After a moment:

AMIR (CONT'D)

Did he tell you about the reallocation?

ANNA

Uh what? He just told me about the party.

AMIR

Duncan had a new idea and he thinks we should specialize more. Make each instructor an expert on a particular age group. We'll be handling couples in their 30s.

ANNA

Okay.

Anna looks pensive. She thinks. Amir glances at her. As if he knows what might be going through her mind and is waiting for her to voice the concern.

After a verse of the song, Anna leans over to Amir:

ANNA (CONT'D)
What about Rob and Sally?

This is what Amir was expecting. He tries to pretend he hasn't thought about.

AMIR
What about them?

ANNA
We won't work with them anymore?

AMIR
No.

They speak out of the side of their mouths while pretending to concentrate on the singing.

ANNA
Fuck. I thought they had a really good chance.

Anna looks really disappointed. Amir keeps trying to give nothing away.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I thought we were doing good work with them.

AMIR
I agree. But Karan has already taken them today. They are in good hands.

He turns back to the singing couple, not looking at Anna.

They sit and watch the singing together. Anna is deep in thought.

Amir winces at a particularly painful note. Anna leans over to him.

ANNA
Could you talk to Duncan? I'm sure we could keep this one couple.

Amir looks straight forward. He pauses. He wants to say yes. Then shakes his head.

AMIR
Duncan's made his mind up. It would be too complicated. We can make this personal.

Anna nods, deflated.

INT. POTTERY WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan stand on either side of a pottery wheel. They're at a pottery throwing workshop with a few other couples. In the far corner, only just visible, a couple are recreating the scene from "Ghost."

RYAN

It's so sticky. Why are we doing this?

Ryan looks almost disgusted at his own hands.

ANNA

I'm sorry... I thought it'd be fun.

The wheel keeps turning, and they try to shape the pot. It keeps getting wonky as it spins.

Suddenly, we see the lesbian couple that was at the interviews. They are nearby, looking at Anna and muttering.

Anna notices their presence, recognizes them, and looks away, panicked. Ryan sees Anna's strange behavior. The young couple comes over.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Hey!

Anna doesn't acknowledge them.

YOUNG WOMAN 1 (CONT'D)

Anna?

ANNA

Uh. Yes. Hi.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

How are you?

ANNA

Yes. Good, thank you. How are you?

The young couple gets confused by Anna's awkwardness.

Ryan frowns at Anna.

YOUNG WOMAN 2

We've got our test next week, so we decided to come here and do a bit of extracurricular work... as you suggested...

ANNA

(she interrupts her abruptly)

Oh, yes. Great, great... good idea. I'll see you soon.

The young couple starts to understand what is going on.

YOUNG WOMAN 1
Oh, okay, well. It was nice to see
you.

Anna flashes them a polite smile. The young couple wanders off.

Anna focuses on the pot. She steals a glance up at Ryan.
He's watching her, thoughtfully.

RYAN
Who are they?

ANNA
Nobody. I'm starving. Should we get
something to eat?

RYAN
Yes.

EXT. POTTERY WORKSHOP - NIGHT

After a while, they are outside the pottery workshop and realize it's pouring. They find shelter under a cover and stay there.

Ryan goes to the sidewalk.

ANNA
Wait for it to stop.

Ryan returns a bit wet.

There is an awkwardness between them, and they remain silent for a while.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I need to tell you something...

Ryan looks at her.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I haven't been very honest with you
recently.

Ryan looks serious. But unsurprised.

Anna freezes, but takes a deep breath and starts talking.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I didn't take the job at the
school. I've been working at a love
training institute downtown.

Both remain silent for a few moments. Ryan looks at her.

RYAN
Why didn't you tell me?

Suddenly, a couple comes out carrying a giant clay amphora. They open their umbrellas and leave. Another small pause between Ryan and Anna.

ANNA
I didn't want to worry you.

RYAN
Worry me about what?

ANNA
I... I don't know. I was stupid. I thought that if I told you, you would think there was something wrong with us. But it was stupid.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I also thought that um... we found each other, and there are so many people out there who desperately want to be in love like us... and I thought that I could maybe help them connect.

RYAN
Okay.

Three 60-year-old women comes out from the workshop. She stands close to them and looks at the rain. She also doesn't have an umbrella.

ANNA
I'm so sorry I didn't tell you. I probably should have.

Ryan doesn't respond.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Don't you want to say anything?

Anna waits for more. Ryan says nothing. He looks very annoyed by Anna's lie.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They enter the house together. They are both very wet. They take off their jackets and their shoes.

Anna begins to undress and goes inside. She turns to Ryan who stands next to the couch.

ANNA

I'm going to take a shower. Do you want to go in first?

RYAN

I'm just going to watch some TV.

He sits on the couch to watch TV, while still wearing his wet clothes. Anna looks at him, upset. She doesn't know if she should tell him more.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Anna's in the shower. Ryan enters the bathroom and pokes his head around the shower curtain.

RYAN

Can I...

He nods at the shower. He's asking to join.

ANNA

Yeah.

He gets in.

RYAN

Is there something wrong?

ANNA

No.

RYAN

Did you lie to me because I think these training programs are nonsense?

Anna grabs the sponge and starts washing Ryan's back.

ANNA

Umm... yes. I thought you might insist on me taking the job at the school if I told you.

RYAN

I wouldn't have done that.

ANNA

I know. It's my fault. I just... really wanted to work there.

RYAN

I understand that. But what you did is fucking serious.

ANNA

I know. It's the first time I've ever lied to you. And I'll never do it again.

(small pause)

Have you ever hidden anything from me?

RYAN

Of course, I have. But trivial things. Like, uh... Nina Simone bores me to death, but I listen to her songs because you like her.

Anna tries to say something lighter.

ANNA

Okay. Well I guess if we count those. I have to also admit that I really like the fatty bits of the steak. From now on, they are mine.

Ryan turns, looks at Anna. Then takes the sponge from her. He begins washing her, starting from the neck. Anna smiles.

RYAN

I think that we should continue lying a bit for little stupid things.

Anna nods.

ANNA

There's a party at the office on Saturday. I told them I couldn't make it, but if you want, we could go together. I want you to see where I work.

Ryan nods. They continue washing each other.

EXT. LOVE INSTITUTE/PARKING - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan get out from the taxi. They walk towards the institute.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - WORKSPACE - LATER

Anna is at a folding table, set up as a bar. She pours two glasses of punch – one for her and one for Ryan.

Ryan is reading the posters on the wall. He reads a FRENCH VOCABULARY poster.

Anna gives him a glass of punch. He thanks her with a flick of his eyebrows and looks back at the poster. She explains;

ANNA

French is a very romantic language.

Ryan nods. Duncan and his girlfriend, GINA, approach them.

DUNCAN

Hey!

ANNA

Hi! Ryan, this is Duncan. Duncan,
this is Ryan.

DUNCAN

And this is Gina.

They shake hands and begin small talk. Ryan's clearly a bit out of his element, but he's trying. Anna appreciates it.

Then, she glances across the room and sees Amir, who has just arrived with his girlfriend NATASHA (27, tall, beaming smile). They head towards the bar, with Natasha leading the way.

Amir steers Natasha towards the group.

AMIR

Hey. Nice to meet you. This is
Natasha.

RYAN

(to Natasha)

Hi. I'm Ryan. I'm with Anna.

AMIR

(whispering to her)

I talked with Duncan. We'll keep
Rob and Sally.

Ryan interrupts them.

RYAN

(to Amir)

Hey, I'm Ryan. Nice to meet you.

Amir shakes his hand, looking to Anna, who is a bit embarrassed.

AMIR

Nice to meet you. I've heard a lot
about you from Anna. We've been
working together these past few
weeks.

RYAN

(he hasn't)

I've heard a lot about you too.

Anna looks at Amir. She is so happy. They all return to drinks and small chat.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - WORKSPACE - LATER

The lights have lowered and a dance floor has formed. Depeche Mode - "Just Can't Get Enough" is playing. Some people are dancing in couples, others in groups. It's fun - they're coming out of their shells.

Anna dances with Ryan casually, nothing too out there. She puts her arms around his neck, and he takes her waist. Ryan smiles a little.

She sees Natasha and Amir dancing a few feet away. They're laughing at something. Natasha does a twirl.

As she's spinning, Amir glances at Anna and notices her looking at him. They hold eye contact maybe a beat longer than feels natural. Definitely a beat longer.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - KITCHEN/HALLWAY - LATER

Anna is next to a table set up with food. She's drinking some water, looking over the spread. There is a big cake decorated for the anniversary.

After a moment she takes the cake knife and tries to cut a piece. But she doesn't want to take one from the corner as it has more whipped cream, so she tries to take one from the center, with difficulty.

While she's trying to get her center piece, Natasha arrives to get something to eat. Anna notices her.

ANNA

Are you enjoying the party?

NATASHA

Mhmm... Everyone's very nice.

Anna smiles politely. Natasha smiles warmly.

ANNA

You and Amir are such great dancers.

NATASHA

I love dancing to songs that are about dancing.

Natasha points at the cake.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Could you also please cut two pieces for me and Amir?

ANNA
Yes for sure.

Anna starts cutting two pieces from the edge. As she does it she realizes;

ANNA (CONT'D)
Err. The cake is not gluten free.

NATASHA
And why is that a problem?

ANNA
Because Amir will die from pain if he eats gluten. He has an allergy.

Natasha looks puzzled and doesn't know what to say. Then she realizes, she's caught.

NATASHA
Oh um. No - yeah, that's right...
You're right. He is gluten free. I just forgot. Please don't tell him I forgot!

Anna doesn't believe her. It's impossible to forget a detail like that.

Natasha stays silent for a while.

NATASHA (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Natasha walks away. Anna thinks for a moment. She's beginning to realize that something is not right. She heads back towards the dance floor in the main work space.

INT. LOVE INSTITUTE - WORKSPACE - LATER

Anna walks towards the dance floor. Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons - "The Night" comes on. Cheers from the crowd. Everybody is dancing. Even looser now.

People are coupled up, and in groups. A small circle has formed around Alexandra and Nathan, who dance in the middle.

Then, she sees Amir, separated from the rest. Single. He's dancing. Eyes closed. It's esoteric and personal. Sometimes he is feeling the music so much that he makes moves like the best dancer in the world. Sometimes he doesn't move at all.

Anna takes it in. She now knows his secret. She's watching him and reconciling all of her little glimpses behind the curtain into the cohesive image of the person dancing in front of her.

EXT. LOVE INSTITUTE - NIGHT

Anna is sitting on the stairs of the building, shivering a little. Ryan has run back inside to get his scarf.

A group of office workers come out of the doors, laughing. Anna smiles at them as they mumble their goodnights and stumble away down the street.

Then, Amir arrives at the door.

AMIR

Hey...I'm just running out to grab some more beer. We're out. Are you leaving?

She nods.

ANNA

Yes. Ryan's just forgot his scarf.

Amir nods. He hovers for a moment, unsure whether to continue or wait with Anna. He sits down next to her.

AMIR

I'll wait with you.

They sit in silence for a moment. Anna doesn't know what to say. Amir has no idea he's been exposed. And they are not quite used to this level of physical proximity. Particularly after a few drinks.

ANNA

Where's Natasha?

AMIR

She went home. She has to get up early tomorrow.

Anna nods and smiles politely, then after a pause:

ANNA

You guys seem great together...

Amir nods. After a small pause, he looks her in the eyes. Anna tries to seem casual. But she doesn't dare to look away. She's trying to figure him out.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(smiling)

What?

Amir finally breaks eye contact, looks away.

AMIR

Sorry. I was just thinking of something.

A strange pause. They watch the cars go past. Anna decides to push further. She's feeling something, does he feel the same way?

ANNA

What is the purpose of the underwater exercise? With the staring?

AMIR

(teasing)

I knew it. You never read the materials.

Anna smiles.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Um...it's supposed to simulate a feeling of breathlessness and the action of looking each other in the eyes at the same time can create... I don't know. Intimacy.

Anna looks at him. Even though he is just describing an exercise, she is finally seeing him clearly, underneath his mask. She sees his vulnerability and his longing.

AMIR (CONT'D)

It's a nice idea. As most of them are. Once you are reminded of it, you realize how little you really look anyone in the eyes anymore.

(smiles as he says that)

We are so fucking stupid.

He turns to Anna, who is also smiling.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Not you. I mean...

ANNA

Yes, I know what you mean. And I'm fucking stupid, too.

They both smile. For a while, there is an awkwardness between them. They don't know how to continue the conversation. As if they want to say so much, but just their eyes and their smile say everything.

AMIR

Look, the exercises help a lot...but it's not only that...

Anna nods.

They both look out at the street and watch the people passing by. Couples. Singletons. Friends.

After a few moments of silence:

AMIR (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 How many of these people do you
 think are in love for real?

Anna looks at him. She turns back to the street and focuses on the faces.

An old couple, waiting at a bus stop, the man snoring with his head on the woman's shoulder. A drunk couple walking along the curb like it's a tightrope, giggling. A nurse in scrubs, yawning, walking on the street.

Then, Ryan emerges with his scarf. Anna stands up. Amir stands up.

RYAN
 Hey. I found it.

ANNA
 Nice.

RYAN
 (to Amir)
 It was really nice to meet you.

AMIR
 (to Ryan)
 You too... Night.

ANNA
 G'night. See you on Monday.

Amir waves at them politely. Anna and Ryan walk down the street.

As they're walking away, Anna looks back at Amir and sees him standing on his own, gazing longingly at the people passing by.

INT. TAXI/EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan are in the back of a taxi heading home. Anna stares out of the window. The car speeds down empty roads.

Ryan takes her hand and holds it. She turns to him.

ANNA
 Did you have fun?

RYAN
 Yeah.

ANNA
 It was a bit boring.

RYAN

A bit.

ANNA

Thank you for coming. I love you.

RYAN

Love you too.

Anna rests her head on his shoulder. But she is thinking about something. She is undoubtedly thinking about something else.

INT. SKYDIVING PLANE - DAY

It's Monday. Anna and Amir belted into their seats on a skydiving plane. They're both looking dead-forward - not at each other. They're 14,000 feet up, and the door's open. A deafening wind blows through the cabin.

Amir's eyes dart to Anna for a second.

ANNA

What time did the party finish on Saturday?

AMIR

I think around five.

Anna nods. After a small pause:

AMIR (CONT'D)

How do you feel?

Rob and Sally are sitting opposite them.

ROB

I'm excited. I have never done this before.

SALLY

I'm a bit scared but we'll do it together.

Anna smiles.

In front of them, one couple strapped together jumps out of the plane. A dozen other couples are all strapped to each other, waiting to jump. One of the strapped-together couples shuffles over to Anna and Ryan.

WOMAN

Excuse me? Sorry to interrupt.

AMIR

Is everything okay?

WOMAN

Um. We're just wondering if this exercise is really necessary...?

AMIR

Well, we've found that the adrenaline and the experience of having your lives in each other's hands can be very effective. But, of course, you don't have to do it if you don't want to.

WOMAN

Okay. It's just that... my partner - Andrew - he's suddenly realized that he has a deathly fear of heights.

The man strapped to her nods gravely.

ANDREW

Like deathly.

WOMAN

Could we do it with a skydiving instructor?

ANNA

(without missing a beat)

What if one of you falls in love with the instructor?

The couple isn't sure if Anna is being serious. They nervously look at Amir.

Amir glances at Anna. A slight smile appears on his lips.

AMIR

Okay. We'll arrange it for another day.

The Man and the Woman look incredibly relieved. They shuffle back to their seat.

SKYDIVING INSTRUCTOR

(shouting)

NEXT!

The instructor beckons another couple towards the open door.

SKYDIVING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

Don't forget to pull the cord.
Okay?

They nod before the Skydiving Instructor pushes them out the open door. Their screams fade as they plummet away from us.

Amir and Anna watch as Rob and Sally, brace themselves and shuffle towards the exit.

Anna turns to Amir and says something impulsively.

ANNA
I liked your dancing.

Amir smiles.

AMIR
Thanks.

EXT. SKY - DAY

We linger on a dozen couples hanging in the air. Tiny drops of color against a vast gray sky. They are not afraid of falling from a great height. They are desperately trying to succeed.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

Amir's car pulls up next to a muddy swamp. Amir gets out of the car first. Then, Anna. A heavy wind rustles their hair and clothes. They look down into the swamp.

ANNA
Fuck.

One couple has landed in the middle of the swamp. They've sunk up to their waists and are wailing for help. The parachute is spread out around them like cake icing.

Amir looks at Anna questioningly. She looks down at the couple, sighs, and nods at Amir.

They move towards the swamp.

INT/EXT. AMIR'S CAR/INTERSECTION - DAY

Amir and Anna are in Amir's car, stopped at a red light. They're both covered head-to-toe in mud. "Be My Baby" is playing on the radio.

AMIR
This light is taking forever.

He nods at the passenger side window. Anna glances at it then smiles at Amir, politely.

ANNA
Have you got a change of clothes at the office?

AMIR
(smiling)
I'm wearing it.

ANNA
Do you want to stop at your place
and pick up some clothes? I don't
mind at all.

Amir hesitates. Thinking. The light goes green.

AMIR
OK. I'll be very quick.

Amir goes to drive off, but the car stalls. A bit
embarrassed, he tries to restart the car but it doesn't.

AMIR (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Wunderbar.

Anna looks at him. A smile slowly grows on her face after he
uses her word.

The car starts.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Finally.

After a few moments.

ANNA
(to herself)
Blue.

No one talks. Then, a light blue car drives right past them.
Anna smiles to herself.

Amir looks confused - he doesn't know the game.

INT. CAR/EXT. AMIR'S APARTMENT - DAY

The car pulls up to Amir's block of apartments.

AMIR
I'll be right back.

He moves to open the door.

ANNA
Do you mind if I come up?

Amir looks like he doesn't want her to come up - he clearly
has something to hide - but he's too polite to say no.

AMIR
I'll just be two minutes.

ANNA

Just to wash some of the mud off my hands...? Unless I'll bother Natasha.

She holds her hands out to show him how muddy they are.

Amir looks down at them, still uncertain.

AMIR

No, she's at work, but it's really messy in there. I haven't had time to...

ANNA

Okay. I'll wait here then.

Amir frowns and then relents.

AMIR

Alright come on up. I'll make us some tea.

INT. AMIR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Amir's apartment is neat and tidy. He has great taste, which is clear from his design aesthetic. But it's also sparse. It definitely looks like the home of a single person.

Anna is in the bathroom and she washes her hands. She notices in front of her in the mirror that there is a cup with only one toothbrush. She looks at it.

Then she goes out and roams around the apartment curiously as Amir makes her a cup of coffee. Amir is moving through the kitchen quickly, neurotically. Obviously stressed to have her in his space.

AMIR

Where did she put the sugar?

Anna stops in front of an enormous bookshelf that takes up the largest wall in the living room area. Her eyes widen, impressed that anyone could have such an extensive book collection. She goes over and stands in front of it, admiring his books and things.

Amir delivers the coffee to a small, circular wooden dining table. He pulls out one of the chairs for Anna, summoning her to it.

AMIR (CONT'D)

You can sit here.

Anna smiles and takes a seat.

AMIR (CONT'D)
 I'll be quick... but if you get
 bored... here...

Without paying attention, he retrieves a large novel from the bookshelf and plops it down in front of Anna. It's Leo Tolstoy's WAR AND PEACE.

AMIR (CONT'D)
 This is very... um...
 (looking down, sees the
 book he's selected)
 ...inte-re-sting. I'll be done in
 ten minutes.

Amir heads down the hall to the bathroom. Anna looks up from the book, bemused.

ANNA
 No rush.

Anna sips her coffee and turns a page from the book without looking at it. She's listening for something.

As soon as she hears the shower turn on, she stands and begins to explore.

A huge cabinet is taken up with a vast vinyl record collection. Anna is increasingly impressed. Anna takes a few of the records out: "CRYING" by Roy Orbison; "BEST OF" by Johnny Cash; a compilation of classical piano concertos.

Anna selects the classical album and puts it on the record player, gently lowering the needle. Mozart's "Piano Concerto No. 27" fills the room.

Anna finds a photo album on the bookshelf. She picks it up. It's full of photos of Amir doing various activities with friends. Amir at the beach. Amir playing tennis. Amir traveling the world. A full life. A few women, but obviously no one very significant. And no Natasha.

Next to it, there is a shelf with DVDs - many different titles. Among them are many romantic films. And only one horror movie. If "Body Heat" is even considered a horror movie.

Then, we see that the bathroom door is open just a crack.

Amir, unbeknownst to Anna, is watching her. He spies on her and sees that she is searching around his stuff.

The shower is still running behind him - a decoy.

Then, he goes back in the shower.

Anna hears the water stop. She sits down in the chair and opens the book.

Around the corner, Amir comes out of the bathroom wearing a bathrobe. He stands and looks at Anna. She's flicking through the book innocently, ears burning. Amir looks at her curiously, trying to figure her out.

AMIR

Um. Anna?

For a second, Anna wonders if he saw her sneaking around.

ANNA

What?

Amir pauses. Their eyes meet for a moment. There is a strange tension between them. He wants her to acknowledge it. He now knows that she knows. And he wants her to know. Because he wants to be with her.

But eventually, he just says:

AMIR

Nothing... I'll be ready in just a minute.

ANNA

Oh. Okay. Great.

They smile at each other. Then, Amir heads to his room to get dressed. Anna takes a deep breath, relieved.

INT. TESTING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Rob's eyes are wide, eyebrows raised. He looks completely terrified. He's sitting in one of the testing chairs. Amir is strapping his arm to the chair. Behind him, Anna is doing the same to Sally. Sally looks at Anna nervously.

ANNA

You okay?

Sally nods, unconvincingly. Then, after a moment, she leans forward and whispers to Anna:

SALLY

I don't wanna lose him.

ANNA

It's gonna be fine, Sally.

SALLY

But what if it's...what do we do then?

Sally gazes at Anna, waiting for an answer. Anna swallows.

ANNA
(unconvincingly)
Don't worry.

If Anna's honest, she has no idea what they should do if the test is negative.

On the other side of the room, Rob stares down at his hand and starts hyperventilating.

ROB
I don't think I like this.

AMIR
It's okay, don't worry.

ROB
No no no I really don't like this.
I really don't like this.

Anna and Sally look over at him.

AMIR
Rob, it's just a brief moment of pain. And then it's done okay?

ROB
I don't wanna do it.

Sally looks on with concern. Amir speaks soothingly.

AMIR
Rob, just close your eyes and bite down on this.

Amir tries to put the wooden stick into Rob's mouth, but he pulls his face away and starts unstrapping his arm.

ROB
I'm not doing it.

SALLY
Rob, look at me. It's gonna be okay. We've waited so long for this.

ROB
I'm sorry, Sally. I'm just fucking freaking out. You know how I feel about blood.

ANNA
There's really not much blood.

SALLY
I'm scared too but it'll be really quick right?

Sally looks to Anna and Amir to back her up. They both nod. Rob stands up.

ROB

I'm sorry - you guys have been so nice to us. But I'm just not...

AMIR

Rob, listen to me. I know your scared and feel vulnerable right now. I know exactly what that feels like. But I've done this before. And it's not as bad as you think it will be.

Amir holds out his hands to show Rob his unscarred fingers.

ROB

I don't care. You don't have to do it right now. I have to do it. Not you.

Anna turns to Amir, unsure of what to do. Amir searches around the room, looking for an answer. Sally is distressed but can't leave her seat to comfort Rob because she's strapped to the chair's arm.

Anna looks at Amir helplessly. She holds her hands up: what do we do?

Suddenly, Amir has an idea. He turns to Anna.

AMIR

(whispers)
I'll do it.

Anna doesn't understand exactly what he means. She barely heard what he said.

He strides over to Rob and calmly places his hands on Rob's shoulders.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Rob... look at me... it's not that bad. I'll show you.

Amir grabs pliers and a wooden stick, then turns to Rob.

AMIR (CONT'D)

If I do it, will you do it?

ROB

What?

AMIR

If I do it, will you do it?

ROB
 What? Ummm... I dunno. I mean,
 maybe?

ANNA
 (to Amir)
 Really?

He gives her a helpless look: what else can we do?

AMIR
 I'll do it, you'll see it's no big
 deal and then it's your turn?

ROB
 Ummm. Okay.

ANNA
 (to Amir)
 What are you doing?

AMIR
 (to Rob)
 Okay.

Amir bites down on the wooden stick. He clenches his fist around the pliers, grabs one of his nails, and rips it out, all in one clean, swift movement. He's clearly done this before - more than once.

A shocked silence falls in the room.

Amir looks fine for a moment. Then he turns his back on the couple and winces in pain. To himself:

AMIR (CONT'D)
 Fuck.

He swallows the pain. Then, trying to smile, turns back to the others.

AMIR (CONT'D)
 Just a little scratch.

He laughs a little. Through the pain. The others are wide-eyed but start to laugh a little as well.

Eventually Anna grabs a bandage and moves to Amir, wrapping his bloody finger tenderly.

Rob leans against the wall, dumbfounded by what has just happened.

INT. TESTING ROOM - LATER

Anna is finishing bandaging Rob's finger. Sally, with her finger already dressed, watches on.

Rob, clearly embarrassed by how he behaved earlier, looks down, red-cheeked, and avoids eye contact.

ANNA
 (to Rob, kindly)
 Well done. Won't be long now.

At this reminder of the test, Rob and Sally suddenly look a bit nervous. They glance at each other, hopeful yet scared.

In the background, Amir is preparing Rob and Sally's fingernails and putting them into the machine for testing.

Anna goes to Amir, while Rob and Sally are not looking at her. She approaches him and stops right behind him. She puts her hands around his body and hugs him. Tightly. Affectionately.

Amir doesn't know what he should do. He stands still. After a few seconds, Anna removes her hands from his body.

Amir steps into the booth and closes the door. We hear the machine as it begins to whir. And we stay on Amir - his eyes wide and full of anticipation.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Anna stands in the institute's hallway. She holds a camera and seems to be giving instructions to some people.

ANNA
 A little bit to the right. Yes,
 it's good there. Maybe a little bit
 to the left. Yes, now it's perfect.

In front of her, we see Rob and Sally. They are both very happy. Rob is hugging Sally, and they are about to have their picture taken.

Amir stands close. He is undoubtedly happy, as is Anna. They have achieved something important: To prove that what they saw so clearly is true.

At the same time, Amir is also thinking of what happened earlier. He sneaks glances at Anna. Through his eyes, we understand that there's something there. Something deep. Something that maybe he hasn't felt for a long time.

The first picture is taken.

From the end of the hallway, Duncan is coming. He approaches them and gives them the certificate. They are both very happy.

DUNCAN
 This is yours. Congratulations.

He shakes both their hands. Anna takes a picture of the three of them. Duncan sees the flash and turns, smiling at Anna. He smiles at Amir too. He looks happy with their work.

ROB

Now, this... Is it valid forever,
or will we have to retake the test?

DUNCAN

(smiling)
Nothing lasts forever. But perhaps
it is forever. It really depends on
you, when and whether you want to
retake the test.

Rob and Sally smile. They both seem relieved.

SALLY

Could we have a picture with Amir
and Anna?

DUNCAN

Yes, of course.

Duncan looks at Amir and Anna. They both nod, smiling.

They go next to the couple and get ready for the shot. Amir taps Rob on the shoulder and whispers something in his ear. Rob laughs. Anna looks at Amir. Amir looks back at Anna. A little moment of awkwardness.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Great, now, look at me for a
moment.

They all turn and look straight ahead. They look at Duncan and smile. The flash goes off.

INT. TESTING ROOM - LATER

Anna is tidying up after the test, packing away the medical supplies, when she finds the Petri dish with Amir's fingernail still sitting in it. She is ready to throw it into the medical waste bin but stops. Instead of throwing it away, she places the Petri dish on the metal table next to the bin. She looks up and sees her reflection in the glass of the framed poster on the wall.

Anna stares at her reflection for a moment, then suddenly walks over to the door. She opens it and pops her head out to check if anyone is around.

It's the end of the day, and most people have already left, so there's no one in the hallway except the cleaner.

Anna closes the door and locks it. She then moves quickly back to the table and grabs a set of pliers.

INT. TESTING ROOM BOOTH- LATER

Anna is sat in the testing room booth. The machine is whirring. Anna stares at the screen intensely. The sound stops, a burst of flames appears suddenly behind the hatch. Anna's eyes widen in anticipation.

Then, the result comes up on the screen:

RESULT: 50%

Anna stares at the number on the screen. Her face is frozen. Goose-pimples ripple up her forearm. The printer starts printing the result. Anna doesn't know what this result means. Is she or Amir in love? She is so confused as she knows her feelings.

Anna hastily closes the results window on the computer. She grabs the printed result from the printer, scrunches it up, and pockets it. She takes a deep breath and leaves the booth.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Anna arrives at the bus stop. She sits down.

She takes out of her pocket a small paper bag from a pharmacy store. She takes out a two fingers splint and tries to put it on her bandaged finger.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Anna is in the living room listening to music and thinking.

After a little while, Ryan arrives at home.

RYAN
Hey, I'm home.

ANNA
Hey. How was your day?

Ryan removes his jacket.

RYAN
Difficult.

ANNA
Why, what happened?

RYAN
Ronan, you know how bad he is. He was unprepared again and I didn't know what to do with the presentation...

Ryan notices the splint.

RYAN (CONT'D)
What happened?

ANNA
Oh, I fell sprained my finger.

Ryan grimaces.

RYAN
We should go to the hospital to get
it checked.

ANNA
(shaking her head)
No, really.
(gesturing to the splint)
It's just in case

RYAN
You sure? It doesn't hurt?

ANNA
No, it's fine.

Ryan leans over, gives Anna a kiss on the cheek. Anna smiles at him.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You hungry?

RYAN
Starving.

ANNA
Great, there are some leftovers
from yesterday.

Ryan smiles at her.

INT. ANNA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

A few moments later, they are both sitting at the dining table having yesterday's leftovers. Anna looks at Ryan. She is so confused.

INT. DUNCAN OFFICE - MORNING

Anna stands at the entrance to Duncan's office. He is sat at his desk. There are two astronaut figures on the desk, which he is studying closely. Anna knocks gently on the open door to get his attention.

Duncan looks up.

DUNCAN
Ah! Anna, good morning.

ANNA
Do you have a moment?

DUNCAN
Of course.

Duncan motions for her to come in and take a seat. He's still staring at the astronaut figures.

Anna sits down. She looks at the figures.

ANNA
Um... what's...?

Duncan speaks almost like he's lost in a trance:

DUNCAN
I was with my son Milo yesterday playing with these. He made them fly through space. Then, he was trying to make them kiss.

He brings the two figures together, so it looks like they're kissing, separated by their space helmets.

ANNA
Uh... I didn't know that you had a son.

DUNCAN
(a bit sad)
Yes, he's nine now. He's from my previous marriage. His mother and I divorced three years ago.

Anna wasn't expecting that. She didn't know that about Duncan.

ANNA
Oh..

DUNCAN
(smiling a bit sadly)
Yes, I've also had a negative test myself.

Duncan stares at the figures.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
But what do you think? Maybe we could try it?

He looks at Anna, who seems to be a little confused.

ANNA
Uh... send couples into space and make them...?

DUNCAN

Yes. Well. No... that might be a bit extreme.

ANNA

...and expensive?

Duncan seems to snap out of his trance-like state, puts the figures down, and focuses his attention on Anna.

DUNCAN

Anyway... what can I help you with?

(noticing the splint on her hand for the first time)

Ooh, what happened there?

Duncan motions to Anna's finger. She smiles, embarrassed.

ANNA

Oh... I'm so clumsy. I fell over at home. Nothing serious.

Duncan smiles empathetically.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I wanted to ask you something.

Duncan nods: "go ahead"

ANNA (CONT'D)

I was wondering... is it possible... Can one person be in love, I mean have a positive result, with two different people at the same time?

Duncan frowns.

DUNCAN

Why do you ask?

ANNA

Oh. Um. Just in case the question comes up with one of the couples... I wanted to know what to tell them.

Duncan nods understandingly.

DUNCAN

No. Sadly, that's not possible. That would be like a 6-months pregnant woman suddenly getting pregnant with a second child. A biological impossibility.

ANNA
Right, yes. That's what I thought
so, too. Thank you.

DUNCAN
Was that all?

ANNA
Yes.

Anna gets up to leave, but then:

DUNCAN
Oh, Anna, I forgot to tell you.
What Amir did yesterday...

Anna hesitates, sits back down.

ANNA
Oh. Yes. It was...

DUNCAN
(interrupting)
...Yes, we didn't discuss it. It's
not professional, but... it's okay.
Amir is.. Amir.

ANNA
Thanks.

Duncan smiles at Anna's reaction. Anna smiles too.

INT. BAR - DAY

Anna sits near the small stage of the bar watching Amir work with a new couple (30s). The lyrics (in French) for "La Mer" by Charles Trenet are up on a screen.

Amir is explaining to the couple what the lyrics mean in English. They listen carefully.

Anna gazes at Amir thoughtfully. He looks so studious - so determined to get it right.

AMIR
...So, "La Mer" means "The Sea".
He's singing about the sea.

MAN
Which sea?

AMIR
Not a particular sea. Just... the
sea... in general.

The man and the woman nod thoughtfully.

MAN

All the seas.

AMIR

More like the sea as an idea. And
um... the idea is... love. The sea
is love.

Anna smiles softly at Amir's innocent romanticism. Amir sees her out of the corner of his eye, but he focuses back in on the couple. It's a bit awkward since their hug.

WOMAN

And what about the rest of the
lyrics?

AMIR

Well, he talks about angels, about
white birds and white sheep... and
rusty houses.

MAN

And how is that romantic?

AMIR

It... it just is... the music is
very romantic. It doesn't really
matter what he's saying.

Anna helps Amir get out of this line of questioning by pressing the play button, signaling to the woman that it's time to start singing. Amir shoots Anna a grateful smile.

WOMAN

Do I sing now?

AMIR

Uh... yes. Go ahead.

The woman stands up and positions herself in front of her partner. She sways a little to the music, glances at the lyrics, then starts to sing the words in a bad French accent. But she has a nice voice - underpowered and definitely untrained but tuneful.

Woman's singing underscores the following sequence:

EXT. BUS STOP - DUSK

Anna waits at a bus stop just outside the institute. Amir's car pulls up. They have a brief conversation that is muted beneath the music. Amir is offering Anna a lift home.

INT. CAR/EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Amir and Anna are in the car without looking at each other. He asks which way to go every now and then, and she gives him directions. Straight on. Left here.

Occasionally, when they think the other isn't looking, they steal a glance sideways – trying to catch a glimpse of the other's expression.

Anna's passenger-side window is open. A strong gust of wind is blowing through it. Anna's hair flies all over the place, getting in her eyes.

She tries to wind the window up, but it's the broken one we saw Amir carefully unwind earlier. The window starts to jut out at a strange angle. Anna stops, worried.

Amir leans across her and tries to fix it, all while keeping an eye on the road. Anna leans forward in her seat to let him. But it's a two-handed job, and Amir still has one hand on the wheel.

Anna offers, silently, to take the wheel. She leans across, in front of Amir and puts her hands on the wheel.

They hold this position for a moment, each leaning across the other to get to the window/wheel.

Once Amir manages to wind the window all the way up, he sits back and takes the wheel from Anna. They drive on silently together. "La Mer", in all its boundless romanticism, plays over their journey.

INT. CAR/EXT. HOUSE - DUSK

Amir pulls up outside Anna's house. They sit quietly for a moment.

ANNA

Thanks for the lift.

AMIR

No worries.

(nodding his head towards
her bandaged finger)

Try not to hurt yourself tonight...

ANNA

Oh. Ha. Yes... I'll try.

Anna goes to get out of the car, but stops and looks back at Amir, as if she has something else she wants to say.

Amir looks at her expectantly, waiting for her to speak.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 (after a pause)
 Can I ask you something?

Amir nods.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 What makes you want to work at the
 institute?

Amir looks confused. He pauses.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 I mean...

AMIR
 (interrupts her)
 No, I got the question...
 (he thinks about it for a
 second)
 I always enjoyed pulling out
 people's fingernails. It's my
 thing.

Anna smiles. Amir also smiles.

AMIR (CONT'D)
 I just... I just wanted to be
 there, and maybe understand love
 better. And I thought I did. But I
 don't know. Lately...especially
 lately I am not sure..

Anna looks at him and nods.

ANNA
 Thanks. And for the ride.
 (after a small pause)
 See you tomorrow.

Amir nods.

Anna gets out of the car and closes the door.
 Amir longingly watches her walk away. He waits for her to
 open the door to her building and get in safely before he
 drives away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan are sitting on the couch watching TV. A
 documentary about space travel plays on TV.

NARRATOR
 It would take over a hundred
 million years for light to travel
 between these two points.

Anna's attention is elsewhere. She looks deep in thought.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

For all we know, stars such as these may have died long ago. But the light is yet to reach us here on earth. What we see is merely an image of how they used to be.

RYAN

Did you remember tomorrow is Carrie's birthday?

ANNA

Yes, of course. I bought her a present yesterday.

RYAN

What did you buy? I didn't see it.

ANNA

Yeah, sorry, I forgot to show you -an album.

RYAN

What album?

ANNA

(smiling)

"The Best of Nina Simone"

Ryan smiles.

RYAN

I hope they gave you a gift receipt.

Anna smiles.

After this quick conversation, they both return to where they were previously sitting. Ryan is watching the documentary, and Anna is lost in her thoughts. After a while, Anna thinks of something and breaks her silence.

ANNA

I think it's kind of cool that they retook the test, don't you? I was thinking, since I work there and get a discount, we could take advantage and do it again?

RYAN

What?

ANNA

You know... just for fun.

Ryan pauses and looks at her like she's insane. He laughs and turns back to the TV, shaking his head.

RYAN

No way. There's nothing fun about having your fingernail ripped out.

After a pause:

ANNA

I just thought... Since the institute has such a good reputation... and with the discount...

RYAN

But we already passed the test. Why would we do it again?

ANNA

(insisting)

Well, because... like, Carrie and Andy took it.

RYAN

I don't care what other people do.

Anna trails off. She can't think of another reason.

Ryan looks at Anna, trying to understand what's going on in her mind. He's concerned now. He is wondering whether this is not just about the discount.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I mean... Do you think we need to? To retake the test? Has anything changed?

ANNA

No! No. It's just that...

RYAN

...because my feelings haven't changed. If anything, I think they're stronger now.

ANNA

It's not about that.

RYAN

Then, what is it about?

Anna's frustration is escalating.

ANNA

I don't know... it's just...

RYAN

Can we please drop this? I really don't want to be having this conversation.

ANNA

(upset)

Fine. Forget I said anything.

Anna and Ryan both look back at the TV, both frustrated by the way this conversation played out.

Anna looks disappointed and upset. Ryan looks confused and annoyed. He crosses his arms over his chest and stares at the TV.

RYAN

What do you want? It's normal to get into a bit of routine. That's the nature of being in a relationship.

ANNA

(quietly)

You can't take it for granted... I think relationships should be worked on everyday.. All the time.

RYAN

OK. And?

ANNA

Nothing, I'm sorry, forget it.

Anna goes to the kitchen to drink some water. Ryan stays there skeptical.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anna's head on her pillow. Eyes wide open. Staring at Ryan, who's lying next to her, on the edge of sleep. His breath begins to deepen and slowly turn to light, child-like snores.

She stares.

And stares.

And stares.

He looks so peaceful.

She breathes deeply. As if psyching herself up for something incredibly difficult.

Then, slowly, she gets out of bed. She leaves the room. We listen to Ryan's quiet snoring. The rain patters against the window.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna is lying on the sofa. Looking at the ceiling again. She holds the stress ball. She starts throwing it on the ceiling. Her goal is to touch the ceiling and then catch it. She is doing that a bit mechanically as her mind is somewhere else.

After a moment Ryan appears in the door.

RYAN
Why are you up?

ANNA
I can't sleep...

Ryan looks at her.

RYAN
Okay, let's godo it now.

Anna looks at him.

ANNA
Now?

RYAN
Yes, let's go now. Do you have the work keys?

Anna nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I prefer to get it done now than to go in another day with all your colleagues there.

Anna doesn't know how to respond. Since things have gotten this far, she has two options: Either to back off and never think about it again or validate her feelings.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night, and the office is completely empty. It's quiet and serene. A naturally busy space rarely seen in this state of undisturbed calm. We hold on to the area.

We hear a door open. Footsteps at the stairs. Then, a key is turning in a lock. Anna and Ryan walk down the hallway through the empty office.

INT. TESTING ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan is sat on the chair. He doesn't look what Anna is doing. He seems quite sleepy and annoyed.

Ryan's nail sits in a Petri dish in the hatch of the machine.

Anna stands next to the machine. She will pull out the finger next to the injured one. She puts the wooden stick between her teeth and takes a few nervous breaths.

She picks up the pliers, and, with a grunt, we see her face drain of color.

She puts her nail beside Ryan's in the hatch and hits the button. The machine starts to whir.

Anna stares at it. Her eyes are wide with the pain/shock at anticipation for what's to come. She turns to Ryan.

ANNA

Do you want to come here to see the result together?

Ryan gets up and goes towards Anna.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan are sat in the backseat of a taxi. They are both exhausted. Maybe for different reasons.

They don't talk. Ryan is constantly looking outside the window.

Anna leans towards him and lays her head on his lap. She takes his hand, the one missing a fingernail, and hugs it.

Ryan looks at her. He is still mad at her, but at the same time, he feels happy about the positive result.

RYAN

How am I going to explain this at work?

ANNA

It was positive, why do you need to explain it?

RYAN

It's the last time we do this, just so you know.

Anna nods. She holds his hand even tighter.

INT. AMIR'S OFFICE - DAY

Anna is sat at her desk. Amir enters the room.

AMIR

Morning.

ANNA

Morning.

They smile at each other. Amir sits down. Anna gives him a moment to settle in and then:

ANNA (CONT'D)

Amir, I was wondering if... um.

Anna is about to ask Amir a question (an important one?) but is interrupted by Duncan entering the room. He looks a bit stressed.

DUNCAN

Morning.

AMIR & ANNA

(in unison)

Morning.

They nod and smile politely at each other.

DUNCAN

Marcus is sick, so he's not coming in today. Two of his clients are booked in for testing this afternoon. Would you two mind stepping in? Sorry for the short notice.

AMIR

Uh... Of course. We don't have any tests booked for this afternoon, so it should be fine.

DUNCAN

Great. Here's their file. If you could take a quick look at it before they get here...

AMIR

(taking the file from
Duncan)

Of course.

Duncan leaves.

AMIR (CONT'D)

What were you gonna say?

Anna shakes her head: nothing.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE TESTING ROOM - DAY

Anna walks down the hallway, having collected the couple (two men in their 20s) from reception, and is now taking them down to the testing room, where Amir is setting up. As they're walking down the hall:

MAN 1

Are there any tips you can give us before we go in? You know... to give us a better shot?

Anna pauses. She dodges the question.

ANNA

I'm sure the work you've done with Marcus will be more than enough. He's one of our best instructors.

The couple smile nervously.

They arrive at the door to the testing room and pause for a moment.

MAN 2

Are you sure? Any advice you could give us would be so helpful.
(looking at his partner)
We're a bit nervous.

Anna looks at them both. She doesn't know what to say. After what happened last night, she is more lost now than ever.

ANNA

(sincerely)
I don't know. I'm sorry.

Anna opens the door, and the couple walks into the testing room. Anna stays behind. Looking uncertain.

INT. RESULTS BOOTH - DAY

Anna stares at her reflection on the computer screen inside the results booth. She is a million miles away.

The result still hasn't come up on the screen. The underscore on the screen (where the result should be) continues to flash as the machine whirs.

Then, the machine makes a strange sound which snaps Anna out of her daze and back to the moment. She looks at the screen.

Still nothing.

RESULT: _

Anna opens the booth door and pops her head out.

Amir stands in the testing room, conversing with the couple (trying to distract them while waiting for their test result).

She clears her throat to get his attention.

ANNA

Um. Amir... would you mind taking a look at something?

AMIR'S PATIENT

Is everything okay?

ANNA

I think there might be something wrong with the machine.

The gay couple exchanges edgy looks and then looks down at their bandaged hands. They don't want to have to go through that again.

Amir steps inside the booth and closes the door, so that he and Anna are cramped in the booth together, both facing the screen. The result section is still blank.

ANNA (CONT'D)

It made a strange sound and then stopped.

AMIR

(under his breath)

Fuck.

Amir starts pressing buttons, trying to figure out what has happened to the machine.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Shit. What are we gonna tell them?

A long pause.

ANNA

I need to tell you something

AMIR

(frowning, distracted)

Now?

Amir looks at her, waiting.

AMIR (CONT'D)

What?

ANNA

I tested our fingernails.

Amir looks shocked. He doesn't know how to reply. He looks at Anna, speechless.

AMIR
What? Whose fingernails?

ANNA
Ours.

AMIR
What do you mean? How? When?

Anna raises her hand to show the two fingers in the splint.

Amir looks at her hand. Just as he begins to process what she's saying, the machine whirs back to life. Amir looks at the screen.

Anna continues to look at him.

ANNA
And I know that you are not with
Natasha. She doesn't know anything
about you.

For a moment, it seems like the result is going to come up, then the machine makes the strange sound again and dies completely, the screen going blank.

After a long pause, Amir looks back at Anna.

AMIR
She's my neighbor. What was the
result?

Anna is shocked. She wasn't expecting this response.

ANNA
Uh. It was 50%.

Another pause. Amir is still looking at Anna.

ANNA (CONT'D)
So, I... uh... I retested myself
with Ryan last night. And it was
100%.

One of the men knocks on the booth door, and they call out from the other side.

MAN 1
Um. Excuse me? Is everything okay
in there?

Amir and Anna are still staring at each other. They ignore the couple completely.

ANNA
I don't know what it all means?
Maybe that um... I dunno...
(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

Maybe that you're in love with me
but um... but I'm not in love with
you?

More knocking at the door.

Amir doesn't know how to respond. His truth is exposed. Is it the first time he has had a positive result? But again, it's not 100%. Amir looks so lost.

MAN 1

Hello...?

Amir gets up and walks out of the booth. He walks straight past the confused couple and out of the testing room. We follow him, leaving Anna behind for the first time.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Amir walks out of the waiting room and down the corridor, towards the workspace area.

INT. WORKSPACE - CONTINUOUS

Amir walks down the corridor in the workspace area.

At the end of the corridor is a door to the fire escape. Amir sees it and picks up his pace, desperate to get out.

Amir finally reaches the fire escape and opens the door. He lets it slam behind him. A barrier between him and us. Through the frosted glass, we see him take a few deep breaths.

At the other end of the corridor, we see Anna, who - as it turns out - has been following Amir. She looks at the fire escape door. Staring at it sorrowfully.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - LATER

Out of earshot, Duncan apologizes to the gay couple as Anna looks on.

The couple leave and Duncan returns to Anna.

DUNCAN

It's a shame that their results
were negative but I'm glad we got
the machine fixed quickly. Where
did Amir go?

ANNA

I have no idea.

ALEXANDRA

Oh. He called me. He had to leave urgently. He wasn't feeling well. He said he might need to take a few days off.

DUNCAN

It's probably the same thing Marcus has. Well, I guess we'll figure out what to do about that tomorrow. Anna, you can handle things on your own for a couple of days?

Anna nods, uncertainly.

INT. AMIR'S OFFICE - DUSK

Anna, looking exhausted, stands at her desk and packs up her things for the day. She puts her bag on her shoulder and then looks over at Amir's empty desk.

She stares at his desk chair.

She stares.

And stares.

INT/EXT. ANDY AND CARRIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Ryan's face through a window. Laughing and smiling. He's sitting in the living room at Carrie's birthday party. Around him people chat and dance.

Anna waits at the front door - she's late. She watches Ryan through the window.

Ryan sits by Andy and Garth. He tells a joke about his bandaged finger. Andy and Garth burst out laughing.

Carrie answers the door.

ANNA

Happy birthday!

CARRIE

Thank you! Come in, come in. Congratulations on your result! You kept that quiet, like us.

ANNA

Oh um...

CARRIE

Ryan said you were thinking of doing it for weeks. Why didn't you tell us?

Anna realizes that Ryan's lied about what happened.

ANNA

Oh um... I dunno. We should have.

EXT/INT. CITY STREET/TAXI - NIGHT

Anna and Ryan sit in a taxi. Ryan looks outside from the window. Anna turns and looks at him.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ryan opens the front door and enters. Anna follows him inside. Ryan hangs up his coat. She hangs her coat up too and heads to the kitchen.

Anna stands alone in the kitchen. She leans on the counter. She stares into the middle distance and thinks. Then, she has some water to drink.

Ryan arrives and pours water for himself too. They both drink their waters in silence.

Anna is looking at her splint on her two fingers. They are wet from water. She is thinking of two tests.

After a moment:

ANNA

I think I might go out and grab something to eat.

RYAN

What? It's past midnight.

ANNA

Yes. I uh... I didn't eat much at the party.

RYAN

Don't we -

ANNA

(interrupting)

We don't have anything. And I feel like chicken soup. Do you want some?

Ryan looks at her strangely.

RYAN

Uh... I'm really tired.

ANNA

That's okay. You sleep. I'll be back soon.

She smiles and nods at him. They look at each other. A strange tension in the air between them.

RYAN

Okay.

INT. 24-HOUR DINER - NIGHT

Anna in an empty diner. A tired waitress at the counter, flicking through a magazine. Anna looks up at the menu on the wall behind the counter.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Anna walks alone in a street full of city lights holding a bag with the food she just bought from the diner. She looks determined.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Anna stands in front of Amir's door. She knocks.

She waits, fists clenched. Head tilted towards the floor. Eyes peering upwards at the closed door.

She waits. Maybe he's not in? She lets out a disappointed breath. He's not here.

Then, the door opens. It's Amir. His face is a mixture of emotions.

AMIR

Hi?

ANNA

Hi.

A brief pause. Amir waits for Anna to say something.

AMIR

What are you...

ANNA

...I brought you some soup.

She holds up the bag.

AMIR

Okay.

ANNA

You're sick. So, I brought you soup.

Amir stares at her. He opens the door a little more widely:
"Come in." Anna steps past him into the apartment.

INT. AMIR'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Anna stands in the middle of Amir's apartment. She glances around the apartment. The lights are low.

Amir closes the front door and turns around. An awkward silence.

ANNA
Would you like to eat it now?

AMIR
Now?

Anna nods.

AMIR (CONT'D)
It's very late.

Anna shrugs. They pause.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Okay.

Anna pulls out the large takeaway container full of chicken noodle soup and holds it out to Amir.

He looks at it and then looks at Anna.

INT. AMIR'S APARTMENT - LATER

Amir and Anna are sitting across the small dining table from each other. They each have a bowl of soup in front of them. They spoon the soup into their mouths. Occasionally, stealing glances at each other.

Anna looks nervous. Like she might be about to do something. She takes another spoonful, swallows, then sets her spoon down.

She stands up and slowly, tentatively moves around the table towards Amir. Amir stops mid-slurp. He lowers his spoon and watches her come towards him. His eyes begin to widen.

Anna stops beside Amir's chair. She pauses for a moment then she leans down and starts kissing him.

Amir lets her lips touch him without really responding. He pulls back, frowns. Then, he stands up off the chair, breathing shallowly, nervously.

He looks at Anna uncertainly for a moment, then he moves towards her, and they kiss properly.

Anna starts to unbutton Amir's shirt. He lets it happen.

Anna puffs out her chest, presenting her blouse for unbuttoning. Amir starts to do so. Anna unbuttons Amir from the bottom up. Amir unbuttons Anna from the top down.

There's an awkward moment in the middle where they have to cross over.

Amir speaks in a whisper as they continue to undress each other.

AMIR
We work together.

ANNA
It doesn't matter.

AMIR
You have a boyfriend.

ANNA
It doesn't matter.

AMIR
You're not in love with me.

ANNA
It doesn't matter.

Anna leans in and kisses him again

INT. AMIR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amir sits at one end of his bed under the sheet. Anna sits at the other. It's the early hours of the morning. They glance at each other a little bashfully.

After a few moments of quiet:

ANNA
You have a little scar, just there.

She points to the right side of his abdomen.

AMIR
I had appendicitis when I was 13.

ANNA
It looks like a tiny train track.

Amir glances down at his scar and laughs

AMIR
I guess it does.

They smile at each other.

After a few seconds of comfortable silence:

AMIR (CONT'D)
What about Ryan?

Anna pauses. Then:

ANNA
I don't know. I'm confused.

AMIR
What did you tell him?

ANNA
I didn't...

AMIR
...Is he away at the moment?

ANNA
No. I just left.

Amir isn't sure what she means. Did she sneak out of the house in the middle of the night, or did she leave Ryan for good? He doesn't want to ask her directly. So:

AMIR
Well, I can drive you over so
you're back before he wakes up.

Anna doesn't want to leave, but she nods.

After a moment of silence.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Why do you work at the Institute?

ANNA
(small pause)
I just wanted to understand.. More
things about me. About..

AMIR
Your relationship.

Anna nods.

ANNA
And you?

Amir shrugs.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Sincerely?

Amir smiles a bit. He slips back into his persona, for just a moment.

AMIR

You know. I told you. I was trying to find answers. I've tested 0% with three girls in the past.

(pause)

And I wanted..

(he smiles in a melancholic way)

I still want to find something real.

She understands what he's saying, what he's finally admitting.

Anna looks very deeply at him. After a moment:

ANNA

I don't want to go back.

Amir looks up at her now. She holds his gaze.

AMIR

Like, today? You don't wanna go back today.

Anna smiles softly. Amir's not letting himself believe what she's saying.

ANNA

I want to stay here.

Amir's eyes widen. He takes this in. After a while:

AMIR

I'd like that. But the test...

ANNA

(interrupting)

I don't care.

AMIR

But you've tested positive with Ryan... twice.

They look at each other worriedly - how can they possibly make this work?

ANNA

I'm thirsty.

Anna takes a bottle of water next to her and starts drinking.

As Anna is drinking the water...

AMIR

I think you should go.

Anna looks up. Surprised.

ANNA
Is that what you want?

Amir looks torn.

AMIR
No... but... I mean... What are we
going to do?

Anna cannot argue with this. They're at a dead end.

ANNA
(looking down)
I... I don't know... I am so tired.
I can't think.

AMIR
Okay... You can sleep here tonight.
I'll drive you back home in the
morning.

Anna hesitates for a moment. Then she nods.

INT. AMIR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anna and Amir are in bed together. His arm around her. Her head on his chest. Both of their eyes are wide open.

LATER:

Amir is asleep in bed. Anna is still wide awake. Her head still on Amir's chest. Her eyes are wide with thought.

She looks down at the small scar on his abdomen. The way his chest moves as he breathes. Then she gulps. And slides out of bed. She moves slowly out of the bedroom.

INT. AMIR'S APARTMENT - LATER

Anna walks into the kitchen. She glances around the room, thoughtfully. Moves towards the kitchen counter and starts opening a few of the drawers. There's an odd expression on her face. Confusion that's calcified into determination. A surreal calmness to her movements.

She takes a wooden spoon out of one of the draws. Takes something else out of another. She leans on the counter.

Anna gulps again. Her eyes are wide. She puts the wooden spoon between her teeth. She breathes for a moment, then muffled by the spoon in her mouth:

Then she winces with pain. She's ripped another of her remaining eight fingernails out. She gently puts it down on the counter. She is not sure why she is doing that. But she doesn't want to have them anymore.

Then goes back in for the next one. Only seven to go.

She is ready to remove the second one. She is trying but its more difficult to remove it and she still has the pain from the first. She removes the half of it and she has more pain now.

Amir stumbles into the room, rubbing his eyes. He stares at her, completely horrified.

Anna stares back at him. Her eyes are a bit red and with tears from the pain. Amir starts towards her as she does so. Then, he stops.

AMIR

What are you - Anna, what are you doing?

Anna looks up at him. Tears are streaming down her face.

AMIR (CONT'D)

You're crazy. Why would you do that!?

Anna takes the wooden spoon out of her mouth. She's panting from the pain.

Amir sinks next to her and hugs her.

AMIR (CONT'D)

There was no need. You are so stupid. I am... I am here.

He kisses her again. Then, he holds her wrists to examine the damage.

Anna and Amir lock eyes. The pain on her face slowly begins to fade and is replaced by anticipation. Eyes are shining. Beaming unselfconsciously. Adoringly.

Amir sees this for what it was: an act of love.

They stare at each other. Hearts in their throats.

INT. AMIR'S KITCHEN - DAWN

Anna and Amir are sat on the kitchen chairs. Amir is preparing to clean Anna's wounds with antiseptic.

Her hand rested delicately in his.

It's dawn. The dark sky outside the window is growing lighter. We hear birds chirping quietly.

AMIR

This is gonna hurt.

Anna nods: "that's okay." She looks at Amir, eyes wide. She's happy and scared; impatient for their future, and uncertain as to whether this is all a huge mistake. A strange cocktail of emotions that might fit some definition of the word "love."

A slow, instrumental version of Yazoo's "Only You" starts to play in the soundtrack.

FADE TO BLACK