

PREHEATING BATTER

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INT. KITCHEN - NOON

The oven is preheating to 350 degrees. Ingredients for cupcakes are laid upon the kitchen counter. A young college woman, SELENE, is mixing up batter in a bowl. Music blasts out of her wireless earbuds.

SELENE's phone rings. It shows her own phone number. She glances at the screen and furrows her brow. Using her elbow, she declines the call.

SELENE scoops the batter out of the mixing bowl and starts filling up paper cups in a cupcake tray.

SELENE's phone rings again with the same caller ID, this time the phone automatically answers the call after a handful of chimes.

SELENE freezes and bits of batter fall outside the paper cups.

INT. ALT SELENE'S KITCHEN, MIRRORED

ALT SELENE

Hello Selene, I know you're there.

INTERCUT between the KITCHENS

SELENE

Who are you? Why do you sound so familiar?

ALT

Because you're me and I am you.

SELENE

You're me? Wow. I thought I would have a better voice to listen to myself than this.

ALT

I-I know this is hard to explain. I'm you from another universe. But I need you to-

SELENE

Another universe? You must be joking. The multiverse only exists in fiction.

Both wait in silence for a reply.

SELENE / ALT

Purple. Hot cocoa. Croissant. AIYA! Santa is fake/real!

SELENE

Huh?

ALT

Shit. I feel bad for you.

ALT (CONT.)

The first time we learned to walk, we ended up running into the oven door and getting a permanent scar on our forehead. I know because all versions of us beyond that point experienced that moment and have the same scar. I bet you also hide it with bangs like me.

SELENE

Alright...so let's say you're another version of me. How did you even call me?!

Selene's oven starts beeping to signal it has finished preheating.

ALT

That's not what's important. I need you to listen to me right now. Do not bake cupcakes at 350 degrees today.

SELENE

Then I'll bump it up by five.

ALT

That won't do! The other Selenes I met tried changing the temp or adjusting the time, but that didn't prevent the same outcome. Just play it safe and not bake anything!

SELENE

Are you saying that I'm just another lab rat for you to test what will happen in a different scenario? What is even wrong with something as baking cupcakes anyways? It's not like the universe is going to implode.

Selene pokes at a batter-filled cup in the tray.

SELENE (CONT.)

Nothing in this recipe can even kill someone! If anything, I'll get diabetes after eating a dozen of these.

ALT

Please Selene, I'm just trying to protect you. We're at the same point in our timeline. I'm here because one of us from the future told me everything I have told you.

SELENE

And what happened to that version of SELENE?

ALT

She actually has diabetes now. Not from the cupcakes but because of what happened between her and...MAY.

SELENE

(scathing remark)

May is my girlfriend!

ALT

Girlfriend? In my world we are sworn mortal enemies. The worst of the worst. Imagining us together is like if you put a cat and a mouse in a room and asked them to talk for five seconds!

SELENE

Well, I'm sorry to know it didn't work out between the two of you, but my May is my bae. We are inseparable.

ALT

Would you really put her over me? Another piece of yourself? I don't want to spoil what I heard about the future but everything has to do with her.

Selene watches the last bits of batter fall from the spatula. Alt Selene paces around the kitchen, taking a few steps in each direction.

SELENE

I know you must have warned other multiversal enigmas of us, but I know my world best. We are all living our own unique lives even if we all share some scar. I believe in my May, and I hope that you believe in yourself too.

Selene hears knocking nearby. Still on call, she heads over.

SELENE

Please excuse me.

Selene takes out one of her earbuds.

ALT

Selene!

INT. FRONT DOOR.

MAY

(violently hugs Selene)

Selene! I couldn't wait any longer to see my favorite person in the whole wide world!

SELENE

May! I was just about to make your special dessert.

ALT

(sharp whisper)

What are you doing? Can she hear me right now? Tell her to go away.

Selene ignores Alt Selene's advice. They return to—

INT. SELENE'S KITCHEN.

MAY

Let me guess—chocolate with peanut buttercream frosting!

SELENE

I wouldn't forget that no matter what. It's dark chocolate this time too!

MAY

Aww, you're always so considerate! I still find it interesting how our periods sync up with each other most of the time. Come here! I hope your cramps have been alright this time. Mmm, I bet we are soulmates with the way we always know what the both of us are feeling. Like that time last week when you kept eyeing that boba shop...

ALT

(to self)

I can't stand this.

Alt Selene takes out her phone and changes the output option from earbuds to the phone's speaker.

MAY (CONT.)

...and I just knew you were craving that—

ALT

(Through speaker)

Can you please shut up?

MAY

What did you say?

SELENE

I didn't say anything?!

Selene pulls out her phone and tries to end the call, but her screen is unresponsive.

ALT

I hate listening to your annoying voice keep going on and on! It makes me want to throw up! It's impossible for the two of us to even be together!

MAY

Selene...Why...why would you ever think that? Why are you treating me like this on my birthday?

Selene continues to try ending the call, even attempting to turn the phone off. Alt Selene, relieved, sits atop the kitchen counter while listening to this argument unfold.

SELENE

No! I didn't say anything. I'm in a call with someone and I think I pressed the wrong button.

MAY

You sure you're not doing this on purpose? Who are you even calling? She sounded exactly like you.

SELENE

Look, I'm not trying to make this day about me. It was just a distant...

Alt Selene starts batting her eyes and scratching the back of her neck.

SELENE (CONT.)

(slightly holds back a gag)

...relative of mine. We aren't exactly on the right terms.

ALT

(to self)

Why do I feel...so...uncomfortable?

MAY

I can understand why you don't usually talk about your family. I would hate having to talk to someone I didn't want to see again.

SELENE

Sorry, there's just a lot on my mind and I didn't expect you to come so early. I wanted to put it all aside for your birthday, but I guess it just messed up everything.

May shifts her gaze to the cupcake batter and then the preheated oven.

MAY

Here, how about we put this mishap and the phone aside and set these sweeties into the oven?

SELENE

I uh...

Alt changes the output back to Selene's earbuds.

ALT

Just do it. The damage has been done.

SELENE

...didn't notice it was ready! Yeah, let's put the little cakes in, together!

MAY

Really?! I'd love that! There's nothing like making a birthday more special than baking the cake with you!

SELENE

And if these cakes come out bad, it'll be on the both of us. Also—random question, but do you think the world would end from making cupcakes at 350 degrees?

MAY

As if. If anything, it'll make our world comfier for another 365 days.

Selene and May giggle to each other. Selene removes the other earbud and puts it aside.

Alt Selene murmurs to nobody on the other end.

ALT

I'm sorry, I'll leave you two alone. I think I was worried about nothing.

An envious Alt Selene hangs up and lets the couple enjoy their day.

END INTERCUT.

INT. ALT SELENE'S KITCHEN, MIRRORED.

Alt Selene lies atop the kitchen counter and takes deep breaths, letting a teardrop escape her face.

ALT

Now I feel like making some cupcakes.

Alt Selene gets up and turns on the oven.

THE END.

Author's Note

I wanted to blend the idea of a multiverse similar to Everything Everywhere All At Once with more realism. The trivial conflict of whether to make cupcakes or to not make cupcakes a specific way relates to how everyday issues in our own lives can transpire into greater conflicts. When internal conflicts come into play due to all the possible negative outcomes from this issue, it can lead to this self-destructive spiral that hurts oneself but also the people around us. This screenplay depicts what happens when we overcome our doubts and salvage what is left, while also making the reader speculate what would have gone differently if our doubts had never affected the situation at all. The comedy adds to the bluntness of internal conflict while also showing how oddly comforting it is to know oneself, allowing the consciousness to be overtaken by our differing thoughts.