

Light of Dawn

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EXT. MAYA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A pale, bright street light illuminates a freshly manicured lawn, striped with the precise cuts of a lawn tractor. A black, rusted car idles just outside the reach of its light, a hooded figure slouching in the driver's seat, SMOKE curling out of the cracked window.

It is late enough that all of the lights in the large, pristine white houses along the curved block have been turned off. One such house stands pridefully and imposingly on the corner of the block.

A flurry of movement from the topmost corner of the house disrupts the quiet stillness of the street. We see the window slide expertly open, and MAYA (16) crawls onto the roof. As she slides forward, her foot catches on the window, and it slams shut with a BANG.

MAYA
(quietly)
Fuck!

Wincing, Maya looks to the black car, where she can hear the man, her boyfriend CHARLIE (20), stifling a chuckle. Maya pauses on the roof, making sure the house has remained silent. Letting out a BREATH, she drops onto the lawn, crushing blades of grass underfoot.

Maya treads carefully across the yard to the black car. Tucking her inky hair behind her ear, Maya opens the door and drops down into the passenger seat. Charlie leans over the console, giving her a quick, sloppy kiss.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Babe, I told you, you can't park here.
My mom could see!

CHARLIE
It's fine, it's fine.

EXT. MAYA'S NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Charlie shifts the car into drive, then pulls quickly off of the curb and onto the street. He drives recklessly, SCREECHING through turns and ignoring stop signs.

MAYA
(flirty)
Where are we going tonight?

CHARLIE

How about a drive along the backroads?
I know of an overlook not too far into
the forest, a few of my buddies are
already there.

Maya playfully pouts, gazing at Charlie doe-eyed as he turns quickly onto a dark, unkempt backroad.

EXT. WOODLAND BACKROADS - CONTINUOUS

MAYA

But babe, I wanted you all to myself.

Charlie smirks, moving his hand to rest on her thigh. He turns towards her, taking his eyes off the road.

CHARLIE

Don't you worry about that.

Maya begins to giggle, but her laugh turns into a sharp GASP as she points to the middle of the road. Charlie turns away from her, startled. He sees that a buck has stopped in front of the car, frozen in their headlights.

MAYA

(loudly)

Holy shit Charlie, stop!

Charlie slams on the brakes, the car skidding to a stop inches from the buck. He flicks his ear, then bounds across the road, trees and bushes RUSTLING as he makes his way into the forest.

The ringing SILENCE in the car is broken by a whoop of Charlie's laughter.

CHARLIE

(excitedly)

Oh my fucking God, did you see the
rack on that thing! What a goddamn
beaut.

Maya laughs shakily.

MAYA

Yeah, that was crazy. Maybe...maybe be
a little more careful next time,
though?

Charlie SCOFFS, pressing on the gas and cranking up the

radio.

CHARLIE

Chill, it's not like anything bad was gonna happen. I had everything under control, so lighten up, yeah? We're here to have fun!

Maya laughs, and Charlie's hand once again moves to rest on her thigh.

MAYA

(agreeable)

Yeah...yeah, you're totally right.

Charlie nods in approval, rolling down the front two windows as he rummages around in the center console.

CHARLIE

Hell yes, found it!

Charlie digs out a beaten red lighter, flicking it on to make sure it still works.

MAYA

(excitedly)

Wait, babe, you brought them?

Charlie nods to the back seat, where Maya sees a crumpled, plastic bag containing a few clumsily rolled joints. Maya laughs.

CHARLIE

Brought 'em from the city. It's good stuff, I think you'll like it.

Absent-mindedly, Charlie drums on the steering wheel, tucking his lighter into the front pocket of his jeans. He slows the car down, turning onto an overgrown, uneven path.

EXT. CAMPING GROUNDS OVERLOOK - NIGHT

He rolls onto a stretch of flat ground. The light of a dying campfire reflects off the side of his car, and we see another parked across the clearing.

A small group of college-aged friends lounge next to the fire, a few laying on ratted blankets and a few sitting on frayed and sun-bleached camping chairs. Puffs of smoke emanate both from the CRACKLING fire and from the group.

A small CHEER rises from the group as Maya and Charlie hop out of the car. Charlie pops open the back door, reaching for the baggie and placing it in a cardboard box containing several bottles of amber liquid.

Charlie strolls to the group, the bottles CLINKING against one another as he walks.

FRIEND ONE

Hey Charlie, what's up man! This your girl?

Friend one points to Maya.

CHARLIE

Yeah, she is.

MAYA

(sweetly)

Hi, everyone!

The group nods in her direction, then continues to mingle amongst themselves. Charlie ambles up to the group, dropping the box of liquor next to the fire, sitting cross legged on a blanket behind it.

Maya trails behind him, choosing to sit next to him, her arm draped over his knee. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls the lighter out of his pocket and the joins out of the cardboard box.

Opening the bag, Charlie turns to face Maya, giving her what he thinks is an encouraging smile.

CHARLIE

You'll warm up to my friends, I promise.

Maya nods, biting her lip. Charlie extends his arms, all but shoving the bag into Maya's lap.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Have a light, it'll help you relax...it helps me relax, at least.

Maya reaches into the bag and holds the end of the joint to the lighter. She takes a long PULL from the joint, holding her breath for a moment. With smoke pouring from her mouth, she relaxes into Charlie's arms.

OVERLOOK MONTAGE:

... smoke hangs in a haze above the entire group.

... Maya and Charlie are still lounging next to each other, but the joint is noticeably shorter, and an open bottle of liquor is sitting next to them.

... the fire has almost burnt out, low embers providing only a subtle glow.

... from Maya's point of view, the ground is tilting and rocking, and Charlie's car seems much further away than it is.

... Maya and Charlie stumbling to the car in the dark.

... from Maya's point of view, her vision fading to black.

END OVERLOOK MONTAGE

EXT. MAYA'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

We cut to Charlie's car pulling away from the curb in front of Maya's house, where he had parked at the beginning of the night.

The first light of dawn begins to color the sky as Maya trudges from the curb to her home's front door. She carelessly unlocks the door and stumbles through the entryway.

Leaning against the wall for support, she starts up the stairs to her room, moving as fast as her body will allow. Clutching the railing, she pulls herself up the stairs and into her cluttered room, collapsing onto her unmade bed.

INT. MAYA'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Maya startles awake, a loud BANG wrestling her from her sleep. Maya's mom, KATHRYN(40), is knocking heavily on the door.

KATHRYN

(shouting)

Maya, I know you're in there, unlock
this door RIGHT NOW.

Maya GROANS, pulling her comforter over her head and turning away from the window, bright afternoon sunlight making it impossible to keep her eyes open.

MAYA
 (shouting back)
 Go away mom.

Kathryn rattles Maya's doorknob, tugging it back and forth.

KATHRYN
 Young lady, you will open the door or
 I'll ground you until you graduate.

Sighing, Maya rolls out of bed, the floor still swaying precariously beneath her feet. She rubs her temple and braces herself against the wall, taking a deep breath.

Grasping the doorknob, she swings the door open, fixing her mom with the angriest glare she can muster.

Her mom does the same, pointing to stairs leading to Maya's bedroom. They are caked with dried, muddy footprints, and one of their picture frames, holding a photo of a younger Kathryn and Maya sharing a hug, hangs CROOKED on its hook.

Maya attempts to play dumb, closing the door enough to hide the mud-stained sneakers she had tossed into the corner of her room so carelessly the night before.

MAYA
 (nonchalantly)
 Okay? I'll do my chores later.

Kathryn SIGHS, exasperated.

KATHRYN
 Maya, quit it. I know you were with him. He left tire marks under our lamppost, and you didn't even remember to close the door when you came back home.

Maya rolls her eyes, and her mom stays planted outside her door, crossing her arms and waiting expectantly for Maya to talk. She does not.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 (angry)
 Maya. Explanation. NOW.

MAYA
 (yelling)
 Fine, mom, whatever. I was with Charlie, and we basically just went
 (MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
for a drive. Why do you even care if I
was hanging out with him anyways?

Kathryn's eyes linger on Maya, registering her bloodshot eyes
and tangled hair, the faint smell of woodsmoke and cheap
liquor still clinging to her clothes.

KATHRYN
Maya, you did not just "go for a
drive". Charlie is a bad influence on
you, like-

MAYA
Don't say dad. He's fun and cool and
you're so uptight that it's honestly
lame.

Kathryn gazes at her sadly.

KATHRYN
Maya, please just listen. You used to
be so sweet and kind, but ever since
you've starting spending time with
Charlie...I know you're too young to
understand-

MAYA
No, mom, I'm not. Charlie's perfect
for me, he actually treats me like an
adult, unlike you.

KATHRYN
(sternly)
Honey, that's because you're not an
adult.

Maya rolls her eyes. Again.

MAYA
(annoyed)
Whatever. Are you done lecturing me
now?

Kathryn hesitates, clearly working up the courage to say
something else.

KATHRYN
No.

Beat.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
I forbid you from seeing Charlie
again, he's only going to hurt you.

Maya blinks up at her mom, her jaw dropping open.

MAYA
(screaming)
What? Mom, that's not fair, you can't
control me!

KATHRYN
(resolutely)
Yes, I can, and I will. If I catch you
with him, you won't leave your room
for the rest of the summer.

In response, Maya yells in frustration, SLAMMING her door in her mother's face, rattling its hinges. The lock CLICKS as Maya's mother reaches for the handle. Maya continues screaming at her mother through the door.

MAYA
I hate you, I can't wait to leave this
stupid fucking horrible place and
never come back.

Kathryn hesitates, her outstretched hand hovering above the doorknob. She pulls her hand back slowly, then takes a step back from the door, turning away from it and walking silently down the stairs as Maya's furious words echo throughout the house.

TITLE CARD

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

5 YEARS LATER

Afternoon light filters through the cheap, white blinds in Maya's college bedroom. Maya is sprawled on top of her comforter, smokey makeup staining her pillowcase black.

A small knock taps against the bedroom door. Maya does not wake up. After a few moments, the door CLICKS open, and Maya's roommate, SASHA(21) enters the room.

Stepping over piles of dirty clothes and empty fast food bags, Sasha crosses to the bed. She lightly shakes Maya awake.

SASHA

(gently)

Hey...sorry, I gotta wake you up. Your phone's been buzzing like crazy.

Sasha passes Maya her phone; catching a small glimpse of her screen, we can see several missed calls from her mom, as well as an email from her university.

GRUMBLING, Maya struggles to sit up in bed, clutching her head. Sasha's eyes pass over Maya's; she hesitates for a moment, then decides to quietly step out of the room, closing the door softly.

Rubbing the sleep out of her eyes, Maya fumbles to unlock her phone. With clumsy, heavy fingers, she types her password incorrectly a number of times before she gets it right.

Sighing, Maya taps on one of her mom's missed call notifications. She picks up on the first dial.

MAYA'S MOM

(concerned)

Maya? Honey, are you there?

Maya closes her eyes and rubs her temples, trying to clear her headache.

MAYA

(annoyed)

Yes, mom, what?

MAYA'S MOM

Oh hi, sweetheart. I've just been getting quite a few emails from your school about your tuition...do you need --

Maya cuts her off, suddenly angry.

MAYA

No, I told you I don't want your help.

A tense moment passes, and Maya's mom begins to speak again.

MAYA'S MOM

(imploringly)

Honey, please --

Maya abruptly hangs up, cutting off her mother's plea. Clenching her teeth, Maya opens the email from the university

regarding her tuition.

Over her shoulder, we see that Maya has not paid her tuition for the current semester and thus has been unenrolled from her classes until she can pay for them.

Closing her eyes, Maya takes a deep breath and turns her phone off. Opening them again, she sets her shoulders and swings out of bed, choosing to resolutely ignore the messages she has just read.

INT. MAYA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maya squints into the bright light of the afternoon sun streaming into their living room. Maya SHUFFLES out of her room, yawning and closing the door behind her.

Sasha steps lightly and cautiously towards Maya, holding a glass of iced water.

SASHA
(quietly)
Here, drink this.

MAYA
(mumbling)
Thanks.

A moment passes, Maya sipping on her water while Sasha studies her face. Looking up from her cup, Maya notices Sasha's eyes observing her face.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(defensive)
What?

Sasha pauses for a moment, clearly choosing her words carefully.

SASHA
(grimacing)
It's just...I saw your notifications
just now.

Maya blanches, but Sasha continues before she can say anything.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Not on purpose! But...uhm...that seems
pretty serious.

MAYA

Yeah...

SASHA

(cautiously)

Obviously it's not my place, so...
y'know...we don't have to talk about
it...

Sasha pauses, giving Maya a chance to tell her to stop. Maya doesn't take the opportunity, so Sasha continues.

SASHA (CONT'D)

But isn't your mom, like, really rich?
I know you two don't really get along,
but it seems like she wants to help-

MAYA

No, she doesn't. She just wants to
have control over me.

Sasha recognizes the immaturity weaved throughout this response, but she doesn't press.

SASHA

Well, alright... but if you need help,
I got you.

MAYA

No, it's okay, I'll be fine. Don't
worry about it.

Another pause, where Sasha again considers her words.

SASHA

But --

MAYA

(endearingly)

Sasha, I'm serious. I know your family
needs the money. I'll figure something
out.

Sasha nods, although she clearly wants to say more. Maya smiles at her, doing her best to lighten the mood, then steps around Sasha and into the bathroom.

Maya cleans the old makeup from her face and takes a couple of Advil to help manage her hangover. Tying her hair into a respectable braid down her back, Maya leaves the bathroom, feeling and looking a little more put-together.

With a deceiving LILT to her voice, Maya strikes up a lighthearted conversation with Sasha.

MAYA (CONT'D)

How about we do something fun tonight.
My friend invited me to a party in
Huntsville, you wanna go with me?

SASHA

(concerned)

Oh...um, I was thinking we could stay
in...weren't you just out all night
yesterday?

Maya nods, finishing the last few sips of her glass. Crossing into the kitchen, she places the glass into the sink.

MAYA

Well, yeah. But there's no harm in
having a little fun once in a while.

Sasha clearly disagrees, not with Maya's sentiment but with her classification of the phrase "once in a while".

SASHA

Ahhh, I don't know. I still have a lot
to do...and I have work on Sunday...

MAYA

(pleading)

Pleaseeeee, c'mon it'll be so much
more fun with you there.

Sasha SIGHS, a smile slowly turning up her lips.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You work all the time, girl. Take a
break!

SASHA

(laughing)

Okay, fine. I'll come, I'll come!

MAYA

(excited)

Fuck yeah! It's gonna be so fun,
you'll see.

Sasha chuckles. Maya grins, striding into her bedroom.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm gonna get ready. Wear
something slutty!

Sasha shakes her head, and Maya LAUGHS, shutting her bedroom door.

Sasha's smile fades as she pulls her phone out of her pocket. Ignoring the muffled rumbling of heavy metal blasting from behind Maya's door, Sasha turns her phone on.

Scrolling through her messages, Sasha taps on her mother's name and types out a short message.

ON SASHA'S IPHONE SCREEN

The text message reads: "hi! i'm going out with maya tonight, i'll transfer it to your account first thing tomorrow. love you <3"

INT. MAYA'S CAR - NIGHT

MAYA
(apologetic)
Sorry about the mess, haven't cleaned
out my car in a while.

Maya moves a few pieces of trash, mostly old Starbucks cups, out of the passenger side and into the backseat.

SASHA
That's okay! I totally get it.

Both girls laugh, and Maya eases the car out of their apartment complex's basement parking lot. Opening the garage door, Maya pulls out her phone, attaching it to an old aux cord plugged into the radio.

MAYA
You can pick the music today. Just
make sure it's hype!

SASHA
I know that's right!

Both girls CHEER, and Sasha scrolls quickly through Maya's Spotify. Smiling, she lands on "Poker Face" by Lady Gaga. Maya nods in approval.

As the chorus starts, both girls start singing along, dancing in their seats.

MAYA
(laughing)
Yeah Sasha, get into it girl!

Sasha laughs, shimmying her shoulders to the beat with Maya cheering her on.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Maya and Sasha are dancing together in a dark, crowded, humid room. The music is far too loud and the multicolored strobe lights are blinding.

Some groups are jumping to the music, spilling cups of bright PINK punch onto the already sticky floor. Some groups are bent over a rickety pool table, cheering whenever a ball ricochets out of control.

SASHA
(yelling)
Hey Maya!

MAYA
Yeah?

SASHA
If we're leaving soon, we should
probably call an Uber!

Maya SCOFFS, waving her hand.

MAYA
(laughing)
Oh, don't worry, I'm not a fucking
lightweight, and I've barely even had
anything to drink. I can drive us.

Sasha pauses, worry flickering across her features.

MAYA (CONT'D)
It's fine, you really need to lighten
up. It's not like anything bad is
gonna happen.

Maya grabs an abandoned cup from a nearby table, shoving it into Sasha's hands.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Live a little!

Maya wipes her nose, cheering as the music builds. Sasha

folds to the peer pressure, laughing. She lifts her cup into the air, downing its contents as the beat drops.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY - LATER

Maya and Sasha stumble out of the house, leaning on each other for support as they make their way to Maya's car.

Maya looks relatively alert compared to Sasha. Sasha's eyes are barely remaining open as she trips toward Maya's car, and it is clear that she does not have a high tolerance for alcohol.

They reach the car together, and Sasha leans heavily against it as Maya fumbles around in her pockets for her keys.

She finds them tucked in her back pocket, then taps the faded unlock symbol. The car's doors all unlock with a muffled CLICK, and the headlights flash, cutting through the darkness surrounding the property.

Sasha hiccups as Maya opens the passenger side door and eases her into the seat.

SASHA
(words slurring)
Thanks...

MAYA
(giggling)
One too many, huh?

SASHA
Maybe...I'm so tired...

MAYA
(gently)
The drive's a few hours, you can take
a nap on the way back.

Sasha doesn't respond, instead slumping down further into the seat, eyes fluttering shut. Maya closes the passenger side door, jumps into the driver's seat, and cranks the ignition, pulling away from the house and onto its gravel driveway.

EXT. BACKROADS - LATER

The darkness of the night is just starting to fade, as the faint light of dawn begins to color the horizon. We see the car pull onto a sparsely-populated country road.

Maya yawns, turning up the music a little louder and shaking her head, attempting to clear the fog that the alcohol and the lack of sleep had created in her head. Her cheeks are still flushed from the party.

Sasha suddenly groans, her eyes squeezed shut.

MAYA
(sarcastically)
Rise and shine, sleepyhead. How are
you feeling?

Sasha opens her eyes, staring at Maya in confusion.

SASHA
What? Where are we?

MAYA
On our way home? Shit, you're more
wasted than I thought.

Sasha doesn't respond, her brow furrowed in confusion. She turns to look out the window, trying to focus on the trees and power lines speeding past the car. Maya continues, unaware of Sasha's inner turmoil.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Hey, at least the party was fun.
Although I really don't think they
meant to make the punch that strong.

Sasha turns to look at Maya, realization dawning on her face.

SASHA
(worried)
Maya, you shouldn't be driving!

Maya turns to look at Sasha, seemingly puzzled by Sasha's reaction.

MAYA
I told you, I'm fine. I've been
driving for hours anyways, and we're
almost back! So don't worry.

Sasha looks at Maya in disbelief, and panicked TEARS begin to well up in her eyes. Maya blinks, taken aback.

SASHA
(begging)
Please, please Maya, can we just pull
(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)
over? I really don't feel comfortable
with this, please.

Maya studies Sasha's face, then nods.

MAYA
Yeah, we can pull over. Just lemme
call one of my friends to see if they
can pick us up really quick.

Maya begins rummaging around her center console, taking one of her hands off the wheel to do so. She finds her phone, turning it on with her thumb.

Just as she takes her eyes off the road, it begins to curve slightly to the right. Maya does not adjust to the road's new trajectory, so her car slowly crosses over the median.

SASHA
Wait, no, let me--MAYA!

Sasha yelps, pointing out the front windshield. Maya turns away from Sasha, and we see a semi truck driving straight towards them.

The truck driver HONKS his horn as Maya swerves to the right, both Maya and Sasha screaming in terror. She successfully avoids the truck, but the car veers out of control, SPINNING off the road.

Maya does not regain control of the car in time, and they crash headfirst into a nearby power line pole as thick as a tree trunk.

The front of the car crumples, the airbags expanding with a short BANG. Black smoke begins to unfurl from under the car's hood, and the car's ALARM begins to sound.

Down the road, the semi truck rolls to a quick stop on the gravel shoulder. Through the window, the driver brings his phone to his ear, looking over his shoulder to survey the damage.

In the car, both girls are motionless, slumped forward. Maya is bleeding from a gash on her forehead. Sasha is completely still.

EXT. CRASH SITE - LATER

The morning light is still dim, but the red and blue and

white lights of ambulances and police cars shatter the peaceful sunrise.

EMT's yell instructions to one another, tearing the driver and passenger side doors open and reaching into the car as carefully as they can, avoiding broken glass and shattered plastic.

They unbuckle Sasha first, checking her pulse and rushing her to the nearest ambulance as delicately as they can. As Maya is lifted from the car, she COUGHS weakly, her eyes fluttering open.

An EMT places her on a stretcher, laying her on her back. Maya resists, struggling to sit up.

MAYA
(voice shaking)
Sasha...where's Sasha?

The EMT steps in front of Maya, blocking her vision of Sasha as she's loaded into her ambulance, a pair of EMT's administering oxygen and beginning to perform CPR.

He places a FIRM hand on her shoulder, preventing her from sitting up any further.

EMT
(gently)
Hey, lay back down for me, okay. Your friend's on her way to the hospital, they're going to take good care of her, alright?

Maya's eyes dart behind the EMT, following one of the ambulances as it peels away from her wrecked car, speeding down the road with its sirens blaring.

Maya stops fighting, collapsing back onto the stretcher. The EMT quickly resumes checking her injuries, laying a thick wad of gauze on her forehead.

Another rolls Maya to the back of the second ambulance. Dizzy and in pain, Maya's eyes close, and she slips into unconsciousness.

INT. MAYA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A low, steady BEEP breaks the monotonous silence of Maya's hospital room. Her head is heavily bandaged, and her arms are cut with scrapes and heavy bruises.

She is breathing steadily, and her expression is peaceful and calm, like she is just getting a good night's sleep. Golden light from the sunset casts long shadows across the white, tiled floors of her sterile room.

INT. HOSPITAL INTAKE DESK - DAY

Outside of her room and down the hallway, the elevator DINGS, and Maya's mom steps out, clutching her purse. She walks briskly up to a nearby intake desk.

There is only one worker at the desk, and she is clearly busy, talking to a patient on the phone while her mouse CLICKS and keyboard CLACKS.

Kathryn stops and stands in front of the desk, tapping her fingers on it impatiently.

FRONT DESK STAFF

(into the phone)

Yes...of course...you take care now,
bye-bye.

The front desk lady turns toward Kathryn with a pleasant smile.

FRONT DESK STAFF (CONT'D)

Good evening, ma'am. How can I help
today?

Kathryn peers distractedly down the closest hallway, looking at the name cards on the closest rooms.

KATHRYN

(quickly)

Hi! Yes, I'm looking for Maya Francis?
I got a call from this hospital saying
she was brought here. I drove as fast
as I could.

The front desk lady nods her head, moving her mouse to the center of her screen and typing Maya's name into the search entry display.

FRONT DESK STAFF

Of course. Let me pull up her
information, and we'll see what we can
do.

She clicks her mouse a few times, pausing to read sections. Kathryn's foot BOUNCES anxiously.

FRONT DESK STAFF (CONT'D)
Yes, okay. It looks like we do have her here, but her medical records indicate that she would not like any visitors to her room.

KATHRYN
(shocked)
What?

FRONT DESK STAFF
Yeah...although it looks like this information was last updated 3 years ago. We can ask her when she wakes up if she would like to change it, but as of right now, we do have an obligation to honor her request. I'm so sorry.

KATHRYN
No, no worries. Thank you so much for your help.
(beat)
Do you mind if I sit in the waiting room until she wakes up?

FRONT DESK STAFF
No, of course not.

She points, and Kathryn sees a cold, empty room, filled with faded chairs and stiff couches.

FRONT DESK STAFF (CONT'D)
It'll be over to your left. You're free to stay as long as you need.

KATHRYN
Thank you, truly.

FRONT DESK STAFF
(sympathetic)
You're welcome. You have a good rest of your day, now.

Kathryn nods, turning away from the desk and walking toward the room. She chooses a rust-red, leather couch in the corner of the room, and sinks into it.

Blinking away tears, her eyes continue to scan nearby rooms. She glances into them, turning her eyes to the next door when she doesn't recognize the faces in them.

Craning her neck, she peers into a room as the very end of a long hallway leading out of the waiting room. She gasps, her fingers hovering over her mouth.

She sees Maya peacefully asleep, but her heart aches at the sight of the large bandage wrapped tightly around her head. Kathryn takes a deep breath, tearing her gaze away.

INT. MAYA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

START FLASHBACK

We cut to Maya sitting in her bedroom, still living at her mom's house. She is surrounded by large cardboard BOXES, all filled to the brim with dark, ripped clothes, expired makeup, and old polaroid photos.

Her room is almost bare, her posters pulled off the walls, her desk cleaned, and her bookshelf empty.

She furiously shoves a few blankets into an open box, then turns to her phone, which is resting face-up on the floor next to her.

She taps the screen, then opens her messages app. She CLICKS the phone icon for her friend DANIELLE(19), lifting her phone to rest next to her ear. She drums her fingers against the floor, impatiently waiting for Danielle to answer her call.

The phone rings, then an automated voice begins to tell Maya that her friend is unavailable.

Maya groans.

MAYA

(under her breath)

Literally what else could she be doing
right now?

Maya stares at her phone, then immediately calls Danielle again. She picks up on the first RING.

DANIELLE

(laughing)

Sorry girl, just missed your call.
What's up?

MAYA

You're still good to drive me
tomorrow, right?

DANIELLE

Yeah, duh. I'm so psyched to go back.
Being home is so boring.

MAYA

(laughing)

I know, right? I can't wait to leave.

DANIELLE

And I know you're gonna love it at
VSU. It's a good school, sure, but the
night life is off the fucking charts.

MAYA

(signing)

Ugh, that's all I need, honestly.

Danielle laughs, not quite catching the honest vulnerability
in Maya's voice.

DANIELLE

True. So what time did you want me to
pick you up?

MAYA

Uhhh...anytime before 4. My mom'll be
at work til then. She said she had
some emergency to take care of there.

DANIELLE

Mkay.

Beat.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Wait, you don't wanna say goodbye?

MAYA

No.

Beat.

DANIELLE

(unseriously)

Okay...you wanna unpack that?

MAYA

(laughing)

Not really. We just don't get along,
that's all.

DANIELLE

That's tough. Couldn't you just stay with your dad, then?

MAYA

(sadly)

Nah. He got into some trouble a few years ago, been locked up ever since.

DANIELLE

Shit, sorry.

Beat.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Well anyways, I can be to your place at like 2? Then we'll have enough time to pack and stuff.

MAYA

Sounds good. See you then babe!

DANIELLE

Kay, bye!

Maya taps the red phone icon, ending the call. She digs her laptop out of her open backpack, powering it up and scrolling through a few open tabs.

She quickly scrolls through her tabs, and we can see health insurance, car insurance, and bank accounts all listed under her name, not her mother's.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MAYA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Maya's hospital room looks exactly the same, save for the bright morning light. The window has also been opened, the soft BREEZE stirring the thin, beige curtains.

Maya takes a deep breath, her eyes fluttering open. She GROANS softly, her hand hovering over the bandaged cut on her forehead.

Confused and disoriented, she blinks a few times, squeezing her eyes shut against the light. Lifting her head and fighting a WAVE of pain, she tries opening them again, and her vision focuses on a panel of buttons on the inside of her hospital bed.

Although she cannot focus long enough to read what it says, her fingers find the largest one, colored in bright red. She presses the button with all the force she can muster.

All but collapsing back onto her pillows, she waits impatiently for a nurse she hoped was coming.

Some time passes, and Maya looks like she has fallen asleep again. She hears the door open slowly, and a nurse approaches her bed, glancing at the various medical instruments WHIRRING and BEEPING around her.

NURSE

(gently)

How are you feeling?

Maya hesitates, brow furrowing.

MAYA

I'm...okay.

The nurse smiles, her tenderness reflected in her eyes. Then Maya's eyes suddenly widen, and she looks worriedly up to the nurse.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Wait...my friend, Sasha...did she-is she okay?

NURSE

(evasive)

She's alive. I'm...I'm sorry, but that's all I can say as of right now. But please trust that we are taking care of her as best we can, okay?

Maya closes her eyes, a flash of sorrow and guilt crossing her features.

MAYA

(voice shaking)

Okay...

The nurse finishes checking all of the machinery surrounding the bed, looking satisfied with what she sees.

NURSE

Of course. If you need anything else, just hit that red button again, alright?

Maya nods, then WINCES.

NURSE (CONT'D)

There is a doctor scheduled to check on you again in about an hour and ask a few bookkeeping questions for our system, if you're feeling up to it.

MAYA

(whispering)

Okay.

NURSE

Try to get some rest.

Maya nods, and the nurse exits the room quietly, the door swinging shut.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maya's mother sleeps restlessly on the same red leather couch, her phone resting in her lap and her head resting on her hand.

From the hospital's waiting room, we see the nurse leave Maya's room, the CLICK of the door closing rousing Kathryn from her light sleep.

She glances out the window, the bright morning light startling her fully awake. she jumps up from the couch, collecting her phone and her purse as she again walks up to the intake desk.

KATHRYN

Hi! I'm so sorry to bother you again--

FRONT DESK STAFF

No worries. How can I help you?

Kathryn glances back towards Maya's room, where she can see Maya turn her head away from the window and close her eyes.

KATHRYN

I'm just wondering if you've heard any new information about my daughter, Maya?

FRONT DESK STAFF

Oh, of course. It looks like we have a doctor scheduled to discuss the status of her paperwork with her in about an
(MORE)

FRONT DESK STAFF (CONT'D)

hour.

KATHRYN

Okay...

FRONT DESK STAFF

I'm sorry ma'am, unfortunately I cannot give you any information about her current condition until she gives us permission to do so. But again, you are absolutely welcome to wait here until we receive an update from the doctor.

Kathryn purses her lips, and the nurse's eyes soften.

KATHRYN

The doctor's going in soon...does that mean she's awake. And at-at least well enough to talk?

FRONT DESK STAFF

I can't say anything for sure, but...

Kathryn lets out a relieved breath, grateful the Maya is okay.

KATHRYN

O-okay, thank you, again.

FRONT DESK STAFF

Of course, honey.

Kathryn offers the worker a small smile, then trudges back to her spot in the waiting room.

INT. MAYA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Maya startles awake to a doctor knocking quietly on her hospital room door. He walks in, wearing a pristine white coat and holding a clipboard stacked with a few pieces of formal paperwork.

He strides up to her bed. Maya politely smiles up at him, her smile turning quickly into a GRIMACE as she attempts to sit upright.

DOCTOR

Hey, it's okay. I'm just here to ask you a few questions, clear up some

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
things in our system. Do you think
you're up for that?

Maya lays back down, eyeing the documents on the doctor's clipboard.

MAYA
(quietly)
Yeah, sure.

DOCTOR
Okay. Let's get started. First, we had
to get some bloodwork done, just to
make sure we could safely give you
various medications. Unfortunately,
your Blood Alcohol Concentration was
above the legal level necessary to
drive.

Maya freezes. It is clear that she forgot all about this
aspect of the car accident.

MAYA
...Okay.

DOCTOR
(sternly)
We'll have an officer stop by at some
point during your stay here to issue a
DUI.
(softer, more paternal)
Fortunately, this is only your first
offense, and your friend is in a
relatively stable condition, so it'll
likely only result in a fine, maybe a
stern talking-to.

Maya SIGHS, relieved on both accounts.

MAYA
So...Sasha's gonna be okay?

DOCTOR
(rehearsed)
We can't say for sure she'll make a
full recovery as she is still residing
in intensive care, but as of right
now, she'll live. I'm sorry, but
that's all I can say about her
condition.

MAYA
(teary-eyed)
That's okay.

The doctor pulls a pen out of his pocket, CLICKS it open, and scratches a few notes onto the topmost piece of paper clipped to his clipboard.

He flips to the second page, scanning its contents quickly before addressing Maya again.

DOCTOR
(formally)
Alright. Secondly, your records indicate that you would like no visitors for the duration of your stay here. Does this sound right to you?

MAYA
Yes, sir.

DOCTOR
Okay. Our staff has been notified that someone named Kathryn Francis would like to come see you.

Maya looks up at him in surprise. He nods, gesturing out of Maya's window, where down a long hallway, we can see Kathryn sitting impatiently in the waiting room.

She anxiously glances into Maya's room, and they make eye contact. Maya quickly looks away.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
We have her listed as a parental guardian. Would you like her to be able to come visit you throughout your remaining stay here?

Maya hesitates, unsure of how to respond. She risks a quick glance out of her window again. Her mom looks hopeful, standing up from a beaten-up old couch.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
(gently)
You can always change your mind, if need be.

MAYA
(quietly)
Right, yeah. I don't...I don't know if
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

I'm ready to have any visitors just yet.

DOCTOR

That's okay. It looks like your insurance is up-to-date as well, so there will be no need to update any of your records just yet.

Beat.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

If you would like us to update this information, just let us know, alright?

MAYA

Yes, sir. Thank you.

The doctor nods, then quietly steps out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back in Kathryn's perspective, we see the doctor leaving Maya's room. She stands up from the couch hopefully, watching anxiously as the doctor talks to a new lady working at the intake desk.

The desk staff member listens for a while, then nods, turning back to the work on her computer. The doctor looks up, scanning the waiting room, then walks away from the desk.

Kathryn's brow furrows, and the front desk worker looks up from her computer, motioning for Kathryn to come see her at the desk.

Kathryn walks over to the desk, her face falling.

FRONT DESK STAFF

Kathryn Francis, correct?

KATHRYN

(voice shaking)

Yes.

FRONT DESK STAFF

We're sorry, but Maya still doesn't want to see any visitors yet.

KATHRYN
Oh...okay, I see.

Beat.

A look of sympathy crosses the staff member's face.

FRONT DESK STAFF
Look, we can't legally give you any more information about the specifics of her condition. But, there's a hotel nearby that you are absolutely welcome to stay at. We'll let her know, and she can get in touch with you when she's ready.

Beat. Kathryn blinks back tears.

FRONT DESK STAFF (CONT'D)
(softly)
I can give you their address if you'd like?

KATHRYN
(sniffling)
Yes, that would be wonderful, thank you.

The front desk staff member gives Kathryn a small smile, then tears a sheet of paper from a small notepad under her computer.

She quickly types into her computer, then SCRATCHES an address onto the small sheet of paper. She reaches over the desk, handing it to Kathryn.

FRONT DESK STAFF
Here you are. You...you take care, okay?

KATHRYN
Yeah...yeah, of course. Thank you so much for your help.

Kathryn smiles sadly at the nurse, then walks slowly towards the hospital elevator, taking great care to avoid looking into Maya's room again.

INT. MAYA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Some time has clearly passed, as Maya is sitting up in bed,

wearing a much smaller bandage on her head. She is reading a book in silence, fidgeting with a tag on her blanket.

She looks up as a nurse enters her room.

MAYA

Hey.

NURSE

Hi, Maya. How're you feeling this morning?

Maya shrugs, folding the corner of her current page and closing the book.

MAYA

Fine. How's Sasha?

The nurse hesitates, speaking slowly.

NURSE

She's stable, right now. We've taken her off of all anesthetics, so she should be waking up soon...

Maya nods, biting her lip.

MAYA

But?

The nurse sighs, glancing at Maya with sympathy.

NURSE

We won't know the extent of her injuries until she begins her recovery and we can run more tests.

MAYA

Okay.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Thank you for keeping me updated. Can you let me know as soon as she wakes up?

NURSE

Of course, sweetheart. Though we might have to give you a call.

MAYA

You don't think she'll be awake before
I leave?

The nurse shakes her head, resting a hand on the side of
Maya's hospital bed.

NURSE

No, it's not likely. We...had her on
some pretty strong medications, and
all of them made her pretty sleepy.
It'll take her a while to recover.

Beat.

NURSE (CONT'D)

(clearing her throat)

You are cleared for discharge
tomorrow, after your meeting with
Officer Alvarez, right?

Maya lowers her head, shame and guilt hitting her all at
once. She takes a deep breath, composing herself before
responding.

MAYA

Right. Yeah.

NURSE

Okay. Don't stress too much about the
meeting; he's a very nice officer,
we've worked with him in the past.

MAYA

Thanks. That...that makes me feel a
little better, I guess.

The nurse smiles, hoping it would.

NURSE

(maternal)

That's good. You stay out of trouble,
from now on, hun.

Maya LAUGHS quietly, and the nurse turns away, striding out
of the door and closing it behind her.

INT. SASHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We cut to the interior of another hospital room, very similar
to Maya's in layout, populated with a single bed, a time-

worn, sunken armchair, and sun-bleached beige curtains.

The air in this room is sterile and still and the blinds are closed, hindering any of the bright afternoon light from filtering into the room.

An older woman, ANGELA(49), sleeps curled up on the small armchair; she looks deeply uncomfortable, the arm of the chair digging into her back, her worry lines creased even in her sleep.

Her chair faces the hospital bed where Sasha lays still, her skin in stark contrast with the thin, white sheets. Bulky machines surrounding the bed flash and BEEP, and her face is all but obscured by tubes helping her breathe.

We see that her chest is heavily bandaged, gauze peeking out from the top of her hospital gown.

An older woman, ANGELA(49), sleeps through the noise, curled up on the small armchair. She looks deeply uncomfortable, the arm of the chair digging into her back, her worry lines creased even in her sleep.

A rickety table has been pulled in front of the chair; Angela's laptop is propped up on top of it, but has long since shut off, the screen open but darkened.

All around the laptop, the table is piled with sheets of paper, and we can see stacks of resumes and job applications mingled amongst freshly delivered medical BILLS.

The door opens slowly, a shaft of fluorescent light cutting through the muted darkness of the room. Sasha's brother, JADEN (12), slips quietly into the room.

He balances a tray of hospital food with one hand, shutting the door behind him with the other.

JADEN
(whispering)
Mom?

The woman does not wake.

Beat.

Jaden crosses the room, setting the tray on the corner of the table. He is careful not to disturb any of the papers that lie there.

Gently shaking his mother's arm, he tries to wake her again.

JADEN (CONT'D)
(a little louder)
Mom.

Angela starts, quickly sitting up.

ANGELA
Yes, baby?

JADEN
Got your food.

As Angela rubs the sleep out of her eyes, Jaden's eyes flit to the stacks of paper littering the table, lingering on the hefty number clearly visible on Sasha's medical bills.

Yawning, Angela quickly shoves the envelopes under her laptop, shutting it in the same motion.

ANGELA
Thank you, sweetie.

Jaden nods, sitting next to his mother's chair on the cold, tiled floor. Pulling his knees up to his chest, he digs his phone out of his pocket and begins to scroll absentmindedly, careful not to look at Sasha.

Silence falls over the room again as Angela picks at her food. She sneaks subtle glances at her son, her eyes murky with sadness.

She too takes her phone out of her purse, sending a quick text. She receives a reply almost instantly, and she breathes a sigh of relief.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Don't you worry about your sister,
honey. The doctors are gonna patch her
up, okay?

Jaden nods, staring intently at his phone.

Beat.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
I just texted Christie, Connor's mom.

She waits for Jaden to respond, but his brow only furrows in confusion.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

She said you can stay at his place for a little bit, if you'd like. This room isn't exactly built for three.

Jaden looks up, a stampede of different emotions crossing his face; first happiness, then guilt, then sadness.

JADEN

But, what about you? And Sasha? I can't just leave.

ANGELA

(with love)

Oh, that's very sweet. But I'll be here with her.

Beat.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(gently)

I want you to be happy, and it does no good for both of us to be miserable here, okay? I'd feel much better knowing you were with your friends.

Jaden pauses, thinking. He suddenly stands up, giving his mom a quick HUG. She hardly has time to wrap her arms around him before he pulls away.

JADEN

(sniffling)

Thanks mom.

Beat.

JADEN (CONT'D)

If anything happens...

ANGELA

I'll call you right away. Now, get your stuff into your backpack, she'll be here in a little bit!

Jaden smiles, not-so-secretly incredibly relieved to be leaving the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - LATER

Jaden's backpack is slung around his shoulders, packed full with clothes. Both him and Angela stand in the hospital's

bustling lobby.

A tall woman dressed in a crisp pencil skirt and a light blouse enters the hospital through the revolving door, her purse swinging from her elbow and her heels CLICKING on the tiled floor.

She walks briskly toward Angela, then gives her a tight hug.

CHRISTIE
(sympathetic)
Oh, Angela. How is she?

Angela offers a small smile, trying not to sound as hopeless as she feels

ANGELA
She's...she'll be okay. They said they
won't really know until she wakes
up...

Christie SIGHS, placing her hand on her chest.

CHRISTIE
I'm so sorry. If anything happened to
my baby-

ANGELA
Yeah. Thank you for looking after
Jaden.

CHRISTIE
Oh, it's absolutely no problem at all.

Christie turns to Jaden.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
We'll have fun, won't we? Connor just
got a new PS5 too.

JADEN
(smiling)
Really?

CHRISTIE
Really.

Beat.

Christie smiles gently.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

You remember what my car looks like,
yes?

Jaden nods.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

Good. How about you take your bag to
the car while I catch up with your mom
for a second!

Jaden gives his mom another quick hug, then walks out of the hospital doors into the nearby parking lot. Angela follows his progress, and we see Jaden greet Connor in the backseat of a pristine, white SUV.

Connor slaps Jaden's shoulder, and Jaden laughs. He talks excitedly, the fear and sadness that had clouded his eyes since he had stepped into the hospital dissipating as they talk.

Her attention is pulled away from Jaden when Christie rests a comforting hand on her arm.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

I'm here for you, Angela. I know...I
know I've already offered, but if you
need help with those medical bills,
I'm sure we can work something out. I
know they're not cheap.

Angela smiles, touched.

ANGELA

Thank you, Christie. I think I can
manage, but that is very good of you.

CHRISTIE

Alright. You'll keep me updated?

ANGELA

Of course.

They wave goodbye, and Angela anxiously makes her way up the elevator and down a long hallway back to Sasha's room. Nothing has changed.

She sits back in her chair, her eyes bruised with exhaustion. She surveys her stack of papers one last time before SIGHING and falling back into a restless slumber.

EXT. SASHA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

START FLASHBACK

On a bright, Spring day, a rusty, rattling car pulls up next to a small, one-story home. An 18 year old Sasha steps quickly out of the car, a smile creeping onto her face as she reads something on her phone.

She shuts the door, locking her car. Still reading from her screen, she makes her way to the front door. She gasps in delight, struggling to fit the key into the lock.

Giddy with excitement, she manages to unlock the door, and then rushes inside.

INT. SASHA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CONTINUOUS

In her haste, the door slams shut behind her. She doesn't notice, turning quickly towards the kitchen

SASHA
(shouting)
Mom! Mom!

She runs into the cramped kitchen, but nobody is there. Then, we hear Angela from the other end of the house.

ANGELA
(shouting back)
In my bedroom!

Sasha laughs, running to her mother's room and flinging the closed door wide open. Her room is cluttered, with clean clothes piled on the bed.

She sits at her desk, her computer open and her glasses resting on her nose.

We catch a glimpse of a family portrait sitting on the corner of her desk: Angela sitting with a much younger Sasha and Jaden, her arms twined around their shoulders.

Sasha's excitement is infectious, and Angela laughs.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
What is it sweetheart?

SASHA
Guess what!

Angela removes her glasses, resting them instead on the top of her head.

ANGELA

What?

Sasha bounds across the room, showing her mom an email pulled up on her phone.

SASHA

I heard back from VSU, and-

Angela gasps, cutting Sasha off.

ANGELA

(shouting again)

YOU GOT IN!

SASHA

(laughing)

I did, I got in! And guess what else!

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I got the scholarship too!

Angela gasps and stands up, pulling Sasha into a fierce hug. Sasha returns the gesture enthusiastically, resting her chin on her mother's shoulder.

Angela pulls away, resting her hands on Sasha's shoulders. She begins to tear up; even though she's trying not to show it, Sasha notices.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(empathetically)

Oh, mom. Please don't cry...

ANGELA

(sniffling)

I'm not, I'm not. I'm just so damn proud of you, honey.

SASHA

Thanks, mom.

Beat. Angela's eyes grow misty.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'm not leaving for another couple of
(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)
months, and I'll visit home so often
you won't even know I'm gone. Plus, I
already have a job lined up there, so
I'll still be able to help you-

Angela flaps her hand.

ANGELA
I know, baby. I just know I'm gonna
miss you.

SASHA
I know.

Sasha smiles. Suddenly, an alarm begins to ring from her
phone. She startles, clearing the notification and checking
the time.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Sorry mom, gotta get ready for work. I
just couldn't wait to tell you the
good news!

She leans forward and gives her mom another quick hug.

ANGELA
Bye-bye. Have a good shift!

Sasha smiles and leaves the room, shutting the door behind
her.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SASHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Night has fallen and Sasha's room is pitch-black, save for
blinking red and green and blue lights on the various
machines surrounding her hospital bed.

Angela is still sleeping on the chair, curled up in the same
uncomfortable position. The lights illuminate her tired face,
carving into the deep bags under her eyes, but she pays them
no mind.

Suddenly, one such light begins blinking rapidly, growing
brighter and brighter. The machine the light is attached to
begins to emit a high-pitched SCREECH, and the noise startles
Angela awake.

She blinks, her eyes adjusting to the darkness of the room.

Processing where the noise is coming from, Angela rushes to Sasha's bedside, panicking.

ANGELA
(whimpering)
Oh my god, oh my god!

She twists to stare at the beeping machines, worry growing on her face. Sasha grimaces, a pained groan escaping her lips. Angela turns back towards her, and she fumbles for the large red button on the side of the bed.

She presses it quickly, watching in growing hopelessness as Sashas heart rate plummets, the BEEPING of the heart rate monitor falling slower and slower.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
No! No no no no no no!

Angela dashes out of the room, tugging the door open so hard that it RICOCHETS off of the wall behind it.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
(yelling)
NURSE! NURSE!

A tall man in dark blue scrubs comes running down the hallway, followed by a woman busy pulling a large white mask over her mouth and nose.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
In here, quick! My daughter-

MAN
(calmly)
Yes ma'am, we got the call. Please wait out here, okay, your daughter's going to be getting a lot of visitors very shortly-

ANGELA
(angry)
What? No, I'm not fucking leaving!

The man brushes past her, as three other night-shift nurses walk briskly into Sasha's room. The woman in the mask turns to her, a sympathetic look in her eyes.

WOMAN
(gently)
I know this is challenging, ma'am, but
(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)
your daughter will be safest if you
wait out here for now, okay?

Beat.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
We'll let you know when you can come
back in, alright?

The nurse clasps Angela's shoulders, then rushes into the room, closing the door roughly behind her.

EXT. SASHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All Angela can do is stare into the room through its glass windows, watching as the nurses roughly and quickly remove all of the tubes and gadgets from her face.

She registers almost in slow motion that they are wheeling her bed towards the door.

One of the nurses PUSHES her out of the way, and they rush down the maze of hallways leading deeper into the center of the hospital.

A different nurse peels away from the group, and Angela turns toward her, desperate for answers.

NURSE
(panting)
She has to go in for emergency
surgery.

Angela can only nod, her hands pressed against her lips in terror. The nurse runs back to Sasha's side, and Angela stands frozen in the middle of the hallway until a quiet, dark STILLNESS settles once again over the hospital.

The only evidence of her daughter's departure is the empty space where her hospital bed had sat moments before.

INT. SASHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Angela treads numbly back into Sasha's room, then sinks back into her chair. She stares blankly ahead for several moments, until her fragility collapses into anguish

Her head falls into her hands as tears begin to stream down her face, hot and heavy.

ANGELA

(sobbing)

My baby...please not my baby...

We pull away from Angela as she sobs, the darkness and loneliness of the room engulfing her.

INT. SASHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Angela has not moved. She no longer cries, but her eyes are still swollen and red-rimmed, her eyelashes sticking together and her jaw clenched.

She stares blankly at the open wall in front of her, oblivious to the rain TAPPING at the window or the faint beams of morning sunlight peeking through cracks in the clouds.

She is pulled out of her reverie by the soft CLICK of the door opening.

Angela shoots up from the chair, walking briskly and hopefully toward the wrung-out nurse, the same woman who had comforted her many hours prior.

Angela hesitates, her inquiry stuck in her throat. She isn't sure she actually wants to know. She fears the worst.

WOMAN

(quietly)

Ms. Park, correct?

Angela clasps her hands together, hoping to find comfort in herself. She nods.

The nurse steps into the room, shutting the door behind her and pulling out a clipboard. She refers to its contents as she speaks to Angela.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Okay. The surgery went as smoothly as it could've, given the circumstances.

Angela swallows.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Doctor Johnson and his staff are wrapping everything up now, and she will be returning to this room to begin her recovery.

Angela presses her fingers against her mouth, overwhelmed with both relief and worry.

ANGELA

O-Oh, bless you, thank you. Thank you
for taking care of my baby.

The nurse nods, giving Angela a grateful, tired smile.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Truly, it means so much...but-but
could I ask you a question?

WOMAN

Of course, ma'am.

Angela takes a shaky breath, then begins talking rapidly, as if she's afraid she'll be asked to stop.

ANGELA

What the hell happened? I mean, it
seemed like-like yesterday, she seemed
okay, like she was going to wake up
soon? And I know you can't tell me
everything, but I just...how the fuck
could this happen?

Beat.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I'm-I'm sorry, I don't mean to be
crass, not to you.

WOMAN

(empathetically)

It's alright ma'am, I understand.
There's no need to apologize.

She lays a comforting hand on Angela's shoulder.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You are aware that in the accident,
the impact of both the vehicle and the
force of the airbag fractured one of
her ribs on her left side.

Angela nods.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Her left lung, in the process of
transporting her to this facility,
(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)
collapsed as a result of this
fracture. We had treated both of these
ailments, and a ventilator was
required to facilitate regular
breathing.

Angela nods again.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(slowly)
We knew the risk of using a
ventilator, as there is always a
chance that the recovering lung cannot
handle the inflow of air.

Beat.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Her's...her's could not, and the left
lung again collapsed.

Angela gasps.

ANGELA
What-what does that mean? Will she be
alright?

WOMAN
(wincing)
We...all we know is that between these
two occurrences, her blood oxygen
levels dropped below 90%, indicating
cerebral hypoxia.

ANGELA
Cerebral...what?

WOMAN
Cerebral hypoxia, when the brain does
not receive enough oxygen and the
cells begin to atrophy.

Angela runs a worried hand over her mouth.

ANGELA
So that's why you can't tell me if
she'll be okay?

Beat.

WOMAN

Yes...yes, that's right. Her lungs will recover, as will her ribs, but until she wakes up, we cannot tell you the true extent of her brain damage.

Angela swallows, tears pooling in her eyes.

ANGELA

Thank you, honey.

Beat. Angela's eyes WIDEN, a thought crossing her mind.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

That night...she said she was going out...with Maya...

The nurse looks at her silently, confusion flickering across her features. Angela looks up sharply.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Was...was Sasha intoxicated, when she arrived here?

NURSE

(carefully)

Yes, though we ensured that none of the medications we gave her negatively interfered with the depressive nature of alcohol, at least until her Blood Alcohol Concentration returned to zero.

Beat.

NURSE (CONT'D)

(hesitantly)

Why do you ask?

Angela's fists had begun to clench involuntarily, but she takes a deep breath, trying to relax.

ANGELA

And...there was another person brought here, from the same accident...

NURSE

Yes, ma'am...

ANGELA

(gritting her teeth)

The other one in the accident. Was she...had she been intoxicated that night too?

WOMAN

(wincing)

We legally cannot tell you any information we have learned about other patient's, I'm afraid.

Angela's eyes FLASH, like she knows the answer to that question.

ANGELA

(numb)

Okay...okay. Thank you for taking care of my daughter.

WOMAN

(professionally)

Of course. You are welcome to stay in here until she gets back.

ANGELA

Thank you.

WOMAN

You take care.

The nurse steps quietly back into the hallway, and Angela sinks back into the chair, seething with too much anger and hurt and fatigue to sleep.

INT. MAYA'S HOSPITAL ROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maya stops in front of her hospital room door, talking quietly with a police officer, a name tag reading "OFFICER ALVAREZ" displayed proudly on the chest pocket of his deep blue uniform.

Maya's head is hung low in shame and guilt.

MAYA

I'm really sorry, sir. It'll never happen again, I promise.

OFFICER ALVAREZ

I know you are, and I know you won't. You are incredibly lucky, given the
(MORE)

OFFICER ALVAREZ (CONT'D)
circumstances. You'll have your
license revoked for the next six
months, and you'll have to pay a small
fine. But seeing as this is only your
first offense, we have no other
consequences for you to face.

MAYA
(quietly)
I feel like it should be a lot worse
than that.

Officer Alvarez shrugs, nodding his head in agreement.

OFFICER ALVAREZ
Perhaps. Hopefully this teaches you to
refrain from driving under the
influence again?

MAYA
(nodding)
Absolutely, sir.

OFFICER ALVAREZ
Good. I'll be on my way, then.

Beat.

OFFICER ALVAREZ (CONT'D)
I hope your friend recovers okay.

MAYA
Yeah, me too.

The Officer gives her a small smile that she returns. The
Officer turns towards the elevator, and Maya turns to let
herself back into her hospital room one last time.

INT. MAYA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rain PATTERS against the windows as Maya packs up her meager
belongings, gingerly lifting her backpack from the floor onto
her freshly-made bed and zipping it shut.

She is no longer wearing a hospital gown, but an extra pair
of clothes she had stashed in her car. They are slightly
WRINKLED, and her socks do not match.

She takes a deep breath, slowly slinging the backpack over
her shoulder. The large bandage wrapped around her head has

been replaced by a much smaller beige one, though it still covers much over her forehead.

She is clearly still in some pain; she moves smoothly, careful not to turn her head too fast, and her shoulders tense as she steps up to the intake desk, the lack of silence RINGING in her ears.

INT. HOSPITAL INTAKE DESK - CONTINUOUS

FRONT DESK STAFF
(politely)
Hello, dear. How can I help you?

MAYA
Hi. I'd like to check out, please.

FRONT DESK STAFF
Last name?

MAYA
Francis.

The receptionist spends a few seconds tapping on her keyboard, her fingers flashing.

FRONT DESK STAFF
Alright, looks like you're all set.

She reaches into her desk drawer, pulling out a pair of scissors, motioning for Maya's hand. She lifts her arm, and the receptionist cuts the HOSPITAL BAND off her wrist.

MAYA
Thank you.

Beat. Maya chews her lip nervously.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Do you know how my friend is doing?
Her name's Sasha Park, she was brought
here the same day as me.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(quickly)
I know they said they would call once
she wakes up, but I was wondering if
you...uh...had any updates before I
leave?

FRONT DESK STAFF

(winces)

Ah, yes. Her guardian asked that we refrain from talking to y- talking to unauthorized personnel about her condition. I am very sorry.

MAYA

Oh...that's-that's okay. Thank you.

The receptionist nods, and Maya shuffles away from the desk, worry growing in her eyes. She walks down the hallway, moving almost on autopilot to the elevator and pressing the down button.

While she waits, a map of the building catches her eye, the words "Intensive Care Unit - Floor 8" jumping out at her. The elevator dings, startling her out of her reverie. A man pushes past her in a hurry

MAYA (CONT'D)

(mumbling)

Sorry.

She steps inside and reaches out to the buttons, but instead of pressing the button that would take her to the lobby, she presses the button for floor 8.

Worry nags at her, and her resolve grows. If they won't tell her what's wrong, she'll check on Sasha herself. She just has to find her first.

INT. FLOOR 8 - CONTINUOUS

Maya steps out of the elevator into a long hallway. This floor is much quieter than hers, save for the PATTERNING of the rain not only on the windows, but on the roof.

She turns left, peeking covertly into rooms as she walks by. Turning another corner, she passes a doctor, quickly covering her bandage with her hair.

The nurse doesn't give her a second glance. She is grateful she is no longer wearing her hospital band.

Turning another corner, Maya stops, glancing into the room at the end of the hallway. Its blinds are shut, but she recognizes the woman sitting next to the hospital bed as Sasha's mom. They've met only in passing, when Sasha would leave to visit home.

Maya begins to walk up to the room, almost dizzy with relief. As she walks closer to the room, she has a much better view of the room, including Sasha's bed.

Maya gasps, her eyes finding Sasha. Her face is flushed and her breathing is labored, and Maya's heart TWISTS.

MAYA
(tearing up)
Oh, no...Sasha...

As if Angela had heard, she glances up from the bed. They lock eyes, and Angela's face hardens in barely repressed anger. She lets go of Sasha's limp hand, standing up swiftly and striding towards the door.

Maya instinctively takes a few steps back from the door, her heart jumping into her throat. Angela steps out of the room, all but SLAMMING the door behind her.

ANGELA
(forceful)
You. I told them to keep you away from here.

Angela crosses her arms, standing protectively in front of Sasha's hospital room door.

Maya swallows, her heartbeat PULSING in her head and her breathing shallow.

MAYA
(stammering)
I know, I know. I just...is she okay?
She looks...

Maya glances over at Sasha again, unwilling to finish her thought out loud. Angela narrows her eyes and purses her lips, anger flickering over her features.

ANGELA
(cold)
She's...she'll be fine. Now leave.

Beat.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Please.

Angela begins to turn away from Maya, reaching for the handle of the door. Maya steps forward, lightly taking hold of

Angela's wrist.

MAYA
(voice shaking)
Ms. Park, please-

Angela whirls around, coming face-to-face with Maya and pulling her wrist sharply out of Maya's grasp. Maya again instinctively takes a step back from her.

ANGELA
Let go of me.

MAYA
I just want to see her.

ANGELA
(voice rising)
No. You have no right. You did this to her.

Maya blanches, the wind knocked out of her lungs.

MAYA
(frantic)
What? No...no, I didn't. No, it wasn't my fault. It wasn't-

ANGELA
(scoffing)
So you weren't drunk driving?

MAYA
Well, yeah...yeah I was, but that's not...that didn't do anything. The truck driver-

Angela cuts her off, all of her anger at Maya, at herself, at the truck driver, at the doctors finally boils over.

ANGELA
(screaming)
I don't want to hear your fucking excuses. She-
(voice breaks)
She trusted you, she stood by you while you - what - threw your life away? And this is how you repay her? She'll never fully recover from this, you know that? And it's your fucking fault.

Maya shakes her head, just as angry. She isn't strong enough to be angry at herself yet, though, so she deflects the blow, directing her anger and her guilt and her regret towards Angela.

Tears begin to pool in her eyes, but she blinks them away, her face flushed RED.

MAYA

(yelling)

It is NOT my fault. Did you ever think about why we got so fucked up that night in the first place? You made her feel like it would be the end of the world if she stopped spending her life supporting you. She never thought she was good enough, until she met me. I saved her. This is on you, not me. Now get the fuck out of the way.

Angela stands frozen, and both women are out of breath, cheeks red and fists clenched.

Angela moves first, the fight leaving her eyes.

ANGELA

No. Take another step and I'm calling security.

Maya is frozen, in anger and in regret. She doesn't respond, and Angela steps back into Sasha's hospital room, locking the door behind her and closing the blinds.

Maya still has not moved, though a tear has begun to trace a path down her cheek. She does not seem to notice, her eyes glazed over.

She seems to realize what she said, and her hands begin to shake.

MAYA

(whimpering)

Ms.-Ms. Park...I'm so sorry..

SNIFFLING, she glances around the hallway, surprised that their shouting didn't attract more attention.

She furiously wipes her tears, pulling all of her emotions off her face and turning towards the elevator. She feels like she's suffocating, she has to get out, get as far away from here as possible.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Maya stumbles into her empty apartment. She closes the door behind her, and the loss of the shaft of light from the hallway plunges the apartment into DARKNESS.

The darkness engulfs her and she crumbles, slumping roughly against the wall. She no longer has the energy to run from her emotions, and with no pushback, they overtake her.

Tears stream from her eyes in heavy waves, her whole body shaking with the force of her sobs. She draws in sharp GASPS of air, but she is drowning, unable to get enough air.

She wonders if this is how Sasha is feeling too.

The thought is too much, and suddenly she needs everything -- her thoughts, her emotions -- to just stop. She pulls herself up, stumbling towards her room.

She throws open the door, crossing her room and reaching under her bed. Her fingers close around the neck of a glass bottle.

She doesn't even look at its label before uncapping it and taking several deep gulps directly from the bottle. It burns, and she begins COUGHING, but she doesn't stop.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maya sits silently on the floor of her bedroom, her back resting against the side of her bed. She's still clutching the now noticeably empty bottle.

Her eyes are open, but glazed and unseeing. Her breaths are shallow and uneven and her cheeks are on fire. She's just happy that she's stopped crying.

As if in a dream, she reaches for her phone, tapping the screen. Light pours out from it in hot, scalding waves, and she covers her eyes with her hands, flinching.

The screen darkens, and she tries again, battling the harsh, white spotlight, fighting to open her phone. She desperately needs to talk to someone who will make her feel better.

Forgetting herself, she clicks on her messages with Sasha, her eyes burning as she taps the call button. She clumsily holds the phone up to her ear.

The phone rings, seemingly for hours. Then it falls silent.

Maya does not notice, assuming Sasha has answered her.

MAYA
(slurring)
Finally, Sasha I...I didn't hurt you,
okay, I s-swear I didn't, I would
never.

Silence.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(frantic)
I'll do a-anything, just please tell
me y-you're okay...

Silence.

MAYA (CONT'D)
No...please no, you h-have to be okay,
you have to.

Silence.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(crying)
I can't believe I did this to y-you...

From far away, Maya hears a small sound emanating from the phone like crackling STATIC. As if carried by the wind, she hears Sasha's voice, telling her everything's gonna be okay.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(gasping)
Sasha?

Time warps. She hears muffled footsteps, the sound reaching her as if she is underwater. Her vision blackens until she is wrapped in a deep, heavy sleep.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

Maya groans, disoriented. Her head is pounding, her mouth is dry, and her eyes are sore and swollen from crying. She squeezes them shut against the bright morning light filtering in through her blinds.

Eyes still closed, she furrows her brow. She doesn't remember climbing in bed. In *her* bed, not a hospital bed. She feels her soft, silk pillow against her cheek, and someone clasping her hand.

She opens her eyes slowly, squinting. She hears a RUSTLE of movement as someone stands and places their hand consolingly on Maya's cheek.

KATHRYN

(softly)

Oh, Maya. What happened?

Maya looks up and their eyes meet. All of the memories from the day before resurface, and Maya's eyes begin to water. She doesn't even try to stop them.

MAYA

(voice breaking)

Mom?

Kathryn sniffles, lifting Maya gently into a tight hug, cradling her head with her hand. Maya buries her head in her mom's shoulder.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(muffled)

Mom...what are you doing here?

KATHRYN

(crying)

Honey, I...I got a call from you last night. You...you didn't say anything, though, and you hung up so fast...I just thought something happened, so I came over, and-

(voice breaks)

and I found you here...

Kathryn gestures to the floor of Maya's room.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

What's wrong, baby? Are you hurt? Do we need to go back to the hospital?

Maya stays silent, tightly pursing her lips as tears again begin to pool into her eyes and spill onto her cheeks.

Kathryn attempts to pull away, but Maya tightens her hug and buries her head into her mom's shoulder.

MAYA

(sobbing)

I-I fucked up, mom...

KATHRYN

Oh, honey...just tell me what happened.

Beat.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Please.

MAYA

(quietly)

Okay...please don't let me go.

KATHRYN

I won't, sweetie.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - LATER

Maya sits silently, still cradled in her mother's arms. Her cheeks are dry, her eyes glazed over with painful, numbing memories.

Kathryn is dazed, her hand hovering over her mouth. She holds Maya tightly, afraid to let her go.

Maya finishes her recollection of everything she has gone through in the past couple of days.

MAYA

I'm really sorry, mom. I should've let you come see me. I just...

Beat. Her voice begins to shake.

KATHRYN

You just what?

MAYA

(whispering)

I just knew you'd be disappointed in me. And you...you should be. How I've treated you for all these years...you were just trying to help, just trying to stop me-trying to stop me from making the same mistakes dad did. And Sasha...

Maya takes a shaky breath. Kathryn stays silent, afraid Maya will stop talking if she interrupts.

MAYA (CONT'D)
And Sasha, when she...if she wakes up,
she won't be the same. And that's...

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
That's my fault.

Maya stops, this admission weighing heavily on her heart.
Kathryn looks surprised, but masks it as Maya eyes lift to
rest on her own.

Maya mistakes this silence for anger, for disappointment, for
regret.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(mumbling)
You don't have to stay.

This snaps Kathryn out of her reverie.

KATHRYN
(gasps)
What? Oh, honey. I had hoped something
like this would never have happened,
of course. But the disappointment I do
have...it's not for you, it's for me.

Maya looks up, taken aback.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
I...I should have done more, to keep
you from...

Kathryn gestures with her hand at Maya's current state.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
All this.

Beat.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
When...when your dad and I finally
split, I promised myself I wouldn't
let you end up like him. I was so
blinded by his charm, his confidence,
that I didn't realize he had blinded
you too. Until he was gone.

Kathryn clears her throat, and Maya looks at her with wide

eyes.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
And then Charlie came along...
(wincing)
and all I could see was your father.
So I forced you apart. I don't regret
that, but I do regret how it tore you
away from me too.

Beat.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
(whispering)
So...uhm...I am very sorry for pushing
you deeper into the dark instead of
helping you toward the light.

They both fall silent for a moment. Maya nervously plucks at
her bedsheet, talking in a rush.

MAYA
No, mom. You did everything you could
and I-I'm so sorry. I'm sorry that I
made you feel like you weren't helping
me enough, and I'm sorry for making
you feel terrible every time you
tried.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
I just wish I had listened to you. You
were right, about everything. I...I
really would understand if you didn't
want to help me anymore.

KATHRYN
You're my daughter. My love for you is
not conditional. You will have
consequences for everything that's
happened, but not from me. We'll get
through this together, okay?

Maya sniffles, but does not reply.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
(softly)
Okay?

MAYA

Okay.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I love you, mom.

KATHRYN

I love you too, sweetheart.
Everything's gonna be alright.

Maya tips forward into Kathryn's open arms.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be alright.

INT. SASHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Angela looks up from Sasha's bed as Jaden and Christie enter the room. Christie gasps softly at Sasha's condition.

Fresh bandages coat her chest, and though she is no longer on the ventilator, various tubes cover her face, helping her breathe.

Sasha is awake, though her eyes are hooded and a deep exhaustion threads the lines of her face. She looks slightly aloof, like she has not processed the arrival of new people.

Jaden walks cautiously forward, still careful not to look at Sasha, though her condition has improved since he has been there. Christie hangs back by the door.

ANGELA

(softly)

Hi, baby. Come here, it's okay.

Jaden stops by the bed, sinking into the chair next to his mother. He casts a small smile to Sasha.

JADEN

(quietly)

Hey.

Sasha's eyes find his, and she returns the smile, but does not speak. Jaden's brow furrows, and he turns toward his mom, worried.

JADEN (CONT'D)

Mom? What's wrong with her?

Angela sighs, turning toward Jaden and placing a consoling hand on his shoulder.

ANGELA

The doctor's don't know for sure, but they think...they think that during the accident, her brain didn't get enough oxygen.

Jaden gasps, understanding how serious that assessment is.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I know, honey, I know. One side effect, based on where the damage occurred, is that she may have to...relearn how to speak.

(her voice shakes)

But she'll get through this. I know she will.

Jaden sniffles, and his mom pulls him into a tight hug. Sasha's eyes drift toward them, but she still remains silent.

Jaden pulls away, the sadness on his face being quickly replaced by anger. He clenches his fists.

JADEN

(seething)

Whoever did this to her, they'll pay.

Angela turns toward Jaden, lifting his chin and forcing him to look into her eyes.

ANGELA

(empathetically)

No, son. No. I...I am angry at her too, even before she tried to visit Sasha-

JADEN

(reeling)

What?!

ANGELA

It's okay. She...she was angry, just as I was.

JADEN

Why?

(pointing to Sasha)

She did this to her. This is all her

(MORE)

JADEN (CONT'D)
fault, you said so!

Angela sighs, releasing Jaden's arm to hold Sasha's hand.

ANGELA
Yeah, I did. But when she visited, she
seemed just as heartbroken as I did.

Beat.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
When she first woke up, I tried to ask
Sasha if she was angry.

Jaden looks over at Sasha, who has not taken her eyes off them throughout the length of their entire conversation. Her eyes flit to her mother, softening.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
(sadly)
She couldn't talk, but she shook her
head, just a little bit.

Angela squeezes Sasha's hand.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
If she can find it in her heart to
forgive Maya, then we have to try as
well.

Jaden thinks for a moment, staring at Sasha. He nods, though his jaw is still clenched shut.

JADEN
Fine. I'll try.

Christie, still watching from the door, wipes a tear from her cheek. She rushes over to Angela, pulling both her and Jaden into a tight hug.

CHRISTIE
(tearful)
Oh, you guys! You are just so strong,
stronger than I could be.
(pulling away)
If you need any help at all, you just
ask me, okay.

Angela nods, thinking.

ANGELA

Actually, could you watch Jaden again,
just for one more day?

CHRISTIE

Oh, of course.

JADEN

(surprised)

Mom, what? Why?

ANGELA

I...I received a message, not too long
ago, from Maya's mom. She said she
wanted to talk.

Jaden groans. Sasha's eyes again flit to Angela in interest,
in hope, and Angela meets them.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I should at least try. For Sasha, I
can try. I just...

(turning to Jaden)

I don't want you to be here, I case
things...get out of hand again. Can
you stay with Christie for me, please?

Jaden groans again, but folds quickly under his mother's
stare.

JADEN

Fine, yes, whatever.

Angela gives him a small smile. Reaching into her jacket
pocket for her phone.

CHRISTIE

Okay, good. Let's get going, then.

Christie again pulls Angela into a quick hug, then leads
Jaden out of the room, closing the door behind them.

Angela takes a deep breath, turning her phone on and TAPPING
on Kathryn's message. She carefully types her own, sending it
before she can change her mind.

ON ANGELA'S IPHONE SCREEN

The text message reads: "I believe you. We can talk tonight.
Bring Maya."

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Maya sits with her mother at her kitchen counter, nursing a glass of water. Kathryn sits next to her, rubbing her back.

MAYA

Thanks for trying, mom. But after what I said...

(wincing)

I wouldn't blame her if she never wanted to see me again. Much less talk to me. Much less forgive me.

KATHRYN

I know, honey. But people can surprise you.

Maya shrugs her shoulders.

MAYA

I guess, I don't know. I don't remember much about her family...situation. But I know they actually needed her, more than I ever did.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(resigned)

And even if she does get better...she's not gonna be able to help them for a while. I took that from them, then blamed her mom for my mistakes, so...

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Yeah. I wouldn't be that shocked if they didn't reach out. That's all I'm saying.

Kathryn nods.

Then her phone LIGHTS up with a notification, and Kathryn and Maya lock eyes.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Is that...?

Kathryn nods, opening the notification and reading it quickly.

KATHRYN

Yes. Sasha's mom. She wants to talk with us.

MAYA

(aghast)

Us?

KATHRYN

(smiling)

Yes, honey, both of us.

MAYA

Oh.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Okay. Alright.

Kathryn's smile fades, and she grows serious.

KATHRYN

You sure you're up for it?

Maya turns towards her mother, nodding.

MAYA

(resolute)

I need to apologize for what I did,
what I said...so she knows none of it
is her fault.

Kathryn passes her a small smile, a mixture of sadness, pride, and love pouring from her eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - NEXT MORNING

Angela waits impatiently in the hospital's lobby, her leg bouncing and her eyes FLITTING to the large revolving doors at the front of the hospital.

She checks her phone, though the screen is still blank. She looks up from her phone with a sigh, and as she does, her eyes catch on Kathryn entering the hospital, Maya following closely behind her.

Angela swallows hard, her nerves beginning to show in the

shaking of her hands. She watches Kathryn search the small CROWD, landing on each individual person until-

They lock eyes. Angela purses her lips, as close to a smile as she is willing to give the pair. Kathryn nudges Maya's shoulder, and they cross the lobby toward Angela.

Angela nods at Kathryn, and Kathryn gives her a small smile. Maya hides almost meekly behind her mother, unable to meet Angela's gaze.

Awkwardness hangs in the air, heavy enough to be cut by a knife. Angela speaks first.

ANGELA

Let's find somewhere to sit.

Maya and Kathryn nod, Kathryn's eyes sweep the lobby, landing on a small cafe.

KATHRYN

(pointing)

How about there?

ANGELA

Sure.

Angela leads the way, Kathryn and Maya fall behind, and Kathryn covertly gives Maya's hand a comforting SQUEEZE.

She glances worriedly at Angela, turning her face away from Maya. She has hidden her nervousness well up to this point, but it's beginning to filter through.

Angela chooses a small table, meant only for two. Kathryn pulls up a chair for Maya, its metal legs SCRAPING against the tiled floor of the hospital.

They sit, and all eyes fall to Maya. She fidgets with the hem of her sweater, unsure of where to start.

Kathryn speaks first, attempting to soften the tension that is growing between them.

KATHRYN

Ms. Park, thank you...thank you for speaking with us.

Angela's unfriendly, sorrowful gaze falls onto Kathryn, softening only slightly.

ANGELA

It's for Sasha, so...

Maya jolts, taken aback. She is surprised enough that she forgets her worry and speaks directly to Angela.

MAYA

(hopeful)

Is...is she okay?

ANGELA

(cold)

She will be. Hopefully.

She looks expectantly to Maya, who swallows hard, forcing herself to meet Angela's eyes. Maya begins to speak, her voice THIN and fracturing with each word.

MAYA

Ms. Park, I...I am so, so sorry for everything, but especially for all the horrible things I said to you, before.

Angela waits, again. Maya's eyes, which had drifted downwards while she was speaking, finds Angela's eyes again.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Nothing, absolutely none of it, was your fault. It...

Maya lets out a shaky breath, her eyes welling with tears. But she continues.

MAYA (CONT'D)

It was all mine. The accident, I mean. I...I should've listened to her before we even got into that car. Should've listened to her while I was driving too, even though I never should've been. It, um...it was all my fault. I think...I think I knew that deep down, when I first woke up here and they told me-

(voice breaks)

they told me they didn't know if Sasha was gonna be okay. I just couldn't accept it, didn't want to accept it.

Maya falls silent, quickly swiping a tear from her cheek with the back of her hand. Angela's lips are pursed and her eyes are trained on her hands, which are resting in front of her

on the table.

Angela remains silent for a few moments, taking deep, SHAKY breaths. She begins to speak, keeping her eyes firmly away from Maya's.

ANGELA

(quietly)

Did Sasha ever tell you about her father?

Maya blinks, taken aback.

MAYA

No, um, not really. Just that he wasn't... wasn't around much.

ANGELA

(nodding)

Yes. And without him, Sasha had to help support us, especially when I was stuck between jobs.

Angela takes a deep breath, looking deeply into Maya's eyes.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Without her, I don't make enough to support us, much less start saving up to help my son pay for college. And I certainly can't pay off her medical bills, which wouldn't even be necessary without your negligence.

Beat. Maya is frozen, a deep BLUSH born of embarrassment pooling in her cheeks.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(sadly)

But you also weren't wrong...that burden should not have been hers to bear, and I can't blame you for recognizing how heavy it weighed on her.

Maya's jaw has slowly fallen open as Angela talks, but she snaps it shut quickly, instead covering her mouth with her hand in surprise. After a second, her brow furrows as she processes what Angela has just told her.

MAYA

No, no no no, please don't think that.
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

She...she loved that she could help you, and she knew you needed support for reasons that were, just, entirely out of your control. It's absolutely not your fault, and I...I don't think I'll ever be able to express just how sorry I am. I k-know there's nothing I can say or do to make things right, but...

Maya pauses, seemingly struck by an idea. She glances at her mom, who follows her line of thinking and gives her a slight nod and a small smile.

MAYA (CONT'D)

My mom and I, we can help how Sasha did, before...like with her medical bills, and with... with anything else you'd need...

Angela opens her mouth, prepared to argue, prepared to say that she doesn't need help, like she has a thousand times before.

ANGELA

But-

MAYA

No, please, I want to help. I...I obviously don't know exactly how you're feeling, but I can guess that you don't want to feel...like you owe someone, like you're tied to someone.

Maya's eyes flit to her mom. Angela nods, in spite of herself.

MAYA (CONT'D)

And I get that. I do. But...I don't want you to try to fix this by yourself, especially because I'm the one who broke everything in the first place. I...um...kinda selfishly wouldn't...wouldn't be able to live with myself, if you did. So please, please let me help.

Angela nods again slowly, thinking. She has kept her composure during the conversation thus far, but something about Maya's deep regret for her actions and her insistence

to help brings tears to Angela's eyes.

She chokes back a sob, briefly covering her face with her hands. Both Maya and Kathryn almost instinctively reach over to comfort her, but both hesitate, unsure if she would actually find their consolation comforting.

Sniffing, Angela dries her cheeks with the palms of her hands.

ANGELA

S-sorry, I...

Beat.

KATHRYN

(quietly)

It's okay.

Angela turns again to Maya.

ANGELA

(whispering)

I just...I won't ever be able to forgive you...at least not fully. And helping me like this won't change how I feel.

Maya FLINCHES, but she nods like she understands.

MAYA

You don't have to explain, I know. I don't deserve your forgiveness, but you deserve everything I can give you, everything that will help your family get through this. It's truly the least I can do.

Angela gives her a small, watery smile.

ANGELA

Okay...yeah, okay. You can help.

Maya SIGHS, relieved.

MAYA

Thank you, Ms. Park.

Kathryn smiles, covertly gripping Maya's hand under the table. Then the group falls again into an uneasy, tense silence, as none of them quite know what to do next.

Angela clears her throat, standing up from the table, still sniffing. Her metal chair SCRAPES along the tile as she stands.

ANGELA
(stuttering, nervous)
Would...would you like to come visit
her?

Maya clenches her jaw and nods almost instinctively, not trusting herself to speak. Kathryn catches Angela's eyes and gives her a deeply grateful smile.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Alright, um...you can just follow me,
then...

Maya and Kathryn stand quickly, gathering their belongings quickly, fearful that Angela might change her mind. She doesn't, and she leads them across the bustling lobby to the elevators.

INT. FLOOR 8 - CONTINUOUS

The group reaches Sasha's room. The door is shut tightly and the blinds are drawn, obstructing any view into the room from the hallway.

Angela slowly pushes open the door, Maya and Kathryn trailing into the room behind her. Maya swallows, her eyes finding Sasha's.

Kathryn freezes, laying a comforting hand on Maya's shoulder. Sasha's eyes, glazed over with fatigue, come to rest on Maya's face as she shuffles to Sasha's bedside.

Maya hesitantly reaches out to hold Sasha's hand, but stops halfway, glancing abashedly at Angela. Angela nods, coming to stand at the end of Sasha's bed and resting her hands on its scratchy, white sheets.

Maya gently lifts Sasha's hand, placing it carefully in hers. At Maya's touch, Sasha's eyes light up in recognition, and she SMILES, the laugh lines around her eyes deepening.

Maya smiles down at her, her eyes again growing misty. She sits next to Sasha's bed, keeping Sasha's hand firmly in hers.

MAYA
(quietly)
Oh, Sasha...I-I'm so s-sorry...

Sasha does not respond. Kathryn and Angela hang back, remaining silent. Maya continues, blinking rapidly falling TEARS out of her eyes.

MAYA (CONT'D)
For everything. You...you took care of me, for...for years. You found a way to help me when I couldn't, when I didn't want to, accept help from anyone else. And this...

Maya glances at the bandages covering Sasha's chest, the assortment of tubes and wires helping Sasha breathe.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(sniffling)
This is what I...what I did to you in return. I'm just so, so sorry. And I-I know there's nothing I can do to actually fix this, but I'm gonna try.

Sasha glances at her, her brow twitching in curiosity. The soft CLICKING of machines working behind her fills the brief silence.

MAYA (CONT'D)
We're gonna help your family...so you don't have to worry about them. They're gonna...they're gonna have enough to get by, and y-you can focus on getting better.

Sasha freezes, processing what Maya had said. A single tear falls from the corner of her eye, trailing down her temple and into her hair.

Maya takes a shaky breath.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Your...your mom said she spoke to me for you. I'm grateful she did. So thank you. Thank you for being there for me. I'm gonna be here for you as much as I can.

The room falls silent, save for Maya's SNIFFLES. Angela moves

quietly to Sasha's bedside, placing her hand on Sasha's cheek and wiping the tear from her eye with her knuckle.

Maya starts to stand up, sensing an end to the conversation. She lightly SQUEEZES Sasha's hand, rubbing the back of Sasha's hand with her thumb.

As she moves to let go of Sasha's hand, Sasha squeezes Maya's hand back. Maya lets out a quiet, watery laugh.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Good-bye, Sasha...I'll-I'll see you again soon, okay?

Angela nods toward the door.

ANGELA

(quietly)

You can find your way out of here, right?

Maya and Kathryn nod, and Maya slowly slips her hand out of Sasha's. Kathryn steps out of the room first, covertly drying her cheeks with her fingertips.

Maya follows, taking one last fleeting look at Sasha before they step out of the room, closing the door behind them with a soft CLICK.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - 6 MONTHS LATER

Maya sits in a pool of sunlight in her living room, the window cracked open, filling the room with the cold autumn BREEZE.

Red and orange and gold leaves tap at the living room window, blown off nearby trees. Maya doesn't look up, absorbed in her schoolwork.

Several notebooks worth of paper are spread out in front of her, and she is furiously typing away on her computer.

A BUZZER sounds from the apartment's call box, startling Maya and breaking her focus. But she smiles, standing up from her work and padding over to the call box, pressing the button labelled "Lobby".

Quickly, Maya gathers her papers, organizing them neatly in a light blue folder. As she closes her laptop and slips it into her backpack, she hears a knock at her door.

MAYA
(happily)
It's open!

The door swings open, and Kathryn steps into the apartment. Kathryn and Maya exchange a smile, then Maya opens her arms and pulls Kathryn into a big hug.

KATHRYN
Hi honey!

MAYA
Hi mom.

Kathryn glances around the apartment, covertly sneaking a glance into Maya's room. Her bed is made, her laundry is freshly folded, and the air smells crisp and clean.

KATHRYN
(prideful)
How are you? You ready to go?

Maya's smile falls slightly, but she nods.

MAYA
Yeah, I'm ready.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Thank you for driving me. My roommate needed my car to get to work today.

KATHRYN
No worries. I'm just happy I get to see you for a little while!

MAYA
(laughing)
Me too.

Maya slings her backpack around her shoulder, leading her mom out the door.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Okay, let's go.

INT. HOSPITAL INTAKE DESK - LATER

Kathryn and Maya walk together to the hospital's help desk, on a different floor where both Maya and Sasha's original

rooms were located.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2
Hi there!

MAYA
(politely)
Hello.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2
Oh wait, I think I recognize you. Are
you here looking for Ms. Sasha Park?

MAYA
(nodding)
Yes sir. I know sometimes the speech
therapy team wants visitors to sign in
before they go back.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2
That's correct, yes.

The front desk staff member pulls open one of the desk's
drawers, then extracts a clipboard from beneath a few old
manilla folders.

He rummages in a nearby pencil cup for a pen, then turns the
clipboard to face Maya. He taps the paper with the tip of the
pen.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2 (CONT'D)
Just sign your name right here for me,
please.

Maya quickly SCRIBBLES her name, handing the pen back to the
front desk staff member when she's done.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2 (CONT'D)
Alright, you're all good to go. Do you
need assistance with anything else
today?

MAYA
Yes, uhm...I just wanted to make sure
the payments for Sasha's appointments
were received? I just...I didn't get a
confirmation email, so I wanted to
make sure nothing went wrong.

Beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

And I wanted to fix it, if something did go wrong.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2

Yeah of course, I can check on that for you. If you'll just give me a minute to pull up her payment history...

MAYA

(nervously)

Yeah, of course. Take your time.

The staff member smiles, then begins CLICKING away on his computer, his eyes occasionally flitting between his two monitors.

FRONT DESK STAFF 2

(cheerful)

Alright, it looks like those payments did go through. I apologize for the confusion, we'll make sure to send you confirmation next time.

MAYA

That's okay. Thank you for checking!

FRONT DESK STAFF 2

You know your way around back there?

MAYA

Yes, thank you!

FRONT DESK STAFF 2

(smiling)

Perfect. You take care.

Maya turns and smiles at her mom, who gives her a shoulder a small squeeze and makes her way to the waiting room.

We see her pull a book out of her purse and crack it open contentedly.

Maya takes a deep breath, walking past the desk and through a set of doors labelled "Long-term Care and Recovery".

INT. SPEECH THERAPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maya reaches a door labelled "Speech Therapy", and she sees Sasha sitting with a nurse wearing dark blue scrubs and a

friendly smile.

Sasha looks at the nurse intently, mimicking the movement of the nurse's mouth as she speaks. She no longer needs any assistance to breath, and the bandages are completely removed from her chest.

Maya lets herself into the room, the sound of the door opening catching both the nurse's and Sasha's attention. Sasha SMILES, waving at Maya.

NURSE 2

Ms. Francis, you made it!

MAYA

Yeah! I'm sorry I'm late, my roommate had something come up at work so she had to take my car, and I had to wait for my mom to get here...it was kinda a whole thing.

NURSE 2

It's okay! Sasha's been very excited to see you all morning.

The nurse turns towards Sasha, addressing her.

NURSE 2 (CONT'D)

(happily)

Haven't you, hun?

Maya and the nurse fall silent as Sasha works through the nurse's question. She slowly begins to nod, consciously forming her mouth into the correct shapes.

SASHA

(slowly)

Yeah!

Maya grins.

MAYA

That's even better than last week, Sasha!

NURSE 2

Right?! She's made some tremendous progress.

Beat.

NURSE 2 (CONT'D)

She has been working on something
she'd like to tell you.

(turning to Sasha)

Would you like to try today?

Sasha glances at Maya, then nods. She forms each word with painstaking concentration and care. Maya waits patiently for Sasha to speak.

SASHA

Maya...

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I...I...forgive...you...

Maya GASPS, taken aback. She smiles at Sasha, then pulls her into a big hug.

Sasha does not react at first, but after a moment, she closes her arms tightly around Maya's waist, hugging her back.

MAYA

Oh, thank you Sasha. I-I knew you did
before, but...it's just so nice to
hear you say it.

FADE TO BLACK