

TRAP

By

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APA /Mariner
Heroes and Villains /Coggins

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

12-year-old girls. Twins. Gymnasts. In 90's-era spandex.

MIA
And extend...

In backwards bridges, both girls extend a leg in the air.
Entwining ankles - they make a beautiful shape.
Perfect. Symmetrical. Breathing together.

MIA (CONT'D)
And push up...!

But one of the girls, MEL, hesitates.
The other, MIA, cranes her neck around to look at Mel.

MIA (CONT'D)
I won't drop you.

MEL
You said that last time.

MIA
You have my word, Mel. Trust me.

They stare, mirror images. Finally, Mel PUSHES UP...
Folding, impossibly, into a human star -
Balancing on her sister's toe. She floats, suspended.
The birds chirp...
The breeze blows...
These 12-year-olds are virtuosos. Steady, strong, balanced.

SCOTT (O.S.)
Melanie?

INT. BABY NURSERY; MCMANSION - VEGAS SUBURB - DAY

EYES POP OPEN. MELANIE MOLTONATO, now 26, startles from memory. We recognize her from her similar-colored hair, now twisted into a fancy up-do. She is dressed to go out, peacoat, designer bag... But her eyes are teary, staring at:

AN EMPTY BABYS CRIB.

A banner droops on the blue wall: **Welcome Home Baby Leo!**

SCOTT (O.S.)
Mel? Babe? They sent a limousine!

Mel wipes a tear from her mascara. Her eyes shift to a BABY MOBILE floating above the crib - TWO CIRCLING ACROBATS.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

SCOTT, 36, moves down the hallway holding a glass of water. Tall. Receding hairline, confident in his expensive suit.

Along the wall, Scott passes: FRAMED PICTURES of MEL and MIA, younger, performing throughout their lives on THE TRAPEZE.

SCOTT
You ready to go, babe?

He pushes open the nursery door --

INT. BABY NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

But sees Mel, eyes full of tears, staring at the deflated baby balloons on the carpet: **It's a boy!**

MEL
Yesterday was six months.

SCOTT
You know what? If this is too much--

MEL
No. We should go. I should see it.

She turns to him, smiles tightly.

MEL (CONT'D)
It's closing night.

She wipes tears, reaches for the water.

As she takes a PILL, she looks to the LIMO on the street.

MEL (CONT'D)
They sent a limo?

SCOTT
(slow)
You are still 'the sister'...

EXT. BELLAGIO - LAS VEGAS STRIP - DUSK

TWO WATER SPOUTS bloom on the surface of the BELLAGIO LAKE. They dance in-and-out of each other, bathed in golden light.

I/E. TOWN CAR - APPROACHING THE STRIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Mel stares out at the glittering casinos. Scott reads his iPad, gently stroking the back of Mel's neck with his finger.

MEL

If there's a thing after, I don't want to stay.

SCOTT

Okay.

MEL

I don't want any small talk.

SCOTT

How about we do our own thing after? I could get us a late table at Eddie's?

Mel looks pained.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

What? You're not into greasy spaghetti and overpriced wine?

He grins. She smiles. He takes her hand.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Hey. I'm proud of you.

Mel scoffs.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Really. And Mel...

He holds up his iPad: A REVIEW OF THE CIRCUS SHOW, **NALU**

SCOTT (CONT'D)

This should be fun. And if it's not, just remember you have so much more now. We have so much more.

She studies the beads of sweat on his hairline.

Then closes her eyes, lays against his chest.

ON MEL, watching the strobing lights out her window --

FLASH TO:

INT. LARGE PERFORMANCE HALL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A spot-lit TRAPEZE ARTIST spins through space.

It's MEL, at 22, performing on the flying trapeze!

CLOSE ON: Muscles bulging, costume glitter, soaring from bar to bar-- SHE FLIPS! Grabs the rope, gravity-defying, FLYING --

Then, A BURST OF APPLAUSE as ANOTHER PERFORMER dives across frame, *caught* by Mel's strong hands --

This is: MIA, Melanie's IDENTICAL TWIN SISTER. Mirrored bodies knit together and pull apart - A HUMAN KALEIDESCOPE.

The AUDIENCE 'OOH-ING and 'AHH-ING below --

CUT TO:

EXT. MGM GRAND - VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT (PRESENT)

A TOWERING MARQUEE of A MERMAID PRINCESS on a TRAPEZE.

CIRQUE DE LUNE'S PRINCESS NALU!

INT. MGM GRAND THEATRE - NIGHT

Tiered balconies. The DIN of an audience finding seats.

Halfway up the orchestra, Mel and Scott study playbills.

MEL'S PLAYBILL: A black and white headshot of

AKIKO ONO: "Both a skilled performer and choreographer--"

SCOTT

Is this the guy?

Scott flips his program over Mel's --

A headshot of **SEBASTIEN DUPRES, 'Artistic Director'.**

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Who your sister was into?

(off her look)

You told me, remember? Listen to this --

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(reading)

Visionary Sebastein Dupres continues to lead Cirque De Lune's most illustrious work yet with the MGM production of Nalu, featuring a doomed sea princess-- blah blah blah... Dupre's worldly travels inform groundbreaking ideas--'

Scott rolls his eyes, shoots himself with his fingers.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

He never tried anything with you, right?

MEL

No. ...Only Mia.

Scott shakes his head, annoyed. Goes back to his program.

Mel gazes at Scott's ear hairs, sticking out.

She goes back to her own program--

--And sucks in breath, looking down at--

MIA MOLTONATO, the headshot of her TWIN SISTER.

The bio reads; '**Playing the TITLE ROLE of PRINCESS NALU...**'

CUT TO:

INT. MGM THEATRE - LATER

Show in progress. Completely full house.

Circus performers leap in and out of a LARGE STAGE POOL wearing fish costumes. Kitschy "under the sea" stuff.

In the audience, Mel, distracted, OPENS HER PROGRAM AGAIN.

In the dim light: **THE HEADSHOT OF MIA.**

Mel's own face, staring back at her. '*Mia Moltonato continues to dazzle audiences in Cirque De Lune's largest production--*'

Suddenly A GASP from the crowd, Mel looks up --

Spotlit above the seats, gliding in on a chandelier of sea coral, A TRAPEZE ARTIST with a mermaid tail and A CROWN.

Scott takes Mel's hand. Mel is bone still.

MEL'S POV: The aerialist arcs and reaches to dramatic 'sea-scape' music. She swoops low over the audience, her FACE coming toward Mel like a phantom:

MIA MOLTONATO in glittering stage make-up. MEL'S OWN FACE, coming toward her, painted, distorted-- *APPLAUSE!*

Mel WINCES --

MEL

Scott...?

The audience, thrilled! The sea queen, SPINNING, whipping her tail --Scott, oblivious, applauding next to her.

But Mel notices suddenly: UPSTAGE, a WEBBING, suspended below where Mia now performs tricks on a static trapeze.

MEL (CONT'D)

Is that... a net?

Scott follows Mel's eye-line.

SCOTT

I think it's just supposed to be coral.

Mel stares at the shimmering NET, camouflaged as SEA CORAL.

Then glances around the enormous hall - every member of the audience, rapt, dazzled by her twin sister.

INT. EMPTY THEATRE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mel cries by herself in a bathroom stall.

Hates herself for it.

EXT. MGM THEATRE EXIT - NIGHT

Neon lights and honking cabs. Audience swarms the sidewalk.

Mel, tender, jostled by the crowd, clutches Scott, watching:

A MOB OF FANS AT THE STAGE DOOR, programs open to

MIA'S PHOTO

Just then, JACK MILCH, 60s, president of Cirque, and SEBASTIEN DUPRES, 52, the handsome ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, emerge from the stage door and REPORTERS SWARM THEM.

REPORTER 1

Sebastien! What's next for *Cirque
Du Lune*?

Sebastien is tall, strong features, *Québécois* accent.

SEBASTIEN

Jack and I, we're figuring it out--!

JACK

-- Bigger and better! Right here at
the MGM!

REPORTER 2

Of course we want to see more of
her! Will she be starring again,
Sebastien?

SEBASTIEN

We very much hope so!

A reporter near Mel, WENDY RILEY, 30s, suddenly shouts --

WENDY

And will she be taking questions
tonight?

MEL

(soft)
She won't talk to you.

WENDY

What --?

MEL

My sister and I, we don't talk to
press. It's our rule.

Wendy stares at her.

WENDY

Melanie Moltanato, right?

Then, thrusting the RECORDING DEVICE at MEL --

WENDY (CONT'D)

How'd it feel? To just watch?

This stings.

SCOTT

Okay, that's our car, let's go --

He starts leading Mel toward the street when --

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)

Mélanie!?

Mel sees --

SEBASTIEN, extracting himself from reporters, pushing their way. All cheekbones and dark eyes. Smiling at her.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Mélanie! Mon amour!

Sebastien suddenly swooping in, breezily kissing Mel on both cheeks -- Mel, for the first time, feeling herself warm--

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Wasn't she amazing?

Mel contracts. Scott holds out his hand.

SCOTT

Sebastien! Scott DeSantos, Mel's other half.

SEBASTIEN

Of course - the casino heir.

SCOTT

Hey, congrats on a great run.

SEBASTIEN

Oh god, closing early, not a great run. But fingers crossed we'll pull something good out of our ass next. Of course, nothing quite has that Moltonato Girl double dazzle...

He studies Mel.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

So glad we got you here tonight, Melaniè.

Then, to Scott, tight --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Scott, sorry we can't take you with us, but with the Sun, the Times, CultureFeed, Indiefuckfeed, plus all of *les influencérs* - not a lot of room backstage. Everybody's a star these days, right Mel?

He hands Mel a BACKSTAGE PASS. Mel looks at Scott, unsure.

MEL

Actually, we were gonna get a table
at Eddie's...

SCOTT

-- No, no. It's good, babe. Great,
actually. Have fun, okay? Fun!

Scott gives an encouraging NOD, wags his cell at Mel,
mouthing: *CALL ME* --

FADE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - MGM - NIGHT

Mel follows Sebastien through dark crisscrossing hallways.
Ropes. Rigging. Half-dressed performers, like out of 8-1/2.

SEBASTIEN

...Five hundred forty thousand
gallons of water, thirty dive
techs, everyone scuba certified --

His assistant, GINA, appears wearing a headset.

GINA

Press in ten --

SEBASTIEN

Gina, You remember Melanie
Moltonato? She and her sister were
our Blue Butterflies in Jungle Book
- stole the show at thirteen -- Ah,
look at that, Melaniè.

TILT UP TO:

A network of CATWALKS above the STAGE POOL.

Techs crawl the ladders above bubbling water, adjusting RIGS.

ON CATWALK 9, TECHS wrangle A GIANT SEA EEL FABRIC back into
its ropes, it's skin lighting up electric silver.

MEL

Wow.

Gina signals Sebastien --

GINA

In the house, now --

Sebastien swoops in to kiss Mel --

SEBASTIEN

She's going to be so happy to see you-- How long's it been again?

But, before Mel can answer, Sebastien flags security --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Take this one to principals please?

INT. HALLWAY, PRINCIPAL DRESSING ROOMS - NIGHT

Mel rounds a corner, following a SECURITY GUARD.

He points down the dressing room hallway:

CLOSED DOORS. Quiet.

Mel pauses. Deep breath. Starts approaching the LAST DOOR --

NAMEPLATE: **PRINCESS NALU**

Mel raises her hand to knock --

MIA (O.S.)

BUTTERCUP!

Mel WHIRLS AROUND.

Standing in front of a dressing room on the opposite side of the hall is MIA MOLTONATO. Big smile. Muscles rigid with blood from performing. Sweat and white makeup a mess down her jaw. Blue wig, icy blue eyes (contacts) contrasting with Mel's dark eyes. Mel pauses. Then walks toward her sister --

-- *We feel the umbilical-cord connection between them* --

Mel clicks into Mia's arms - they fuse, Mia laughing, squeezing Mel with her athletic shoulders --

A male performer, BARDO JOHNSON, 25, struts out of the dressing room, still in white leotard and make-up.

BARDO

Ooh, the *sister*. Yaaas.

MIA

Right?! Everyone needs to meet you.

MEL

Oh... I'm tired, Mi --

MIA

You think I'm gonna let you go?

Mia grabs Mel suddenly, squeezing her face like a baby.

MIA (CONT'D)
 You've ignored me for three years,
 Daisy, you're not going anywhere.

A beat. Then Mia grins. Scrunches her nose.

MIA (CONT'D)
 I know, wrap parties are
intolerable, but I make everything
 better and I'm here now and we will
 have so much fun, I promise, we
 will dance..

CUT TO:

INT. MGM PENTHOUSE SUITE - NIGHT

A sprawling party suite. The kind you can only book in Vegas. Pounding music and colored lights. A static trapeze bar hangs in one area, drunk acrobats (Cirque De Lune Corps members) doing sloppy tricks for each other between shots.

FIND MEL, alone on a couch. She stares across the room watching: MIA. Surrounded by friends and adoring company members, a diva in her element, laughing, dancing --

BARDO (O.S.)
 Rum with cayenne and honey, baby?

Bardo appears in front of Mel, hands her a drink.

BARDO (CONT'D)
 I figured, same genes, same
 tastebuds.
 (then)
 You don't remember me.

He sits, nursing his own drink.

BARDO (CONT'D)
 I was an extra in your show at the
 Wynn. Mia and I would party after
 and you would go home and --

MEL
 Rest?

Mel takes a sip of the drink, grimaces. He watches her.

BARDO
 Guess genes aren't everything.

MEL

Nope. Choices are more important.

She looks again to: Mia, dancing. Mel stirs her drink.

MEL (CONT'D)

What do you think? Would I be the star of a huge show at the MGM if I didn't choose wife and mommy-ship?

BARDO

No one can have it all, right?

Mel drinks again, despite herself. Eyes wandering back to --

But Mia is gone. Mel scans, but Mia is lost somewhere in the crowded party and chaotic lights. Now, Mel's eyes land on --

MEL

Who's that?

Bardo follows her gaze to: AKIKO, 28, hip, refined, standing in a group with SEBASTIEN, his big arm around her shoulders.

BARDO

So he goes to Kyoto last May, comes home with all new ideas about "theatre" and "circus", and I guess because she wears white linen to board meetings and has a lot of esoteric training, he also thinks she has enormous talent?

MEL

I barely noticed her in the show.

Bardo looks at her, surprised. He studies Mel's sadness.

BARDO

How old's your little one?

MEL

He would have been six months. Yesterday.

Bardo raises his eyebrows, *awkward*..

Mel shakes her head at her own buzzkill.

MEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm leaving. Just have to text my husband, nice to - see you again --

She gets up, grabbing her phone from her bag --
 And walks through the party, TEXTING QUICKLY --
 But her phone is suddenly PLUCKED FROM HER HANDS --
 Mel looks up to: MIA, grinning.

MIA
 (reading Mel's text)
I'm coming home, have a headache-- -
-blah blah blah-- NOPE.

Mia DELETES.

MEL
 Hey! I'm not feeling well --

MIA
 Bullshit. How about, instead we
 write...

TYPING into Mel's phone --

MIA (CONT'D)
 ...you're staying out *all night*...
 So he shouldn't wait... up...

MEL
 How are you doing that?

MIA
 What? You don't remember me,
 dumbfuck? I'm your twin.

Mia licks her THUMB PAD, wiggles it in Mel's face.

Presses it on Mel's HOME BUTTON.

Bardo sashays up, holding shots --

BARDO
 Ooh amateur hour, super fun.

He points to NON-AERIALISTS doing sloppy tricks on the bar.
 One falls.

MIA
 I hate parties.

BARDO
 Hate.

MIA

Of course, Mel hasn't been to a party in god knows how long. She is a domestic princess.

Mia grabs a shot from Bardo, toasts Mel --

MIA (CONT'D)

She got the prince, I got the stage.

Mia slams her drink.

MIA (CONT'D)

But we're both fucking it up real good, aren't we, Daisy?

MEL

I'm sorry, I have to go --

MIA

You did see the net, right? My net?
(then)
The scandalous thing is, Mel wouldn't need a net. Mel is better than me at all of it.

Mel rolls her eyes, leading Mia away from Bardo and his shots--

MEL

Mia, stop --

MIA

(quote)
'And MELANIE, the fearless of the Moltonato twins, dives from her sister's arms with all the confidence of an eagle...'

MEL

We were fourteen when they wrote that, Mia --

MIA

'...She sails over the crowd, inciting gasps... with the body of a lithe tiger.'" Did you get that? My sister's an eagle and a tiger...

MEL

Stop it--

But Mia suddenly sees:

SEBASTIEN, both his arms around AKIKO now, whispering to her sweetly. Mia sours. Puts down her glass. PULLS Mel toward --

A BENCH SEAT, in the eye-line of Sebastien. Yanking Mel onto the bench, Mia glances at Sebastien and starts to SING...

MIA
London bridge is falling down...

MEL
Hey, don't...

MIA
...falling down...

Mia tilts from side to side, starting a small ROUTINE --
She tries to pull Mel into a sway, but Mel swats her off.
From near the wet-bar, Bardo, watching them.

BARDO
Oh-kay...

ON MIA, bending at the hips, extending into a HAND-STAND --

MIA
*...London bridge is falling down, My...
Fair...*

MEL
Mia...!

MIA
LA-DY!

Suddenly, Mia LUNGES AT MEL and FLIPS HER OVER --

-- MEL WOBBLER over Mia's back, feet peddling the air...!

A beat. A few people watching now, a little unsure...

MEL'S POV: *The room spinning, lights flashing* --

She can hear her breath -- her own HEARTBEAT --

MEL RECOVERS. Lands on the narrow bench seat - like a pro.

Her face suddenly flushed, hair wild --

A small audience CHEERS! MEL, *remembering the spot-light...*

MIA (CONT'D)
...Take the key and lock her up--!

MEL
 (soft)
Lock her up...

Mia LAUGHS, grabs Mel's back and dips her into a bridge.

MIA
*Lock her up! Take the key and lock
 her up --*

MEL
 (soft)
My...

MIA
FAIR...

MEL MIA (CONT'D)
 SISTER! SISTER!

IN SYNC, they flip to their sides, landing in a CRISP POSE.

BARDO / OTHERS
 Yaaaaas!

CHEERING, WHISTLING --

MIA
 My sister, everyone! The fearless
 Melanie Moltonato!

Mel laughs, can't help it. She breathes.

She glances at Sebastien, who's watching them.

INT. BEDROOM, PENTHOUSE - SAME

Mel and Mia on the bed, party beat leaking through the walls.
 They're watching: A Youtube video, cast from Mel's phone.

The video is of Mel and Mia as 12-year-olds, doing partner
 tricks in their backyard. *Similar to the opening flashback.*

MEL
 How does this have six hundred and
 seventy-thousand views?

MIA
 I have a million followers,
 Buttercup. They do their research.

Mel looks at her sister, who almost glows. Mia does a line.

Mel grabs the phone, pausing the video on a BALANCING TRICK.

Mel scoots back on the bed, pauses, then KICKS UP.

She attempts to REPLICATE the TRICK ON-SCREEN.

MIA (CONT'D)

Yes! Full-pike! You got it! You
don't lose that muscle, Daisy --

But Mel slumps, out of breath.

MEL

I can't, Mia. I got hurt --

MIA

--I know. So did I.

Mel looks at her suddenly.

Mia lifts her shirt. Traces a finger along her own belly.

MIA (CONT'D)

External oblique, right side? I
felt it.

MEL

No, no you didn't...

MIA

You may not want to believe it,
Rosey, but I did. What you feel, I
feel - we can't escape that --

MEL

Mia...

MIA

It felt like a hot poker was ripped
from my body, when he died --

MEL

My body, Mia, my body--!

Mel suddenly POUNCES ON HER on the bed. They wrestle --

MEL (CONT'D)

You don't know what it felt like!

MIA

Of course I did, we're linked,
Daisy --

MEL

No --

MIA

But that's why we achieve so much.

Mel has tears on her face.

Mia reaches up, tucks a hair behind Mel's ear.

MIA (CONT'D)

It's good for you to get stronger,
Mel. Try again?

Staring down at her sister, Mel pauses. Then raises her
hands, KICKS UP --

Reaches behind her for the edge of the entertainment system--

And folds herself, impossibly, into a suspended planche.

MIA (CONT'D)

Look at you! Jacked bitch!

Mel, muscles shaking, balancing...

MIA (CONT'D)

Breathe with me...

MEL BREATHES WITH MIA, helping her focus...

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)

(doorway)

Holy fuck.

Mel collapses. They both look up to:

Sebastien in the doorway, his arm around Akiko.

AKIKO

Amazing! And I hear you're six
months postpartum?

Mel glares at Mia. Mia just grins, oblivious.

MIA

Yeah she is! And she's gonna be a
strong mama soon, too. Keep
working, Mel - your body has to
recover so I can be a crazy aunty.

Mia pinches Mel's cheek. Then frowns at Sebastien and Akiko.

MIA (CONT'D)

But now I'm just crazy, right? So.

Mia grabs her cup and whisks coldly past Sebastien and Akiko.

Mel straightens, about to leave as well --

SEBASTIEN

Mélanie! Wait? Stay a minute? Kiko
and I just took out the good stuff.

He holds up a bottle of Sake. Then, whispers to Akiko --

AKIKO

Nice to meet you, Mel.

And she bows, moving off.

Sebastien lingers, studying Mel with a soft smile.

SEBASTIEN

You know, my sisters were identical
twins. Trapeze artists, like you.

He gestures at the girls' image, projected on the wall.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Always my favorite act in circus.

He holds up his cup, toasting her. Moves into the room.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

And from what I just saw, seems
like it wouldn't take much for you
to get it back.

MEL

I'm-- that's not the life I chose.

SEBASTIEN

Ah, right. The casino heir. Can't
be much more fun than being in a
show, Melaniè - you sure you don't
want to be in a show?

She looks at him suddenly. He pours himself more sake.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Hey, closing night of Nalu! Have to
do something next.

MEL

I'm sure you have something great
lined up.

SEBASTIEN

Well they do. I'm fighting it.

He winks at her, shrugs. Drinks.

MEL

What do you mean?

SEBASTIEN

I mean, a year ago, Cirque De Lune sells 95% of it's holdings to HLB Capital. Suddenly, pshhh! Life force, sucked out of circus. Sake?

Without Mel answering, he pours into her cup.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Just when they promised I could do something elevated after Nalu - whatever I wanted - suddenly, new management, Jack Milch, guy direct from Cirque in China - comes in and wants even more spectacle - more tricks, more kitsch.

MEL

They always want a sure bet.

SEBASTIEN

But what they don't understand, is that in circus...

MEL

You have to take risks.

He looks at her. Smiles.

SEBASTIEN

We're trying to negotiate. I'm pitching them something revolutionary - Kiko's idea, of course, she's the visionary - but the deal would be, if it doesn't go over well... Fssht. I leave. My contract - finished.

MEL

They'd fire you?

SEBASTIEN

Yes. If I don't deliver... I go back to Montreal, teach, whatever. It's okay. It's our shot, Mélanie.

(MORE)

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Our one shot, to show the world
that people will buy into circus as
art.

He takes a drink. Eyes gleaming.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

You want to hear it?

They lock eyes. He pours her more sake.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Kiko comes from Kabuki. Larger-than-
life. Longing. Big human emotion.
This is in that style - a Japanese
folktale called, The Crane Wife.

MEL

Sounds pretty.

SEBASTIEN

It's about a crane who turns
herself into a woman for love.

He meets Mel's gaze.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

But she never forgets the bird
inside.

(then)

You would understand a part like
that, wouldn't you, Mélanie?

Mel scoffs, looks away, heart pounding.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

A wife, who longs again to fly.

(pause)

You would be great.

MEL

Sebastien. I'm not-- I don't do--

SEBASTIEN

She would be The Crane, of course!
The best trapeze part in the world!
Flying above audiences, free.
Meanwhile, her twin - you - on
static trapeze - a few feet off the
ground - easy, you could do that.
Earthbound, *dreaming of your past*
life.

She looks at him. Sebastien is dead serious.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 Who knows better what that's like,
 Mélanie?

The projection suddenly cuts out. They are in the dark.
 Mel goes to turn on the beside light-- He catches her hand.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 Hold that planche for 20 seconds -
 and you have the part.

The whites of his eyes gleam, party beat leaking through.
 Mel pulls her hand free. Stares at him. Deciding.
 He's watching her. She moves back, reaches backwards --
 And folds herself in half, LEGS EXTENDING --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 Yes, hold it. Hold it, Mélanie...

She struggles - breathing, muscles shaking --

FLASH TO:

AUDITORIUM - FLASHBACK

Mel and Mia swing in a DUEL SUSPENDED ANGEL HANG-- APPLAUSE!
They FLIP out of it-- One twin catching the other --
BUT, A SLIP OF THE HAND! THE AUDIENCE GASPS --
ONE OF THE TWINS, FALLING -- FALLING THROUGH SPACE --

SEBASTIEN (V.O.)
 Rehearsal's on Monday.

Mel's eyes pop open - as Sebastian leaves the room.
 She collapses on the bed, eyes wet.

INT. MEL AND SCOTT'S LARGE KITCHEN - NIGHT

PLOP! Scott mashes cold spaghetti from a take-out box into a
 Tupperware. He looks tired, upset. The door opens. He turns --

MEL
 I'm sorry.

Mel, in the doorway.

Scott pauses. Sighs. He deals TWO PILLS onto the kitchen bar.

SCOTT
(softly)
Take them.

He fills a glass of water. She looks at the pills.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
No dinner, no pills - recipe for
disaster, Mel-bel.

Mel relents. Sits on a barstool and starts swallowing.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You have fun?

MEL
Oh, not really --

SCOTT
-- It's okay if you did.

She looks up. A softness in his eyes.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
I think it's a good thing you
stayed out. A sign that... maybe
you're turning a corner?

He smiles, kindly.

Mel suddenly lifts halfway out of her barstool to KISS him.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Oh, there's the vodka!

But he enjoys it. Takes her face, and kisses her more deeply.

MEL
Scott... Scott, I think I am too...
Turning a corner, maybe.

Scott walks around the counter, picks her up off the stool.

Carries her to the couch, where they cuddle.

MEL (CONT'D)
Babe, I need to tell you something.

SCOTT
Shhh...

He kisses her, lays her against the pillows.

His hand slides up her skirt.

Mel, feeling the bliss of this... He moves on top.

It gets heavier. Soon, they're having sex.

But, as Scott gets closer to coming...

Mel, realizing, suddenly PUSHES HIM OFF.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Hey...
(breathless)
What's up?

MEL

I just-- Not now.

SCOTT

What do you mean?
(then)
Mel, it's the 15th. Isn't that,
still around your time?

She stares at him. He touches her hair, but she dodges.

MEL

What if I was built for more than
just getting pregnant?

Scott, taken aback.

SCOTT

Of course you are. But, we just
talked about this... Dr. Shauna says
six months is a good time to at
least start thinking --

MEL

He offered me a role.

SCOTT

What?

MEL

In their new production. Sebastien
offered me a role.

SCOTT

Who...? That tool?

MEL

He's a visionary.

SCOTT

Mel. Listen to yourself..

MEL

No, you listen-- Sometimes it feels like I can't breathe in here!

She gets off the couch. Pacing.

Scott realizes - she's serious.

SCOTT

Mel, you're not-- you're not in that kind of shape! To perform..?

MEL

I could be, though. But definitely, definitely not if I were pregnant.

SCOTT

No, that life was too hard..

MEL

Harder than getting sick!? And then losing our fucking child!?

He's surprised. Mel's eyes, wild.

MEL (CONT'D)

What if I made the wrong choice, Scott? Mia took the stage, I took you - and the suburbs and a baby - but it didn't work! It didn't fucking work!

Scott, stung. But trying to be gentle...

SCOTT

Mel, we have new doctors now, better doctors --

MEL

-- When I could fly, people respected me, I was a success.

SCOTT

You still are a success --

MEL

I'm a failure! I couldn't even help him the day he was born!

She leaves him suddenly, moving upstairs into --

THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mel whips open a suitcase, packing. Scott, following her in --

MEL (CONT'D)
If this is too hard, I'll go to the
hotel --

SCOTT
What? What hotel--?

He's now panicked, Mel packing --

MEL
Cirque puts company members up in
the MGM to be near the theatre. We
even get trapeze bars in our rooms--

He catches her shoulders suddenly --

SCOTT
Don't you remember? What happened?
You can't do this again, Mel.

A beat. Mel yanks herself away --

MEL
You don't understand. I have to.

INT. BABY NURSERY

Mel bursts in, flicks on the light: The BALLOONS sag on the
carpet, breast pump box still shrink-wrapped --

Mel YANKS opens the closet, starts SHOVING EVERYTHING IN --

Deflated balloons, rented helium tank, stuffed animals. She
ROLLS UP the RUG, wrestles that in too --

She takes a deep breath, lies down on the clear floor.

...And starts doing CRUNCHES. UP-- UP-- working hard --

Flushed, sweating, WORKING...

And starting to smile...

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - MORNING

Shimmering heat off the sidewalk.

MEL walks quickly past CASINOS, down the long blocks toward

THE MGM GRAND.**EXT. BACKSIDE OF MGM - MORNING**

Mel stands at a back door of the sprawling, multi-block resort and theatre. A little sign on the door says

CIRQUE TRAINING FACILITY

She tries the FINGERPRINT SECURITY LOCK. But it BLINKS RED.

She frowns, confused. Hears a group of COMPANY MEMBERS in workout clothes approaching with Starbucks, and slinks back.

They press their fingers / swipe their cards, going inside--

MEL catches the door, slides in behind them..

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Dim light. A maze of hallways and equipment.

Mel follows the echoing voices, emerging into --

A HUGE TRAINING GYMNASIUM - DAY

Cavernous space. Crash pads under various CIRCUS APPARATI.

FABRICS. RINGS. STRAPS. A few COMPANY MEMBERS, working out.

Mel takes it in, swelling with new purpose --

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
You can't be here.

She turns. A security guard, RUDY, points to a sign.

RUDY
Corps members only.

MEL
Oh... Sebastian said I should come to rehearsal...

He crosses his arms: *really.*

MEL (CONT'D)
My sister's in the show --

SECURITY GUARD
Your sister?

MEL
Nalu. The star?

But the guard looks at her funny...

*

A weird beat.

*

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
Rudy! I see you've met Mel!

They look up: Sebastien comes through the doors, freshly showered, designer sunglasses, flanked by AKIKO and MIA --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Newest member of our company.

Akiko in white linen, MIA, like a hung-over movie star --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Everyone! Good morning!

Sebastien, now addressing the whole room --

Company members dismount, move toward him over the mats.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Seats! Where you are!

People gather on the mats in clusters, toweling off.

Sebastien, his hand on Mel's back:

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
This is Mélanie! You may recognize her, of course, as the sister of the great Mia Molotnato - we are very happy to have her with us.

Neutral applause. Akiko smiles at Mel, clapping.

But Mel looks to MIA, unreadable behind her big glasses.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Have a seat, Mel?

Mel looks again to Mia - who now takes off her sunglasses...

And smiles. Pats the mat next to her.

MEL, relieved, hurries over and sits next to her sister.

MIA
(sotto)
I'm glad you're here.

MEL
 (sotto)
 You are--?

MIA
 Yeah. See what's it's all about,
 right?

Mia squeezes Mel's knee, condescending. Mel, unsure...

SEBASTIEN
 So, we have two months! Less?

He looks to Akiko for confirmation. She points down.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 Less! Okay! But, I've said it
 before, as circus people it's our
 job to do the impossible!

Some whistles, clapping from the company.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 And with The Crane Wife we are
 going to bring art to Vegas.

Some laughs. But Sebastien is serious, purposeful.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 We're stripping it all away. Baring
 the soul of circus. This is our
 chance to move people. To elevate
 circus to the heights of the
 Bolshoi of Russia, the Philharmonic
 of New York.

The room, quiet now. Mel glancing at her sister...

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 Of course, we have Kiko to thank.
 The true visionary here.

MIA
 (sotto)
 Oh *god*...

SEBASTIEN
 So, I will let her *show you* our way
 forward.

Akiko rises, removes her slides, and begins darting around
 the mats, swooping like a bird. She starts 'CAW-CAWING'.

Mia grabs Mel's hand, snickering.

Mel giggles, loves being 'in' with her sister.

Sebastien, serious, watching Akiko, starts to tell the story:

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Once, in a land between the sun and moon, on a cliff high above the sea - there lived a lonely sail-maker who loved to watch the cranes fly.

(then)

Bardo, come up here please?

Bardo puts down his coffee, leaps to the make-shift stage.

Akiko drifts into a swoopy dance around Bardo.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

In the spring, when the cranes began their mating dance, he would leave his great loom for hours, walking the beach, thinking how nice it would be to have someone there to help him weave his sails.

Bardo 'walks the beach' as Akiko '*flies*' around him.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

One night, the sail maker was watching the cranes when something caught his eye: One bird was weaving in the sky, shot through with an arrow.

Akiko weaves. She falls to the mats at Bardo's feet.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

The sailmaker cradled the bird. Removing the arrow, he took her home and wrapped her in the finest silk he had - tying her wing back on so she could fly.

Bardo and Akiko in effortless, improvised pantomime.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

But in the morning, the bird was gone. Saddened, the sail maker slept until the afternoon and when he awoke he felt *ashamed* - he had wasted a whole day!

Bardo covers his face in exaggerated shame.

Mia laughs. Everyone laughs - this is becoming fun.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

He was supposed to deliver a sail to a renowned captain! But he had not even begun his work!

Bardo, dancing, panicked --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

But all of a sudden, he heard the KNOCK OF THE LOOM in his weaving room. For a moment he thought he was dreaming... but then a beautiful voice called from inside.

AKIKO

Please wait and all will be well!

The company, now kind of mesmerized, watching --

SEBASTIEN

The sail-maker was confused, but he waited. All through the night the shuttle *knocked* against the loom - *'Whoever is in there is the strongest weaver there ever was'* he thought. *'Even if she is ugly, I will ask her to marry me.'*

The company giggles --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

But in the morning, the door opened, and the most beautiful woman emerged with a finished sail.

Akiko peels off her linen tunic, offering it to Bardo.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

And when he looked into her eyes...
...he knew who she was.

Sebastien looks out to the cast.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

The crane had transformed herself. She had come to be his wife.

Sebastien looks at MEL and MIA.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Playing the dazzling Crane, irresistible as she sweeps across the moon, of course, our star.

Mia smiles, puts down her coffee, and BOUNDS UP to the mats to stand NEXT TO AKIKO.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

With a great wingspan she'll fly
over the MGM, and we all won't help
but fall in love.

Everyone APPLAUDS. Mel CLAPS, smiles.

Mia grins, spreading her arms, bowing --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

And finally... Mélanie! Can you come
to the stage, please?

All eyes turn back to: Mel.

Mel pauses, not expecting this. She glances to Mia.

Mia peers at her, confused.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Mel will be playing the Crane Wife:
The human embodiment of the bird.

He motions Mel up.

Mel, heart pounding, tentatively stands.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

She will perform, earthbound, on
her beautiful loom - longing for
her lost wings.

Mel, glancing at Mia, takes her place in the row next to Bardo, Akiko and Mia. Mia mouths: *What the fuck?*

MEL

(whisper)

I thought you knew--?

Sebastien shoots them a look. Goes back to his script:

SEBASTIEN

The woman drapes the fine sail over
her arms to show off her work.

Sebastien looks at Mel, waiting.

AKIKO

Melanie. That's you.

Mel pauses, then takes the white linen from Akiko, drapes it across her arms and spreads them wide --

SEBASTIEN

It was as if she held the wind!
This woman was a genius!

The cast laughs, claps. Mel, worried, looks back at: Mia.

MIA sets her jaw, then crosses over the mats in front of everyone, grabbing her gym bag, and stomps out the door.

Mel looks at Sebastien - *what should they do??*

But Sebastien holds her gaze steady, and keeps reading - he must have been expecting this.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

The sailmaker was delighted to have
this woman as his new wife...!

Mel, panicking, Bardo, dancing around her, '*delighted*' --

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAY

The streets now crowded with tourists, trash. Trucks WHIZ by.

MEL rushes through the crowd, looking for

MIA: There, a little ahead, moving through a busy crosswalk.

MEL

Mia!

Mel darts between traffic, trying to catch her --

MEL (CONT'D)

Wait! Mia!!
(catching up)
You said-- You were glad I was
there!

Mia, whirling suddenly --

MIA

This is not what we agreed.

MEL

Listen, I'm sorry...

MIA

I thought you were sitting in on
fucking rehearsal! Or he'd make you
a fucking fish or something--?

(then)

But a principal? A co-star?

MEL

I don't know, we had wine, he was
telling me about the new show --

MIA

Oh so you seduced him? Fuck you,
that's just like you.

MEL

Come on, Mia --

MIA

You were just waiting in the wings,
weren't you? For an opportunity to
leap frog over my work --

MEL

--No! You can trust me! We trust
each other, remember? I need that,
I need you --

MIA

Then don't break your word, Mel.

(then)

You chose your life, Daisy.

MEL

No. No, it's not working. Your idea--
that we had to choose - it's not
working. We can share the stage,
Mia, we can both have careers --

MIA

But we can't both have Scott, can
we?

Mel, at a loss.

MIA (CONT'D)

We had a deal. You got the prince,
I got the stage.

MEL

You still have the stage! You're
The Crane, Mia! They're building a
300-foot bird in your likeness!

MIA
 Until you get a taste of those
 wings, right?

In her face --

MIA (CONT'D)
 Then we all know the claws come
 out.

MEL
 Please, I don't mean to replace
 you.

MIA
 Just like you didn't mean to drop
 me?

Mel falters.

MIA (CONT'D)
 I know you want to be friends,
 Buttercup, but it doesn't work if
we don't stay in our lanes.

Mia backs away --

MEL
 Mia, wait, I can't do this without
 you --

MIA
 Then go back home where you belong.

MEL
 No, Mia --!

MIA
 -- Or don't, but stay the fuck away
 from me.

The light turns --And Mia crosses, lost in the crowd.

Mel, stricken, starting to get panicked, trying to find her -- *

MEL
 Mia?!

But Mia is totally gone.

Mel is suddenly confused, disoriented by the crush. HONNNK--!

-- CUT OFF by a CAB, a group of DRUNK PEDESTRIANS.

Mel picks a direction and starts walking, mind spinning, trying to ignore the naked ladies on busses, clowns on billb--

SCOTT (O.S.)

Mel? Mel? What're you doing here?

Mel, disoriented, realizing --

MEL

Scott?

She stares at - Scott, in a suit for the office, sweat stains on his shirt, flanked by a couple of BUISNESS-Y COWORKERS.

SCOTT

Guys, tell Gary I'll see him at the four-o'clock...?

COWORKERS

No problem / nice to see you, Mel...

They move off, glancing back at her --

SCOTT

Mel. We need to get you home...

MEL

Wait, Scott...

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)

Everything okay?

They look to: Sebastien and Akiko, coming toward them from the MGM alley. Cool, artistic, calm --

SCOTT

We're getting Mel home, into some AC, now--

SEBASTIEN

Oh - so not coming to rehearsal later, Melaniè?

Mel looks between the artists and SCOTT: sweating in the sun.

MEL

There's AC in the hotel, Scott.

SCOTT

What?

MEL
I'm staying with the company. At
the MGM. So I can be closer to
rehearsals.

SCOTT
Mel...

MEL
I can lay down there.

SEBASTIEN
Great! Akiko will get you set up
with our favorite concierge --

SCOTT
-- Wait a minute, Mel --

MEL
Just through the run. Then maybe we
can both move back to town, right?

She kisses Scott quickly, then backs up toward Sebastien.

Off Scott, abandoned..

CHOREOGRAPHY COACH (PRELAP)
And... go!

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE / MEL'S ROOM - DAY (SERIES OF SHOTS)

COMPANY MEMBERS progress across the floor in choreo groups.

CHOREOGRAPHY COACH
And go!

MEL goes flapping across with her group - not the worst, but
not the best. She glances across the space to

MIA, who is training with her ACT COACH, in her own world.

COACH
And go!

INT. MEL'S HOTEL ROOM - MGM - DAY

Mel is shown into her new room by a CONCIERGE, 50s.

With them, a RIGGER with a TOOL BELT. The concierge points to
a BEAM in the ceiling and the rigger sets up a ladder, STARTS
DRILLING--

CRANE COACH (PRELAP)
Spread your wings! You're cranes!

CIRQUE REHEARSAL SPACE

FOUR COMPANY MEMBERS swoop high above on a SWINGING TRAPEZE.

CRANE COACH (CONT'D)
 Float! Feathers on your feet!

Mel gazes up from the sidelines, marking their movements --

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
 Melaniè?

Mel turns: Sebastien, with a SQUAT RUSSIAN WOMAN.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 This is Irina, your act coach.

He points to a LOW TRAPEZE BAR, a few feet above crash pads.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 You will be working static trap
 until we get your Loom apparatus,
 hopefully two weeks...

He stalks off, shaking his head, consumed by AD problems.

IRINA
 Don't look at them.

Irina has a thick Russian accent, points to the CRANES ABOVE.

IRINA (CONT'D)
 They are birds in the air. Your
 part is here, on the ground.

Mel nods, but sees

MIA walking toward them, texting on her phone, ignoring them--
 -- She walks right past.

HOTEL SUITE

Alone, Mel admires her very own THREE-POINT TRAPEZE.

She shoves her bed underneath it. Jumps on the bar..

TRAINING GYM

Mel practices her act with Irina - it's not going well.

She weaves trapeze fabrics, swinging from one to the other --

IRINA (CONT'D)
No! You're supposed to be the best
weaver in the world!

Mel SLIPS. Lands clunkily on the mats.

IRINA (CONT'D)
Again! Up!

Mel glances at: Bardo and Mia, across the space, marking
choreography with Sebastien and Akiko, smooth and easy --

MGM STAGE

Mid-construction. Rigging going up. The pool, an empty pit.

Sebo reads off a sheet, dividing the company into groups.

SEBASTIEN
...on fabrics! Until we get the moon!
Hopefully in ten days! Okay, Moon
Cranes with Akiko downstairs!

Mel, distracted, watches Mia and Akiko, chatting in the wing.

As the Moon Cranes shuffle away, Mel, realizing she's alone,
starts to approach Akiko and Mia --

MEL
Mia, can we--?

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Mel spins: Sebastien annoyed, flanked by Gina and assistants.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Every spare second you're in physio
with James downstairs, understand?
(walking away)
You were out four years, Melaniè,
you have to work harder!

He powers away, slipping into a corridor backstage.

Mel can't help but glance at Mia, who now stares at her. *

A slight smile, she TURNS AWAY. Disappears into the wing. *

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MGM - NIGHT

Mel practices her act. Pushing it. Flushed, sweating, grinding the spin again and again. She goes to JUMP SPLIT--

And FALLS onto the bed.

Mel punches the pillow. Eyes closed, calming her breath.

Then, she turns over and grabs the bedside phone, PRESSES: 0.

MEL

Hi, this is Melanie Moltonato in 23B - I need the penthouse? ...No my sister is staying there with-- Mia Moltonato? Mia, my-- No, I can't call her she blocked my-- Fine.

Mel hangs up, pissed.

Looks up at the trap, gently swaying above her.

FLASH TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - LAS VEGAS (FLASHBACK)

Mel and Mia, 22, doing Spinning Angels on a stripper pole.

Synchronous. Athletic. Spinning fast, grasping HANDS --

PRO STRIPPERS nearby WHISTLE and CLAP --

ON MEL, cheek-to-cheek with her sister --

MEL

Is he looking?

MIA

Wouldn't you like to know?

Mia grins. TAPS. They SWITCH SIDES so Mel can see:

SCOTT, 32, in VIP.

He's tall, rich, powerful. Surrounded by an entourage.

Looking STRAIGHT AT THEM through the STROBING LIGHTS --

MATCH TO:

INT. LOBBY, MGM GRAND - DAY (PRESENT)

CAMERAS FLASH. Reporters jostle. Sebastien, board members and company members at a long table answering press questions.

SEBASTIEN

With The Crane Wife we are elevating circus to an art form --

REPORTER 1

-- By scaling down?

REPORTER 2

(skeptical)

What's an intimate show like? At the MGM Grand?

BOARD MEMBER

Still plenty of theatrics!

MEL, at the table, GLANCES ACROSS THE ROOM TO MIA:

Doing solo shots at the step and repeat, cameras flashing.

PRESS PHOTOS - MOMENTS LATER

Company members gather for photos in front of the step & repeat banner, printed with 'Cirque' and 'MGM' logos.

PUBLICIST

Okay and Moon Cranes together?

Mel watches as company members POSE.

The publicist reads off her list --

PUBLICIST (CONT'D)

Okay, Crane and Crane Wife?

Mel, heart beating, glances back to MIA! This is her chance!

Mel pushes through the crowd, to the photo mark, ready...

But Mia just glances at Sebastien, and points to the size-able MAGAZINE CREW waiting on her, then LEAVES WITH THEM.

MEL

Wait...?

BUT AKIKO is suddenly standing next to Mel, putting her arm around her shoulders as the CAMERAS POP.

AKIKO
It's okay. Just smile for the
photos...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM HALLWAY - MGM - MOMENTS LATER

Gina preps Sebastien for a meeting, handing him folders.

GINA
Set and costumes in cream,
storyboards in blue --

ON MEL, rounding a corner, has been looking for them --

MEL
Sebastien.

He looks up: Mel at the end of the hall, powering toward him.

MEL (CONT'D)
I need to talk to you.

SEBASTIEN
Not now, Mel.

He glances into the CONFERENCE ROOM: BOARD MEMBERS gathering.

Mel ignores this, approaching, desperate --

MEL
How am I supposed to perform? If
she won't even look at me. I'm the
Wife, she's The Crane - she's my
partner, we need to rehearse
together, we need to trust each
other again.

Sebo and Gina exchange glances. Gina gives them space.

MEL (CONT'D)
Please, she'll listen to you,
Sebastien. Can you talk to her?

But Sebastien just looks at Mel strangely.

SEBASTIEN
I didn't realize this was a
problem. Is this a problem,
Melanie?

A board member peeks his head out --

BOARD MEMBER

You ready?

Sebastien looks again at Mel, studies her eyes.

SEBASTIEN

Excuse me.

He goes inside with the suit.

Mel glances at Gina. Walks quickly away, avoiding her gaze.

But rounding a corner, Mel almost bumps directly into --

WENDY RILEY, 35, the hip, young journalist who was in the press room just now, and at the closing night of Nalu --

WENDY

Ms. Moltanato!

MEL

Excuse me --

WENDY

-- Wait. I'm Wendy Riley from the Vegas Star Theatre Desk - I wanted to talk to you about your sister--

MEL

Mia and I don't talk about each other to press.

Wendy follows Mel down the hall --

WENDY

How does it feel to be back on stage? After everything that happened?

MEL

I told you! My sister and I don't talk about each other to reporters!

WENDY

(pause)
Even if...?

MEL

Even if what? It's our rule.

Wendy stares at her.

Then, Mel realizing...

MEL (CONT'D)

Wait a minute, did she talk to you?
Did she talk to you about me?? Is
that what she's doing out there?

Wendy pauses.

WENDY

No.

Mel, relieved, even heartened, walks back down the hall.

Off Wendy, staring after her...

SEBASTIEN (PRELAP)

And as she falls to the beach...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME

Sebo and Akiko pitch a table of BOARD MEMBERS and HLB EXECS.

SEBASTIEN

...the sail-maker sees: An arrow is
lodged in her wing!

Akiko stands from her Aeron chair. Spreading her arms, her kimono falls open, one sleeve with a SPOT OF RED.

BOARD MEMBER

(quiet)

How high does she fall from?

Board members chuckle under their breath. Sebastian stops.

SEBASTIEN

I'm not sure what you mean.

JACK MILCH

He means butts in seats, Sebastien!
That's the goal, right? You were
supposed to be telling us about the
theatrics today!

SEBASTIEN

This is a 1000 year old folk tale.
The moon. The sea. All symbolic --

He points to the set illustrations spread in front of Jack.

JACK MILCH

Yeah, I saw you're getting rid of
catwalks 8, 9 and 11?

(then)

(MORE)

JACK MILCH (CONT'D)

If there's no scale, why are audiences coming to the MGM?

SEBASTIEN

The loneliness in these characters will fill an auditorium. Resonate with critics --

JACK MILCH

This is Vegas! People are drunk high and horny - they're not reading the New York Times!

(then)

When a tree falls in the forest, right, Sebastian? Is it 'Art'? If there's no one there to see it?

Off Sebastien, fighting his inner Alpha...

IRINA (PRELAP)

No. NO!

INT. CIRQUE TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

Irina drills Mel in strength training.

IRINA

You are weak! Like a little girl!

Her words echo through the space. Mel glances at MIA again, working balance with Akiko, ignoring Mel's very existence.

IRINA (CONT'D)

Oh look, now we try this.

Mel closes her eyes, ready for more drills --

But when she looks up, Irina is gazing at:

TWO TECHS, carrying a MASSIVE APPARATUS over the mats.

MEL

The loom.

A tall, wood-framed LOOM. Shimmering aerial silks hanging down from a high crossbar - like cloth to be woven together.

Everybody stops, watching it be delivered. Truly, a gorgeous piece of set design. Even Mel forgets her troubles, staring.

IRINA

We start after lunch.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Mel stretches her wrists, ankles. Nervous.

AKIKO (O.S.)
We're getting vegan, you coming?

Mel turns. Akiko in the doorway.

MEL
I'm not hungry, thanks.

AKIKO
I got you. Big day, right?

But Akiko lingers, slightly concerned.

AKIKO (CONT'D)
Eat something though?

She disappears. Mel hears her exit with the group.

Mel gets out her phone. TEXTS MIA:

I got the loom. Work on it with me?

She hits SEND. Waits. Nervous.

In the corner of the changing room, she sees:

THE CRANE WINGS, in progress. Feathers glued to a long frame--
--BZZZZ! Her PHONE! Mel grabs it!

A TEXT FROM SCOTT:

You OK? Call me

Mel stares, disappointed. BZZ! Another one: **I LOVE YOU**

Mel throws her phone back in her bag, disappointed.

MIA (O.S.)
Somebody went whining to Sebastien.

Mel whirls --

MIA, in the doorway, where Akiko was. *

MIA (CONT'D)
You should't do that.

MEL
Mia. I just want to talk.

MIA
It's not professional --

MEL
You won't even look at me!

MIA
If it's so hard, why not leave?

MEL
Because I need this.

Mia cocks her head, watching her sister grovel.

MEL (CONT'D)
And I need you. You know that.

MIA
We made a deal, Buttercup. You're the one breaking it --

MEL
Well I think it's time we renegotiate.

They lock gazes in the mirror.

MEL (CONT'D)
Just a talk, Mia. How we talk best.

INT. EMPTY TRAINING FACILITY - LUNCHTIME

Mel and Mia, alone in the gym, staring up at the massive
LOOM APPARATUS

Shimmering fabrics hang from a 15-foot trapeze bar.

Markedly higher than Mel's practice trap.

MIA
So, what do you want to say, Mel?

Mia LAUNCHES herself up the pole, onto the bar. Easy for her.

MIA (CONT'D)
'Can't we both be stars and still be friends?'

MEL
Would that be so bad?

Mel leaps, a little more effortful than Mia, but gets there.

MEL (CONT'D)

You said we had to choose, Mia, but
it's an old idea. We can have both.

They're both on the bar now, face to face.

MIA

Mel. Think about your life. How
hard it is for you, already. You
want to add a career to that?

Mia LEAPS, grabbing the fabrics, winding herself up --

MEL

It's the only way to keep sane.

MIA

It's doing too much --

MEL

It's balance.

Mel, now wrapped in a fabric herself, grabs Mia's hand.

They hang, suspended.

MEL (CONT'D)

You need balance too. You can't
sustain this. You're drunk all the
time, you need a net to perform --

MIA

You don't know what you're talking
about --

MEL

-- You're not even practicing at
height, I see you every day.

Mel reels Mia in with the fabric --

MEL (CONT'D)

They're not going to keep you
around for much longer, Mia. Let me
take some off your plate.

Mia's eyes go fierce. SHE YANKS MEL'S HOLD --

AND MEL UNRAVELS! FALLING FOUR VERTICAL FEET --

-- Until Mia catches her.

MIA

Did you learn nothing?

Mel dangles in Mia's grip. Mia hisses down at her.

MIA (CONT'D)
It's dangerous to want it all.

MEL
It was an accident!

MIA
People get hurt.

MEL
Dropping you was an accident--!

MIA
-- Why? Cause of your little crazy pills? You got dizzy?

Mia raises Mel UP a little bit more.

MIA (CONT'D)
We made a deal, Mel. You had one job: Pass on our genes.

She raises Mel higher.

MIA (CONT'D)
But instead...

MEL
Mia--!

Higher still, four, five, six feet off the ground --

MIA
You took Scott, took his money...

MEL
Wait, Mia --

MIA
Had his child...

All the way to eye level --

MIA (CONT'D)
And then you killed our baby.

MIA LETS GO. MEL DROPS --

FLASH TO:

INT. DELIVERY WARD - HOSPITAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mel fades in and out of consciousness, nurses rushing around--

*DOCTOR (O.S.)
Baby's oxygen declining, Apgar 4--*

SCOTT'S VOICE, echoing in and out at the periphery --

*SCOTT
What's happening?!*

*NURSE
Two minutes --*

*SCOTT
What's happening to my wife --?!*

*DOCTOR
We're trying to save your child,
sir--*

Mel turns her head in her hospital bed, dazed..

BACK TO:

INT. TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

MEL WAKES UP.

Akiko kneels by her side. The loom above her: EMPTY. *

*MEL
Where's--? **

But she sees MIA, nonchalantly packing her gym bag near the door, pointing at Mel as corps members trickle in from lunch.

Sebastien, rushing over, with an on-site MEDIC --

*SEBASTIEN
What's going on?! Is she okay!?*

*MEL
I'm... fine...*

*AKIKO
I came in to get my wallet, she was
on the loom with --*

MEL SUDDENLY GLARES at AKIKO: *PLEASE DONT SAY ANYTHING.*

AKIKO (CONT'D)
 -- With the fabrics.
 (then)
 It was beautiful, actually.

SEBASTIEN
 (frustrated)
 Okay, next time wait for Irina?

Mel ices her knee. Looks back toward the door --
But Mia is gone. Only sunlight in an empty doorway.
 She didn't even stay.

INT. CIRQUE MEDICAL - DAY

Mel waits in a sterile doctor room, ice bandaged to her knee.
 Her phone BUZZES. Scott: **Are U OK? They told me to get you**
 Mel texts back: **I'm fine. Routine. Don't come**
 She considers adding a <3

NURSE
 (coming in)
 Howdy Mel, how's the knee?

Mel decides against it. Deletes the heart.

MEL
 It's fine. I don't need this. I
 don't need to be here.

NURSE
 Well, slow down, if you're part of
 the company, we do need to get you
 into the system..
 (typing)
 ...Any pregnancies?

MEL
 (pause)
 One.

NURSE
 Full term?

Mel nods.

NURSE (CONT'D)
 Medications?

MEL
Just... some Clozapine. Sometimes
Risperidone.

NURSE
Both?

MEL
We were going to try and get
pregnant again and... it wouldn't be
good for the baby. But I got
withdrawals. We're still trying to
find the right fit.

NURSE
(typing)
You have a doctor following this?

INT. CIRQUE MEDICAL BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Mel, stewing, walks out of the office opening UBER on her ph--
But hears, ahead in the foyer --

WENDY
...Hi, Wendy Riley from the Vegas
Star, I'm wondering, did this woman
come in today--?

Mel sees, ahead of her:

Wendy, showing a picture to the CIRCULATION DESK ATTENDANT.

Mel, floored. Moving toward her --

MEL
Are you asking about me? That's a
violation of privacy--!

WENDY
You're a public figure --

MEL
Bullshit --

WENDY
Don't you remember, Mel? I wrote a
book about you. Two years ago.
About you and your sister.

Mel pauses, confused --

WENDY (CONT'D)

Mel, you want people to come to your show, right? Then we have to let them peek under the hood a little bit, you have a great story--

MEL

There's no story.

Wendy's eyes flick to Mel's ice-bandage.

WENDY

Did you fall today?

Mel stares at her, seething-- BZZ! Her phone: RIDE CANCELLED.

MEL

Damn it!

She looks back at Wendy, a little emotional.

MEL (CONT'D)

You have a car?

(then)

I need a ride. Back to the MGM.

Wendy, hopeful. Mel, putting on sunglasses --

MEL (CONT'D)

They have a bar, we can talk there.

She walks out of the building. Wendy, quickly following --

WENDY

What about the 'rules'?

MEL

Bitch dropped me. Fuck the rules.

Mel rips off her bandage, stuffs it into an outdoor trashcan.

INT. MGM LOUNGE - DAY

Mel and Wendy sit across from each other with drinks.

MEL

Growing up, I practiced just as much as she did. It's my right to perform just as much as it is hers.

WENDY

So you're still... competitive with her, in a sense?

MEL

Have you ever tried to change the dynamics of a close relationship? People fight like hell to keep the status quo.

WENDY

You're trying to break old patterns.

MEL

Mia is used to calling the shots. Playing Big Sister.

WENDY

But your twins...?

MEL

I was born three-and-a-half minutes later. Will never live it down.

Wendy stares at her, like she's crazy.

WENDY

Mel, what happens if you let her go?

MEL

I tried. To stay separate - it didn't work. Sometimes it felt like I couldn't breathe without her.

WENDY

But you did let her go. Once.

They lock eyes.

MEL

(slow)

If you're talking about Mia's fall four years ago, that was an accident. She slipped.

WENDY

In a moment when you were holding her?

MEL

I thought this was supposed to be friendly.

WENDY

It's whatever you want it to be.
But I think you want butts in seats
just as much as I want eyes on the
page. Controversy sells.

(then)

Mel, there have been rumors that it
was a man who tore you two apart.

MEL

No. No man tore us apart. We made...
a collective decision.

WENDY

I guess, I'm not following.

MEL

You have a husband, Wendy?

WENDY

Fiancè.

MEL

Right, and you want kids too,
right? And you also want to be an
editor one day, or bureau chief.

WENDY

It's a lot, yes...

MEL

Well what if there were two of you?

Wendy absorbs.

MEL (CONT'D)

And what if, when your twin had an
experience, you really believed it
would be like you having that
experience yourself.

WENDY

Is that what you believed?

MEL

We divided it up. Mia would be the
star, with the stage, the
international tours, and I... I could
marry the prince and have a family..

Mel trails off.

WENDY

But she didn't follow the rules,
did she?

Mel looks at her suddenly.

WENDY (CONT'D)

That's why you got angry.

(then)

Mia agreed to take the stage, but
then she tried to pick up your man.

Wendy leans in --

WENDY (CONT'D)

So you dropped her.

MEL

I told you, it was an accident --

WENDY

You're describing a relationship
with a dominant and an oppressed,
Mel, the oppressed always rises up.

MEL

Mia fell because she was hung over.
Are you writing about that? That
she's a fucking addict? I mean, I
do drugs too, just the legal kind
that are supposed to make me happy--

Wendy, glancing at her notes --

WENDY

You were performing a duo act at
the Wynn - you had recently met
your now-husband, Scott DeSantos,
son of casino magnate, Jerry DeSan--

MEL

Okay, so?

WENDY

So the night after Mia was pictured
kissing Scott in tabloids --

(pause)

You dropped her.

Mel clenched. She starts packing her things.

MEL

You know what? This was a mistake -
we have a big day tomorrow, on the
stage for the first time --

WENDY

So I'll get the check--? Yeah --

MEL (CONT'D)

Mel walks out.

Wendy sits back, staring after her.

EXT. VEGAS STRIP - MORNING

Mel hustles down the strip, mind spinning.

She gets to the MGM STAGE DOOR, about to go in when --

AKIKO steps out, blocking her way.

AKIKO

Mel. How about you skip rehearsal
today?

MEL

What? We're on the stage today!
(pause)
Is this about the interview? I
shouldn't have done that --

AKIKO

This is about what I saw yesterday.

MEL

Wait, Kiko, I can explain --

AKIKO

On the loom. I talked to Sebastien.

Mel hangs her head, defeated.

AKIKO (CONT'D)

You were amazing.

Mel looks up. Akiko gazes at her with newfound respect.

AKIKO (CONT'D)

I don't know what was going on... but
it was exquisite. The longing in
your movement. I could feel you,
longing to be her.

Mel, taken aback.

AKIKO (CONT'D)
 Mel, I'd like you to be more
 central in the show. The Wife, it's
 a good role, but it's not...

MEL
 ...The Crane?

Their eyes lock. Above them, the huge CRANE MARQUEE going up.

AKIKO
 When you're moving on the trapeze,
 it reminds me of Kabuki. The
 oversized gestures, the drama of
 it. Look, today they're just
 marking the stage with techs - how
 about, instead, you go to the
 training pool, and get certified.

MEL
 Scuba certified?

Akiko texts Mel an address. Then points up, across the strip.

AKIKO
 We use the rooftop pool on the
 Luxor.

Mel turns, eyes searching for the right building.

AKIKO (CONT'D)
 I can't promise anything, Mel. But
 to even practice as the Crane, you
 have to know how to fall. And the
 only way down is the sea.

EXT. LUXOR ROOFTOP POOL - DAY

THREE MASKED MEN in the POOL in black wetsuits. Ominous.

REVERSE TO: MEL, walking out of the locker room.

The men look severe, scary. Then, DIVE COACH ED, 50s, lifts
 his scuba mask, and waves.

EXT. POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Coach Ed and Mel in chest-deep water.

DIVE COACH ED
 You're breathing heavy after your
 act, right?
 (MORE)

DIVE COACH ED (CONT'D)
 Impossible to hold your breath! So,
 your only job: Dive off the trap,
 hit the water - I'm there. Or one
 of my guys is there.

He gestures to the other DIVERS, a few feet away.

COACH ED
 We grab you, put the respirator
 into your mouth.

He grabs the BLACK RESPIRATOR, snaking from his OXYGEN TANK.

Mel realizes, and opens her mouth.

He guides the respirator between her teeth, gestures for her
 TO BREATHE...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP POOL - DAY

Coach Ed in the pool, counting down on his fingers:

COACH ED
 Five... four...

REVERSE TO: MEL, ON THE POOL DECK. She JUMPS IN AT ..."1" --

-- UNDERWATER --

GURRRGGGGLE! A FLURRY of BUBBLES --!

Coach ED GRABS MEL, slides the respirator into her mouth --

She starts to BREATHE. He gives a THUMBS UP!

EXT. POOL DECK - DAY

Mel DANCE-EXERCISES while tinny HIP HOP plays from an iPhone.

COACH ED
 Winded yet?

Ed in the pool, his divers around him, waiting.

COACH ED (CONT'D)
 Maybe some knee highs?

Ed demonstrates KNEE-HIGHS in the water.

Mel does quick KNEE-HIGHS on the deck.. Another THUMBS UP!

COACH ED (CONT'D)
 Okay, you're gonna run, hit the
 water, mouth open... It will feel
 counter-intuitive, but mouth op--

Coach Ed cuts off because --

MEL SUDDENLY STAGGERS ON THE POOL DECK, and FAINTS SIDWAYS.

EXT. POOL DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Mel holds an ice pack on her head. Coach Ed has a clipboard.

COACH ED
 History of fainting?

MEL
 No.

COACH ED
 Dizziness?

MEL
 No.

COACH ED
 How's the bump?

MEL
 I ...barely feel it.
 (then, desperate)
 Coach? Tomorrow... they might let me
 train for the best trapeze part in
 the world.

COACH
 There's always another part, Mel.

MEL
 No. Not like this.

Ed squints at her, but he's softening.

MEL (CONT'D)
 I just, I really think it was the
 sun.

Ed looks up at the entirely overcast sky. Then at Mel. Sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MEL'S HOTEL SUITE - LATER

MEL hurriedly rummages through her toiletry kit.

DUMPS OUT all of it on the vanity. Picks out a PILL BOTTLE.

WHIPS OPEN the bathroom cabinet, finds another PILL BOTTLE --

RUMMAGES through her open purse, finding another

ORANGE RX PILL BOTTLE.

She stares at it. Then turns it over, reading the label:

MAY CAUSE DIZZINESS

One by one, Mel POPS the lids off the ORANGE Rx BOTTLES --

DUMPS THEM IN THE TOILET and FLUSHES.

She watches them swirl away. Determined.

PRELAP: RUMBLING WATER JETS

INT. MGM STAGE - MORNING

WATER FILLS the ENORMOUS STAGE POOL.

INT. MGM STAGE - DAY

Rehearsal in progress. Full pool. DIVE TECHS with TANKS.

Sebastien is downstage center with a microphone. Coach Ed directing alongside Sebastien.

SEBASTIEN

Readying for Dismount 4.

Three dive techs in the pool give a THUMBS UP.

Sebastien signals a PERFORMER suspended above on rigging.

DIVE COACH ED

Three two one... *Almodovar!*

THE PERFORMER releases, dives into the pool --

A DIVE HANDLER meets her with a respirator. Cast applauds.

SEBASTIEN

Okay, Moon Crane 5... and, is that it? Gina, are principals suited?

GINA
On the catwalk.

BACKSTAGE - SAME

Mel ascends from the downstairs dressing rooms in a wetsuit.
She twists through backstage as the AD VOICE booms on the PA.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (OVER PA)
Principals, to Catwalk six --

AHEAD: Mel sees MIA, at the bottom of the catwalk ladder.

MIA
What are you doing here?

MEL
Principals on cat six, right?

Mel grabs for the first rung of the ladder.

MIA
You're The Wife. You don't practice
in the pool.

MEL
They trained me yesterday, Mia.
(smiles)
Just in case.

Mia absorbs. Mel pushes past her, climbs up the ladder --

SEBASTIEN (ON PA)
Okay, principals dive-ready?

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Sebastien, agitated, looks into the house where --
CIRQUE BOARD MEMBERS are filing down the center aisle.
Gina, at his side, sees his frustration.

GINA
I told them we were on stage today..

SEBASTIEN
So now they just drop in whenever
they want?

Gina waves, gives a tight smile to the board from the stage.

DIVE COACH ED (ON PA)
Principals cued?

CATWALK - CONTINUOUS

High over the pool, MEL walks down the catwalk.
Akiko at front, with Bardo and riggers. Mia follows Mel.
Bardo turns to them, points to the house below, concerned.

BARDO
You see who's here?

They glance out to

THE HOUSE

GINA greets the BOARD MEMBERS in the center aisle. She gestures to SET, the DIVERS. The suits look skeptical.

ON THE CATWALK

MEL
The Cirque board?

BARDO
And some guys from corporate.

MEL
They don't seem impressed.

MIA
They can suck a dick.

COACH ED
Three, two, one... *Wong Kar-wai!*

The catwalk SWINGS as AKIKO JUMPS OFF --

IN THE HOUSE

The execs glance at each other after the simple dive: not impressed.

GINA
(apologetic)
It's our first time in the pool so,
we're still getting comfortable...

ON STAGE

Sebastien, watching the interaction, pissed --

SEBASTIEN
 (into headset)
 They're not having this, are they?

ON THE CATWALK

Mel, Bardo, Mia, watching from birds-eye above.

MEL
 They're leaving.

The executives, shaking hands with Gina, moving to exit.

MEL glances above at CATWALK 9.

MEL (CONT'D)
Mia. Get on Cat Nine with me?

Mel points to the highest platform, the BIG EEL hanging down.

MEL (CONT'D)
 The eel is rigged like fabrics -
 remember our tri-state act? We'll
 do the easy version.

MIA
 (hiss)
 I'm not doing shit with you.

Mel stares at her. Then MARCHES PAST HER.

She gets to the edge of the platform, glances at the execs..

AND JUMPS! GRABBING ONTO THE FABRIC EEL ABOVE THE POOL --

ON STAGE

The divers and cast LOOK UP. Sebastien, confused --

ABOVE THE STAGE: The EEL writhes dramatically under Mel's weight, a spectacle that catches everyone by surprise.

SEBASTIEN
 What the fuck?

But Coach Ed, next to him, seems impressed --

COACH ED
 Is she doing a toe hang?

MEL, wrapping her right ankle for an impressive HOLD.

IN THE HOUSE

On their way out, one board member happens to see the stage --

FEMALE BOARD MEMBER
Wait. Look at that.

They turn, seeing

MEL, SWINGING ON THE EEL --

ABOVE THE POOL

CLOSE ON MEL, the eel's shiny painted fangs in her face as she loops herself up in the silk to spin down --

She glances at MIA, on the catwalk, nearly eye level with her, SEETHING.

Mel glances at the BOARD MEMBERS: Rapt.

One board member APPLAUDS, thrilled with the drama of it.

ON STAGE

AKIKO joins Sebastien on stage, toweling off after her dive.

AKIKO
You think she can do that with wings on?

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Mel changes into street clothes, on a high after the impromptu performance. MIA appears in the mirror beside her.

MIA
You told me you weren't here to replace me.

Mel turns.

MEL
I tried to work with you... And all you did was drop me.

A beat. Mel grabs her bag and pushes past her sister --

-- Running right into AKIKO in the hallway.

AKIKO
Sebastien wants you down in costume for the rest of the afternoon.

Mel, confused --

AKIKO (CONT'D)

To be fitted.

(then)

He wants to try you in the wings.

Mel absorbs. Akiko smiles, suddenly HUGS Mel.

AKIKO (CONT'D)

Don't look so upset! I think it's great. Board members loved you, if you can do all that with wings on, you'll sell the show as the Crane.

MEL

The Crane. But what about...?

AKIKO

Remember, Mel, true art comes before everything - love, self. It breaks new ground.

Mel can FEEL Mia watching, just behind the open door --

AKIKO (CONT'D)

If he likes the way you move in the wings, I'd play the Crane Wife, and we'll take care of everything else. Your only job now, Mel, is to fly.

Akiko leaves.

Mia's eyes burn into the back of Mel's neck.

Both of them, acknowledging, Mel is about to take her place.

MIA emerges from behind the door, slides past Mel...

...into the cavern of backstage. She turns back, face lit in eerie light.

MIA

The wings, Daisy?

Mel can barely breathe --

MIA (CONT'D)

Good luck with that.

And she disappears, into darkness.

INT. LOBBY BAR - MGM - LATE NIGHT

Mia sits alone. She wears the crane's wig, jet black with blood red tips. Red lipstick, staring into her martini.

Her eyes wild, distant, calculating. She looks up to --

SCOTT. Coming in the grand lobby doors, nervous, worried.

Mia takes another drink, smiles... and waves him over.

MIA

Scott!

Scott stares at her, concerned. Approaches Mia --

MIA (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming.

SCOTT

Are you okay? Is everything okay?

She smiles, flags the bartender --

MIA

Double scotch on the rocks.

(then)

Have a seat, Scott.

Tentatively, he sits on the barstool next to her.

MIA (CONT'D)

Remember when we used to do this?
You would always order the same
thing. So classy.

She wraps her fingers around the stem of her martini. Sips.

SCOTT

I thought you never wanted to see
me again.

MIA

I'm sorry. I've been busy. You know
that.

She slowly eats an olive. He can't help but watch.

MIA (CONT'D)

So. Do I look like my sister?

SCOTT

I don't know. I guess.

He gets his drink, relieved --

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Is that your costume? You wore it
here?

He glances around.

MIA
You're wearing your monkey suit.

She flicks his tie, grinning at him-- HE GRABS HER HAND.

SCOTT
(emotional)
What are you doing?

MIA
What?

He stares at her: *She knows what.*

Mia creeps two fingers over his neckline. Gets closer to him.

MIA (CONT'D)
Remember that time at the Wynn?

SCOTT
(he does)
No.

MIA
After the show. I was wearing my
costume. You called me by her name?
I didn't know if you could tell us
apart. But somehow... it was so... hot.

SCOTT
Things are different now.

She takes off her wig.

MIA
Call me my sister's name?

They gaze into each other's eyes. Scott, sweat on his brow...

MIA (CONT'D)
Finish your drink, I'll be right
back.

She puts her wig into his lap. Leaves him there.

FRONT DESK

Mia, approaching the FRONT DESK ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT
Miss Moltonato...

MIA
Has my room been made up today?

The attendant glances from her cleavage, to his computer.

ATTENDANT
House keeping came at nine.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

The SINGLE POINT TRAPEZE hangs from the scaffold, swaying gently side to side. Through the loop of the trapeze we see:

THE BED, where Mia and Scott are having sex. Mia rides him.

CLOSE ON MIA AND SCOTT: She has her wig on, back arched. Scott reaching up to her, touching her face, mixed.

Mia leans down, whispering in his ear.

MIA
Tell me something?

SCOTT
(whisper)
What...

MIA
The night we met...
(opening her eyes)
Did you want her, or me?

He sits up now, closer to her face.

SCOTT
I wanted you.

She grinds. He vacillates between ecstasy and pain, TEARS in his eyes.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Mia and Scott cuddle, naked. She opens her eyes. Smiles.

MIA
That was nice.

He seems far away. She reaches up to caress his face.

MIA (CONT'D)
I was thinking... maybe we should do
this again. But, at your house.

He pauses.

SCOTT
What do you mean?

MIA
I want to be with you.

Scott pulls back now, looking at her.

MIA (CONT'D)
Scott, what if Mel doesn't have
time for you anymore?

SCOTT
I... don't think we should talk about
this now, not like this--

MIA
-- Why? What if she has new
priorities?

Scott looks away, trying to hold it together.

SCOTT
Did you talk to her? Is that what
she said?

MIA
If you love her, you'll give her
what she wants.

SCOTT
Which is what?
(mocking)
To 'fly'?

MIA
You want a child. Maybe, I can give
you that. Me. Mia.

Suddenly angry --

SCOTT
Don't fuck with me --

MIA

-- I thought I wanted to fly. But now I think a real life, a normal life, with you, could make me happy.

SCOTT

This isn't right...

MIA

Mel and I had a plan, a long time ago, that she would take you, a baby, everything that comes with it, and I would take the stage.

(then)

But it seems like we got it wrong. Maybe now, it's time to switch --

She interlaces her fingers with his... But Scott grabs her, presses her into the headboard, his face a mask of tears.

SCOTT

I don't know what demented fantasy you're living in, but I want to make something very clear: This was a one-time thing. I want to be with my wife. And as long as she's around, I'm going to fight like hell to be with her.

They stare at each other. Off Mia, her eyes filling...

INT. BACKSTAGE - MORNING

A bustling dressing room.

MEL at a mirror, TWO COSTUMERS attaching WINGS to her ARMS.

A TECH comes in, fitting Mel with an INNER EAR MIC.

TECH

Crane rehearsal in two.

The HIGH-PITCHED MICROPHONE WHINE takes us to --

INT. STAGE - DAY

MEL RISING above the stage, WEARING THE WINGS.

Below her, Sebastien on headset, gazing up.

SEBASTIEN
Let's keep her center please?

TWO RIGGERS, Stage Left and Stage Right, raise Mel higher.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
(switching channels)
Mélanie! How's the weather?

ABOVE THE STAGE

MEL'S POV: The stage RECEDES, SEBASTIEN'S VOICE in her ear.

SEBASTIEN (O.S., FILTERED) (CONT'D)
First, we get used to resistance,
okay? Little leap to catwalk six?

Mel looks down at CATWALK SIX, two stories below.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Ian will slow you way down...

Sebastien signals the Stage Right rigger, also on headset.

MEL lets go of one hand, TEETERS SIDEWAYS --

Grabs back on.

ON STAGE

A TECH LOOKS at Sebastien.

TECH
Should we launch a safety?

SEBASTIEN
We have two riggers on her - if she
can't do it emotionally, we need to
know now.

He signals the riggers to 'hold'. Back on headset:

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Mélanie: Remember when you would
perform with your sister?

ON MEL, trying to steady her breath, high above the stage.

SEBASTIEN (IN HER HEADSET) (CONT'D)
You were one body. Extensions of
one another. These wings are an
extension of you - in the same way.
Stretch your right wing for me?

Mel breathes, releases the bar with one hand, stretching out--

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Foreign, and at the same time, in
your control.

Mel reaches up her left arm. Both wings extend, balancing..

ON MEL, breathing deeply. But, she suddenly hears:

A RUMBLING BELOW. Looks down to --

Sebastien, the stage hands, all looking up at her. But the stage they're standing on...

Is sinking. The main lift, HISSING DOWNWARD.

WATER SLIDES OVER THE STAGE, pooling around their ankles --

A hallucination. Mel knows, but can't help but stare:

Sebastien, sinking down, while his voice in her ear --

SEBASTIEN (ON HEADSET) (CONT'D)
You know what that's like, Mélanie.

Mel suddenly LEAPS --

Out over the pool -- extending her wings --

She pedals the air, *suspended* --

The RIGGERS, holding her steady from either side --

A 9-foot human fledgling, wheeling over RISING WATER.

ON STAGE - REALITY / SOLID GROUND

Everyone looking up, watching.

AKIKO
That's so fire.

Sebastien SIGNALS the TECH BOOTH --

SEBASTIEN
Crane Music. Now.

Symphonic MUSIC fills the hall.

MEL stretches into an effortless arch --

Wings rising off her back, opening her eyes as she hangs --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
 (into headset)
 That's it, *mon amour*.
 (then)
 You're the Crane.

Off Mel, heart exploding...

INT. THEATRE LOBBY - DAY

Mel in the lobby, taking a moment. Steadying herself on the red velvet ropes as tears drip down her face. Akiko enters.

MEL
 Sorry. Just... I never thought--

AKIKO
 You never thought you'd do it without her?

MEL
 What are you going to tell her?
 That she's just, not in the show--?

Akiko peers at her. Gets closer to Mel, no one else around.

AKIKO
 You've been in a dance with her for a long time, haven't you? But you can dance without her. You can fly.

Suddenly, Akiko hugs Mel --

AKIKO (CONT'D)
 But to fly, you have to break free.

EXT. PARKED CAR / SPRING VALLEY MANSION - DAWN

MIA sits at the wheel of a parked car, eyes rimmed red from crying. *In the fullness of emotion, the twins are looking more and more alike.* On the seat next to Mia, AN OXYGEN TANK.

Mia stares across the street at: MEL and SCOTT'S HOUSE.

SCOTT emerges from the front door of his house with a briefcase, gets into his Beamer and backs out of the drive.

INT. SOLOIST'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

The CRANE'S RED HEADDRESS IS PLACED ON MEL'S HEAD.

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
...As circus performers, it's our job
to do the impossible...

INTERCUT:

SPRING VALLEY MANSION - DAWN

Mia walks up to the garage door. The ALARM BOX BLINKS RED.

A JOGGER runs by on the street. Waves at Mia.

Mia smiles, waves back.

She puts her finger against the FINGER PRINT READER on the ALARM, and it BLINKS GREEN. CLICK-!

WHIRRRRRRR: The GARAGE DOOR OPENS...

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
They say only the grandest
spectacle can fill up the MGM..

MGM STAGE - DAY

SEBASTIEN paces the now-set stage, talking to his company.

SEBASTIEN
So tonight, on opening night...

INT. GARAGE - SPRING VALLEY MANSION - DAWN

MIA takes in Mel and Scott's massive garage:

Jaguar sports car. Scott's expensive TOOL SET along one wall.

...Including a WOOD SAW and A HAND SAW.

Mia sees: A BOX, overflowing with THE HALLWAY PICTURES of Mel and Mia on the trapeze. Mia picks one up, the glass cracked.

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
We will lift up our audience...!

MGM STAGE

Sebastien in front of his company, who sit in the front rows.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Transport them! Fill them!

The company APPLAUDS --

INT. SPRING VALLEY MANSION

MIA pads down the upstairs hallway to

THE NURSERY

She flicks on the light.

The room, now changed. A desk, an office chair.

But she sees, something **STICKING OUT** from **THE CLOSET**..

MIA **OPENS THE CLOSET**. All **THE BABY STUFF**, jammed in. Balloons and helium tank never returned, breast pump box, stuffy toys--

Mia picks up a **STUFFED BEAR**, **TAG** never removed. She smiles.

ON STAGE

Mel joins Sebastien on stage, in full costume.

The company applauds. She beams.

Sebastien hugs her, kissing both cheeks --

SEBASTIEN

You're glowing.

The cast and crew, clapping for her.

At the back of the house, Mel sees --

MIA walk into the hall, holding a **SMALL BOUQUET OF DAISIES**.

The sisters lock eyes.

EXT. STAGE DOOR, ALLEYWAY - DAY

Mel emerges into the alley, in full stage make-up and sweats.

Down the alley, on the strip:

MIA holds the bouquet in the swirl of traffic.

She looks small, sad. Mel can't help but run to her --

MEL

Mia. Mia!?

MIA **URNS**. Hair up and conservative. They've switched looks.

MEL (CONT'D)
You know I didn't want it to happen
like this --

MIA
Shh, Buttercup. I'm just here to
say congratulations.

She smiles, hands Mel the daisy bouquet.

MIA (CONT'D)
Maybe you were right. Maybe you
were always supposed to be the one
on stage. The 'Crane of Las Vegas'.

Mia gazes at Mel's stage make-up. Then hugs her.

MIA (CONT'D)
But you'll always be my little
Daisy.

On Mel, all her pent-up emotion, releasing --

MEL
I thought we could perform together
-like we used to. Maybe next time,
maybe this one's just not our show--

MIA
I don't think there is a next time,
Rosey. You wanted to switch, right?

Mia pulls away, cocks her head, smiling.

MIA (CONT'D)
You will have a great show. And I...
I will have a beautiful baby.

MEL
What?

MIA
Scott really does have great genes.

Mel stares at her, confused. Mia leans in close.

MIA (CONT'D)
And maybe, I can keep him.

Mel, mind spinning, starts to SHAKE.

Mia backs away from her, with a condescending smile.

MEL

Mia...?

But Mia turns, walks into the foot traffic --
 Mel, shaking, looks down at the DAISY BOUQUET in her hands.
 In the center of the bouquet, a PLASTIC STICK:
 A USED PREGNANCY TEST. Mel lifts it out of the bouquet --
 A **little '+'** in the TEST WINDOW: **positive**.
 The white daisies fall to the street.

MEL (CONT'D)

MIA--!?

CUT TO:

INT. SEBASTIEN'S OFFICE - BACKSTAGE, MGM - SAME

Sebastien paces, shouting at Gina and other assistants.

SEBASTIEN

Where is she? Curtain's in two
 hours, we have notes...

A KNOCK on the door, and AKIKO comes in, followed by --
 WENDY RILEY, holding an iPad.

AKIKO

This is Wendy from the Vegas Star.

Sebastien looks from Akiko to Wendy, confused --

SEBASTIEN

Does she know where is Melanié?

EXT. STRIP - TWILIGHT

ON MEL, running into the crush after Mia.

MEL

Hey! HEY!

Mel darts through the crowds, panic rising, trying to follow.
Damn it! Mel backtracks down the strip, stage make-up wild.

A flash of LIGHT hits her, and she whirls, looking up to:

THE MGM MARQUEE. It reads: **AKIKO ONO as THE CRANE!**

Then, A WORKER appears with a ladder and reach tool, begins REPLACING THE LETTERS of Akiko's name.

Slides out the A, K, I--

SECURITY GUARD

Melanie?

Mel whirls. The now-familiar Security Guard eyes her warily.

RUDY

You must be pretty good, huh?

He points up at the MARQUEE. Mel looks up again to see:

THE LETTERS of HER OWN NAME now sliding in: M - E - L - A --

RUDY (CONT'D)

Kiko's supposed to be some kinda genius! And you take her place?

MEL

Akiko? But what about *Mia*...?

Mel recedes into the foot traffic --

RUDY

Hey! Hey! Don't you have a show--?!

CUT TO:

INT. MGM LOBBY - DAY

Mel repeatedly presses the PENTHOUSE ELEVATOR BUTTON: **UP UP** --

CONCIERGE (O.S.)

Miss Moltonato?

Mel spins. The Concierge moves toward her --

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Your room is on floor eight --

MEL

No, my sister-- She stays in the penthouse --

Mel hits the UP button, HARDER --

CONCIERGE
I'm sorry, you don't have top floor
privileges--

Mel sees: An ELECTRONIC ACCESS CARD in his breast pocket.

DING! The ELEVATORS OPEN across the hall --He looks up to
greet the departing guests --

AND MEL GRABS THE SECURITY CARD FROM HIS SUIT.

LUNGES into the PENTHOUSE ELEVATOR --

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)
HEY!

She frantically SCANS the card as *DOORS CLOSE* --

The CONCIERGE, pissed, SIGNALING SECURITY --

PRELAP: DING!

TOP FLOOR

MEL GETS OUT, wheeling toward the penthouse double doors --

FLASH TO:

*Mia and Mel, reeling down THE SAME HALLWAY the night of the
Nalu wrap party. Blues and yellows whirling in the carpet --*

MIA, LAUGHING, as she hangs on Mel, arm slung around her --

But when Mel looks back at BARDO, he is staring, unsure.

Mel looks again to her side: MIA IS NOT THERE.

Just EMPTY HALLWAY.

PRELAP: KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY - (PRESENT)

Mel POUNDS the PENTHOUSE DOOR.

MEL
Mia! I have to talk to you!

She's crying. Glances at the ELEVATORS, realizing --

The CONCIERGE KEY in her hand. She swipes the ACCESS CARD on
the lock --GREEN LIGHT! Mel opens the door, stumbles into --

INT. PENTHOUSE - CONTINUED

Lived-in luxury. Note piles, laptops, AKIKO'S LINEN TUNICS.

Mel searches for signs of her sister. GLIMPSES SOMEONE, in the BEDROOM --

MEL

Mia?!

She bursts in to find --

A confused MAID, making the bed. Mel, frantic with her:

MEL (CONT'D)

Does my sister live here? Please?!
She looks like me! *La misma* --!

The maid, nervous, shakes her head, *no no* --

Voices of SECURITY in the hallway --

Mel rushes, rummaging through the suite, maid watching.

A PLAYBILL for NALU. Mel tearing through, CAN'T FIND MIA --

-- Only **AKIKO'S HEADSHOT: Both a skilled performer and choreographer** --

Mel drops the program. Sees the BOUQUETS ON THE VANITY. Grabs the CARDS, READING: **Dear Akiko, Dearest Akiko and Sebastien** --

MEL turns around to see:

STORYBOARD SKETCHES TACKED TO THE WALL: Pencilled, quick DRAWINGS of AERIALISTS, sketched mid-flight, his show ideas:

A woman on a trapeze labeled, "*Crane Flying*"

A woman dancing with another woman, "*Crane Becomes Wife*"

A bird dances with a man, "*Sailmaker and Crane Wife*" --

They're labeled with names: **AKIKO, MELANIE, AKIKO, BARDO, AK, AK, MELANIE? SMALL CRANES, AKIKO** --

MEL STARING, confused --

MEL (CONT'D)

Mia? Where are you?

CONCIERGE (O.S.)

There!

Mel whirls. SECURITY bursts through the doors.

INT. SEBASTIEN'S OFFICE - SAME

Sebastien reads Wendy's iPad. Akiko and Wendy, standing by.

He looks up, sober.

SEBASTIEN

Unbelievable. She thinks her
fucking sister is still alive?

AKIKO

I think, for a minute, she believed
she was her sister.

Sebastien looks at her... *What?*

Then, he holds up the iPad to WENDY.

SEBASTIEN

Absolutely not. We're not signing
off on this. Trash it.

Wendy looks at Akiko. Akiko holds Sebastien in her gaze.

AKIKO

Sebo, wait.

EXT. MGM VALET - DAY

Scott's Beamer swerves up. Scott gets out, rushes inside.

VALET

Hey! You a guest, sir--!?

INT. MGM LOBBY - SAME

Mel sits behind the front desk with a blanket over her
shoulders, the concierge hovers, pissed.

CONCIERGE

First with the flowers, then this?

Mel looks at him, unsure what he means.

He points to A BARREL of WHITE DAISIES across the lobby.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

This morning, it was like you were
in your very own fucking garden!

Mel looks to the display of DAISIES, remembering --

INT. MGM LOBBY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Humming calmly, Mel stands at the barrel of daisies, PLUCKING FLOWERS and ARRANGING them in her hand in a small BOUQUET.

FLASH TO:

MIA smiles, handing Mel the bouquet of DAISIES.

MIA

You'll always be my little Daisy --

SCOTT (O.S.)

Babe?! Are you okay!?

INT. LOBBY - PRESENT

Scott, hurrying toward the front desk, bee-lining toward Mel.

CONCIERGE

She broke into the penthouse--

SCOTT

Mel, sweetie, what's going on?

Mel stares at him. Her eyes go back to the daisies.

MEL

Did you fuck Mia?

SCOTT

What?

MEL

Did you fuck Mia, Scott--!?

CONCIERGE

I'm asking both of you to leave--

SCOTT

She's confused! We need to get her to her room! Mel-- where's your room key, babe--!?

Off MEL, teary, as Scott collects her room key from her bag --

INT. SEBASTIEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sebastien paces, alone with Akiko, piecing it together.

SEBASTIEN
You knew about this?

AKIKO
No. I guessed. When I saw her
rehearsing, it really looked like
she thought her sister was there.

SEBASTIEN
And you didn't you tell me?

AKIKO
Sebastien, how many people read the
Vegas Star? If she prints this,
we'll have all the butts in seats
Jack ever wanted.

But this somehow makes him emotional --

SEBASTIEN
So, that's how you want to do it?
She's crazy, Kiko-- What if she
falters?

AKIKO
Sebastien, the secret of Kabuki
is that it fuses reality and myth.
(tears in her eyes)
Nobody I've ever seen does that
better than Mel.

INT. MEL'S SUITE - MGM - SAME

MEL sits on the bed, tears streaking her face.

Scott, frantic, rummaging through Mel's toiletries, make-up.

SCOTT
Where are they, Mel!? Where are
your fucking pills!?

Mel just stares at THE RED CRANE WIG on the vanity..

FLASH TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mia and Scott have sex on the bed. Mia riding him, WIG ON.

CLOSE ON MIA AND SCOTT: Scott reaching up, touching her face--

SCOTT (O.S.)
Are you out?!

BACK TO:

HOTEL SUITE

Mel on the bed --

Scott, in her face, holding up empty pill bottles --

SCOTT
I thought you and Dr. Shauna were
on top of this!

Tears streak her face, eyes dilated.

MEL
How could you...?

He looks at her... looks at the wig.

Suddenly, he grabs her shoulders.

SCOTT
Mel, no. *Mia wasn't here.* Mia isn't
here. It was us, babe... We were
playing-- How else would you
remember it, Mel?

MEL
Mia and I... we share things...

SCOTT
No, no, baby. Mia isn't with us
anymore. She hasn't been with us
for a long time. You and I, we were
playing. I thought you knew-- I
thought-- I didn't realize, you
really thought you were...

Scott falters, tears in his eyes now --

SCOTT (CONT'D)
I'm so fucking selfish! I'm sorry--
I thought-- you needed to get out
of your head-- We do it sometimes--
Damn it!

He can't take it, gets up --

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Jesus christ where is your fucking
 medication!!?

Eyes red, he ducks into the bathroom, we hear him RUMMAGING.

Mel, starting to shake --

FLASH TO:

MGM HOTEL LOBBY

"MIA" humming, admiring her new DAISY bouquet. From her coat pocket, "Mia" takes a PREGNANCY TEST STICK. Places it in the center of the bouquet, surrounding it with flowers --

BACK TO:

HOTEL ROOM - PRESENT

Mel, on the bed, the realization now freezing her motionless.

SHE PUTS A HAND ON HER BELLY.

BATHROOM

Scott finds, deep under the sink: ANOTHER EMPTY RX BOTTLES.

He turns it, reading the same warning: **May cause dizziness**

SCOTT (O.S.)
 MEL?!

HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Scott steps out of the bathroom, holding the empty bottles --

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 DID YOU TOSS YOUR FUCKING PILLS?

But when Scott looks up, he sees --

The room is empty.

The door, slowly closing... CLIIICK.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 FUCK.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

MEL, RUNNING DOWN THE STAIRS --

LOOPING past another floor landing, remembering --

FLASH TO:

MGM LOBBY (FLASHBACK)

Akiko, touching Mel's face, Mel upset.

AKIKO

You've been in a dance with her for
a long time.

Her penetrating eyes, suddenly wise, comforting.

AKIKO (CONT'D)

But to fly, you have to break free.

FLASH TO:

MGM BAR - DAY (FLASHBACK)

WENDY, staring at Mel across the table, like she's crazy.

MEL

...Sometimes it feels like I can't
breathe without her.

WENDY

(slow)
Mel what happens if you let her go?

FLASH TO:

MGM PENTHOUSE SUITE - NALU PARTY (FLASHBACK)

ON MEL: Performing 'London Bridges' - ALONE - singing on the
booth seat as COMPANY MEMBERS WATCH.

MEL

LON-DON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN--!

Mel FALLS into a wheel, then kicks-up to a handstand, alone.

People cheer. Bardo, watching her. Sebastien, watching her.

INT. STAIRWELL - PRESENT

MEL reaches the bottom of the stairs --

RUNS toward the GREEN EXIT SIGN --

FLASH TO:

FIRST REHEARSAL

Sebastien, on the mats, announcing --

SEBASTIEN

Playing the dazzling Crane,
irresistible as she sweeps across
the moon, of course, our star.

Mel looks at MIA, who puts down her coffee, and BOUNDS UP to the stage, STANDING NEXT TO AKIKO.

...But suddenly, MIA IS GONE. Only Akiko on stage.

SEBASTIEN and the company applauding FOR AKIKO --

FLASH TO:

REHEARSAL SPACE - FLASHBACK

BARDO and MIA rehearse their trapeze act. Sebastien coaches.

SEBASTIEN

We are not in Nalu anymore! She is
a Crane! Light! Light as feathers!

Mel, watching. But during a flip: MIA TURNS INTO AKIKO.

Akiko looks right at Mel. Mel and AKIKO lock eyes.

Akiko, peering at her...

EXT. MGM HOTEL / BACK ALLEY - PRESENT

Mel bursts from the stairwell, runs toward the MGM THEATRE.

FLASH TO:

INT. MGM HOUSE - NALU PERFORMANCE (FLASHBACK)

Mel watches the glittery, made-up performer sail through the air. But as she comes closer, we see it's AKIKO PERFORMING.

Mel looks back at her program: The headshot of MIA is now a headshot of AKIKO: "Akiko Ono, performing as Nalu--"

EXT. MGM VALET - (PRESENT)

Scott BURSTS from the lobby, into the purple twilight --

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - FLASHBACK

"MIA" flicks Scott's tie. He grabs her hand, pained.

SCOTT
Why are you doing this...?

EXT. ALLEY - TWILIGHT

Mel PUKES next to some trash cans.

Trying to catch her breath, eyes filled with tears --

FLASH TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - FLASHBACK

"Mia" on top of Scott, having sex with him --

Scott grabs "Mia", eyes wild --

SCOTT
I want to be with my wife.

Off "Mia", her eyes, filling..

EXT. ALLEY - PRESENT

Mel holds her belly, pukes again.

Tears streaking her face, she looks up at the STAGE DOOR

INT. PRINCIPAL'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

ON BARDO, applying stage make-up.

MEL (O.S.)
Do what I say...

He whirls: Mel stands in the doorway, already undressing.

MEL (CONT'D)
 Tell them I'm fine, and I won't
 drop you after your second flip.

Bardo raises an eyebrow...

CUT TO:

STAGE POOL - NIGHT

The RUMBLE OF JETS, filling the stage pool behind curtains.

IN THE WINGS

RIGGERS work, serious, silent, routine.

SNAPPING carabiners, TIGHTENING straps, HOISTING rigging.

BACKSTAGE WING

Mel in the CRANE COSTUME: The blood-red wig and headdress.

Her Rigger clasps her into a harness.

Screws the bolt. She tests. Gives him a THUMBS UP.

He SCREWS a second bolt, tightening it around her belly.

AKIKO (O.S.)
 Mel.

Mel looks up. Akiko walking toward her in the spotty lights of backstage, wearing THE WIFE COSTUME.

AKIKO (CONT'D)
 I'm glad you got back safely.
 (gently)
 You think you can do this?

Mel TESTS her rigging. NODS again to her rigger.

MEL
 I have to.
 (then)
It's my last chance to fly.

But when she looks back, Akiko is now:

MIA, in the wife costume, staring back at her. Slight smile.

MIA
 I'm glad we get to dance tonight.

EXT. BATHROOM - SPRING VALLEY MANSION - NIGHT

Scott ransacks the medicine cabinet. Also on his cell --

SCOTT

No! I have to talk to Dr. Shauna--!
Then call her at home!

He moves into

THE BEDROOM

RUMMAGING through Mel's DRAWERS --

SCOTT (CONT'D)

-- I need the medication! She needs
to send the script to a pharmacy--
I'm out-- No-- I don't care if it's
Saturday night--!

He suddenly sees, across the hall: THE NURSERY DOOR, AJAR.

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Scott BURSTS IN.

All the baby stuff, unpacked, strewn. BALLOONS sag on the
carpet. Helium TANK rolls. RUBBER FILINGS litter the floor.

SCOTT

What the fuck...?

INT. BACKSTAGE, POOL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

SSSSSS... An OXYGEN LEVER is COMPRESSED on a RESPIRATOR TUBE.

Suited divers stand in the pool, CHECKING show equipment.

DIVE COACH ED

Regulator one?

DIVER 1

At one hundred, full pressure.

DIVE COACH ED

Regulator two?

DIVER 2

99.7, full pressure.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Scott stares at the HELIUM TANK, in a nest of BLACK TUBING.
 He kneels, picking up a BLACK FILING from the carpet.
 Turning it in his fingers, he holds it up to the light...

FLASH TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - (SCOTT'S FLASHBACK)

"MIA" riding Scott, leaning down to him --

MIA
 I want to be with you...

JUMP TO:

After sex, Scott, pressing "Mia" into the headboard --

SCOTT
 I want to be with my wife. And as
 long as she's around, I'm going to
fight like hell to be with her.

Off MIA/MEL her eyes filling..

PRELAP:

DIVER FOUR
We have a problem.

INT. EQUIPMENT CHECK, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

DIVER FOUR holds up a faulty RESPIRATOR TUBE to Coach Ed.

DIVER 4
 It's just not issuing right.

He DEMONSTRATES, pressing the lever:

IT HISSES... Then SPUTTERS to a CHOKED GURGLE.

EXT. MGM THEATRE - NIGHT

Scott screeches up to the theatre, jumps out of the Beamer --

TRAFFIC COP
 Hey! Can't park there!

SCOTT
Fucking take it!

Scott powers toward the THEATRE ENTRANCE --

-- TRIES the box office doors: LOCKED.

From inside, a BOX OFFICE LADY, motioning / mouthing --

TICKET LADY (MUFFLED)
We open, ONE HOUR --

EXT. STAGE DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

SCOTT shakes the locked stage door.

SECURITY GUY
Hey, Pal! You again?!

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)
Scott.

Scott whirls. Sebastien comes toward him down the alley.

Scott sweating, fierce, in his face --

SCOTT
Get her off that stage.

SEBASTIEN
I can't do that --

Scott GRABS HIM, THROWS HIM against the alley wall.

SECURITY GUY
Whoa whoa-- whoa!

SCOTT
Get her off that fucking
stage!

SEBASTIEN
(to Guard)
Okay, it's okay --
(to Scott)
She wants to perform, Scott --

They scuffle again.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Your little wife is crazy, but
she's a professional --

SCOTT
-- SHE FUCKING KILLED HER SISTER!!
You know that?! She dropped her!
(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

And now, she's going to try again.
Because she thinks-- She thinks--

He almost laughs, it's so intense --

SCOTT (CONT'D)

She'll end up killing herself -
because she thinks she's Mia. And
Mel is in Mia's way.

He wipes tears. Then, pulls from his pocket:

A section of the SAWWED-OFF OXYGEN TUBE.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

She's set it up already, I know it,
she's already set it up..

He holds the tube out to Sebastien. Sebastien, studying it..

INT. SOLOIST DRESSING ROOM - SAME

ON MEL as two make-up artists paint her face with final crane touches.

*Mel looks something like Mia when we first saw her -
glittering white circus make up --*

STAGE HAND

Places in twenty!

A BEAK is strapped over Mel's nose.

Mel stares at herself in the mirror, *transformed*.

INT. THEATRE HOUSE - 20 MINUTES UNTIL CURTAIN

AUDIENCE MEMBERS stream down the aisles.

INT. STAGE POOL DECK - BEHIND THE CURTAIN - SAME

Dive Coach Ed explains to Sebastien, while Scott look on.

COACH ED

All the other dive tanks are
functional - just that Act 2 Crane
Exit. We swapped it out, made a
note to check with the gas techs -
looks like someone might have
swapped in CO2 by mistake--?

SCOTT
(softly)
It was helium. For party balloons.

All the divers look at Scott, *who is this guy?*

SEBASTIEN
This is Scott! From Total Dive, I brought him along to grab the dud.

COACH ED
Grab the dud?
(to Scott)
You guys made a big fucking mistake!

SEBASTIEN
Excuse us --

Sebastien quickly pulls Scott back into the wings.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
You heard the man, they switched the bad tank. All under control --

SCOTT
I don't want her up there --

SEBASTIEN
Not your call, man...

Sebastien nods to SECURITY, who moves to lead Scott away.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)
Enjoy the show...

INT. BACKSTAGE WING, CATWALK SIX - SAME

MEL WALKS OUT ONTO the CATWALK, in FULL COSTUME.

The SWELLING MUSIC of the OPENING ACT. Below her on stage, SMALL CRANES prance and tumble through ankle-deep water.

Water sprays, glistening on white feathers --

Mel looks at the AUDIENCE: Full house. Watching.

THE BOARD MEMBERS, in their boxes, looking on...

MEL'S RIGGER moves onto the catwalk for HARNESS CHECK:

RIGGING, CHECK. CARABINER, CHECK.

THE WHITE MOON rises over the stage with PUFF OF TIMPANY.

CRANE RIGGER 1
You're a go for Entrance One.

He checks her LAST CARABINER, stands back --

The MOON, floating now in front of the catwalk, casts a WHITE GLOW on Mel's face. Mel breathes, waiting for her MUSIC CUE --

-- And LEAPS. Grabs the scaffold-back of the MOON --

RIGGER: THUMBS UP. THE MOON LURCHES FORWARD OVER THE STAGE --

APPLAUSE as the white disc emerges for the audience!

MEL, silhouetted, a graceful bird STRETCHING HER WINGS --

INT. THEATRE LOBBY - SAME

CLOSE ON SCOTT, alone with an USHER at the theatre door. He's trying to compose himself, as the usher waits for her cue to--

OPEN the door. Scott pauses, then follows her INTO --

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Closer on AUDIENCE MEMBERS as they watch Mel's act.

CRITICS, awe in their eyes, watching.

WENDY RILEY, with her notes, watching.

ON STAGE: MEL, reaching down to Bardo from the moon.

BARDO, as the sailmaker, reaching back longingly from the pool. The music RUMBLES and the SMALL CRANES rise on a lift --

They float off the water, surrounding Mel in the sky --

Mel flies with her flock, out of sight, disappearing in the stage left wing --

Bardo, the water rising at the hem of his kimono, alone, longing for her --

CATWALK - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Coming off the catwalk ladder, Mel and the Small Crane Performers HIGH-FIVE each other, amped after their first act.

Sebastien approaches Mel, hands her a towel.

SEBASTIEN

They love it, you hear that?

He points toward the house, the APPLAUSE --

Mel, filling with pride... Then, his hand on her shoulder.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

You doing okay?

She looks up suddenly, into his probing eyes.

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

(careful)

And the dismount dive? In the next act? You good for it?

Mel hesitates, her expression changing..

She glances at THE DIVERS, adjusting TANKS in the pool --

SEBASTIEN (CONT'D)

Mélanie?

Mel fixates on a diver's OXYGEN TANK.

FLASH TO:

BABY NURSERY - (FLASHBACK)

"Mia"/Mel opens the CLOSET DOOR. Sees: THE HELIUM TANK.

She looks down at THE HANDSAW in her hand. Smiles.

SEBASTIEN (O.S.)

Mel?

PRESENT

Mel looks up at Sebastien. Smiles tightly.

MEL

I-- just have to get changed.

INT. DIVE STORAGE AREA - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mel hurries quietly backstage, making sure she's alone.

She moves to the DIVE CAGES, housing OXYGEN TANKS and WETSUITS. The tanks: ominous, identical, confusing.

RESPIRATOR TUBING-- MASKS and VALVES--

Mel finds a cage marked CRANE EXIT. She looks around, sure she's alone, and climbs onto the top of the cage --

Trying to look at the LABELS on each tank, through the mesh --

DIVE TECH (O.S.)
Everything okay?

Mel looks up. The DIVER walks toward her in the half-light.

DIVE TECH (CONT'D)
Tonight's tanks are already in the
hole, we set them up at rigging.

He looks at her curiously. Extends a hand to help her down --

FLASH TO:

GARAGE - SPRING VALLEY MANSION (FLASHBACK)

"Mia", SAWING OFF THE HELIUM TANK TUBE with Scott's HAND SAW.

"Mia", HOOKING TOGETHER the HELIUM TANK and the OXYGEN TANK.

BACK TO:

INT. CATWALK 6, BACKSTAGE - PRESENT

MEL, on the catwalk, waiting to enter. Her eyes wide, remembering, but also confused. Fear starting to creep in..

The audience, below her, watching the SAILMAKER'S SOLO.

MIA (O.S.)
Aren't you supposed to be the
fearless one?

Mel whirls: Mia stands at the far end of the catwalk.

MEL
Mia. Stop. Why are you here??

Mia moves down the catwalk toward her --

MIA
In act two, I become the wife.

MEL
No-- Stop!

Mel turns, pressing her forehead into the wall at the far end of the catwalk, trying to make it go away --

MEL (CONT'D)

No!

Mel suddenly whirls --Bird talons at Mia's throat.

Strangling her sister, feathers flying --

MEL (CONT'D)

No, no!

Mia's eyes start to bulge, Mel, wild-eyed --

And then, MIA'S FACE SUDDENLY CHANGES TO:

THE FACE OF TIM, HER RIGGER. He SHAKES HER OFF HIM --

TIM

What the fuck!? STOP! STOP!

Mel reels backwards --

TIM, straightening, hands massaging his throat, backing up --

Mel, hyperventilating, confused..

MEL

I'm, I'm sorry --

TIM

I'm stopping this fucking show --

His hand reaches for the SAFE EDGE BUTTON --

MEL DIVES ON HIM.

MEL

No. Please --

They struggle --

MEL (CONT'D)

You touch that, and I'll tell them you made a pass at me up here --

TIM

That is so fucked up --

MEL

Don't press the fucking button, Tim.

Mel turns away, eyes dilated, stares down at the audience --

MEL (CONT'D)
I have to fly.

FLASH TO:

"MIA", hooking the HELIUM TANK to the OXYGEN TANK.
Black tubing fastened between them to EXCHANGE GASSES.
Mia turns the VALVE, a DEADLY HISSING SOUND --

ON STAGE - PRESENT

ON MEL, performing the Crane/Sailmaker act with BARDO.
On her EYES, remembering, as she and Bardo flip together --
The audience, hanging on every movement --
Mel, trying to enjoy it, but *distracted* by her memories --
Pinpoints of light dancing on her face - as if they were her
confused thoughts --

BARDO
Good. Really good. Check: Lay Out?

MEL catches his GAZE, squeezes her carabiner: CHECK.

They whirl into the LAY OUT - APPLAUSE!

A FLAMING ARROW LIGHT CUE HITS MEL'S WING --

SOUND CUE of a SCREECHING BIRD as the audience GASPS --

Mel swoons, limp. Bardo CATCHES HER, SWIRLING IN THE AIR --

The music swells, Bardo yells, checking the next trick --

BARDO (CONT'D)
Check, LAST SPIN, ready--?

MEL
Wait, Bardo, for the dismount --
(sotto)
I have to exit Cat 5.

BARDO
What?

Mel looks down at the outline of DIVERS, below in the pool:

BLACK MASSES moving, PREPARING FOR HER EXIT...

MEL

I can't dive tonight.

She looks across at CATWALK 5.

MEL (CONT'D)

Just put me on Cat 5--

BARDO

You have to dive! You dismount in the pool--!

MEL

I can't-- Not tonight--

BARDO

What--?

They spin, feigning agony. He CATCHES HER AGAIN --

MEL

It's the wrong tank--! It's not oxygen --!

BARDO

-- You land, down-right, Akiko rises from that same spot --

MEL

I can't, Bardo--! My tank--!

BARDO

Fuck. GO.

He sets Mel spinning --

The audience, APPLAUDING --

INT. ORCHESTRA SECTION - SAME

Scott, staring at Mel, hoping, praying --

CATWALK FOUR

Bardo CATCHES Mel. CHECKS her carabiner for THE DISMOUNT.

BARDO

Check: Dismount?

Mel, panicking, looking at THE POOL BELOW --

BARDO (CONT'D)
Dismount, fucking check!?

The DARK SHAPES OF DIVERS, below the surface, moving --

MEL
BARDO--!

He gives the carabiner the second squeeze himself --

BARDO
Fuck it, it's good, you're good--

MEL
NO!

He STAGE SMILES. GRABS HER, JUMPS --

Together they SPIN in TIGHT CIRCLES across the wide space --

MEL'S face whirling, whirling --

MEL'S POV: *BARDO'S FACE FLASHING from BARDO - TO MIA* --

MEL (CONT'D)
No!

The AUDIENCE, APPLAUDING --

MEL, SPINNING, HER FACE PAINED...

MIA
You ready, Buttercup--?

MEL
NO, MIA!

Bardo / Mia, spinning with her, unhooking her carabiner --

MIA
To switch places?

MEL FALLS - the WATER, coming up fast --

CUT TO:

WOOSH! SHE HITS THE SURFACE --

UNDERWATER

CLOSE ON MEL, panicking, A DIVE TECH COMING TOWARD HER --

He HOLDS THE **RESPIRATOR**, tries to PUT IT IN HER MOUTH --

MEL ELBOWS HIM IN THE FACE, BAM--!

--BAM! KICKS HIM IN THE CHEST --

The DIVER, reeling, GURGLING WATER, COMES AT HER AGAIN --

MEL
(gurgling)
NO! PLU-HEASE-- YOU DON'T UN-DEEER-

And suddenly, the dive tech is --

MIA
Breathe with me, Daisy.

Mia's voice, uncannily clear --

Mel, gurgling --

MEL
N-OH!

MEL KICKS, STRUGGLES -- GULPING WATER -- FLASHING TO:

THE WOMB

A FETUS, struggling in the womb, gulping fluid. Strangled.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
-- He's losing heart rate, oxygen --

SCOTT (O.S.)
He can't breathe! Do something--!

INT. STAGE POOL - UNDERWATER (PRESENT)

The SLOWED GURGLE of LUNGS, FILLING WITH WATER as

MEL STRUGGLES, going more limp... eyes rolling..

DIVE COACH ED
Get her up NOW--!

Mel looks toward the surface. Reaches up to THE PERFORMERS ON STAGE, across the threshold of the water's surface.

From the spot where Mel fell, the CRANE WIFE RISES OUT OF THE POOL. She crosses to Bardo, they EMBRACE as music swells.

MEL, underwater, reaching out for the couple, as they kiss --

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

MEL IS LIFTED out of the pool by two divers, her body limp.

Company, crew members gather --

Paramedics descend, administering CPR --

PARAMEDICS

One, two, three --PUMP!

SCOTT suddenly there, pushing through to Mel's side --

MEL'S EYES dilated, barely responding to the medics --

SCOTT

Oh my god-- oh my god, Mel--!

DIVER 1

She pushed me off her! I don't know! She swallowed a lot of water!

Scott PUNCHES HIM. ON MEL, her eyes fluttering open, the swirl of faces around her, through the crowd, she sees --

MEL

Mia?

Everyone looks at her --

MEDIC

We have a heartbeat --

SCOTT

(taking her hand)

Baby, I'm right here. I'm here --

Mel tries to form words but can't speak. Instead, above her:

A TRAPEZE BAR LOWERS, out of the reaches of the MGM rafters.

MIA, perched on the bar, smiling down at her.

She reaches out for Mel's hand --

SCOTT, panicked as Mel's grip loosens on his hand..

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Mel, listen to me, sweetheart, you have to be strong, *breathe* --

PARAMEDIC

Oxygen! One, two --

They SHOCK MEL. Stuff a BREATHING TUBE DOWN HER THROAT --
 BUT a SHADOW VERSION OF MEL now SITS UP, OUT OF HER BODY,
 reaches out to Mia, who helps her onto the trapeze.

While bodily, earthly Mel is flat-lining: BEEEEEEEEEE---

SCOTT

Mel, MEL!

SOUL-MEL is rising above them, above it all, with her sister.

ON THE TRAP

Mia and Mel rise together, slowly arching backwards --

MIA

That's right, now we can dance
 together...

They hook ankles, arch into a double pointed star.

CRANE WINGS extend from their arms. Their routine, ethereal --

MIA (CONT'D)

Breathe together...

But Mel looks down: Over an audience that is chatting,
 obliviously, during intermission break...

Over the paramedics, trying to REVIVE HER OWN BODY...

MIA TAPS for the next trick...

But Mel hesitates.

MIA (CONT'D)

Trust me, Daisy.

Mel looks from her sister, back down to the stage:

Akiko staring down at Mel's body, awash in guilt...

Sebastien, devastated, for his performer, his career --

And SCOTT, crying... His voice, far away...

SCOTT (FAR AWAY)

We need a hospital, a *hospital*...

Mel looks toward her sister again, reaching out her hand..

CUT TO:

HANDS CLASP --

AND WE ARE ON MEL, lying on stage, surrounded by activity --

GRIPPING SCOTT'S HAND. Her eyes flutter slightly open --

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Mel! Mel, you're back!

She looks up at him, first responders flurrying into action --

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You're back! You're here!

MEL
We're here.

SCOTT
(sad)
No... Mel, she's not here --

MEL
I KNOW.

He's thrown. She's never said this out loud.

She squeezes his hand.

MEL (CONT'D)
But we are. Us.

And she puts her other hand OVER HER BELLY.

He realizes, tears streaming --

Mel's eyes drifting back up to --

THE TRAPEZE. Swaying gently above the stage: Empty.

PARAMEDIC
That's right! Single breaths, all
by yourself now...

The medic takes the OXYGEN TUBE from her mouth --

And Mel gently breathes - all by herself, and deeply.

FADE TO BLACK.