

MOVE ON

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. RESTAURANT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

An upscale bathroom inside an upscale restaurant. TEDDY (28) stands in front of the mirror. Handsome with an easygoing charm, he nervously fixes his tie and suit jacket.

He pulls out a RING BOX and practices going down on one-knee without actually touching the bathroom floor for obvious sanitary reasons.

He pops the box open to reveal an ENGAGEMENT RING.

TEDDY

(sotto)

Leyna, will me you marr--

He shakes his head and stands back up. Reset. Back down.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Leyna, I can't think of a better way to celebrate our anniversary than asking you to marry me. So will you... marry... me?

(to himself)

Jesus, Teddy. Words.

He shakes it off and tries once more when a PATRON enters. Teddy springs back up.

PATRON

Oh, am I interrupting?

TEDDY

No, you're good. I'm just, uh... practicing.

The Patron smiles as he hits the urinal. Teddy waits for him to finish. The Patron zips up, washes his hands and dries off. On his way out--

PATRON

Good luck, man.

TEDDY

Thanks.

The Patron exits. Teddy looks at himself in the mirror.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Screw it. Here we go.

INT. RESTAURANT - HALL - NIGHT

Teddy steps out of the bathroom when his phone RINGS. He checks -- it's SQUID. He picks up.

TEDDY

Yo... No, I'm at the restaurant now... I haven't yet... Well, I can't because I'm on the phone with you! Yeah, keys are above the door... Just make sure no one goes in my bedroom... Okay, later.

Teddy hangs up, lets out the heaviest of nervous EXHALES, and heads back to his table.

INT. RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Classy. Low-lit. White table cloths. LEYNA (28) -- smart, elegant, uncomfortable in this particular moment -- sits at a table with a look of horror on her face.

LEYNA

No.

In front of her, down on one knee, is Teddy as he presents the RING. We watch his soul get crushed in real-time.

The entire restaurant's eyes are on them.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I... I'm sorry.

She stands and walks out of the restaurant. The crowd is embarrassed for him but also enthralled by the drama.

An elderly MAITRE D' approaches and talks low to Teddy, who's still down on one knee.

MAITRE D'

Chin up, son. There we go.

The Maitre D' gets Teddy to his feet.

MAITRE D' (CONT'D)

You can use the back exit here if you'd like.

TEDDY

(despondent)

I still need to pay--

MAITRE D'
It's taken care of.

The Maitre D' pats him on the back and waves a WAITER over, who quietly leads Teddy out through the kitchen.

EXT. CHICAGO - STREET - NIGHT

Teddy drives down a busy street as he calls Leyna but it goes to voicemail. His phone battery is down to 4% and he's manic. He stops at a red light and tries again. No answer.

TEDDY
Come on Leyna, pick up!

The light turns green but Teddy doesn't notice because he's busy texting her: *Please call me back.*

The car behind him HONKS but Teddy ignores.

TEDDY: *Let's talk about this.*

The car HONKS long and angry now as the light turns yellow.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
All right! Christ!

Teddy steps on the gas but the light is back to RED again. A TRUCK comes barreling through the intersection. Teddy has no time to react as HEADLIGHTS BEAR DOWN ON HIM--

SMASH!!

The truck clips his rear bumper and he SPINS OUT OF CONTROL, skidding across the intersection before coming to a stop on the opposite corner.

Beat.

Shaken but unhurt, Teddy gets out of his car as the TRUCK DRIVER runs over.

TRUCK DRIVER
You okay??

Teddy looks at the phone, still in his hand. It's dead.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A disheveled Teddy opens the front door and trudges inside when the lights turn on--

CROWD (O.S.)
SURPRISE!!

Teddy flinches. Party poppers go off and shoot little bits of confetti as FRIENDS emerge from their hiding spots.

A big BANNER above the door reads: **ENGAGED AF!**

Teddy GRUMBLES as SQUID (28), his best friend, approaches with a big grin and hugs him.

SQUID
 Yo, where were you guys?
 (wincing at the smell)
 Jesus, how much you drink?

Off Teddy's silence--

SQUID (CONT'D)
 And where's the lucky lady?

Teddy shakes his head and the crowd falls silent.

SQUID (CONT'D)
 Oh shit.

Squid grabs Teddy and leads him into the bedroom.

SQUID (CONT'D)
 (to the crowd)
 Turn the music up! Y'all keep
 drinking. Party's still a party.

INT. TEDDY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Squid closes the door behind them as Teddy plops down on his bed, draped in sadness.

SQUID
 Dude...

TEDDY
 You were right. I forced her hand
 and she said no.

SQUID
 Where is she now?

Teddy shrugs. *No idea.*

SQUID (CONT'D)
 That's rough, man. I'm sorry...
 But hey, maybe now you can move to
 Tokyo with a clear conscience.

Teddy throws Squid a look.

TEDDY
 Are you serious right now?

SQUID
 I'm just trying to find the silver
 lining here.

TEDDY
 I proposed because I wanted her to
 move with me.

SQUID
 I know...

They take a beat to commiserate.

SQUID (CONT'D)
 I'll clear everyone out.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Squid sees the crowd out. Once the apartment is empty, Squid
 knocks on Teddy's bedroom door.

SQUID
 Coast is clear.

Off Teddy's silence--

SQUID (CONT'D)
 She hit you up yet?

More silence.

SQUID (CONT'D)
 Come on. Let's go out.

TEDDY (O.S.)
 I want to be alone.

SQUID
 That's the last thing you want to
 be tonight, trust me.

TEDDY (O.S.)
 Go away.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Teddy lies in bed staring at his phone, willing it to buzz with a call or text from Leyna.

SQUID (O.S.)
Stop staring at your phone, man.

TEDDY
I'm not!

He texts her:

I'm sorry I sprung that on you. Take however much time you need and call me when you're ready.

He puts his phone down and covers his face with a pillow when Squid opens the door.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(under the pillow)
Leave me alone, dude.

SQUID
I can't because I know how you are when you're alone.

TEDDY
I'll be fine.

SQUID
No, you'll sit here and stew and wallow in self-pity and that little voice in your head is going to make things seem a thousand times worse--

TEDDY
All right, Jesus!

Teddy gets out of bed.

SQUID
You know I'm right.

INT. DOGWOOD TAVERN - NIGHT

A low-key neighborhood dive bar. Squid and Teddy sit at a booth, a couple beers in.

SQUID
So was it like a "not now" vibe or a "never" vibe?

TEDDY
I don't know. It was a "no" vibe.

SQUID
Shit.

TEDDY
Not helping.

SQUID
Well, then Tokyo could be an even bigger blessing in disguise. New country. New people. Fresh start.

TEDDY
I don't want to think about that right now.

SQUID
Just saying, better to rip the band-aid off in these types of situations.

TEDDY
These situations? You've never been in a relationship, Squid.

Squid shrugs.

SQUID
Doesn't mean I'm not right.

TEDDY
All right.

Teddy stands and heads to the bathroom.

INT. DOGWOOD TAVERN - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Teddy splashes water on his face and stares at himself, a shell of his earlier self. His eyes sunken in, hair disheveled.

He checks his phone again. No new texts. He shakes his head, defeated. He wipes his face and heads back out.

INT. DOGWOOD TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

As soon as he steps out, the music cuts out. When he gets back to the bar area, he notices that it's dead-silent.

Something's not right.

Teddy scans the crowd and notices that no one's moving.

What the hell?

He walks back over to their table where Squid is frozen.

TEDDY

Squid?

He grabs Squid's shoulder and shakes him. Nothing. Thinking it's some joke--

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Weird but okay, you got me...?

That's when Teddy spots a pitcher of BEER being poured into a glass at the next table. The liquid is frozen mid-stream.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

What the...?

He waves his hand through the suspended liquid, clearing away the beer that touches his hand while the rest remains hanging in mid-air. When he pulls his hand back, the beer sticks to his skin like normal.

Teddy looks to the crowd now. No one's moving. Or breathing. Or blinking.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Hello?!

Nothing. Suddenly frightened, he heads out of the bar.

EXT. DOGWOOD TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

He BURSTS out the doors and spots a CAR turning out of the parking lot.

He runs over and looks inside -- the DRIVER is frozen still. The engine idling in a weird monotone. The BLINKER stuck mid-blink. He KNOCKS on the window.

TEDDY

Hey!

No reaction. He checks the rest of the street. Pedestrians frozen mid-stride. A skateboarder frozen mid-ollie. A train on the Red Line frozen on its tracks.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Teddy sprints over to the nearest row of shops and looks inside a restaurant. FROZEN CUSTOMERS.

He runs down to the next shop. A jam-packed SPORTS BAR. Fans watching a football game are frozen mid-celebration like someone pressed the PAUSE button.

Teddy pulls out his phone and dials LEYNA'S NUMBER but it doesn't work. He tries MOM, then DAD. No ring. No dial-tone. He checks his social media apps but they won't open.

He sprints down the street in a panic.

TEDDY
Anybody?! Anybodyyyyy?!

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. MICHIGAN AVE - DAY

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

Everything still frozen. Cars line the roads, their drivers frozen at the wheel. Pedestrians remain unmoved despite the sun beating down on them.

From down the street, a MAN appears on a mountain bike. He shoulders a large backpack, his ragged hair tucked under a wool cap while his scruffy unkempt BEARD covers his neck.

He weaves through the frozen traffic and heads north past The Art Institute and Millennium Park.

He cruises down a few more blocks and pulls up to--

INT. CHIPOTLE - DAY

Frozen CUSTOMERS sit at the tables while EMPLOYEES stand behind the counter in the midst of making burritos and bowls.

Our Man enters and heads behind the counter, grabs a tortilla, and sniffs the carnitas. He dumps a scoop on the tortilla and slides down the line, adding toppings.

INT. WALGREENS PHARMACY - DAY

He eats the burrito as he browses the aisle for toiletries. He steps up to the MEN'S SHAVING SECTION where the over-priced replacement cartridges are locked away behind a plastic case.

He tries to slide his hand underneath but can't reach so he gently pulls at the plastic guard but it doesn't budge.

He looks around, then YANKS at it until it breaks off. He grabs a set of blades and goes on his way.

EXT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

With plastic bags full of goods hanging off his handle-bars, our Man pulls up outside an apartment complex and heads towards the entrance when--

LEYNA (O.S.)

Teddy?

Our bearded Man whips around and for the first time, we get a CLOSE-UP of his face. It is Teddy. His eyes widen. Standing before him is...

LEYNA. Like him, she's a bit disheveled, clothes stained, hair longer. His mouth drops.

TEDDY

Leyna?!

It takes them a moment to process...

Then they rush into each others' arms. She takes his face in her hands as if to make sure he's real.

LEYNA

It's you... It's really you.

She buries her face into his neck and he squeezes her tight, both still in shock.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They enter. He flicks the lights on to reveal an unchanged apartment. Plates piled up in the sink. Food wrappers everywhere. Clothes scattered on the floor.

TEDDY

Sorry for the mess. I haven't been back here in awhile.

He kicks some of the clothes out of the way when he sees Leyna looking up at the **ENGAGED AF!** banner still hanging above the door.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Shit.

He tears it down and shoves it in the trash can as guilt creeps across Leyna's face. She shoots him an apologetic look but Teddy can't meet her eyes and pushes on, desperate to change the subject--

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Um, coffee?

Leyna takes a beat before letting it go.

LEYNA

Sure.

He moves to the KITCHEN, puts on a pot and starts the burner.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Yours still works?

TEDDY

Yeah. Yours?

LEYNA

It's shoddy. Maybe because it's electric? I don't know.

TEDDY

Yeah, I've noticed certain things are more glitchy than others.

LEYNA

I have so many questions.

TEDDY

Me, too.

Teddy grabs a bag of coffee beans and pours them into an electric grinder. He's doing anything to avoid eye contact, which makes it only more awkward.

She, on the other hand, seems more in control.

LEYNA

Where are you coming from?

TEDDY

Jersey.

LEYNA
Your parents?

TEDDY
Yeah.

LEYNA
Are they...?

TEDDY
(unfortunately)
Yeah.

LEYNA
Did you bike there?

TEDDY
Took cars where I could but for the
congested areas, the bike comes in
real handy.

He kicks the coffee grinder into gear. It's loud.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Sorry. One sec.

The loud grinding is a welcome reprieve. Teddy finishes and
taps out the coffee grinds into a pour-over contraption.

LEYNA
I--

The pot starts to WHISTLE. Teddy puts up a *hold-that-thought*
finger and turns the burner off. He pours the hot water into
the coffee-packed filter.

He reaches into the fridge and pulls out milk. Sniffs it.
Still good. He looks to her for approval.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
I trust you. None of the food I've
seen has spoilt so far.

TEDDY
Me neither.

He gives hers a pour and slides the cup over.

LEYNA
Thanks.

There's no more activity for him to occupy the silence with.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

So... wanna start at the beginning?

TEDDY

The beginning as in...?

LEYNA

The night everything froze.

TEDDY

Right. Sure, um...

She sees him struggling--

LEYNA

I'll go first. After our... dinner, I had just gotten home when it happened. I tried calling you, my parents, friends... Nothing went through so I came here but you weren't home.

TEDDY

Yeah, I was out with Squid when it happened. I went to your place too but we must have missed each other.

LEYNA

After that, I went downtown, to the office, malls, parks... It's all frozen.

TEDDY

Same with New Jersey, New York, and every town I passed through.

A sullen beat. She sees the bags under his eyes.

LEYNA

You must be exhausted.

TEDDY

A bit. I never realized how big this country was until I had to get around it manually.

LEYNA

Why don't you rest up and we can talk more tomorrow?

TEDDY

Sure. Mind if I hop in the shower?

LEYNA
Go ahead.

TEDDY
Feel free to...
(waving his hand around)
You know.

LEYNA
Thanks.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Teddy's muscles relax as the HOT WATER pours over him. Suddenly, the water stops mid-air. Yet another glitch. Not bothered, he pushes the paused water out of the way, jiggles the knob on and off and the water starts flowing again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leyna has a look around. The decorations are still up and the poppers and confetti litter the floor. The coffee table is covered in POLAROID printouts of them.

She sits down and picks one up. A PHOTO of them at the bar making silly faces. Another of them laughing hysterically. A selfie he took of her sleeping on his chest...

She starts to tear up.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Teddy hears the bathroom door open. A moment later, Leyna gets in the shower. She wraps her arms around him from behind and places her head on his back.

A comfort washes over him. He turns and they embrace, holding each other in silence.

After a long beat, she pulls away.

LEYNA
I'm sorry.

TEDDY
It's okay--

But she steps out. Teddy drops his head.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teddy emerges from the bathroom as Leyna prepares to leave.

LEYNA
I should go.

TEDDY
Just stay.

LEYNA
You don't have to--

TEDDY
You're the first unfrozen person
I've seen since this all started.
I'd feel better if you stayed here.

Leyna mulls a beat and relents. Teddy opens a closet and grabs a bedsheet and a comforter.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Take my bed.

LEYNA
No, that's not--

TEDDY
It's fine. I spend more nights on
the couch, anyway.

Leyna doesn't press.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Your clothes are still in the
dresser... if you need.

That guilt creeps up on Leyna again as Teddy finishes setting up the couch.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
If you need anything, let me know.

LEYNA
Thanks, Teddy.

TEDDY
(lightly)
Go fuck yourself.

Leyna stops, taken by surprise. An amused look from her as they exchange a knowing glance.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
 Sorry, that was--

 LEYNA
 It's fine. Good night.

 TEDDY
 Night.

She heads into his bedroom and shuts the door.

INTERCUT:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leyna gets into bed. Lights off. Staring up at the ceiling.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teddy in the same position, also staring up at the ceiling.
 He glances over at the bedroom door...

She does the same, as if willing him to come in... but he
 doesn't.

He SIGHS and draws the comforter over his face. It's going to
 be a long night.

FADE TO:

EXT. NORTH AVENUE BEACH - CASTAWAYS - DAY

SUMMER. The sandy shores are packed with locals trying to get
 as much sun as they can. This is before the freeze.

A clean-cut Teddy stands in front of a restaurant shaped like
 a steamship when Leyna -- with longer hair -- approaches.

 LEYNA
 Teddy?

 TEDDY
 Leyna.

A gawky hug. Teddy points to himself.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
 As you expected?

 LEYNA
 Very much so.

TEDDY
Good. Shall we?

EXT. NORTH AVENUE BEACH - LATER

They stroll barefoot along the beach.

LEYNA
Worst date you've ever been on.

TEDDY
Oooh, I like this one. Let's see...
My worst date lasted five seconds.

LEYNA
Do tell.

TEDDY
She came into the restaurant, saw
me sitting at the table, we clearly
made eye contact, then she turned
and walked right back out.

LEYNA
Ouch. That's brutal.

TEDDY
That's New York. She even made an
"eww" face on her way out.

LEYNA
No she didn't!

TEDDY
Oh ya. It was the perfect mix of
disgust and disappointment, like
this...

Teddy scrunches his face. Leyna CRACKS UP.

LEYNA
What happened to good ol' fashioned
standing people up?

TEDDY
Right?? But no, she had to come
down to the restaurant, inspect the
goods in person, show disgust, and
then leave.

LEYNA

Is that why you moved here? To escape the cut-throat dating scene of Manhattan?

TEDDY

Yeah, I heard that women in Chicago will at least let you buy them a beer before they ditch you.

LEYNA

We are very polite.

Leyna pulls up to an ice cream cart.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Want one? My treat.

TEDDY

Sure, I'll take a strawberry shortcake bar.

Leyna raises a brow.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I'm very secure.

LEYNA

I can see that.

They take their ice cream and sit on a bench.

TEDDY

So what's your worst first?

LEYNA

I once had a guy tell me the only way he could orgasm was by screaming his mother's name.

Teddy chokes on his ice cream and starts COUGHING.

TEDDY

Don't believe you.

LEYNA

Ten minutes into meeting me.

TEDDY

Did he confuse you for his therapist?

LEYNA

Who knows? I wasn't about to do a deep-dive into that Oedipal complex so I let him buy me a beer and then I took off.

TEDDY

Well, you win that round.

LEYNA

Your turn.

TEDDY

Hmm, how about worst thing an ex ever did to you?

LEYNA

I'm gonna go with he gave me an STD after cheating on me... with a guy.

TEDDY

What?!

LEYNA

Yeah, it was traumatic on multiple levels. And don't worry, it was one of the curable ones.

TEDDY

Christ, I can't follow that. And who are all these awful people you're dating?

LEYNA

I have famously poor taste in men.

TEDDY

I'll ignore that.

She LAUGHS.

LEYNA

Your turn.

TEDDY

Hmm... Well, my last ex ruined the phrase "I love you" forever.

LEYNA

How so?

TEDDY

Tried to force it down my throat from the moment we started dating.

LEYNA

That's never a good sign.

TEDDY

She used it like a period at the end of every sentence. I have a gag reflex every time I hear it now.

LEYNA

I love you.

Teddy shudders.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Oh man, you're not joking.

TEDDY

Unfortunately not.

LEYNA

Well, that's an easy fix. Just replace it with a different phrase.

TEDDY

Like what?

LEYNA

Like instead of "I love you," my parents used to say, "I hate you."

TEDDY

That's funny.

LEYNA

I thought it was cute, too. Then they got divorced.

TEDDY

Ha! Sorry.

LEYNA

So probably not that one.

TEDDY

Hmm...

LEYNA

How about "go fuck yourself?"

TEDDY

Hey babe, you're the best. Go fuck yourself.

They let it linger in the air.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Think we got a winner.

 LEYNA
You're welcome.

They get up and start walking again.

 TEDDY
So was it gonorrhoea?

 LEYNA
Go fuck yourself.

They share a laugh as we--

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Leyna's eyes open. It takes a beat to let the dream/memory fade into the back of her mind.

Unsettled, she gets up and heads to the bedroom door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She opens it and peeks out to see Teddy SNORING on the couch. A look of relief washes over her.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Fresh out of a shower, she rummages through her little section of the cabinet mirror and finds a RAZOR and shaving cream. She puts her leg up on the counter and runs her fingers across her shin -- it's bristling with hair.

She lathers her leg and starts shaving. A few strokes in, she NICKS the back of her calf and winces.

 LEYNA
Ow.

She looks down at the cut as blood starts to ooze out. She runs a finger across the wound and inspects the blood. She rubs it between her fingers as if it's foreign to her when--

A KNOCK at the door snaps her out of her trance.

 LEYNA (CONT'D)
Yeah?

TEDDY (O.S.)
 Hey, I'm going across the hall to
 use the neighbor's shower.

 LEYNA
 Oh, I'm almost done.

 TEDDY (O.S.)
 That's okay, take your time. I'll
 be back in a bit.

 LEYNA
 Okay.

Leyna returns her attention to the blood on her fingers.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Teddy returns as Leyna brews coffee.

 TEDDY
 Ah, I see the student has become
 the master.

 LEYNA
 Don't get your hopes up. I'm a
 hipster in training wheels compared
 to you.

 TEDDY
 I see the back-handed compliment
 game is still strong with you.

She hands him a cup and watches him take a sip.

 LEYNA
 Bad?

 TEDDY
 The opposite of bad. Hell, if your
 career doesn't work out, you can
 always become a snobby barista at
 an overpriced coffee shop.

Leyna forces a smile but Teddy senses the underlying sadness.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
 Hey, we're gonna get through
 whatever this is...

Leyna tries her best to stay positive and forces a nod.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
And that starts by figuring out
what this is.

LEYNA
What do you mean?

Teddy pulls out his PHONE and opens up GOOGLE MAPS. He swipes to the Eastern seaboard of the United States and shows her.

TEDDY
Check this out.

LEYNA
What am I looking at?

TEDDY
See that black line over the
Atlantic Ocean?

Sure enough, there's a straight BLACK LINE that cuts parallel down the US coastline about ten miles out to sea.

LEYNA
Yeah?

TEDDY
I didn't say anything last night
because I didn't want to sound
crazy, but... I saw it.

LEYNA
Saw what?

EXT. NEW JERSEY - NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Teddy cruises down the street on his bicycle and pulls up to a small house in a middle-class neighborhood.

He walks up and BANGS on the door.

TEDDY
Mom? Dad? It's Teddy!

No answer. He heads to the back of the house when something grabs his attention.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(sotto)
What the hell...?

Behind the house, in the far distance, a WALL OF BLACK extends into the sky.

Confused, Teddy gets back on his bike and heads towards it.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK - DAY

Teddy rides his bike to the end of the boardwalk and looks out at the ocean. His eyes widen, face frozen in shock. It takes him a beat to take in whatever he's looking at. He rushes over to the edge and WE PAN WITH HIM TO SEE--

A WALL OF BLACK OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN. A pitch black curtain of nothingness slicing across the water for as far as the eye can see and extending up into space.

It's as if the world just ends there.

Ocean waves lap into it and disappear. A vacuum of sight and sound. It's at once mesmerizing and terrifying.

He checks the map on his phone and sure enough, it's the same black line that slices through the ocean from the North Pole down to the South.

Frightened, he rushes back to his bicycle and pedals away.

BACK TO:

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Leyna furrows her brow.

LEYNA

I don't understand.

TEDDY

I don't know how else to explain it. Here's another one.

This time, Teddy swipes over to the West Coast. Another BLACK LINE cuts vertically down the coast through Los Angeles.

LEYNA

You think it's the same thing?

TEDDY

Only one way to find out.

LEYNA

You're not thinking of going there.

TEDDY

What's the alternative? Wait around and hope things unfreeze?

Leyna looks like that's exactly what she was thinking.

LEYNA

What if it's dangerous?

TEDDY

I was maybe ten miles away from it and nothing happened. It's safe.

LEYNA

How do you know?

TEDDY

I just... feel it.

LEYNA

You feel it?

TEDDY

Okay, saying it out loud sounds nuts but so is everything that's happened. Machines and electronics still work and day still turns to night but all living things are frozen? It doesn't make any sense.

LEYNA

I don't know, Teddy. Maybe we should just stay here.

TEDDY

Leyna, it's already been three or four months and nothing's happened.

LEYNA

What are you planning on doing if you get to it?

TEDDY

I'll know when I get there. And I'd feel better if you came with.

LEYNA

Sounds like you're going regardless of whether I come or not.

A KNIFE to Teddy's heart. Leyna immediately regrets it.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean that.

TEDDY

No, I deserve it.

Leyna thinks a beat, then relents.

LEYNA
I'll need to pack some things.

INT. SPORTS STORE - DAY

They load up on camping gear, sleeping bags, flashlights, protein bars, and water packs.

Teddy checks out a CROSSBOW. Leyna frowns and Teddy puts it back. He grabs a HUNTING KNIFE instead and holds it up for approval. Leyna shrugs.

EXT. MALL - DAY

They step out with two shopping carts full of gear.

LEYNA
How are we going to fit all this stuff into your car?

Teddy eyes the parking lot and spots a TOYOTA 4-RUNNER.

TEDDY
(pointing)
We'll take that one.

They approach the SUV to see a young preppy COLLEGE KID driving it. Teddy opens the door and checks inside.

LEYNA
Oh, Teddy. I don't know about stealing some poor kid's car.

Teddy reaches in and pulls out a BAG OF ECSTASY from the glove compartment and holds it up.

TEDDY
Poor kid?

LEYNA
Oh.

Teddy then holds up a big plastic bag containing little baggies of COCAINE.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
Okay, fine.

MOMENTS LATER

Leyna loads the equipment into the back while Teddy gently places the frozen College Kid in a shopping cart along with his drugs.

TEDDY

Thanks, buddy. We'll try and get your ride back to you...
 (to Leyna)
 You ready?

LEYNA

I guess?

They get in.

INT./EXT. SUV - DAY (MOVING)

Frozen cars dot the I-290 as they drive down the shoulder, away from the Chicago skyline.

They settle in. Leyna turns the radio on but all the channels are dead-silent.

TEDDY

You can leave it on, just in case.
 760 AM's the emergency station.

Leyna scrolls to it and leaves it on. It's silent.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

How did you sleep last night?

LEYNA

Honestly? Really well.

TEDDY

Me, too.

Leyna shoots him a warm glance before her eyes move down to his beard.

LEYNA

How's all that hair working out for you?

TEDDY

You no like?

LEYNA

It's... different.

TEDDY
I noticed a lil' baby 'stache on
you, too.

Leyna SMACKS his arm.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
Hey, never hit the driver.

Suddenly, Leyna spots something on the other side of the
highway five hundred yards ahead and points to it.

 LEYNA
Teddy, look.

It's a CAR CRASH taking place.

 TEDDY
Whoa.

Teddy slows down and pulls to a stop beside the crash.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Teddy gets out, hops over the divider and approaches the
scene. It's mid-crash. A PICK-UP TRUCK is in the midst of
slamming into the back of a MINIVAN. The windows are just
smashing, milliseconds away from spraying glass everywhere.

Teddy approaches cautiously and peeks inside the mini-van.
The driver is a YOUNG MOM who's frozen, her muscles
constricting and bracing for impact. In the backseat, a
TODDLER is strapped into a baby seat.

 TEDDY
Jesus.

Leyna gets out and approaches.

 LEYNA
Teddy?

 TEDDY
It's okay. Well, not okay but...

Teddy waves her over. She looks inside the minivan and GASPS.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
We're literally a second away from
this turning real bad.

 LEYNA
We have to get them out.

Teddy nods. He opens the Mom's door and un-clips her seatbelt. Leyna helps him carry her out of the car.

TEDDY

Let's place her over by the grass.

They carry her over and lay her down. Teddy goes back in and grabs the Toddler. He places her in the Mom's lap and wraps the Mom's arms around the child.

Leyna checks the Mom and Child for injuries while Teddy gets inside the minivan and presses on the BRAKE. He then taps the GAS and the minivan starts to roll forward. He cuts the wheel to get away from the truck.

The shattered windows are frozen in place and left behind, creating a silhouette of the minivan. He rolls the minivan onto the shoulder, safely away from traffic.

He gets out and jogs over to the pick up truck. He drags the Driver out and onto the grass next to the Mom.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

That does it, hopefully. How are they doing?

LEYNA

I'm no doctor but they seem okay.

They exchange a look of relief. Leyna puts a hand on his arm as they look over the work they've just done.

INT./EXT. SUV - DAY (MOVING)

The scenery has turned rural and the cars have thinned out. Teddy and Leyna still processing what happened.

TEDDY

That was...

LEYNA

Unreal.

TEDDY

I mean, we did a good thing, right?

LEYNA

Obviously, yes.

TEDDY

Like, we're not messing with fate or anything.

LEYNA
Don't think like that.

TEDDY
But like--

LEYNA
If that's messing with fate, then
it's worth it.

TEDDY
No, you're right. You're right.

Leyna looks at Teddy, who's focused on the road. She reaches for his free hand and squeezes. He squeezes back.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

As the sun begins to set, WE FLY OVERHEAD as they drive down a desolate stretch of highway.

INT. SUV - NIGHT (MOVING)

Leyna sleeps as Teddy rubs his eyes and yawns. He switches lanes and takes the next exit for DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - NIGHT

They pull up to the front of the hotel.

INT./EXT. SUV - NIGHT

Teddy parks as Leyna wakes up.

LEYNA
Where are we?

TEDDY
St. Louis. Would've made it further
but all the frozen traffic slowed
us down pretty considerably.

LEYNA
No need to rush, especially after
seeing that car crash.

TEDDY
True. Figured we could stay here
tonight.

They exit the vehicle. Leyna looks up at the beautiful hotel.

LEYNA

Fancy.

TEDDY

Might as well take advantage of the situation, right?

LEYNA

Might as well.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

It's a gorgeous modern layout. Frozen GUESTS mill about as Teddy and Leyna weave their way over to elevators.

LEYNA

You know what you're doing?

TEDDY

Just need to find housekeeping.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator door DINGS open and Teddy pushes the luggage cart down the hall as Leyna rides on it. A MAID stands frozen in the hallway.

TEDDY

Perfect.

Teddy walks up to her and grabs the MASTER KEY CARD off her belt. They pull up to a set of regal double doors.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Let's see what's behind door number one.

Teddy swipes the keycard and the doors unlock. Teddy pushes the doors open into--

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

A sprawling room with a view that overlooks all of St. Louis.

LEYNA

Wow. This is so nice, Teddy.

TEDDY

I'll be just down the hall. Wanna do dinner in an hour or so?

LEYNA

Sounds like a plan.

TEDDY

See you then.

Teddy stands at the door, waiting for something.

LEYNA

Yes?

TEDDY

It's customary to tip the bellhop.

LEYNA

(haughty; waving him off)
Put it on my account, won't you?

TEDDY

It's scary how quickly you've acclimated to this lifestyle.

She laughs as he shuts the door behind him.

INT. TEDDY'S PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

Teddy opens the door to his room and enters. It's a similarly grand hotel room. He collapses on the bed and lets out a heavy SIGH.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Leyna takes a much-needed soak in the bathtub. She lifts her leg to check the shaving nick from the previous morning. It's scabbed over and healing as normal. She runs her finger over it again as if it's still foreign to her.

Satisfied, she sinks into the water and blows bubbles.

INT. TEDDY'S SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Post-shower, Teddy finishes shaving his face and gives himself a once-over. A satisfied -- if slightly nervous -- look emerges on his face, like first date energy.

INT. TEDDY'S SUITE - NIGHT

Teddy tries on a few shirts in front of the mirror and settles on a button-down tucked into chinos with leather dress shoes to top it off.

He gives himself one last look, runs a comb through his waxed hair, and heads out.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

Leyna also gets ready, except she's in a simple white T-shirt and jeans with high-top chucks. Her hair up in a bun. She casually checks herself out and heads to the door.

She opens it to--

INT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Teddy stands at the door, pre-freeze. He's in a black T-shirt, black jeans, black converse.

Leyna greets him in a black blouse, black trousers, black mules, and a black leather jacket.

LEYNA

Hey--
(seeing his outfit)
Oh.

TEDDY

Wow. Great minds.

LEYNA

It's like we're attending a really casual funeral.

TEDDY

Don't worry. Hipsters flock to where we're going so we'll blend right in.

LEYNA

Where are we going?

TEDDY

A bar hidden inside a morgue.

LEYNA

Funny.

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

From outside, we see Leyna and Teddy sitting by the window, laughing and eating in a crowded, divey local spot. The neon signs and the steam rising up from the drains creates an *In The Mood For Love* vibe.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's bustling inside but they sit in silence as Teddy eyes Leyna for a beat. Then--

TEDDY
Non-profit.

LEYNA
Are you kidding?

TEDDY
What? I have plenty of friends who went to business school and work at non-profits.

LEYNA
I totally respect that but I can't afford to spend two hundred thousand dollars on an MBA to go work at a non-profit.

TEDDY
Fair enough.

LEYNA
You got one guess left.

TEDDY
Okay, well I know Booth is strong in finance...

Leyna gives off a "no" vibe so he swerves.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
But I know you think the industry is douchey and lame because it's festering with muppets like me...

Leyna CHUCKLES.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

So given your outgoing, independent personality, along with a flare for calculated risk-taking, I'm going to guess... entrepreneurship and like, marketing to back it up.

Leyna raises an impressed brow.

LEYNA

Did you stalk my LinkedIn profile?

TEDDY

Wait, did I nail it?

LEYNA

Yes, you did.

TEDDY

Wooo!

LEYNA

I'm totally creeped out.

TEDDY

Don't be salty. Bet's a bet. Meal's on you.

LEYNA

Mm hmm. Excuse me while I go set my profile back to private.

Leyna wipes her mouth with a napkin and stands.

TEDDY

Don't skip out on the bill.

LEYNA

I only do that on second dates.

TEDDY

This is our second date.

Leyna grins as she disappears around the corner--

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

FROZEN WORLD. Leyna exits the elevator to Teddy waiting in the lobby. He lights up and walks over.

TEDDY

Hey.

The mismatch in styles is noticeable.

LEYNA
You shaved.

TEDDY
Figured I'd get civilized again.

LEYNA
I was starting to get used to it.

TEDDY
Really?

LEYNA
No, not really. Any woman who says she likes beards has never dealt with one or is lying.

TEDDY
Good to know.

LEYNA
So, where to?

EXT. ROOFTOP RESTAURANT - NIGHT

They arrive on a rooftop that overlooks all of St. Louis. The city lights glow softly below.

LEYNA
Wow. This is nice.

TEDDY
Too nice?

LEYNA
No, it's perfect.

Teddy grabs two MENUS and seats Leyna at an empty table. He squints over at a chalkboard by the front.

TEDDY
Today's specials are...
(butchering it)
Ris de veau and farci poitevin?

They look at each other, lost. She hands him the menu back.

LEYNA
Chef's choice.

TEDDY

Two of whatever I can find in the kitchen coming right up.

LEYNA

Want me to help you scavenge?

TEDDY

I'll grab food. You get drinks?

LEYNA

Sure.

As Teddy saunters inside, Leyna heads to the BAR. The Gateway Arch rises up in the distance, majestic and alien.

She goes behind the bar and finds a bottle of red WINE. She grabs two glasses and on her way back, spots an OLD COUPLE holding hands across the table, frozen in time. The image warms her heart.

Teddy re-emerges from the kitchen with two PLATES in hand and they meet back at the table.

TEDDY

So this is all I could find. Chef's salad and some fancy chicken. What did you get?

LEYNA

A bottle of cab.

TEDDY

You win.

They take their seats. She pours while he serves her a plate.

LEYNA

This looks good.

TEDDY

Let's hope so. That menu was New York prices.

As they dig in--

LEYNA

It's incredible that this chicken is still warm.

TEDDY

Right?

LEYNA

At least starving to death won't be a problem.

Off his look--

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I just mean it's comforting to know that eating is one less thing to have to worry about.

TEDDY

Right.

Teddy pushes his food around a bit.

LEYNA

Did I say something wrong?

TEDDY

No, you just reminded me that we may be the only unfrozen people left in the world.

LEYNA

Oh... Right. Sorry.

TEDDY

Not your fault. But don't you find that strange?

LEYNA

What?

TEDDY

I mean...

Teddy points his fork at her, then himself.

LEYNA

Yeah, I guess.

TEDDY

It's either coincidence, cosmic, or... calculated.

LEYNA

Calculated?

TEDDY

I don't know. I don't want to make it a thing.

LEYNA

It already is a thing, Teddy. To your point.

TEDDY

So maybe we talk about it then.

LEYNA

About what?

TEDDY

Us.

Leyna shifts uncomfortably and glances at the other PATRONS.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

They can't hear us this time, if that's your concern.

That stings.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Sorry, bad joke.

LEYNA

No, you're right. You deserve an explanation and I never got the chance to give you one...

She drops her head to fight back the tears but she's losing. She shields her eyes with her hands.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

A long, guilty beat from Teddy. He looks around, his eyes landing on a middle-aged COUPLE two tables over.

TEDDY

What do you think they're fighting about over there?

The MAN rubs his temples in frustration as the WOMAN looks like she's doing her best not to scream at him.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Money? Kids?

LEYNA

Well, for starters, he's wearing a wedding ring and she's not.

Teddy looks more carefully. Leyna's right.

TEDDY
Good spot. So cheating?

 LEYNA
Or divorce.

 TEDDY
Yeah...

Teddy mulls this.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
Think we would've ended up like
them?

 LEYNA
(uncomfortable)
I don't know, Teddy.

Teddy lingers on the couple as he processes a thought.

 TEDDY
You know what? We don't need to
talk about it right now. Let's just
enjoy ourselves tonight and focus
on unfreezing the world first.

Leyna nods and they get back to their meal.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Teddy and Leyna walk down the hall, an awkward distance
between them. Eyes forward or on the floor.

They stop in front of her door.

 LEYNA
Thank you for dinner.

 TEDDY
Thanks for joining me. I forgot how
nice it is to not eat alone.

 LEYNA
I'm sorry I made it awkward back
there.

 TEDDY
No, it's me. I'm the one acting
weird... Because this is weird.

 LEYNA
Yeah. It is.

Leyna hangs by the door, her body language as hesitant as the tone in her voice.

TEDDY

Anyway, I was thinking of heading out early tomorrow if that's okay with you. We can make it to Albuquerque by nightfall if the roads are clear.

LEYNA

Sure.

TEDDY

Great, I'll swing by around seven?

LEYNA

Okay.

TEDDY

Okay...

Awkward beat.

LEYNA

Good night, Teddy.

TEDDY

Night.

Teddy walks to his room. Leyna watches him for a beat before unlocking her door and heading inside.

Teddy gets to his door and looks back as hers shuts. Disappointed, he heads inside--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Teddy and Leyna drunkenly stumble inside his apartment, lips locked, hands grabbing at each other. Teddy kicks the door closed and fumbles for the light but she grabs his hand and draws it back around her.

TEDDY

Can't see.

LEYNA

I know--

They trip over something and fall onto the bed, giggling like giddy honeymooners.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I love how your bed is so close to the door.

TEDDY

Is that a nice way of saying my apartment is small?

LEYNA

It's cozy. Like a closet.

TEDDY

The queen of backhanded compliments strikes again.

They kiss again, more deeply this time, and wrap their arms around each other.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

They lay naked in bed, still wrapped up in each other.

LEYNA

Probably space.

TEDDY

Space?

LEYNA

I have all the money and time in the world, right?

TEDDY

Yeah.

LEYNA

Space. Final answer.

TEDDY

Explain.

LEYNA

Looking up at the stars always made me feel small in a good way, like no matter what I was dealing with in that particular moment, it was infinitesimal compared to everything that's happened -- and will happen -- in the universe. I want to experience what it would feel like to be on the other end of that, looking back at our planet from above.

Teddy sees Leyna light up at the thought.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Seeing all the civilizations, the vastness of the continents... think it would give me perspective.

TEDDY

On what?

LEYNA

The future? Life? I won't know until I get up there.

Teddy's moved by this. He kisses her.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Good answer?

TEDDY

Great answer.

LEYNA

What about you?

TEDDY

(thinking a beat)
Route 66.

LEYNA

What?

TEDDY

Historic Route 66--

LEYNA

I know what it is. Why?

TEDDY

It's quintessential Americana. There's something cool about a road that connects Chicago to the Santa Monica Pier.

Leyna's not convinced.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

You seem disappointed by my answer.

LEYNA

I was expecting something bigger than... a road.

TEDDY

Oh, it's so much more than a road.

LEYNA

I'm listening.

TEDDY

Okay, well I may not be as eloquent as you but it's history! Sky City, Grand Canyon, The Petrified Forest. The list goes on.

LEYNA

Yeah, but you could do that now. The point of the question is that you have unlimited money and time.

TEDDY

So we would stay at the nicest hotels and drive a Bentley.

LEYNA

We?

TEDDY

Oh, you're definitely coming.

LEYNA

How about you drive and I'll fly to LA and meet you at the Pier?

TEDDY

You'll come around, I can sense it.

LEYNA

I probably won't.

TEDDY

Whatever. In reality, I get two weeks off a year and money is limited so I like to keep my vacation dreams somewhat realistic.

She plays with his hand.

LEYNA

Actually, I wanted to talk to you about that.

TEDDY

What? Dreams?

LEYNA

Career.

TEDDY

Let me guess. You've decided to drop out of business school with three months left to create the next Facebook.

LEYNA

Not quite.

TEDDY

I thought you promised to become a billionaire so I can quit my job.

LEYNA

Fair warning. Once I hit a billion, I'm going to have a harem of men.

TEDDY

A harem, huh? Sounds unsanitary.

LEYNA

I'll make sure you're all bathed and fed.

TEDDY

Classy. So what did you want to talk about?

LEYNA

What are your thoughts on Redwood Capital?

TEDDY

They're the most successful venture capital fund in the world. Why?

Off her look, Teddy sits up.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Wait, did you get an offer?

LEYNA

Maybe.

TEDDY

Holy shit! But wait, aren't they in San Francisco?

LEYNA

They're setting up a Midwest office here in Chicago. I'll be one of their first employees.

TEDDY

That's amazing! Way to bury the lede, Jesus! This is a dream job!

LEYNA

I know! I'll get to hunt for the next unicorn that will hopefully make the world a better place, and the best part is I get to stay here, with you.

TEDDY

Everything I want to hear. I'm so proud of you!

He hugs her.

LEYNA

Well, I haven't accepted yet.

TEDDY

What? Why not?

LEYNA

I wanted to get your input first. So you think I should take it?

TEDDY

I mean, that's up to you but YES!

LEYNA

Good, because I was supposed to get back to them tonight.

TEDDY

Go-go-go.

Leyna grabs her phone.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

We need to celebrate.

Teddy gets up and rummages through his fridge.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I'm pretty sure I had a bottle of... here it is.

He pulls out a CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE.

LEYNA

Don't you have work tomorrow?

TEDDY

Like I said, I'm gonna quit my shitty job.

LEYNA

Thought I needed to make a billion dollars first.

TEDDY

You will.

He UNCORKS the bottle and--

INT. TEDDY'S SUITE - NIGHT

POP! Teddy opens a mini-bottle of champagne from the mini-fridge and kicks the door shut.

He takes a big gulp straight from the bottle and looks out over the St. Louis skyline, a sadness in his eyes.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - MORNING

Teddy packs their stuff into the 4-Runner as Leyna emerges from the hotel.

LEYNA

Haven't had to wake up this early since before everything froze.

TEDDY

Well, hopefully we'll get back to those days soon.

LEYNA

Want me to drive?

TEDDY

That's okay. I can start us off.

Leyna gets in shotgun as Teddy slams the trunk shut.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A clear highway across the PLAIN STATES. Nothing but flatland, prairies, and farms for as far as the eye can see.

INT. SUV - DAY

They ride in silence, staring out at the road that stretches to the horizon. It's a hypnotic monotony when--

BANG! The sound of a tire FLAPPING. Their SUV starts to rock. Teddy gently steps on the brakes.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SHOULDER - DAY

They pull to a stop and get out. Teddy checks the tires -- the left front tire is completely shredded up.

TEDDY

Well, tire's completely gone.

LEYNA

Drug dealers need to take better care of their cars.

TEDDY

It's oddly comforting to know that major inconveniences still occur.

LEYNA

Ever the optimist.

They look up and down the highway. A single car in each direction. Teddy points to the further one.

TEDDY

I'll check that one?

LEYNA

Sure.

They split up and head towards their respective cars.

ON TEDDY

He reaches a SUBARU STATION WAGON carrying a family of four. Two DADS and their young SON and DAUGHTER.

TEDDY

Shit.

ON LEYNA

Leyna approaches a small Mercedes Cross-Over SUV. She peeks inside to see a PREGNANT MOM driving alone.

LEYNA

Oh, no.

BACK AT THE SUV -- MOMENTS LATER

Leyna and Teddy reconvene.

 TEDDY
What you got?

 LEYNA
One of those smaller Mercedes SUVs
carrying a pregnant mom. You?

 TEDDY
A family of four in a Subaru.

 LEYNA
Oh, come on.

 TEDDY
Yeah...

They mull the decision.

 LEYNA
A Subaru would fit more stuff.

 TEDDY
(defensive)
We don't have that much stuff and
we can grab more on the way.

 LEYNA
But we can't leave a pregnant woman
out here all alone.

 TEDDY
It's a family of four, Leyna.

 LEYNA
Mine's a family of two.

 TEDDY
Mine's a gay couple.

 LEYNA
That shouldn't-- I mean-- You can't
assume we're in hostile territory
just because it's middle-America.

 TEDDY
I didn't. I'm just saying...

They fall back into a difficult silence.

LEYNA
I have an idea.

STATION WAGON

Leyna and Teddy move the Son into the middle seat and gently place the Pregnant Woman in his seat.

TEDDY
God, they're going to flip out when the world unfreezes.

LEYNA
Hope the shock doesn't force her into labor.

Leyna wraps the seatbelt around the Pregnant Woman's belly.

TEDDY
At least she won't be alone. I'll grab the rest of our stuff.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

They're loaded up with Teddy at the wheel.

TEDDY
Ready?

LEYNA
Let's do it.

He shifts the car into gear and hits the gas.

LEYNA (V.O.)
Tokyo?!

INT. TEDDY'S CAR - NIGHT

WINTER. Teddy hits the brakes in stop-and-go traffic as they head out of pre-frozen Chicago. Leyna looks at him in shock.

TEDDY
They said it's a two-year stint. I just need to set up shop and get the local analysts trained up.

LEYNA
Those offers are never "just two years." I have friends who were supposed to go for a year five years ago and they're still there.

TEDDY
Don't be so dramatic.

LEYNA
Dramatic?!

TEDDY
Can we just talk this through?
(back to the traffic)
God, is all of Chicago heading out
of town tonight?

LEYNA
Well, are you going to take it?

TEDDY
That depends on you.

LEYNA
Don't throw this on my plate.

TEDDY
This isn't a decision to be made
alone. We're a couple.

LEYNA
Moving abroad together is a big
decision, Teddy.

TEDDY
I realize that.

LEYNA
And I can't leave my new job after
just two months.

TEDDY
(sheepish)
Do they have a Tokyo office?

This sets Leyna off.

LEYNA
You are so selfish!

TEDDY
What?! I didn't mean--
(honking the horn)
Let's move, buddy!

LEYNA
What happens if you don't?

TEDDY
If I don't what?

LEYNA
If you don't take it.

TEDDY
Then they'll get some other schlub
to go in my place, I guess.

LEYNA
But you're their only Asia analyst.

Teddy's stumped. Leyna eyes him.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
You already said yes, didn't you...
Caught red-handed, his silence is his answer.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
You are unbelievable!

TEDDY
This is huge career opportunity!
I'd be running all of Asia, do you
understand what that means?! No
more graveyard shifts or late-night
calls or flying back and forth
every month. These next two years
could set up the rest of my career!

LEYNA
And what about mine?

A guilty beat from Teddy.

TEDDY
Can you at least try and meet me
halfway on this?

LEYNA
What does that even mean?!

TEDDY
(relenting)
I... I don't know.

LEYNA
There is no halfway, Teddy! You
made this decision without me
because you assumed I would just
give up my career and follow you
halfway around the world!

TEDDY
That's not true!

LEYNA
Well your actions scream otherwise!

Teddy SIGHS and shakes his head. The traffic clears up.

TEDDY
Finally.

He steps on the gas.

EXT. RURAL ILLINOIS - NIGHT

They drive in silence. The winter air is cold and crisp outside. Snow packs both sides of the desolate highway. Up ahead, there's a rest stop. Teddy pulls in.

INT. TEDDY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He parks in front of the bathrooms.

TEDDY
Bathroom break. Need to go?

Leyna can't even look at him.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
I'll leave the engine on so please
don't drive away.

Still nothing. He steps out and runs into the bathroom.

EXT. REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Teddy re-emerges to see the car's lights off and Leyna leaning on the hood, looking up.

TEDDY
What are you doing?

LEYNA
The stars.

Teddy looks up. The sky is crystal clear and millions of stars shimmer above them.

TEDDY
Whoa.

He joins her on the hood.

LEYNA

This doesn't mean I'm not still mad at you.

TEDDY

I know.

It's hard not to be entranced by the sight.

LEYNA

How did you think I was going to respond to that?

TEDDY

Just like you did. Honestly, the firm didn't give me much of a choice. I could turn it down and search for another job here.

LEYNA

Is that what you want?

Teddy hesitates too long.

TEDDY

I want what's best for us.

LEYNA

What does that mean to you?

Difficulty as Teddy searches for the right words.

TEDDY

I don't know. If it means losing you, I don't want to take it, obviously. But if taking this job sets us up financially... I know it's a massive ask but I would ask you to make that sacrifice.

LEYNA

You know I can't make that decision for you. We're not married. It's your career.

TEDDY

I know.

Teddy sighs as he takes in the stars.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
You're right about looking up at
the stars. It gives... perspective.

Leyna looks at him with a profound sadness. After a beat, she looks back up to the sky--

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

FROZEN WORLD. That same sky, much more brilliant above the deserts of New Mexico. WE TILT DOWN to their Mercedes as it drives down a desolate highway.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

Leyna's at the wheel now as Teddy sleeps in shotgun. She YAWNS and rubs her eyes. She's getting sleepy so she pulls over. Teddy comes to.

 LEYNA
How are you feeling?

 TEDDY
Still tired. How long was I out?

 LEYNA
My guess? Maybe ten hours.

 TEDDY
Seriously? I feel like I could
sleep for another day.

 LEYNA
That settles it then.

 TEDDY
Settles what?

 LEYNA
How about we camp out tonight?

Leyna points up out the window. Teddy leans forward and looks up to see the night sky.

 TEDDY
Holy hell. Where are we?

 LEYNA
Halfway to Flagstaff.

 TEDDY
So we passed Albuquerque already?

LEYNA
A couple hours ago.

TEDDY
You're a boss.

LEYNA
Got lucky. Nothing but empty road.

They get out of the car.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - NIGHT

With the tent set up along with two foldable chairs, Teddy carries a few branches and tumbleweed.

TEDDY
This is all I could find.

He dumps it onto a pile of branches in a makeshift fire-pit.

LEYNA
All right, here goes nothing.

Leyna dowses the pile with lighter fluid and pulls out a lighter. She flicks it a couple times and it LIGHTS UP.

She brings the flame to the base of the pit and... it starts to burn.

TEDDY
Nice!

She stands back and lets the lighter fluid do the rest of the work. Once it's going, they take a moment to look around and settle in. Leyna pops open the cooler and hands Teddy a beer.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - LATER THAT NIGHT

They sit by the fire and gaze up at the sky like they did at the rest stop. A dome of stars that stretches from one horizon to the other.

Teddy drinks it in as Leyna steals glances at him with that same sad look in her eyes.

TEDDY
Name one thing you're thankful for.

LEYNA
What do you mean?

TEDDY

Being in this frozen mess.

Leyna takes a beat to think.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Like, I know this sounds bad but I'm actually thankful for the peace and quiet. It's made me realize how stressed I was, how my mind was constantly racing, how I was way too focused on work...

LEYNA

You did grind your teeth a lot in your sleep.

TEDDY

Yeah. I feel like I've been given a second chance, you know? To reflect without all the distractions and actually string two coherent thoughts together. I was so tense and coiled up like a stress-ball before the freeze...

He looks to her, earnest and apologetic.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry if I took it out on you.

LEYNA

I was no better, but thank you. That means a lot.

TEDDY

So how about you?

LEYNA

Time.

Teddy looks to her, surprised.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Here. With you.

Teddy smiles. Thankful as well. He looks back up to the stars. Content in this moment.

However, Leyna keeps her gaze on him. That sadness lingering in her eyes. She wants to say more... but still can't get herself to speak up.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
I'm going to turn in.

TEDDY
Okay, I'm gonna hang out here a bit longer if that's okay.

LEYNA
Of course.

She squeezes his shoulder and heads inside the tent. Teddy finishes his beer and gazes back up at the stars.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Teddy unzips the opening and crawls inside as Leyna lies in her sleeping bag, facing away. She sniffles and quietly wipes her eyes.

TEDDY
You okay?

LEYNA
I'm fine.

He lays down next to her.

TEDDY
Are you though?

LEYNA
It's nothing.

TEDDY
Is it one of those nothings where I'm supposed to ignore that and keep asking? Or is it a "leave me alone" nothing?

She lets out a sad laugh.

LEYNA
If only men could read women's minds.

TEDDY
I bet it's a shit-show in there.

She elbows him.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
 Seriously though, if you want to talk, I'm kinda the only option you got unfortunately.

She rolls over, her eyes wet.

LEYNA
 It's just... this whole thing. I thought I could do it.

TEDDY
 Do what?

LEYNA
 Pretend like nothing's wrong.

TEDDY
 There's a lot wrong.

LEYNA
 I know. I just...

He reaches for her and draws her in. Whatever she was holding back comes out now. Her sobs grow.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

He holds her in silence, gently stroking her head and letting her cry. After a long beat, she pulls back and wipes her tears, trying to play it off.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
 God, I'm a mess.

TEDDY
 Never.

They exchange a look. She leans in and kisses him. It's warm. Comforting. Familiar. They kiss again, more passionately this time as we--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WINTER. Teddy's on top of Leyna, in the middle of sex. His face buried into the mattress while she faces the ceiling, her eyes closed, trying to concentrate... Mentally, they're oceans apart. Her concentration breaks. She tries to regain focus but he stops.

TEDDY

I'm sorry.

He lays down next to her, embarrassed... or annoyed?

LEYNA

That's okay.

Teddy remains silent. He's clearly bothered.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

TEDDY

Nothing.

This only bugs Leyna more.

LEYNA

Can we stop pretending like nothing's wrong?

TEDDY

What are you talking about?

LEYNA

Let me be more clear. Can you stop pretending like nothing's wrong?

TEDDY

I'm not.

LEYNA

We can't keep kicking the can down the road forever. You're leaving in two months.

TEDDY

I've told you what I want so really it's up to you.

LEYNA

That's not fair, Teddy.

TEDDY

I can do long-distance.

LEYNA

But you've never done it! I have and even Chicago to Boston was hard. Tokyo is a world away!

TEDDY

So you don't even want to try.

LEYNA

I don't want my heart broken again
and I'm talking from experience.

TEDDY

With a previous boyfriend who isn't
me. It's not us.

LEYNA

Tokyo is fourteen hours ahead. You
work from six to six while I work
nine to nine. That means we'll have
maybe a one-hour window in the
mornings to talk.

TEDDY

We'll have weekends.

LEYNA

It's not like I haven't thought
this through, Teddy. It's two
years, at least. And I know you
expect me to quit my job and follow
you wherever you go--

TEDDY

Now you're just putting words in my
mouth.

LEYNA

But my job is just as important to
me as yours is to you.

TEDDY

I know it is.

LEYNA

Then act like it!

Teddy's defenses start to come up.

TEDDY

Hang on. I've put in seven years at
my firm. Seven years of slaving
away over late nights and weekends
so I could get an opportunity of a
lifetime like this.

LEYNA

But you hate your job!

TEDDY

I wouldn't expect a first-year
analyst to understand, okay?

LEYNA

What is that supposed to mean??

TEDDY

It means you haven't been at your job long enough to deal with the politics and bullshit that comes with any job so excuse me if I take your idealistic view on career strategy with a grain of salt.

LEYNA

You are being such an asshole right now! I'm sorry that I love my job and can't commiserate with you on how miserable work is!

TEDDY

Give it three years. Then we'll see if you still use "love" and "job" in the same sentence.

Leyna's taken aback by his flippant vitriol.

LEYNA

Why are you so desperate to drag me down with you?

TEDDY

Because I don't understand why you won't come with me! Or do long-distance! Or even try!

LEYNA

Because I know how that ends.

TEDDY

No, you're just going to turn it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

LEYNA

You're asking me to choose between my career and chasing you.

TEDDY

No, I'm not!

LEYNA

You are and we're talking in circles now.

TEDDY

Well, why can't you do the same job in Tokyo? There are plenty of venture capital firms out there.

LEYNA

Because I've already invested in three companies which could change the landscapes of healthcare, clean tech, and AI--

TEDDY

Oh my god, stop convincing yourself that you're changing the world. You know ninety-nine percent of those companies go bust before they ever make it to market. Most are just pie in the sky ideas with great pitchmen who collect investments from naive idealists like you.

He's crossed the line. A stab at Leyna's pride.

LEYNA

And what do you do besides analyze some stock to see if its price will go up a point? Real noble work.

Shots fired. Teddy's hurt and it shows. Leyna quickly reins it in.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that.

He gets out of bed.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

TEDDY

I can't be here right now.

Teddy gets dressed.

LEYNA

Teddy...

He puts his shoes on and storms out.

INT. TENT - MORNING

Teddy awakens, his face riddled with guilt. He looks over at Leyna, who sleeps peacefully with her naked back to him.

He reaches for her when suddenly, SHE GLITCHES.

Teddy freezes.

She glitches again -- in and out of existence -- like a buggy computer program. He reels back as Leyna comes to. She yawns and rolls over to him.

LEYNA

Morning...

(off his horrified look)

What's wrong?

Teddy scrambles to open the tent.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

He rushes out.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - MORNING

He sprints over to the car, rips the door open, and grabs the hunting knife as Leyna emerges from the tent.

LEYNA

What are you doing?

TEDDY

What are you?!

LEYNA

What?! I'm me. Leyna!

TEDDY

Bullshit! I just saw you glitch like some... hologram!

Leyna freezes. Beat.

Her tone changes.

LEYNA

Teddy...

TEDDY

Stop and answer the goddamn question! What is this place?!

She mulls how to answer this, and lets out a heavy SIGH.

LEYNA

It was supposed to be a way for me to get closure.

TEDDY

Closure? For what?

LEYNA

Our relationship. For us.

TEDDY

What are you talking about?!

LEYNA

The night you proposed...

Teddy furrows his brow.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Teddy and Squid sit in a booth.

SQUID

I mean, if you want me to be real, you kinda brought this on yourself.

TEDDY

How?

SQUID

You don't have to go to Tokyo.

TEDDY

Dude, you sound just like her.

Squid shrugs.

SQUID

Well?

TEDDY

They made it clear that if I want to move up in the firm, I gotta earn my stripes abroad.

SQUID

So go to another hedge fund.

TEDDY

It's not that easy.

SQUID

If you ask me, it sounds like you're choosing your career over your relationship. And I'm guessing that's how it sounds to her, too.

TEDDY

Says the guy who's never been in a real relationship.

SQUID

By choice, baby. To avoid emotionally taxing decisions like this until I'm ready to get serious.

TEDDY

How's this for getting serious?

Teddy pulls out a RING BOX and puts it on the table. Squid reels back like it's garlic to a vampire.

SQUID

Oh, bro. Put that away.

TEDDY

What? Why?

SQUID

'Cuz that shit feels mad forced. Are you kidding me right now?

TEDDY

I gotta do it.

SQUID

Let me ask you this. If you weren't moving abroad, would you still propose to her right now?

Teddy hesitates a beat, which is all Squid needs.

SQUID (CONT'D)

See?

TEDDY

Timing is everything.

SQUID

Yes! Timing is everything.

Teddy shoves the ring box back in his pocket.

TEDDY

Thought you'd be more supportive.

SQUID

I am being supportive by giving you my honest opinion.

TEDDY

So what am I doing wrong?

Squid sighs.

SQUID

Listen, she could've gotten a job in Silicon Valley for more money and a better career track but she chose to stay in Chicago. For you.

TEDDY

But it's different. I didn't throw down an ultimatum like it's me or her job. She could've moved to San Francisco and I would've dealt with it. Because that's what you do to make a relationship work.

Squid rolls his eyes and drops his head.

SQUID

You don't get it, man.

TEDDY

I gotta do this. I can't lose her.

SQUID

Don't put this on me if it doesn't end well.

TEDDY

I will definitely take it out on you. Wish me luck.

Teddy turns to head out.

SQUID

Fifth grade. Maddy Walker.

Teddy stops.

TEDDY

Why are you bringing that up?

SQUID

'Cuz you asked me if you should ask her to be your girlfriend, and I already knew that she didn't like you, but I was afraid of hurting your feelings so I said do what you want. Then, after you got rejected, you found out I knew all along and wouldn't talk to me for an entire month because I didn't warn you.

TEDDY

Yeah, so?

SQUID

I'm warning you.

Teddy thinks a beat, then--

TEDDY

Wish you had kept that to yourself. I like the supportive Squid better.

SQUID

I'm trying to be.

TEDDY

Well, you can be supportive by inviting our friends over to my place this Friday after I propose.

With that, Teddy walks out. Squid watches him exit like a dead man walking.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Leyna walks away from Teddy, who's down on bended knee. Tears stream down her face as she exits the restaurant.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Teddy sits at the light, texting her over and over. The light turns green as he types away but he's too distraught to notice. The car behind him TAPS his horn but Teddy keeps texting. He's holding up traffic now. The car HONKS, longer and louder this time as the light turns yellow.

TEDDY

All right! Christ!

He sends the text and steps on the GAS but the light is RED. A TRUCK comes barreling through the intersection--

SMASH!!!

The CRUNCH of twisting metal. In this version, the truck doesn't just clip his rear bumper -- he's T-boned HEAD-ON. His car crumples from the impact and SLAMS into a light pole.

FROM ABOVE:

His HORN blares. The car is flattened into an impossible sliver. The TRUCK DRIVER stumbles out of his cab and rushes over to Teddy's window. He GASPS and collapses to the ground as a CROWD gathers to help. We can't see inside but from their reaction, we know it's bad.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - MORNING

Teddy stands there in shock, shaking his head in disbelief.

TEDDY

That truck clipped my car and I spun out. I walked away.

LEYNA

No... You didn't.

TEDDY

The engagement party back at my place. Squid. Our friends.

Leyna shakes her head.

LEYNA

The algorithm takes real memories and builds new ones off of them.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Leyna sprints down the hallway in a panic. She asks a NURSE who points her around the corner.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

She arrives but it's too late. A SURGEON comes out to tell her that Teddy has died. She stands frozen in shock.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

Teddy stands there with that same look of shock.

TEDDY
No... No, I don't believe you.

LEYNA
It's true.

Leyna takes a step towards him.

TEDDY
So then this is...?

LEYNA
A place someone built for people
like me. People who don't know how
to move on.

Something's starting to click in Teddy's brain. Tears start to stream down his face.

TEDDY
Why would you do this?

LEYNA
Because it's all my fault. Had I
picked up your call... Had I just
picked up the first time...

Leyna starts to cry.

TEDDY
No! You don't get to do that!

Leyna tries to choke back tears but they keep coming.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
You don't get to grieve when I'm
standing right in front of you!

It's all too much for Teddy to process. He takes the hunting knife and slices his forearm.

LEYNA
What are you doing?!

His arm starts to gush blood and he winces at the pain.

TEDDY
You're telling me this isn't real??

LEYNA
Please don't!

He does it again, drawing another line down his flesh. It splits open and begins to spurt blood.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

STOP!

He gets inside the car and starts the engine.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Teddy!

He peels out and takes off down the highway. WE STAY ON LEYNA as she crumples to the sand.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Leyna stands there alone, frozen in shock, as the world around her slows. Squid arrives along with a few other close friends but WE STAY ON HER as the background changes to--

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Friends and family mourn Teddy's death. Leyna remains frozen in shock as the mourners fade away and the background once again changes to--

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She stands in front of Teddy's bed in the midst of boxing up her things when she collapses and starts to BAWL. She clenches the sheets as her body expels all the pain.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Leyna sits in the bathtub, knees to her chest, as the water pours over her. Her face numb from all the crying.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A PSYCHIATRIST talks to her but she can't hear him. In fact, he's blurred out-of-focus and his voice is muffled just like everyone else's.

She's despondent, unmoved, unable to feel--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

The same look. WE PULL BACK to reveal a boardroom where Leyna sits with her co-workers. Someone's talking but again, it's muffled and out of focus. She stares into nothingness when--

BOSS (O.S.)

Leyna.

Her BOSS (50) turns to her and she snaps out of her trance.

LEYNA

Yes?

BOSS

Joji was asking a question.

Leyna looks over at JOJI (32), a handsome unassuming type, who's in the midst of giving a presentation to the team.

LEYNA

I'm sorry Joji, what was the...?

Joji sees her having trouble and covers for her.

JOJI

It's okay. I'll follow up later.

As she fades back to despondence, we turn our attention to the presentation Joji has on-screen. It's a live-feed of New York City at ground-level. Taxis drive by. Horns honk. Pedestrians battle the summer heat.

JOJI (CONT'D)

So, our team has started the world-building phase for each Playground as seen here. So far, we've built New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago with more cities to come over the next six months. As you can see, it's photo-real with sight, sound, touch, taste and smell replicated to exact specs...

Joji holds up an earpod.

JOJI (CONT'D)

You enter the Playground using this connector, as Osahon will show us.

He hands it to his teammate, OSAHON (30), who sits in a chair. Osahon takes the earpod and places it in his ear. It glows a soft blue, his eyes close, and his body slumps in the chair. He's out like a light.

Osahon then pops up on-screen inside VR New York.

JOJI (CONT'D)
It's that simple.

IMPRESSED MURMURS from everyone.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Now, because the VR playground
operates in hyper-speed, one second
is equal to six hours inside, so...

The live-feed moves in super fast-forward and stops. As quickly as Osahon passed out, he re-awakens.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Welcome back, O.

OSAHON
Good to be back.

JOJI
How long were you inside?

OSAHON
Twenty-four hours.

Very IMPRESSED MURMURS from the investors.

JOJI
And who did you meet with?

OSAHON
Just our teammate Sarah, who's back
at the lab.

The screen changes to a live-feed of a LAB where a team of SCIENTISTS huddle around SARAH (27). She waves to the camera.

SARAH (ON SCREEN)
Hey guys.

JOJI
Hey, Sarah. How are you feeling?

SARAH (ON SCREEN)
Good, thanks. It was good catching
up in the Playground, O.

OSAHON
Likewise.

JOJI

There we have it. In four seconds, Osahon and Sarah were able to enter the Playground, meet up, and spend an entire day inside, all of which was recorded on our feed which we will show you later...

An excited energy permeates throughout the room.

JOJI (CONT'D)

And so there we have it. Our first successful beta test.

The room ERUPTS in APPLAUSE, jolting Leyna back to reality. Joji clocks this.

INT. LEYNA'S OFFICE - DAY

As Leyna retreats to her office, Joji KNOCKS on her door.

LEYNA

Hey, come in.

JOJI

How you doing?

LEYNA

Great! What you've created is truly a game-changer. I'm speechless.

JOJI

Thanks, but I meant... how are you doing?

Leyna's mood shifts. She looks at Joji, his face still fixed with concern. She opens her mouth, ready to spew out the next lie, but his look makes her hesitate.

LEYNA

Honestly? I don't know how to answer that.

Joji sits down across from her.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

It's been over a year and some days are better than others...

He nods in support.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

But that shouldn't be your concern. I need you to stay focused on your company and creating the future.

JOJI

You were the only investor to believe in us. Without you, we'd be nothing, so your well-being is my concern. And my company's concern.

LEYNA

I appreciate that and I'm sorry if I don't seem present--

JOJI

Don't ever apologize for your grief.

She looks at him, surprised and thankful.

JOJI (CONT'D)

You know, I lost my mother when I was twelve.

LEYNA

I'm sorry, I didn't know that.

JOJI

It was sudden. Her heart just failed one day and she was gone...

This strikes a chord with Leyna.

JOJI (CONT'D)

That void never goes away, not really. In fact, I missed her so much that I tried to rebuild her.

LEYNA

What?

JOJI

I was a dumb kid with a penchant for programming, so I collected her social media profiles, hacked all her e-mails, voice recordings, anything I could find, and Frankenstein'ed this Siri-like voice app. Even added her profile pic with a moving mouth to it.

LEYNA

Did it work?

JOJI

It was rudimentary. I programmed her to learn from questions and adapt, but again, I was twelve. The most she could do was tell me the weather or read Google searches...

He lets out a small, sad chuckle.

JOJI (CONT'D)

But it helped me cope, especially on the days when all I wanted to do was simply give her one last hug.

There's something endearing about him.

JOJI (CONT'D)

And then that led me to wonder, what if I could create a virtual space where real people could interact with each other? Not just through a pair of goggles but with all five senses. Hence, the Playground was born. And it all came from me wanting to hug my dead mother. Morbid, I know.

LEYNA

No, that's really sweet. Why haven't you told that story before?

JOJI

I guess I wasn't ready to share that part of me with anyone... until now.

Leyna eyes Joji a beat. He stands.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Anyway, I should go. I'll send a progress update next week.

LEYNA

Thanks.

He stops at the door and turns back.

JOJI

The void may never be filled, but it does get better.

Leyna responds with a thankful nod. He exits and closes the door behind him--

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

Leyna SMASHES the back window of a car open with a rock. She crawls inside and unlocks the door.

She moves the DRIVER over to the passenger seat and takes off down the highway after Teddy.

INT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WINTER. Leyna and her roommate, EMI (31), sit in sweatpants and watch a horror movie. Emi covers behind a pillow.

EMI
Why do we do this to ourselves?

LEYNA
I really don't know.

EMI
We should go out.

LEYNA
To where?

EMI
I don't know. A bar?

LEYNA
That's worse than a horror movie.

Emi pauses the movie and turns to Leyna, her tone cautious.

EMI
I think it's time.

Leyna rolls her eyes.

EMI (CONT'D)
It's been almost two years.

LEYNA
I've tried.

EMI
Have you?

This stumps Leyna when her PHONE buzzes with a text. Joji's corporate photo pops up on-screen. Emi grabs it.

EMI (CONT'D)
(attracted)
Who is this?

LEYNA
Give it back.

EMI
Not until you answer.

LEYNA
He's the founder of one of the
start-ups we seeded. Now gimme.

Emi types in Leyna's passcode and unlocks the phone.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
Uhh, since when do you know my
password?

EMI
We're roommates.

LEYNA
That's not okay.

EMI
He's asking what you're doing
tonight.

LEYNA
No, he's not.

EMI
(talking out her typing)
"Not much. You?"

LEYNA
Emi!

WHOOSH. The text is sent. Leyna snatches the phone back.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
I can't believe you just did that.

EMI
He's obviously interested.

LEYNA
It's not like that.

EMI

Really? Because I don't have any
work people texting me at nine PM
on a Saturday night.

BZZZ. A reply.

JOJI: *I hope I'm not being inappropriate but would you like
to grab a drink tonight?*

Leyna blushes.

EMI (CONT'D)

He ask you out?

LEYNA

No.

EMI

Liar.

LEYNA

It's inappropriate.

EMI

Just say yes.

Leyna GRUMBLES.

EMI (CONT'D)

I know I'm being annoying but I'm
doing this because I love you.

LEYNA

(relenting)

I know.

EMI

Worst case, you turn around and
come right back home to me.

Leyna hesitates.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Leyna enters to find Joji waiting in a booth. He stands to
greet her.

LEYNA

Hey.

JOJI

Thanks for coming out.

He offers her a seat as a SERVER approaches. Joji looks to Leyna.

LEYNA
Club soda with lime, please.

JOJI
Two.

LEYNA
Oh, you can drink. Don't mind me.

JOJI
That's okay. I'm happy to just sit
and chat.

Just then, another Server brings over a cheesy-looking punch bowl with two straws in it.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Oh, we didn't order this.

SERVER
No, they did for the entire bar.

The Server points to a smiley OLD COUPLE at another booth.

SERVER (CONT'D)
They come here every year to
celebrate their anniversary. This
is the first drink they had
together, so enjoy!

The Old Couple wave to Joji and Leyna. They wave back and everyone starts to CLAP and congratulate the old pair.

They turn to the bowl. A straw for each of them.

JOJI
Well...

LEYNA
That is really sweet.

JOJI
It is.

LEYNA
I'll feel bad if I don't at least
take a sip.

JOJI
Yeah, I'm really bad with parental
guilt. Are they still looking?

LEYNA

They're literally watching every table to make sure they take a drink from it.

JOJI

In a creepy or cute way?

LEYNA

Like a cult ritual suicide way?

Releasing the straw from his mouth--

JOJI

Well, that settles that.

LEYNA

I'm sorry. That was dark.

JOJI

I like this side of you.

They exchange a glance. The Old Couple look to their table.

LEYNA

Oh, they're looking at us.

JOJI

Please, after you.

LEYNA

Together?

JOJI

Sure.

They lean in at the same time and drink.

LEYNA

Actually, not bad.

JOJI

Very... fruity.

They wave back at the Old Couple, point to the drink and mouth, "thank you." The Old Couple return their smiles and the Old Man gives a thumbs up.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Yep, they definitely poisoned us.

Leyna LAUGHS which brings a smile to Joji's face.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

As patrons come and go, through the window we see Leyna and Teddy talk the night away. It's a lively conversation and the first time we've seen Leyna LAUGH this much since Teddy died.

INT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Leyna returns home, waking Emi up on the couch.

EMI
(groggy)
Hey, babe.

LEYNA
I'm sorry. Didn't mean to wake you.

EMI
Mama wanted to wait up for you.

LEYNA
You're the best.

Leyna joins Emi on the couch and lays down on her. Emi wraps her arms around Leyna and strokes her hair.

EMI
So how did it go?

LEYNA
(beat)
It went.

Emi smiles.

EMI
That's what mama likes to hear.

FADE TO:

INT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Leyna gets dressed for another night out when Emi walks in.

EMI
Out again?

LEYNA
Maybe.

EMI
Two nights this week. Same guy?

LEYNA
Yes, but it's not like that.

EMI
That shade of lipstick says
otherwise.

LEYNA
Go away.

EMI
Can't. Need to pee.

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS -- NIGHT

MONTAGE:

-Leyna meets with Joji at a restaurant. They have a lively,
animated conversation.

-The conversation continues at a bar. They sit a bit closer.

-Now they're the last ones sitting at a third bar, engrossed
in each other's company.

EXT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joji walks Leyna home. Their breaths visible in the cold air.
They pull up to Leyna's apartment.

LEYNA
Well, here's me.

JOJI
I had a lot of fun tonight.

LEYNA
So did I. Thanks for inviting me...
I needed that.

JOJI
Me, too.

Beat. Their faces close, Joji leans in and kisses her. After
a beat, she pulls back.

LEYNA
I'm sorry.

JOJI
No, I'm sorry.

LEYNA
It's just with work and
everything...

JOJI
Right. You're right.

They exchange another look. Joji offers a warm smile.
Suddenly, she kisses him. Now he's the one to pull back.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Are you sure?

INT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They burst into the apartment and rush over to her bedroom.

INT. LEYNA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They shut the door and start undressing each other when Joji
pulls back again.

JOJI
Tell me if my checking in gets
annoying but I just wanna make sure
you're sure--

LEYNA
I appreciate that and yes.

They get back to it. They fall onto the bed and she pulls the
covers over them as we PUSH-IN ON the frost-covered windows--

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUMMER.

WE PULL BACK from the windows, now open with the fan on full-
blast. Leyna and Joji lay there, sweaty, naked, entwined.
Leyna's hair is much shorter now.

JOJI
Water?

LEYNA
Yes, please.

Joji gets up and we see that it's a different bedroom. He
steps out naked into--

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

--a different apartment. The living room is filled with both of their things. They've moved into a new place together.

He pours a glass of water and returns to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He hands her the glass.

LEYNA

Thanks.

JOJI

Oh, there's one other thing.

LEYNA

What?

He gets down on one knee, still naked. Leyna sits up.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Wait, what are you doing?

From behind his back, he pulls out a ring box.

JOJI

Leyna, it's been four years since we first met and three incredible years since we started dating. I can't imagine spending my life with anyone else. Will you marry me?

Leyna GASPS, frozen in shock a beat too long.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Please... say something.

LEYNA

(beat)

Yes. Yes!

Joji exhales relief and gives her a huge hug. He puts the ring on her and they kiss--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Teddy down on one knee as Leyna walks away.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Teddy texts furiously, oblivious of the truck as headlights barrel down on him--

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leyna JUMPS AWAKE in a cold sweat. Joji wakes up beside her.

JOJI

You okay?

LEYNA

(lying)

Yeah. Bathroom.

She gets up and walks out of the room.

EMI (V.O.)

Another nightmare?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Leyna paces around, on the phone to Emi.

LEYNA

Ever since Joji proposed, they've returned. It's like--

EMI (V.O.)

Nothing. It's nothing. Don't let that guilt back into your life. You've suffered enough. You're allowed to be happy.

LEYNA

But what if I'm not?

EMI (V.O.)

That's it. I'm coming over.

LEYNA

No, no. It's fine.

EMI

Are you fine?

Off Leyna's silence--

EMI (CONT'D)

I think there's someone you should talk to.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Leyna sits and waits nervously at a table outside.

SQUID (O.S.)

Leyna.

Leyna turns to see Squid. Five years older and more refined than when we first met him. He carries a NEWBORN BABY in a sling on his chest.

LEYNA

(looking at the baby)

Oh my god.

SQUID

I know, right?

He goes in for a hug, the baby between them.

LEYNA

When you said baby, I assumed it was a woman.

SQUID

Well, she is a girl so technically you're not wrong. It's mama's day off so papa's running defense for baby Misa.

LEYNA

Misa. That's a pretty name.

SQUID

Thanks, I chose it.

EXT. CAFE - LATER

They sit at the table, eating and talking.

SQUID

Been married two years now and this one came along six months ago.

LEYNA

(disbelief)

Squid is a father.

SQUID

I know, I know.

LEYNA

I think it's great.

SQUID
It's a work in progress. So how
have you been?

LEYNA
Well...

Leyna holds up her engagement ring.

SQUID
Oh, whaaat! Congrats!

LEYNA
Thanks.

SQUID
Who's the lucky guy?

LEYNA
We met through work.

SQUID
That's great to hear, honestly. I'm
really happy for you.

Off her hesitance--

SQUID (CONT'D)
Right?

LEYNA
No, it is great. He's really great.
It's just... I've been seeing Teddy
in my dreams. Nightmares, actually.

Squid deflates.

SQUID
I see.

LEYNA
With all of the therapy and grief
counseling, I thought I had made
peace with what happened, but...

SQUID
It took me awhile, too. But it's
been five years, Leyna.

LEYNA
I know.

SQUID

It's okay to move on. He would've wanted you to. And that's coming from his best friend, so you know it's the truth.

Leyna nods but it's still hard for her.

LEYNA

I'm sorry I cut you guys off.

SQUID

Don't be.

LEYNA

It was so kind of you to reach out and check on me but I just didn't know how to--

SQUID

We all grieve differently. It's water under the bridge.

Baby Misa starts to cry.

SQUID (CONT'D)

Uh oh, someone's awake...

Leyna watches fondly as Squid bounces his baby.

LEYNA

You really do make a great father.

SQUID

Hold that judgment 'til you see me change a diaper. It's a disaster. Speaking of...

Squid checks her diaper.

SQUID (CONT'D)

Yep. She always does this at the worst possible moment. It's like she knows.

The Server brings the bill and Leyna pays for it.

SQUID (CONT'D)

Hey, no. Let's split it.

LEYNA

That's okay. I should let you go.

SQUID

Sorry about that. This girl drops some serious bombs. It's a public health hazard.

LEYNA

Please don't tell her that once she's of age.

SQUID

What fun is it being a dad if you can't embarrass your kid?

LEYNA

Thanks again for meeting me.

SQUID

Anytime. And I mean that.

They stand and give each other a big hug.

SQUID (CONT'D)

We should do this again, seriously. You can meet wifey next time.

LEYNA

I'd like that.

Squid grabs his things and looks to her, sympathetic.

SQUID

Not sure this helps but it's not your fault, Leyna. None of us ever thought that.

Leyna's heart silently breaks. She forces a thankful smile.

LEYNA

Bye, Squid.

Squid nods and goes on his way.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leyna SNAPS AWAKE again. Those same panicky breaths. Cold sweat. Joji wakes up more urgently this time.

JOJI

Leyna--

LEYNA

(between gasps)
I'm fine.

JOJI

Creating the world was straight-forward. Trees, food, cars, etc. They're all either static objects or repeat some basic function. Easy to program, easy to manage. The most difficult part was creating convincing background actors that humans could interact with at shops and on the streets--

LEYNA

Because human beings are the most complex decision-making systems in the universe.

JOJI

Exactly.

Off his reticence--

LEYNA

What is it, Joji?

JOJI

Remember I told you how I created an avatar of my mom after she died?

LEYNA

Yeah.

JOJI

Okay, well...

He presses ENTER. A WOMAN (35) pops up on-screen.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Say hi to my mom.

Photo-real like she's on the other end of a FaceTime call, moving around, waiting for someone to speak.

Leyna's impressed by how realistic Joji's Mom looks.

LEYNA

Is this your original rendition?

JOJI

No, I updated it recently.

LEYNA

Why?

JOJI

(beat)

I wanted to see if I could hug her.

Leyna, perplexed. Joji presses ENTER and the screen changes to a VIDEO of Joji talking with his Mom at a restaurant.

Leyna watches in shock.

LEYNA

Where is this...?

JOJI

Inside the Playground. Last week.

ON VIDEO: a teary Joji hugs his Mom.

Joji presses ENTER and the video cuts out. He turns to Leyna, who's still in shock.

JOJI (CONT'D)

I know it's crazy. It's been over twenty years but being able to tell her about you and say goodbye -- really say goodbye -- in person... It was the most cathartic thing I've ever experienced.

LEYNA

So you performed a Turing test on yourself in the Playground?

JOJI

(nodding)

And she passed with flying colors.

LEYNA

Why are you telling me this?

The difficult part...

JOJI

I built him.

LEYNA

Who?

Joji's look says it all. He presses a key on his computer and TEDDY pops up on-screen. Leyna GASPS in horror.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

No...

JOJI
Just hear me out--

LEYNA
Why would you do that??

Joji can see the terror in her eyes.

JOJI
Because I don't want to see you in pain anymore.

LEYNA
This is not the way. This is not how we're supposed to grieve.

JOJI
Says who?

They exchange a heavy look. Hers scared, his worried.

JOJI (CONT'D)
You've been having the same nightmare for the last eight months but you won't talk about it or seek professional help--

LEYNA
Stop.

He gives her a beat to process. She turns away from the screen, confused and scared.

JOJI
All I know is, after seeing my mom inside, that little tiny void in my heart, the one I thought would never go away, is gone. And I feel so much better.

Leyna looks back at Teddy's face on-screen with a mix of confusion and fear and anger.

JOJI (CONT'D)
It's up to you. Say the word and I'll delete the program and we'll never speak of it again. But I just need to believe that you're all in on us and not hung up on the past.

Leyna considers this for a beat but she grabs her bag and storms out the door instead.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Leyna, wait!

She's gone. Joji drops his head.

EXT. NORTH AVENUE BEACH - NIGHT

Leyna walks along the beach as YOUNG LEYNA AND TEDDY walk and talk behind her, ice creams in hand. Her heart sinks a bit.

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The neon sign bathes Leyna in blue and red. As she passes by, we see LEYNA AND TEDDY sitting inside the window, cracking up at something. Her heart sinks a bit more.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Leyna stands outside the restaurant where Teddy proposed. It's closed now, lights off, doors locked. She sucks in a choppy, panicked breath and walks away as Teddy's car pulls away from the back parking lot and speeds down the street.

Her heart's on the verge of breaking.

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

Leyna stands at the corner in a depressed trance. Suddenly, we see Teddy's CAR charge into the intersection and get T-BONED by the SEMI. The SOUND OF METAL CRUNCHING AND TWISTING slams into her brain.

Leyna covers her ears and SCREAMS--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Joji lies in bed waiting anxiously when he hears the front door open and shut. He sits up as Leyna enters the bedroom.

JOJI
Hey...

She sits down next to him, emotionally exhausted.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Listen, I'm sorry about earlier. It was selfish and stupid of me to--

LEYNA
Let's do it.

Joji stops.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
I want to do it. For me. For us.

Joji studies her to make sure she's ready. Her eyes clear, she holds his gaze. He nods.

INT. LAB - NIGHT

She sits down on a sofa as Joji punches commands into his terminal. He then holds up an earpod.

JOJI
You'll have the same device once you're inside so we can communicate in case of emergency. Otherwise, you'll have complete privacy. I made sure nothing records...

Leyna nods.

JOJI (CONT'D)
When you're ready to exit the Playground, just put the pod in your ear, say your full-name and the word, "extract." That will tell the program to pull you out.

LEYNA
Okay.

JOJI
Some elements might be buggy since I had to hack the main program but it shouldn't pose any risks. Also, You can only enter once.

Leyna looks to him.

JOJI (CONT'D)
After that, his profile will be wiped from the program because...

Joji looks down at the earpod, hesitant to hand it over. She puts her hands over his. She understands why.

LEYNA
Thank you. You're the best partner a person could ever ask for.

JOJI
Just come back to me, okay?

He hands her the earpod. She hugs him, puts it in her ear, and lays down.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Ready?

She exhales a nervous breath.

LEYNA
Yes.

JOJI
Entering in 3... 2... 1.

The earpod glows blue and she closes her eyes--

INT. LEYNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Leyna awakens inside her old apartment. She takes out the earpod and steps out into the living room to find Emi already frozen on the couch, in the middle of eating ramen.

LEYNA
Emi?

No response.

LEYNA (CONT'D)
What the...?

Leyna pulls out her cell phone and tries calling TEDDY but it doesn't work. She tries MOM. DAD. Nothing. Confused, she heads out of the apartment.

FADE TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - DAY

Leyna pulls into the PARKING LOT by the Pier and gets out. Crowds of tourists frozen at the beach. Seagulls mid-flight. Ocean waves still lap and the sun still shines but there's a stillness to everything else.

And before her, over the Pacific Ocean, the great BLACK WALL.

She climbs the stairs up to the Pier to get a better look. It stretches down the Pacific for as far as the eye can see and into the sky. It's surreal.

Part of the Pier is consumed by it. Everything beyond the roller coaster is pitch black.

As she approaches, she spots Teddy standing right up against the wall, looking into its emptiness.

LEYNA

Teddy.

Without turning--

TEDDY

How did you know I'd be here?

LEYNA

It's where Route 66 ends.

TEDDY

You remembered.

LEYNA

I did.

A sad beat from him.

TEDDY

I believe you now.

He holds up his arm. The cuts from the hunting knife are gone as if they never happened.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I glitched earlier and the wounds disappeared... It's kinda cool if you think about it, I guess.

Leyna's not sure how to respond.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Was anyone else hurt in the accident?

LEYNA

No.

A sigh of relief from Teddy,.

TEDDY

Good... How long has it been? Since I died?

LEYNA

(heavy beat)
Five years.

TEDDY

Jesus. Five years... Lots happened since, I imagine.

LEYNA

Some things. Squid's a father now.

TEDDY

You're joking.

LEYNA

Married with a baby daughter.

TEDDY

Wow. Never thought I'd see the day.

LEYNA

Don't think anyone did. He makes a good father, though.

TEDDY

I don't doubt it. And my parents?

LEYNA

They're doing good.

This hits Teddy particularly hard. He gives a thankful nod.

TEDDY

Are you seeing anyone?

She hesitates. He turns to her.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

It's okay.

And he does seem at peace.

LEYNA

Yes. We're engaged.

Teddy takes this in stride.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

He's the one who built this place.

TEDDY

Well, tell him he needs to fix a few bugs.

She tries to match his levity but it's too difficult.

LEYNA

I should never have done this.

TEDDY
You're telling me.

LEYNA
I am so sorry.

TEDDY
So we're here because you want to apologize? For what? Because you said no?

Tears well up in her eyes. It's triggering for Leyna.

LEYNA
You died because of me.

TEDDY
What? No, Leyna. I died because I was on my phone like an idiot and not paying attention. It's pretty straight-forward.

LEYNA
I know what you're doing and it doesn't make me feel any better.

TEDDY
What I'm doing is telling you the truth. Don't get me wrong, you could've handled the night a whole lot better, too. But my death is on me. And only me.

He sits down on the bench.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
It wasn't just that night, either. It's everything. I tried to force you to choose between living my life and your own. That's not what a good partner does. It was selfish and unfair and...

He shakes his head and turns to her, sincere, guilty, sad.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
I am so sorry for what I put you through. If I could take back the all the pain you've had to endure because of me, I would.

She starts to cry. Not just tears of sadness but those of finality. This is it. She takes the seat next to him.

LEYNA
I'm just glad I got to spend this
time with you.

TEDDY
Me, too.

He faces the eternal blackness of the WALL.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
So what's the fiancé like?

LEYNA
Sweet. Hard-working. Honest to a
fault. Like you.

TEDDY
I hope he's better than me because
you deserve someone truly great.

Leyna trembles. This is hard to hear.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
So what happens now?

LEYNA
I don't know.

TEDDY
You're not going to keep me in here
like some digital harem, are you?

Leyna unexpectedly SNORTS, which makes Teddy smile. She pulls
out the earpod from her pocket.

LEYNA
I put this in and I leave. Forever.

TEDDY
And me?

LEYNA
This world will shut down...

TEDDY
(understanding)
Forever.

Leyna nods. Teddy accepts this and stands back up.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Then I might as well step inside
that wall. I'm super curious as to
what's beyond it.

LEYNA

Think there's something on the other side?

TEDDY

Maybe nothing. Maybe everything.

Leyna stands with him.

LEYNA

Teddy, I--

He wraps his arms around her and squeezes her tight. She does the same and a catharsis washes over her. Not wanting to let go but knowing she has to.

TEDDY

I got you to do Route 66 after all.

LEYNA

You did.

TEDDY

I hope this next guy takes you to space.

They squeeze each other as tight as they can. After a long beat, they release.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

So, who goes first in these situations?

LEYNA

How about we both go on three?

TEDDY

That's a good plan.

Leyna inserts the earpod. It glows blue.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Okay. One...

He takes a step back towards the Black Wall.

LEYNA

Two...

Another step. He's on the edge of it.

TEDDY

Hey...

Her tone shifts now.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

I came because I know that wasn't really you in the Playground, so I wanted to say it here... Thank you for everything. You were a good person and I hope you're resting in peace, wherever you are...

She takes out the earpod and places it on his headstone.

LEYNA (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Teddy.

A calm washes over her. A large weight has lifted off her shoulders. She caresses the headstone and walks back to Joji. As they leave, we stay on the earpod and slowly PUSH-IN...

...as it starts to glow a soft blue.

FADE TO BLACK.