

This Is A Story About You
by Caroline Udell

FADE IN:

INT. EXPOSURE STUDIOS, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A WOMAN with a clipboard strides through a busy workshop.

MONTAGE

- Hands burnishing a small piece of steel. A figure in the background sprays a large mobile in sweeping motions
- Glassblowers rolling molten glass, cut to the same piece being cold worked to a polished finish
- A hand dumping peroxide over a cut and lazily bandaging it
- Two people in shade helmets torch welding, looking bored

The woman breezes past flames and sparks. Weaving through a jungle of partially assembled lighting fixtures, she reaches a makeshift office. On the far side of the room is a PHOTOGRAPHER, attempting to shoot every angle of an inoffensive contemporary floor lamp.

On the near side of the room, AVERY (25, white), leans over a standing desk. Cameras and coffee cups act as paper weights for stacks of photos and color-coded spreadsheets. Her face is illuminated in the alternating cool blue of her computer screen and the warm glow of lightbulbs amidst testing.

The woman hovers in the doorway.

WOMAN

Avery?

Annoyed, Avery glances up at the intruder. The woman radiates well-practiced sympathy and poorly-managed anxiety.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Could we borrow you upstairs for a minute?

The warm light flickers out and Avery is left bathed in blue.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Avery idly drums her fingers on the live edge conference table. Indifferent to the meeting, she opts to study the INTERN nervously waiting on the other side of a glass wall.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The intern's posture is excellent, as if striving to epitomize professionalism. Only the hummingbird tap of the blue metal rectangle in their hand betrays their nervousness.

Avery fixates on the vape.

FLASHBACK, 2017 - INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The vape is replaced with a blue stick of gum. The scene widens and we see Avery in the same chair. Her hair is shorter and objectively more interesting than present day.

Behind her, the wall of bookshelves and their contents are now a uniform shade of white. In the corner, a cluster of red ladders converge against each other in an impossible sculpture. It is almost a caricature of room.

Avery takes a deep breath and looks around. She notices a stack of monochromatic coffee table books and picks up the only one with a title: "Exposure Studios: Year in Review."

She flips past double-page spreads of high profile projects to smaller, more intimate photo-shoots. One photo stands out as the only candid. A group of musicians lounge within a maze of hanging lights.

The foremost figure is a young woman, laughing and looking off-camera. Avery pauses on the photo.

VOICE (O.S.)

Avery.

FLASH FORWARD, PRESENT - INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Avery's eyes regain focus and she turns her attention back to the room as the last of her co-workers exit.

The intern stands beside the woman with the clipboard. The woman strains a smile. The intern gives a shy wave.

INT. AVERY'S JEEP - NJ TURNPIKE SOUTH, NEW JERSEY - DAY

A phone in a cupholder. The call display reads 'KJ' followed by the ogre and baby emojis.

KJ (V.O.)

So... what exactly is the upsetting element here?

Avery drives with both hands on the wheel, her form only breaking to gesture as she speaks.

AVERY

I don't know. All of it? It's just
so unnecessary.

INTERCUT - AVERY AND KJ - PHONE CONVERSATION (MOVING)

- Avery: NJ Turnpike, South Jersey

- KJ: Temple University, Philadelphia

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TEMPLE UNIVERSITY - DAY

Avery's sister, KJ (20), secures her phone in her bra strap as she changes from cleats into Air Max 90s.

AVERY

I mean, I get in theory why they
would think expanding the
department makes sense. But it's
just so misguided. I have a system.
It works. I don't have time to make
fake jobs for people to do.

EXT. TEMPLE UNIVERSITY / NORTH PHILLY

KJ exits the locker room and effortlessly embeds herself in the flood of students in exodus from the athletic center.

She weaves her way through campus, waving at friends, faculty, and hookups past and present.

KJ

So are you like, in charge of this
person?

AVERY

Yeah.

KJ

And the person they hired last
month.

AVERY

Yeah.

KJ

And they're giving you more money.

AVERY

Apparently.

KJ

I think that's just called a promotion.

Avery cuts through a development of identical McMansions. She enters an older neighborhood of split-level homes and pulls into a driveway.

AVERY

I don't see how making my life harder is a promotion.

KJ

I think that's just called hating your job.

INT. OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Avery takes the spare key from behind the "Back Door Guests are the Best" sign and pokes her head inside.

AVERY

Where are the parentals?

KJ

Dunno, I haven't heard from them since I came through last week to steal toilet paper... Wait, when you said on your way home you meant like home home?

Satisfied that the house is empty, Avery goes to the kitchen.

AVERY

Thought I'd stop in and say hi.

KJ

From New York. To South Jersey. On a Friday in the summer.

AVERY

(annoyed)

I didn't feel like being in the city this weekend. Am I not allowed to come home?

KJ

Let me just state for the record, I have not said anything to that effect. You are having a private experience.

A "Happy Retirement!" photo calendar hangs on the refrigerator door, nestled among an onslaught of magnets and engagement announcements. The calendar indicates that their parents are due to return from vacation the next day.

AVERY

I was thinking about going down the shore.

KJ

That's dumb. Come to Philly.

AVERY

What are you doing tonight?

KJ

Any chance you're feeling nostalgic for alcohol and attention in a damp basement?

Avery opens the refrigerator. Pushing aside an abundance of seltzer, she finds a singular Tupperware. Determining it to be of questionable safety, she moves on to pantry.

AVERY

The alcohol I'll take. The venue I need, like, three deviations removed from damp basement.

INT. KJ'S APARTMENT - DAY

KJ takes the phone off speaker as she enters her apartment. She mouths a group hello to her FIVE ROOMMATES, who acknowledge by pointing to the blender in the kitchen.

KJ

Margs and a movie with my roommates?

She opens the blender lid and recoils at the smell. A bottle of Everclear sits behind it.

KJ (CONT'D)

Nope, wait I'm picturing this and it ends badly.

AVERY

Aw, I like your friends.

KJ

Oh, I like my friends too. They're beautiful and kind and thoughtful people. They're also heathens and I won't let them corrupt you.

KJ's roommates chime in from the living room.

ROOMMATE 1

Is that Manager Avery?

ROOMMATE 2

Avery, come hangout with us!

ROOMMATE 3

Avery, we need your wisdom!

The roommates continue shouting for Avery. KJ waves them off. She pours herself a glass and goes into her room.

KJ's phone buzzes. She looks at it and sucks her teeth.

AVERY

What?

KJ

Uh, forget everything I said because as much as I would absolutely love to see you, ya girl's got a date tonight.

Avery takes a jar of peanut butter from the pantry.

AVERY

Who is it this week?

KJ flops onto the bed.

KJ

Same as last.

Avery climbs the stairs. She pauses.

AVERY

I thought second dates were against the rules.

KJ

It's a small city and getting smaller. Unrelated, they've got three older siblings. All really hot and mostly single.

Avery walks through the master bedroom to a huge bathroom.

AVERY
Ambitious. Even for you.

KJ
I meant for you.

AVERY
How thoughtful.

Avery shuts the bathroom door.

KJ hears the click of the call ending. She laughs to herself and pulls a textbook out of her bag.

LATER

Steam pours out of the bathroom door. Avery emerges, phone in one hand, spoon in the other. The peanut butter jar peeks out of her robe.

AVERY (CONT'D)
So is this like a date date? Like a
go somewhere date?

KJ abandons her homework and goes into story-telling mode.

KJ
Okay, so you know those not-so-
secret house shows I always invite
you to and you never come?

Avery traverses a long hallway lined with painfully formal family portraits.

AVERY
I am familiar.

KJ
So, Elliot Samuels started MCing
them and I promised I'd go to the
one he's running tonight. Fast
forward to one hour ago and I
remember I have this date.

Avery enters KJ's bedroom. It is largely unchanged from when KJ was in high school. She goes to the closet and looks through KJ's vast collection of hoodies and joggers.

AVERY
Can the concert not be the date?

KJ
Of course not, that would be far
too linear.

(MORE)

KJ (CONT'D)

No, as I'm composing the text to surprise this person with concert tickets, I get a text from them asking if we can reschedule. Because they also forgot about our date. And then promised their sister to babysit.

AVERY

Oh, KJ, you didn't...

KJ

Oh, I did. So now, instead of taking this person on what would have been a very good date and supporting my childhood best friend in his creative endeavors, my dumbass will be spending the evening with...

(checking her phone)

Markelle: Twenty-one; Comm major; Coffee lover and Capricorn rising... and their sister's infant triplets.

AVERY

Skipping the U-Haul and going straight to the minivan, huh?

KJ sits up, deeply surprised.

KJ

I would love to know where you got that joke from.

Avery roots deeper into the closet. She doesn't respond.

KJ (CONT'D)

Mhmm, yeah, that's what I thought. Anyway, I'm actually looking forward to it. Kids are cool and just because you don't know how to interact them doesn't mean they aren't worth interacting with.

AVERY

It's not that I don't know how to interact with them, I just actively choose not to... Are your kinda tight black joggers here?

KJ

Bottom drawer... Not liking things isn't a personality trait, Avery.

AVERY

Okay, that was way harsher than my joke... I don't see them.

KJ

Check your closet... For real though, if you're not doing anything would you wanna go to this concert? I feel bad bailing on Elliot.

Avery grabs a shirt and leaves KJ's room.

Tying her hair in a messy bun, Avery kicks open the door to her childhood bedroom. The space has since been relegated to the ill-defined limbo between attic overflow and teenage time capsule.

Avery squeezes past a sheet-covered mirror, following a narrow path of white carpet that leads to the closet.

KJ (CONT'D)

Buddy, I say this with all of the love in my heart. Go be social.

AVERY

You know I hate being social.

KJ

No, you hate New York.

Avery skims through a rack of nearly identical black shirts.

AVERY

I'm really not in the mood to be around cool art people doing cool artistically fulfilling things right now.

KJ

It's not that tragic.

KJ hangs up. Avery's phone vibrates and the display brightens with two notifications:

MAIL

From: KJ Ohtori

Subject: FWD: CodaChromatic - Your Tickets

MONEY

Payment request from KJ Ohtori

Description: 🙄👉

Avery glances at her phone and rolls her eyes. She looks up and sees the joggers folded neatly on the bed.

EXT. OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Avery struggles to open the Jeep's trunk while juggling a box of snacks and assorted toiletries.

Behind her, what was seconds ago an empty yard is now populated by THREE CHILDREN in soccer uniforms and one soccer ball. All four entities are seemingly frozen in action.

A girl is posed mid-jump. Her SCRUNCHIE-adorned head is canted forward, apparently having just headed the ball. Opposite the ball is a boy in a HEADBAND, whose leg is raised into a roundhouse kick. Across from them is a girl with PIGTAILS, diving with arms outstretched as if tending an unseen goal.

A moment later, they reanimate. Headband follows through with his kick, and Pigtails dives for it. The ball grazes her fingertips and slams into the Jeep, shattering the tail light just inches from Avery's head.

Avery screams and falls backward, letting loose a barrage of Tastycakes and toilet paper.

Pigtails lands face-down. She groans and lifts her head.

PIGTAILS
Can somebody else be the goalie
now?

Headband and Scrunchie stare past her.

Dazed, Avery rises to her feet and looks at the wreckage around her. She does not notice the kids.

Pigtails rolls over. She eyes the older girl with suspicion.

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)
Who're you?

Startled, Avery turns around. Her head swivels between the the kids and the car. Scrunchie and Headband anxiously side-step toward the ball.

Regaining her senses, Avery navigates the sea of glass and approaches them. Pigtails jumps up. Avery towers over her.

AVERY
What are you -

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)
Sorry lady-

Headband picks up the ball. Scrunchie motions to Pigtails.

SCRUNCHIE
(whispering)
Let's go.

The girls' voices raise as they talk over each other.

AVERY	PIGTAILS
-wait, where did you even	-but that's a really dumb
come from-	place to park your car-

Scrunchie whispers-yells something that sounds like a name.

AVERY (CONT'D)	PIGTAILS (CONT'D)
-you were definitely not	-like right behind our goal
there a second-	wait, where is the goal-

SCRUNCHIE
Avery!

Both girls whip their heads in the girl's direction.

AVERY AND PIGTAILS
What?!

They turn back to each other.

AVERY AND PIGTAILS (CONT'D)
Wait, what?

Headband nudges Scrunchie and points to the items strewn across the driveway.

HEADBAND
(whispering)
I think she's a robber.

SCRUNCHIE
I think she's...

Scrunchie signs the "coo-coo" gesture.

Avery turns her back to survey the damage. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees them sneaking toward the house.

AVERY
Hey!

The kids whip around, actually a bit frightened now.

Pigtails moves to put herself between her friends and the stranger. As she steps forward, her foot lands on a piece of glass. The shard cuts a deep crescent into her bare heel.

PIGTAILS

Ow. Owowow-ow ow-owow.

AVERY

Oh jeez, okay, don't move.

Avery runs past them into the house.

Ignoring her instructions, Scrunchie gives Pigtails a piggyback ride up the porch steps and through the door.

INT. OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Scrunchie stops abruptly just inside the doorway. Her arms drop to her sides, causing Pigtails to slide off.

PIGTAILS

Jeez, I'm not that heavy.

Pigtails hobbles further inside and reaches the middle of the room before also stopping abruptly. She stares at the rug.

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)

What the...

Pigtails turns to see Scrunchie is similarly puzzled. Headband sidesteps Scrunchie to enter the house.

HEADBAND

Excuuuuse me- woah, this isn't your house.

SCRUNCHIE

But it is...

Pigtails remains completely still. Her eyes move side to side as she scans the room and come to rest on the wall behind the couch. Scrunchie and Headband look at the wall and gasp.

Avery returns with the first aid kit.

AVERY

(sighing)

Anddd you're inside. And there's blood on the carpet.

Three sets of eyes snap toward her and then back to the wall.

A long frame holds two rows of yearbook photos. A young girl grins in the last picture of the top row. Her hair is done up with an excessive number of hair clips and two pigtails.

Avery moves into view, placing herself squarely in front of the graduation portrait.

The kids stare at her.

Avery gives them a look before sitting on the couch. She fumbles with the latches of the first aid kit.

PIGTAILS

Why do you have a picture of me?

AVERY

Sit down.

Scrunchie and Headband covertly slide into the kitchen. Pigtales sits on the couch, observing Avery with curiosity.

PIGTAILS

You kinda look like my mom.

AVERY

Gee, thanks.

Avery goes to dab the wound with peroxide. Upon making contact, a jolt of static electricity runs through them. They both yelp, more in surprise than pain.

PIGTAILS

Ow, what're you trynna do, kill me?

Avery shakes it off and returns to the first aid kit.

Scrunchie and Headband poke around the kitchen. Headband picks up a smart home speaker. It flashes to life. Startled, he drops it on the floor.

Scrunchie takes a less hands-on approach. Her eyes lock on the refrigerator door.

Avery watches the cut for bleeding as she takes out a band-aid. Her hands halt midway through unwrapping.

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)

What?

Gaze unwavering, Avery stands up. She backs away and slides off a flip-flop. She looks at the bottom of her foot.

Scrunchie walks to the couch and hands Pigtales a photo. It reads "Happy Holidays 2019 from The Ohtoris" and features Avery, KJ, and a very fat cat - all in matching pajamas.

Pigtales gasps. She looks at Avery excitedly.

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)

Woah! You have tuxedo cat, too?!

Scrunchie jabs her finger at the text. Pigtail's eyes widen. She holds the card up next to Avery's face.

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)

Are you from the future?

SCRUNCHIE

Avery, I think we're in the future.

Pigtails looks between Avery, the Christmas card, and the photo wall. She nods, slowly at first, then emphatically.

PIGTAILS

Ohhhhh, okay. Yeah. I see what happened. So you and me. Mhm, okay.

Avery responds with a slow blink.

SCRUNCHIE

I don't think she gets it.

Headband returns with a bag of chocolate chips.

HEADBAND

Gets what?

Scrunchie shows him the Christmas card. He mumbles through a mouthful of chocolate.

HEADBAND (CONT'D)

Oh shiz.

Pigtails holds her foot and hops closer to her. Avery blinks rapidly.

PIGTAILS

Welllll. If you're me, then... your name is Avery Andersen Ohtori; you were born on January 27, 1995; your favorite color is teal; and Saf and Calvin are your best friends. And you like raisins - but only in the box by themselves, NOT mixed in with things like sticky buns and fried rice. Because that is gross.

Avery stops blinking.

HEADBAND

I think you broke her.

SCRUNCHIE

Say something only you would say.

PIGTAILS

This is what I would say!

SCRUNCHIE

What's your stranger danger password?

PIGTAILS

Oh yeah.

Pigtails locks eyes with Avery. She smiles and points with a bloody finger.

PIGTAILS (CONT'D)

Chocolate milk.

Avery drops into the recliner behind her. The leg rest extends, sweeping her legs out from under her. Coupled with the sinking effect of the chair, she appears very small.

// Names are now as follows: Pigtails is WAVES (8, white); Scrunchie is SAF (8); Headband is CALVIN (8, Black).

LATER

Tiny hands form a chocolate milk assembly line in the kitchen. Calvin nudges Saf and points to the refrigerator.

CALVIN

Metal fridge.

Saf laughs. She carries three glasses to the living room.

Avery, now rigidly seated in the recliner, watches as Waves attempts to smother her cut under a layer of band-aids.

WAVES

So this is what the future's like.

Saf holds a glass in front of a very pale Avery. Dazed, Avery slowly takes the glass.

AVERY

Apparently.

SAF

Is time traveling a normal thing in the future?

AVERY

Definitely not.

Saf takes a seat next to Waves on the couch. Waves leans over her to grab more band-aids.

WAVES

And I'm gonna be you when I'm old?

Avery raises her foot. On the heel, faint with age but unmistakable, is a crescent-shaped scar.

WAVES (CONT'D)

Weird.

Waves pokes the scar. They recoil immediately as a jolt of electricity runs through their bodies, causing their hair to stand on end. They briefly look nauseous.

WAVES (CONT'D)

Wuhhh what was that?

AVERY

I don't know, but we are NOT doing it again.

Saf reaches out to poke Avery's foot.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Wait, no-

Avery braces for impact, but Saf's touch produces no effect.

SAF

I think it's just you two that can't touch.

Waves licks her hand and pats her hair down.

WAVES

Fine by me. Where's mom?

Avery delicately attempts to coax her hair back to flat.

AVERY

Vacation.

WAVES

Without us?!

Avery exhales a laugh. Her posture relaxes slightly.

WAVES (CONT'D)

If you're me, that means there's an old Saf and an old Calvin, right?

Calvin pokes his head out from the refrigerator. He downs the last of his chocolate milk.

CALVIN
I wanna meet old me!

Calvin runs into the living room. Avery analyzes him.

AVERY
Calvin? Calvin Wylie?

CALVIN
Uh, yuhhh. What, you don't recognize your old pal, Cal?

Calvin skips to Avery. He leans in close and pulls back his hair while making a face.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
How 'bout now?

He spins away and marches around the room while singing a made up song. The phrase "How 'bout now" constitutes a majority of the lyrics.

Saf and Waves laugh. Waves' shoddy bandaging starts to unravel. Saf sees Waves struggling and takes over.

SAF
What about me?

Avery watches as Saf carefully wraps Waves' injury.

AVERY
(flatly)
I know you.

WAVES
Are they home? I bet Saf can't beat me one on one even when she's old.

Saf frowns. She pokes Waves' foot.

WAVES (CONT'D)
Ow.

SAF
Mean.

AVERY
I...I don't know.

WAVES
Well can you call them?

AVERY
I can't-

WAVES
Why?

AVERY
It's not that easy.

Calvin, having marched back into the kitchen, sees the calendar on the fridge.

CALVIN
It's two-thousand and twenty!?

Calvin runs back to the living room.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Dang, so you're like old old.

AVERY
I'm twenty-five.

CALVIN
Yeah. Old.

Avery opens her mouth to defend herself. Waves cuts in.

WAVES
Why?

AVERY
Why what?

WAVES
Why can't you call them?

AVERY
It's... been a while since we talked.

WAVES
Why?

AVERY
We have our own lives and stuff just-

WAVES
WHY?

AVERY
BECAUSE WE'RE NOT FRIENDS.

The recliner rocks as she yells. Avery slouches forward and closes her eyes. The kids stare at her. She doesn't look up.

Waves takes her foot off Saf's lap. They scoot closer to each other. Calvin joins them on the couch.

SAF

Are you okay?

Avery rests her palms in the corners of her eyes. She stays this way for a moment, then runs her hands through her hair and looks up. Wet streaks shine across her cheekbones.

AVERY

Right, so, how old are you?

WAVES

I'm eight and a half, Saf is thirty-eight days younger than me, and Calvin is eight.

CALVIN

But my birthday is in thirteen days, so I'm basically nine.

AVERY

Okay. Eight for me was third grade.

SAF

We start school in two weeks. Unless we're not home by then.

WAVES

Oo, you're right! Can we stay here?

Avery does the math.

AVERY

2003. You're me from 2003.

WAVES

I mean, my name's Avery, your name's Avery. Seems pretty open and shut to me.

Avery continues nodding. The kids politely wait for her. She finally speaks.

AVERY

What's the last thing you remember happening before you got here?

CALVIN

Well... we were playing soccer...
and Saf headed me the ball... and I
shot on Waves... and I scored on
her... but the net wasn't there
anymore... but your car was
there... and it hit your car.

Waves shakes her head at Avery.

WAVES

I told them we don't play goalie.

AVERY

That's it? Nothing weird before
that?

The kids look at each other for confirmation before shaking
their heads no.

SAF

Are we stuck here?

AVERY

I don't know.

CALVIN

Maybe my old me does?

WAVES

Or Saf's?

Avery leans forward again and plays anxiously with her hands.
The children wait for her response.

Avery's phone lights up with a second email from KJ. She
swipes it open.

Attached are two tickets, both printed with just three
symbols: a QR code; a time, double-underlined; and an emoji
blob, rendered illegible by the black and white draft quality
printing and subsequent low-res scanning.

Avery scrolls to the second message:

From: KJ Ohtori
Subject: FWD: address

1652 Ridge
bring the roomies

xoxo,
Elliot

CALVIN

What time is it? My mom gets real mad if I'm late for dinner.

Avery stands up. She puts on her most professional smile.

AVERY

As a former child, I understand that - despite your tiny bodies and questionable logic - you have brains.

You have ideas about the world. Many of these ideas you will discard somewhere along the way. But some will endure, and those that do, you come to view as knowledge. As truth.

What I am now realizing is that all the ideas I previously held about the world are proving to be completely useless, if not straight up false.

But I will defer that personal crisis for the time being, to focus on the singular fact I do have.

My parents will be home tomorrow morning. And if there's one thing I think we can all agree on, it's that you never involve the adults.

The kids stare blankly at Avery.

SAF

But you're an adult.

AVERY

Yes. And it is for that reason I find myself feeling extremely protective over all of you, particularly...

(pointing to Waves)

This one. I don't know the consequences of meeting alternate versions or past versions or whatever of yourself, but I know myself and therefore will not be letting you out of my sight.

Waves rolls her eyes.

WAVES

Soooo...

AVERY

So for now, all you need to do is put aside whatever your brains are telling you, and please just trust me. Can you do that?

Calvin raises his hand, but doesn't wait to be called on.

CALVIN

Miss Avery, if me and Saf aren't gonna be home for dinner can you call our parents so we don't get in trouble?

AVERY

(exacerbated)

Sure.

The kids confer privately and come to agreement. Avery clasps her hands together.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Great. So, we need to take a little field trip...

(looking down)

and none of you have shoes. Okay.

Avery walks away, into the kitchen. The kids look at each other, shrug, then follow. Waves walks out last.

WAVES

Oooh, this is fancy. Got the countertops and - woah, metal fridge! Hey old me, are we rich in the future?!

LATER

The kids are gathered around an attic ladder. A yellow duffel bag tumbles down and lands at their feet.

WAVES (CONT'D)

Whose house are we going over?

CALVIN

Is it your new best friend's house?

Waves punches Calvin in the arm. She hugs Saf.

AVERY (O.S.)

It's not a playdate...

Another bag comes down, letting loose a deluge of graphic tees, tie-dyes, and intramural sports shirts. Avery's head appears at the top of the ladder.

AVERY (CONT'D)

It's a house concert.

Avery continues to search through bins and bags in the organized but overwhelming attic.

AVERY (CONT'D)

It's like a regular concert but instead of a venue it's in someone's living room or basement or open-concept-co-working-makerspace. But I don't know what it is yet cuz they keep the address a secret until right before.

WAVES

Why do they do that?

Avery reaches the far corner of the attic and stops in front of towers of shoe boxes. She checks a few and takes them.

AVERY

So you can tell people you went to a secret concert.

SAF

But then it's not a secret anymore.

As she stands up, a thin beam of sun interrupts the yellow haze of the dim incandescents, perfectly bisecting her face. She opens a box and is momentarily distracted by the contents.

AVERY

No, I guess not.

She takes a small object from the box and closes the lid, then climbs down with the shoeboxes and a backpack.

CALVIN

Why can't we just wear our clothes?

AVERY

Because...

Avery one-hands the attic hatch close.

AVERY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Because I don't wanna have to
explain to anyone why I'm walking
around Philly with a youth soccer
team in the middle of the night.

SAF
Is anyone really gonna ask that?

AVERY
Go get dressed.

EXT. OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Now suitably dressed for a dELiA's x Hot Topic photoshoot, the kids catwalk down the driveway. A giant blue soccer backpack bounces on Calvin's back. They climb onto the running boards of the Jeep and hang on the frame.

AVERY
Buckle up, we gotta beat traffic.

Avery walks to the back of the car. The tailgate hangs open. She slams it shut and the sound of breaking glass erupts.

The kids look down from their perches. Their collective response is "oof."

Avery's hands remain on the tailgate. She closes her eyes, knowing without looking that her tail light is kaput. She steps back and hits the lock button on her fob. A singular light blinks.

Waves looks across the top of the Jeep to Saf.

WAVES
Well that's unfortunate.

SAF
Very unfortunate.

Avery puts her hands behind her neck. She looks up and lets out a prolonged sigh.

INT. PATCO TRAIN, WESTBOUND TO PHILADELPHIA - DAY

The kids' slurp Boost slushies and look out the window as the train moves through suburb to suburb, gliding across Camden to Philly.

Waves climbs off the seat and slides next to Avery. The movement of the train causes them to bump into each other. They both recoil. Waves moves to the seat across from her.

WAVES

Why did you say parents?

AVERY

What?

WAVES

You said "My parents are coming home." Parents. Like two.

AVERY

No I didn't.

WAVES

You did, I heard you!

Avery silently admonishes herself. She takes a breath.

AVERY

Mom got married.

WAVES

Oh.

Waves processes, but does not seem distressed by the news. They both wait for the other to say something.

WAVES (CONT'D)

Where's Kaya?

AVERY

She's at college. In Philly.

WAVES

Can we go see her?

AVERY

Maybe later. We have to find Safina and Calvin first.

Saf and Calvin pop up from the seats behind Waves.

SAF

Is Old Me gonna be at the concert?

AVERY

No, but someone who knows where she is will be.

WAVES

Is mom gonna be mad we broke the
light on her car?

AVERY

That's my car.

WAVES

I have a car?!

AVERY

No, I have a car. You have a
scooter and an overbite.

Calvin giggles hysterically. Waves turns around and karate
chops his arm.

CALVIN

Ow! Hey, Miss Avery!

AVERY

You can drop the Miss.

CALVIN

Hey, Old Avery, Avery Avery karate
chopped me.

AVERY

Okay, we're gonna need some sort of
system for names because I am not
cool with being called Old Avery.
If anything, I'm Avery Avery since
I've been Avery the longest.

WAVES

Why do you get to be Avery Avery?
I'm just as much Avery as you are.

AVERY

Age before beauty.

SAF

You know you just called yourself
ugly right?

Avery glares.

SAF (CONT'D)

Twice.

The kids burst into laughter.

AVERY

Do you want me to pick a name for you? Because I will. And I guarantee you won't like it.

CALVIN

And so begins the The Naming of the Averys! I'll help with Avery Avery cuz I don't know you like that, Miss Avery.

He scoots next to Waves and puts on an intense thinking face.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Aves.

AVERY

Too similar.

CALVIN

Baves?

AVERY

Are you just...

CALVIN

Caves...Daves. Oo, do you wanna be Dave?

Waves shakes her head. He progresses down the alphabet.

Saf looks out over the Delaware River. The wind has picked up significantly, creating tiny white caps on the water.

SAF

Waves?

This catches Avery's attention. Calvin sprints to W.

CALVIN

RavesSavesTavesUaves. Waves!
Waaaaaaayyyvezzzzz.

WAVES

(to Avery)

Do we like Waves?

Avery looks startled, as if she just remembered something. She laughs to herself.

AVERY

Sure.

EXT. CENTER CITY, PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT

MONTAGE

- A sign: "Welcome to Philadelphia: Enjoy our Past, Experience Our Future!"
- The El passing murals and graffiti-plastered buildings, chronicling the city's long history of street art
- Multi-generational dance crews in Love Park, reviewing steps in between performances
- Scores of dirt bikes and quads racing down Broad Street, followed by a slew of bike messengers
- Dudes hollering at an anime-wrapped sports car that looks suspiciously like local rapper Lil Uzi's Bugatti.

The gang crosses Broad Street, backdropped by City Hall. A group of teens bounds down the steps of the Walnut-Locust BSL station. Avery and the kids follow them down.

EXT. FRANCISVILLE, NORTH PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT

The same teens emerge from the Fairmount BSL station, half-heatedly pursued by SEPTA police. Seconds later, Avery and the kids arrive on street level and head north.

As they walk, clouds roll in and the wind creates tiny gyres of trash at their feet. The neighborhood hums with people taking in the last of the fading summer light. They pass rows of stoops, each hosting their own mini party: families gathered in circles of camp chairs and swimming pools; teens practicing their band instruments; little kids harassing everyone and themselves.

AVERY

Okay, one more time. Three rules.
Go.

CALVIN

No talking about time travel.

SAF

No talking to adults.

Avery waits for Waves' answer.

AVERY

Hey, demon child.

WAVES

No touching, I got it, I got it.

Rounding the corner, they are confronted with two massive construction projects. Between them is a narrow storefront with a sign reading "Gilbert's Shoes." It is apparent that the building has been neither a shoe store nor anything else in years.

CALVIN

I thought you said we were going to a house.

Avery looks perplexed. She tentatively tries the door and finds that it is unlocked.

INT. GILBERT'S SHOES - NIGHT

They enter the store's showroom and find it empty, seemingly untouched since the store's closing. The faint thuds of a bass line echo as they walk through the 'Employees Only' door and down a dimly lit hallway.

Their path ends at a door marked 'EXIT' next to a rusty freight elevator. Muffled thumps of feet come from above.

Avery walks to the elevator. Seeing no buttons, she attempts to pry it open by hand. It doesn't budge.

SAF

Are you sure you have the right place?

Avery actively ignores the question. She looks around.

Tucked into a corner of the room is a door and an old couch. Lying on the couch is an exceptionally bored-looking WOMAN with a tablet.

Avery tentatively approaches her.

AVERY

Hi.

The woman makes no acknowledgement of their presence. Avery tries again.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Um, we're here for the concert?

CALVIN

The SECRET concert!

Waves pitches Calvin a baby shoe and he whacks it with a thigh-high leather boot. The shoe flies past the woman.

The woman looks up. She takes out an earbud.

AVERY

Um, hi, sorry we're here for the concert.

WOMAN

We don't let anyone in after start time, sorry. Courtesy to the performers.

The woman looks past her at the kids. Calvin wears mismatched boots on his arms. He chases Waves and Saf, pretending to be a robot. Her mild annoyance softens to amusement.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You know tonight's eighteen and over, right?

Avery examines the tickets on her phone.

AVERY

Where's it say that?

The woman points to the blob emoji.

AVERY (CONT'D)

That's supposed to be an 'X'? An 'X' and the baby emoji. Really. I get being cryptic is cool and all but that's just impractical.

The woman shrugs and returns to swiping on her tablet.

WOMAN

I don't make the rules.

She pauses, appearing to have processed her words and deciding they tasted bad.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Or the graphics, sorry.

A young man in expertly coordinated streetwear rushes in from outside. His clear, plastic coat is dotted with rain.

MAN

Is that Ms. Ohtori, Avery?

The man takes off his beanie to smooth his hair. He puts it back on, immediately undoing his efforts. Avery turns and smiles at ELLIOT SAMUELS (20). They hug and it is nice.

AVERY

Hi, Elliot.

ELLIOT

If I'd known you were home I would've hit you up! Are you here with KJ?

AVERY

KJ couldn't make it. She is on a date.

ELLIOT

Sounds about right.

AVERY

A second date.

Elliot laughs.

ELLIOT

Isn't that against her rules?

He notices Avery's company.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Who are the buddies?

Waves points at Avery. She interjects.

WAVES

We're the same person!

Elliot nods.

ELLIOT

Good person to be.

WAVES

Except I'm eight and she's old and dumb and doesn't have any friends.

Saf elbows her. Avery inhales sharply, annoyed but grateful for the idea it gives her.

AVERY

This is my cousin. She's also a brat. Those two are her friends. They're only marginally better.

ELLIOT
Right on. I'm Elliot. Are y'all
coming up?

AVERY
Actually, I'm just here to ask-

ELLIOT
Sorry, one sec. We're between sets
I just ran down to close Saf's
windows.

Saf perks up at the mention of her name. She looks intently
at Elliot. Her face lights up, but she stops herself from
calling to him.

Elliot turns to the woman on the couch. He puts on a
professional tone.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Sasha, would it be at all possible-

Having long ago lost interest in the conversation, SASHA
waves them off.

Elliot catches the door and gestures toward the staircase
inside. The kids run under his arm. He calls after them.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Top floor! Yo, wait at the door!

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Elliot and Avery climb the stairs.

AVERY
How've you been?

ELLIOT
Fantastically well. I was close to
spectacular before the sky decided
to bless me with an interior car
wash. But this totally makes up for
it. It's been a minute.

AVERY
I know, I haven't been home that
much since college.

They reach the final flight and are unsurprised to find that
the kids have ignored their instructions.

ELLIOT

KJ told me you've been doing the New York thing. You liking it?

AVERY

I do. It's hard, but I do.

ELLIOT

Good. Happy we could steal you back for a night, though. She's gonna be so hype to see you.

Avery hesitates midstep.

AVERY

She who?

Confusion, suspicion and finally realization ripple across her face as she takes the final steps to the landing.

INT. CODACHROMATIC CONCERT VENUE - NIGHT

Avery exits the stairwell, distinctly more anxious than when she entered.

The door opens into a warehouse space. Large industrial windows cast their reflections, slowly distorting the city skyline as the surface wets with rain.

Waves, Saf, and Calvin stand just inside the door, marveling at the room. The camera pans and the space transforms into a sea of lights. The atmosphere buzzes as people settle back into office chair and throw pillow seating.

A middle-aged man comes over to them. He is wearing sensible sneakers and a lightweight sweater. Saf recognizes the man as MR. SAMUELS, her dad. She hides behind Waves and Calvin.

Mr. Samuels has a water in one hand and a beer in the other.

MR. SAMUELS

You've got yourself some admirers.

He tips his head toward a group of COLLEGE GIRLS: covertly sipping the same beer; blatantly checking out Elliot.

Elliot reaches for the beer. Mr. Samuels hands him the water.

ELLIOT

Hey, Dad, you remember Avery. She brought along her cousin and some friends.

MR. SAMUELS
Avery! Good to see you! How's your
season shaking out?

It is apparent that Mr. Samuel's Dad Brain has conflated
Avery and her sister. Avery does not attempt to correct him.

ELLIOT
You're thinking of KJ. Avery is
Safina's friend, remember?... Went
on family vacation with us?...
Every summer?...

Mr. Samuel snaps and points at Avery.

MR. SAMUELS
Avery.

ELLIOT
Incredible.

The lights dim twice, signaling the end of intermission.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
That's my cue.

MR. SAMUELS
Hey, help me set this thing up to
record the show for your mother.

Elliot sighs and takes Mr. Samuels phone to demonstrate.

ELLIOT
Ight, so then when you're ready
just press the red circle.

MR. SAMUELS
Press the red...

Mr. Samuels awkwardly turns the phone camera to face himself.
He presses record.

ELLIOT
No, not right-

MR. SAMUELS
Hello dear! Everett here, along
with
 (pointing the camera at
 Elliot)
Your son...

Elliot waves as he slowly backs toward the stage.

ELLIOT

Hi, mama.

He bobs into crowd and disappears. Mr. Samuels centers the camera on Avery.

MR. SAMUELS

As well as surprise guest, Avery
Ohtori...

Avery gives a sheepish wave.

MR. SAMUELS (CONT'D)

And some youngins...oh?

He points the camera to where the kids had been standing.
They are gone. Mr. Samuels and Avery look at each other.

INTERCUT ELLIOT / AVERY

Elliot hustles through the crowd and nearly trips over Saf.
He half turns to apologize.

ELLIOT

Oh, sorry!

Elliot stops when he sees Saf inspecting him.

SAF

Buddy?

Elliot stares back.

ELLIOT

You know, you look a lot like my
sister when she was little.

SAF

Really?

ELLIOT

A lot. You'll get to meet her
actually, she's bout to be on stage
right there.

Saf looks alarmed.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(laughing)

She's not scary, I promise! I pinky
promise.

He holds out his pinky. Saf gives him a big hug around the legs. Elliot is confused, but doesn't pull away. He gently pats her back.

Saf lets go and runs off. Elliot hesitates a moment before jogging onto the stack of rugs that form the stage.

Mr. Samuels engages Avery in light but earnest conversation.

MR. SAMUELS

And there's a market for that?

AVERY

Apparently.

MR. SAMUELS

I keep telling Elliot, there's so much opportunity out there. I think he would really thrive in a bigger city. But I get it, his people are here.

Elliot communes with the three-piece band as they finish their sound checks. It's obvious that they're all pals.

MR. SAMUELS (CONT'D)

Do you see yourself settling down up there?

Avery covertly scans the room for the children.

AVERY

Uh, there's a lot I love about it. But there's things I miss about being here...

She spots the kids, all piled in one massive beanbag chair. They giggle as Waves and Calvin pretend to be bodyguards, flanking Saf to hide her from Mr. Samuels.

Avery looks sad, but snaps back into Talking to Parents mode.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Honestly the smart thing would be to buy a house here, get roommates to cover the mortgage, and do whatever he wants not having to worry about making rent. But you factor in the exposure value and resources of New York and the conversation may be different. Depending on his goals. Longterm.

MR. SAMUELS

Could I convince you to marry my son?

Avery laughs awkwardly as the house lights dim and stage lights rise.

Avery's illuminated face betrays a look of anticipation tinged with fear. The rain grows heavier.

Elliot picks up the mic.

ELLIOT

Ight, so before we bring out our closing act, I just want to again thank y'all for coming out tonight and for braving this weirder than usual Philly weather to support local music.

The crowd's applause mix with the storm outside.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Now, judging by some of the merch I'm seeing out there it looks like someone may have let slip the name of our next performer.

Applause thunders through the room, as does literal thunder.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Me. It was me, I can't keep a secret, I don't know why they let me keep this job. But I think I deserve a break this time because our final artist holds a special place in my heart. And I'm not just saying that cuz our dad is here.

The audience laughs. A group of COOL YOUTHS holler "Sam Fam."

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

That's right, that's right. Whole squad in the house tonight...old squad in the house tonight!

He winks at Avery. Another clap of thunder. Elliot raises his energy to rival the storm.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

And I know y'all not bout to be shown up by a little rain.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

So I'mma need you to please give a
warm welcome home to my OG homie,
the one and the only - Safina
Samuels.

Lightning flashes, but no thunder follows. At the moment the drummer hits the first beat, silence falls. Actual silence.

The lights go out, leaving Avery's face half-lit by moonlight. Slowly, new lights rise from the stage to illuminate the room.

Empty chairs and cushions form a 'V' from Avery to the stage. It is as if the audience and band have simply evaporated.

The makeshift stage has been replaced by a single swath of white carpet, extending infinitely into the darkness. An unnaturally high stack of makeup palettes takes the place of the keyboardist. The chord that had once led to the bassist now ends in a hair straightener.

Avery makes to take a step forward. She stops as the lights return to full brightness and flash across her face.

A voice sings, clearly, but softly. The way you would sing if you were either perfectly comfortable with your company or certain you were alone.

VOICE

*Toned and tidy, uptight and wealthy
The girl from Center City hails
taxis
Cuz when she walks
It's only for charity
Or over me*

Center stage, SAFINA (25) sits cross-legged in front of a mirror, not unlike the one in Avery's room. We do not see her face, just her hands as she does her makeup.

VOICE (CONT'D)

*When she talks, she laughs with a
vinyl tongue
Wrapped in plastic like all the
other ones
They line her room
I bought them
She keeps the receipts*

Avery sits down, hugging her legs to her chest. Safina carefully brushes glue on a fake lash and waits.

VOICE (CONT'D)

*Oh, how it makes my heart happy
 How they all stare from their
 corners
 Sway in their collars and khakis
 But each evening she'll dance
 through the sea
 Of all people she comes back to me*

Avery looks to the side and sees Waves, sitting on her knees on the white carpet. Fully absorbed in Safina's performance, she leans forward, as if trying to get as close as possible.

Safina places the fake lash over the real.

SAFINA

*Kind then callous, unsure and
 flighty
 The girl from Center City comes
 running
 And when she knocks
 I'll sigh
 And toss down my key
 She does not see
 She does not see
 She does not*

Safina sits back from the mirror and we see her face in full. She blinks a few times.

We see Avery, now standing, from the perspective of the stage. The audience reappears, obscuring her face. Sound returns slowly as if surfacing from underwater. At full volume, the applause is indistinguishable from rain.

LATER

The gang wait in a makeshift green room. The concert crew works around them, dismantling equipment and the flimsy partitions that separate the room from the rest of the venue.

Calvin spins in an office chair. Waves and Saf sit at a keyboard: Saf picking out notes; Waves poorly copying her.

CALVIN

Saf, you're a really good singer.

WAVES

Yeah, why don't I ever hear you sing?

SAF
 (shrugging)
 I didn't know I knew how.

WAVES
 You don't have to know how to sing
 you just do it.
 (singing)
 Like this!

CALVIN
 (singing)
 Like this!

Waves and Calvin harmonize a few extra off-key notes.

WAVES
 Now you.

Saf laughs and looks down shyly.

CALVIN
 I wanna know what old me is like. I
 hope I'm famous like Saf.

WAVES
 Yeah, Saf, why does your old you
 get to be cool and mine's all...

She points to Avery, who has taken to picking at a water
 bottle label and not blinked in some minutes.

WAVES (CONT'D)
 Why are you being weird?

AVERY
 I'm not being weird.

CALVIN
 Are you nervous to see Safina?

AVERY
 Why would I be nervous?

CALVIN
 Cuz she's a cool famous rockstar
 and you're-

AVERY
 I'm what?

Waves gives her an up-down and raises her eyebrows.

As Avery attempts to formulate a defense against herself, the crew removes the final partition beside her.

SAFINA (O.S.)

Hi, Avery.

Avery hesitantly spins her chair. Before she can respond, blue and red lights flash on Safina's face.

Elliot flips open a window and peeks out.

ELLIOT

Ayo, JOSH, that's you.

JOSH (20, white), latches the case on his audio mixer and jogs toward the stairwell.

Safina, unbothered, pulls her bag from the pile at her feet.

SAFINA

Wanna get out of here?

EXT. GILBERT'S SHOES - NIGHT

Safina leads the gang and some lingering attendees downstairs, through the back door, and down an alleyway. She signals for them to pause. Avery peers onto the street.

A few feet away, Josh chats with two cops while casually blocking the store entrance.

Avery gives the okay and the crowd slips out, dispersing across the street.

AVERY

Are they gonna be okay? Should we, like, call-

SAFINA

The cops?

AVERY

Right.

SAFINA

They'll be fine. Elliot says it's so routine they can time it in place of raising the house lights.

They turn the corner. The kids are ahead, following some of the cool youth up a set of overpass stairs.

AVERY

Well, he always was way too good at
throwing parties he definitely
should've been caught for...

EXT. THE RAIL PARK - NIGHT

The stairs open onto an elevated green space that was once a
segment of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Waves and Calvin take turns playing king of the hill on the
raised wooden platforms that run alongside the gravel path.
Saf leans against a railing, quietly inspecting her older
self as Safina approaches with Avery rambling behind.

AVERY

...though the legality of these are
also questionable. But at least now
he's getting paid for it so-

Safina stops abruptly and turns to face Avery.

AVERY (CONT'D)

What?

SAFINA

Are you gonna tell me why you're
here?

While Avery searches for an answer, Calvin pushes Waves off
the platform, sending her stumbling into Safina.

WAVES

Sorry!

Safina smiles. She likes kids.

SAFINA

You're good.

WAVES

Wow, you're really pretty!

Calvin pops up behind her.

CALVIN

Do you recognize me?!

Safina pretends to think.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

(sighing)

You're just pretending to be nice.

Waves pats Calvin on the back.

WAVES

It's not your fault. Part of us
being time travellers must be that
we get secret identity magic!

SAFINA

You're time travellers? When did
you come from?

WAVES

2003!

SAFINA

(laughing)

Whatchu know about 2003?

WAVES

Last night me and Saf played Sims
and we made all the boys in our
class and made them go in the pool
and then we deleted the ladder.

Safina smiles as if to laugh again but stops. She notices Saf
staring at her.

Waves and Calvin continue their conversation in the
background.

CALVIN

I'm in your class!

WAVES

It's okay, we made you the baby.

CALVIN

I don't wanna be the baby.

They continue to argue in the background. Safina looks back
to Avery, who has given up trying to formulate words.

SAFINA

Do you know them?

Avery hesitates. She nods.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

And...?

AVERY

So do you...

Waves steps between Avery and Safina.

WAVES
You're not very good at this.

CALVIN
(groaning)
Can you tell her already? I am
starving.

WAVES
Yeah, just tell her. Saf is like a
billion times smarter than us,
she'll get it.

SAFINA
Get what?

AVERY
Ahh...

WAVES
Fine, fine, I guess I just have to
do everything myself.

AVERY
(frustrated)
Avery.

WAVES
(mocking)
Ay-vuh-ree!

Avery and Waves glare at each other. The ensuing silence
causes them to look back at Safina in unison.

Safina stares intently at them. A few raindrops fall.

CALVIN
Okay, people, let's wrap this up.
They're both Avery. You're both
Safina. I'm Calvin cuz you always
save the best for last. Got it?

SAFINA
(laughing)
For real?

CALVIN
Yup.

WAVES
Mhmm.

Safina looks to Avery, expecting her to refute the claim.

SAFINA

For real?

Avery nods. Safina's eyes drift to Saf. Her eyes squint like she's going to interrogate her. Safina steps closer.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

How do I know you're really me?

SAF

How do I know you're really me?

Saf looks to Waves, who nods encouragingly. Saf hops down a step to bring her eye to eye with Safina.

SAF (CONT'D)

Prepare for trouble.

Safina stares at her. Saf repeats, motioning for her to complete the phrase.

SAF (CONT'D)

Prepare for trouble.

Safina is at a loss. Only one thing comes to mind.

SAFINA

And make it double?

Saf grins. Safina reaches out to touch her, but Saf anticipates and steps back, shaking her head. Safina gets it.

The Averys look at their respective Safinas.

AVERY

Dude.

Waves laughs openly at Saf.

WAVES

You are so weird.

Raindrops dot the gravel. One hits Calvin's face and he wipes it away dramatically. And looks up at the darkening sky.

CALVIN

That's it.

He takes off down the path.

CALVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Batten the hatches! Hug your loved ones! There's a storm a brewin'!

INT. SILK CITY - NIGHT

Tierra Whack's "Flea Market" plays low on the jukebox.

Avery and Safina sit in a back booth of the mostly deserted diner. The kids inhale french fries in the neighboring booth behind Avery.

Safina processes Avery's recap. She takes a breath and nods.

A SERVER refills Avery and Safina's coffee. They both acknowledge the server because they are kind people.

AVERY

I'm sorry. Thanks.

SAFINA

Thanks. Why are you sorry?

AVERY

I don't know. It's a lot to spring on you.

SAFINA

It is a lot.

AVERY

Well, you didn't faint. So I'd say you're taking it better than I did.

SAFINA

What do we do with them... us?

AVERY

We haven't settled on vernacular yet. Also, do you remember when we first started calling me Waves?

SAFINA

I feel like I've just always called you that.

AVERY

Apparently not, because I just third party watched my own nickname get made. On our way here. By them.

They watch as the kids play with jelly packets. Calvin flicks a marmalade missile at Saf and Waves' concord grape fort. It withstands the attack and they raise their fists in victory.

SAFINA

Wow. Calvin Wylie.

AVERY

I know. I tried looking him up on social media, but he's either a total Luddite or he joined the online exodus... When did he move?

SAFINA

Summer before sophomore year. Like around this time, I remember it was right before your Labor Day party.

AVERY

Did he ever tell you why he left?

SAFINA

I remember texting him and him answering way later that his parents wanted to be closer to family. But I don't think we really talked after that.

AVERY

Honestly, I forgot how good of friends we were with him. Like it really was always the three of us like that. And I get it, but...I wish we'd tried harder.

Realizing she's implicated Safina by saying 'we', she backtracks.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Not saying you didn't, I mean me.

SAFINA

No, you're right. We could've been better. Kinda got overshadowed by some stuff.

Safina's comment hangs as they look at each other. Avery breaks eye contact as she goes to speak.

The diner door chimes open and Elliot and crew walk in laughing. Safina whispers to Avery through her teeth.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Did you tell Elliot?

AVERY

I may have said they're my cousin and her friends.

SAFINA

Dude.

Elliot sees Avery and Safina and walks over.

ELLIOT
Well this is fun.

Safina and Avery straighten up.

SAFINA
Citation?

ELLIOT
Nope. Our boy Josh over there is
exceedingly charismatic.

AVERY
You mean exceedingly white.

ELLIOT
Yup. Charmed them long enough for
us to dip out the back. He's our
real life bard of the party.

He grins at Safina. She roles her eyes.

SAFINA
I can't with you.

AVERY
Huh?

Elliot opens his mouth. Safina cuts him off.

SAFINA
Don't encourage him.

ELLIOT
So how long do you have the
halflings?

Avery gives him a puzzled look.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
The kids.

AVERY
Uh, just the night. They're getting
picked up tomorrow morning.

CALVIN
We are?

SAF
By who?

WAVES

Liar! You can't leave us cuz you
need us to grow up to be you.

Elliot makes a face at Waves' response. Safina shoots a look
to Saf, who kicks Waves under the table.

CALVIN

(singing in a Texas accent)
I wanna go hoooooome, home.

Safina gets an idea.

SAFINA

Elliot, does CodaChromatic have a
national mailing list?

ELLIOT

They do.

SAFINA

Would you happen to have access to
said mailing list?

ELLIOT

I would.

SAFINA

Could you be convinced to let me
see it?

Elliot takes out his phone and holds it at his chest.

ELLIOT

Could you be convinced to do
another show next week?

SAFINA

Next month?

Elliot navigates to a page and hands her the phone.

ELLIOT

I want to ask, but it being you
two, I feel like it won't do me any
good.

He side-eyes a grin at Avery. Avery smiles weakly, quickly
returning her attention to Safina.

AVERY

What are you thinking?

Safina types variations on 'Calvin Wylie' in the search bar.
No results. She sets the phone on the table.

SAFINA
It was a long shot.

Avery thinks for a moment. She leans over the kids' booth.

AVERY
Calvin, what's your screen name?

Calvin rattles off an intelligible string of words.

SAFINA
One more time.

Calvin stands on the booth. He clears his throat and slowly enunciates.

CALVIN
Big Ex. Little Ex. Line-

AVERY
Line like a dash?

CALVIN
No. The lower line.

SAFINA
An underscore?

CALVIN
Yeah, the lower line. I'll start over.

His finger mimics the words 'ex' and 'line' as he speaks.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Big Ex. Little Ex. Line. King. Da. Cal.

WAVES
Like the roller coaster.

CALVIN
Yeah. Then line. Five. Five. Line. Little Ex. Big Ex.

Safina types 'Xx_KingDaCal55_xX' into the search bar.

SAFINA
KingDaCal, added eight months ago to CodaChromatic Pittsburgh.

AVERY

Guess we're going to Pittsburgh.

ELLIOT

And these two things correlate how?

CALVIN

My grandma lives in Pittsburgh!

AVERY

Why didn't you say something before?

CALVIN

You didn't ask.

Waves leans toward Saf.

WAVES

Where are we going?

SAF

Pittsburgh.

WAVES

Ah.

She nods and sits back up. She leans in again.

WAVES (CONT'D)

Where's that?

Safina nudges Avery.

SAFINA

We should probably get going.

Elliot's confusion veers toward concern.

ELLIOT

Saf.

From the corner of his eye, Elliot notices that a different head perks up at the sound of his sister's name. Saf realizes her slip up and her eyes flash to Safina for help.

SAFINA

Oookay.

Safina slides out of the booth and presses the phone into Elliot's hand. She backs toward the door.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
El, I love you. I thank you. Kids!
Home. Yeah?

The kids jump up and scramble around Elliot.

CALVIN
It's past our bedtime.

WAVES
Wayyy past our bedtime.

Avery throws cash on both tables.

AVERY
Bye El, good seeing you, great
show!

She hurries out the door, leaving Elliot in stunned silence
as a server clears the table around him.

EXT. SILK CITY - NIGHT

Avery meets Safina outside.

AVERY
You okay?

SAFINA
I just didn't want to drag Elliot
into this.

AVERY
I don't think you could drag Elliot
into anything. He'd want to help.

SAFINA
This isn't his mess to fix. Those
aren't Elliot and KJ's younger
selves over there. They're ours.
This is about us.

AVERY
I wasn't thinking of it like that.

SAFINA
I'm sure you weren't.

A beat.

AVERY
My car's in Jersey.

SAFINA

As in the car you just told me has
a busted tail light?

AVERY

I know, it's not ideal.

SAFINA

Not ideal is the moving violation
we'd get when we're pulled over ten
minutes down 76. Arrested is what
we get for three counts of reckless
endangerment of a minor.

Or do seat belt laws not apply to
inter-dimensional passengers? I
mean I guess you could argue it's
still one seat per discrete person.

AVERY

Ya done?

SAFINA

Almost.

Avery watches as Safina walks into the diner and up to
Elliot's table. It looks like banter until Elliot's face
turns concerned. His eyes flit to Avery.

Avery diverts her attention to her phone and pretends to text
until Safina comes back. Avery looks up as Safina approaches.
Safina smiles and dangles a pair of keys. She breezes past.

AVERY

Am I supposed to follow you?

SAFINA

No, I'll get the car. You can get
the kids out the street.

She turns the corner and Avery sees the kids down the street
with some TEENS who are teaching them to skateboard.

Avery looks alarmed. She trudges after them.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Avery and the kids wait on the curb.

WAVES

Does Big Safina have a rockstar
car?

AVERY

What qualifies as a rockstar car?

WAVES

Like a convertible. Or a limo. Or a purple punch buggy cuz it's Saf's favorite color.

CALVIN

I bet it's a tour bus with her name on it in big lights!

AVERY

I wouldn't put it past her.

A car turns the corner and pulls over, illuminating them in its headlights.

The gang squints through the light. Behind the hazy halogen lights is the silhouette of a station wagon.

Waves and Saf gasp excitedly and the kids run to the car. Safina emerges from the driver side. Avery stands up.

AVERY (CONT'D)

My god, it lives.

Safina gives an affection tap on the roof of the 2001 Gold Ford Taurus.

INT. THE TAURUS - ROUTE 76W, PA - NIGHT

A Tamogachi jangles among the many keys that share a ring with the Taurus keys.

Avery types an email to Calvin on her phone.

AVERY

I can't believe this thing is still in one-piece. Much less street legal...is it street legal?

SAFINA

More than yours is right now.

AVERY

Elliot is the original hipster, after all.

SAFINA

He is. Which is why Elliot's commute is on our grandfather's vintage road bike.

Avery looks up.

AVERY
You took the wagon.

SAFINA
I took the wagon.

Avery presses send.

AVERY
Welp, it's not my most poetic slide
into someone's DMs, but...

Safina's eyes narrow. The left fully blinks. Avery interprets
it as her being tired.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Do you want me to drive?

SAFINA
No, thank you.

AVERY
Okay, I am perfectly capable of
operating a vehicle.

SAFINA
Avery, I have been in car accidents
with you. On my street. At five
miles an hour.

AVERY
You can't pass on a residential
road. If that lady just let it go
she wouldn't have been found eighty
percent liable for sideswiping a
car turning into a driveway.

SAFINA
And the time with my mailbox?

AVERY
That... wasn't great.

Safina raises her eyebrows, her point made. Avery eyes the CD
changer.

AVERY (CONT'D)
You still got CDs in there?

Safina presses play on the stereo. The old CD changer
stutters in protest but eventually comes to life.

The first few seconds of a song play. Avery recognizes it as a particularly explicit Lil Wayne track.

Avery laughs and awkwardly looks away, fully expecting Safina to skip the song. She doesn't. Avery glances at the kids.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Um.

The song plays. Safina's finger hovers over the skip button.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Safina.

Safina makes no moves. Avery grabs her hand and makes her press the button. A new song starts up.

Safina looks Avery dead in the eye. Her gaze travels down. Avery realizes she is still holding Safina's hand. She lets go. Safina smirks. Embarrassed, Avery looks out the window.

Waves leans forward. Avery recoils, afraid of them touching.

WAVES

I have to pee.

AVERY

We just left the diner.

WAVES

I went at the diner. And now I gotta again.

Saf raises a finger and recites.

SAF

Never forgo the opportunity to relieve oneself.

Safina snorts. Avery looks at her.

SAFINA

Our dad always say that.

CALVIN

I gotta pee, too.

Safina glances at Avery.

SAFINA

Coffee?

AVERY

Please.

Safina slides into the right lane.

EXT. REST STOP - NIGHT

Safina and Avery pull up to the gas pump. They all get out.
The kids sprint for the entrance.

AVERY
Hey!

SAFINA
I'll go. Fill it regular.

Safina hands Avery her credit card. Avery looks utterly lost.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
You're joking.

Avery shrugs.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
You're twenty-five. You live in a
different state!

AVERY
I get gas in Jersey...

Safina takes the card and sets the pump to auto. Avery sulks.

AVERY (CONT'D)
It's cheaper there.

Safina shakes her head and goes to catch up with the kids.

INT. REST STOP - NIGHT

The rest stop is amidst an identity crisis. A space eternally under renovation. Decades of opposing design trends clash against each other, creating a double-vision aesthetic. A poorly-registered screen print in three dimensions.

The kids wash their hands at a long sink. The bathroom is unnaturally nice for a rest stop.

They buy too many snacks and take every brochure from the tourism display.

INT. THE TAURUS - ROUTE 76W, PA - NIGHT

The kids are jacked up on sugar.

SAFINA

I don't care if it means we cease to exist, I'm going to kill them.

AVERY

I thought that red dye stuff was just something people said to make other people feel like bad parents. I didn't think it actually worked liked that.

SAFINA

How'd they even pay for it all? We did not have that type of allowance.

AVERY

I thought you gave them money.

A wallet drops into Avery's lap.

WAVES

You left it on the seat when you got out.

CALVIN

You're lucky it's us that found it.

WAVES

Technically, it's my money, too.

SAFINA

A cash advance.

WAVES

Yeah, see she gets it.

Avery takes an aggressive sip of coffee.

SAFINA

Chill. Once the time travel and sugar highs wear off these fools are gonna be asleep in two seconds.

WAVES AND SAF AND CALVIN

Nuh-uh!

LATER

Smash cut. The kids are ptfo.

Avery flips through Safina's CD collection, many of which are mixtapes with faded sharpie titles: Hit Clips n' Frosted Tips; Gel Pen Love Letter; My Brand New Found Fall Out City Soundtrack; Booty Meat.

AVERY

How many of these even play?

SAFINA

Solid thirty percent. Forty if you're down for some chopped n' screwed remixes. I can't bring myself to throw them out.

AVERY

Ah, yes. I too am deeply sentimental about Boner Jams '09.

Avery roots through the armrest and glove-box.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Do you have one of those cassette tape to AUX chord things-

SAFINA

You sound different.

AVERY

Different how?

SAFINA

Just certain words. Not an accent or anything.

AVERY

So not a Boston accent. Because you know I spent four years preventing myself from developing a Boston accent because you told me if I came back from college with a Boston accent we couldn't be friends anymore.

SAFINA

That... sounds like something I would say.

AVERY

Yup.

SAFINA

Sorry.

Avery waves off the apology.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

How'd you know I was in Philly?

AVERY

I didn't, actually. KJ had tickets but couldn't go and I happened to be home and got convinced to take them. And then all this happened and I had no idea what to do or how to reach you or if you were home or even on this side of the country. But I knew Elliot was gonna be there. And so here we are.

SAFINA

That's an absurd string of coincidences.

AVERY

And yet somehow still the least absurd thing about today.

SAFINA

That is some fate shit.

AVERY

That would explain how easily I got talked into dropping fifty dollars on a random concert by my serial monogamist hoe of a sister.

SAFINA

Uh, tickets were pay what you can. It was a free show.

AVERY

Freaking KJ.

SAFINA

How is she?

AVERY

She's good. She is winning college, if that's a thing you can do.

SAFINA

I feel like KJ was always winning college. Even when she wasn't in college yet.

AVERY

She was built for it. How's your dad?

SAFINA

He's chillin. I think he wishes me
and El were home more.

AVERY

What about you? Where are you
living?

SAFINA

Atlanta. For a while now. Before
that was LA. Chicago. New York
before all that and I was like
never again.

AVERY

No?

SAFINA

I mean, I say that. And then always
somehow end up there for projects.
Because everything has to happen in
New York apparently. What about
you?

AVERY

I live in Brooklyn. I stayed
another year in Boston after
college. Moved home for a little,
got a job offer and yeah. I'm a
Creative Content Strategist. Or I
was. As of six hours ago I am now a
Creative Content Manager.

SAFINA

What does that entail?

AVERY

You know the thumbs up or down
thing the Romans did to decide if a
gladiator lived or not?

SAFINA

That's historically inaccurate, but
sure.

AVERY

It's basically that. With slightly
higher stakes.

SAFINA

You like it?

Avery throws up her hands.

AVERY
(sarcastically)
It's the place to be.

SAFINA
We're doing really well.

They laugh and exist in comfortable silence for a little.
Avery looks out the window. They pass a billboard with big
block lettering: THE REVOLUTION IS COMING.

AVERY
This is so weird.

SAFINA
Oh, for sure.

Avery glances at the side mirror.

AVERY
I wanna, like, tell them things.

SAFINA
Like what?

AVERY
I don't know. Future wisdom.

SAFINA
You've got wisdom? Cuz I don't
think I know anything about
anything.

AVERY
It just feels like we're supposed
to help them.

SAFINA
Avery, we would not be in this car
right now if it weren't for them.
Who's helping who?

Silence.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
I get what you're saying. About
telling them things. It just sucks
they're not gonna remember it.

AVERY
How do you know?

SAFINA

Do you remember time traveling
fifteen years into the future and
going on a road trip with yourself?

Avery gets the idea. She makes the facial equivalent of a shrug.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Not to pretend I remotely know
anything about the laws of time
travel.

AVERY

No, that makes sense.

Silence.

SAFINA

What would you want to tell them?

AVERY

I guess to pay a little more
attention? To other people's stuff.
To KJ. We're a lot better now but I
could've been kinder to her.

SAFINA

Sure, though if it's any
consolation, KJ was an annoying
little shit. As was Elliot.

AVERY

Thank god we only had one year of
overlap with them in high school. I
don't think I could've handled more
than one season of KJ-Ella goal
celebration.

Avery pauses.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Sorry, it like, being a thing we
named.

SAFINA

It's okay.

AVERY

So would I change it to be KJ-
Elliot now? If I'm talking about
past stuff, pre-transition?

SAFINA

I mean it differs person to person.
But in general you're good just
using their chosen name.

AVERY

Gotchu. So what would you want to
tell them?

SAFINA

Write more? And don't burn all the
trash writing you did cuz you'll
wish you had it later. Go down the
shore on prom weekend like everyone
else and definitely don't stay home
to write a twenty page summary on a
racist novel. Come out earlier.
Quit soccer way earlier.

Silence.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Also maybe don't tweeze the ever-
living shit out of your eyebrows?

AVERY

Oh, if we're doing that, then mine
would be that it's okay if you
don't have every color in the
visible light spectrum represented
in your eye shadow collection.

SAFINA

Or your tracksuit collection.

AVERY

The tracksuits I stand by. I can't
say the same for your jean skirts.

SAFINA

Jean skirts are trendy now.

AVERY

According to who?

SAFINA

Better than jeans *under* skirts.

AVERY

Plaid shorts.

SAFINA

Side bangs.

AVERY
Polos.

SAFINA
Gauchos.

AVERY
Oof.

They sit with the memories of their many fashion indiscretions. Safina glances in the mirror at sleeping Saf.

SAFINA
I'd wanna know to hangout with mom more.

Avery nods.

AVERY
That song you dedicated to her was really beautiful.

Safina responds with a sad smile.

AVERY (CONT'D)
All your songs are.

Silence.

SAFINA
You understand it's really hard for me to be here right now, right?

AVERY
(defensively)
It's hard for me to be here.

Safina stares down the road. Avery is first to break the silence. Her voice is flat.

AVERY (CONT'D)
You never responded when I reached out.

SAFINA
Reaching out isn't seeing my dad at the grocery store and asking him what I'm up to.

AVERY
I texted you. For months.

SAFINA

That you "drove past my house" and
"hope I'm doing well."

AVERY

I drove past your house. And hoped
you were doing well...

SAFINA

Oh, great, I'm glad that's what you
were thinking about. That's not
what I was thinking about.

AVERY

I didn't want to bring it up if you
didn't want to talk about it.

SAFINA

I think it was pretty obvious I
wanted to bring "it" up when I was
crying in your driveway in the
middle of a snowstorm.

AVERY

How is that obvious?

SAFINA

How is that not obvious?

Avery responds quietly and cautiously.

AVERY

I didn't want to say the wrong
thing.

SAFINA

You never want to say the wrong
thing. You live your whole life
worried about saying the wrong
thing. So much so that all you end
up doing is tiptoeing around my
brother's name, sending me weird
coded texts for five years, and
telling me that my songs about you
are "beautiful."

AVERY

That's not fair.

SAFINA

Okay, how is it then?

Silence.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
You asked me to come inside and
watch a movie with your family.

AVERY
(softly)
I didn't want to say the wrong
thing.

SAFINA
I told you I loved you and you
asked if I wanted to come inside
and watch a movie with your family.

A beat.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Literally anything other than that
would've been better.

AVERY
(angrily)
You left.

SAFINA
No, I said "absolutely not" and you
didn't say anything. And then I
left.

AVERY
You could have come inside. And not
left.

A beat.

AVERY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

SAFINA
I'm not asking for an apology.

AVERY
Does that mean I'm not allowed to
be sorry?

A long silence. Indie movie long. The gas light chimes.

AVERY (CONT'D)
I thought I filled it up.

Safina says nothing for a moment. When she finally speaks,
her tone is softer.

SAFINA

You probably did. This thing is a gas guzzler and I wasn't paying attention.

AVERY

Okay. Sorry.

Safina is annoyed - more by the apologizing than the gas.

SAFINA

You're good. There's an exit in a couple miles.

Waves fidgets in her sleep and nestles closer to Saf. The movement causes Saf to blink. She looks to the front seat.

EXT. SHEETZ, HARRISBURG - NIGHT

They pull up to the gas pump. Safina gets out immediately and puts her card in the machine. Avery gets out. She talks over the car.

AVERY

You want anything?

Safina jerks the nozzle out of its holder. She doesn't respond. Avery gives up and walks to the store.

Safina looks through the window at the kids. They all appear to be asleep.

A strong wind blows. Safina sees a shimmer - a blue gum wrapper whirling around the passenger footwell.

AVERY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hey!

FLASHBACK, 2013 - INT. THE TAURUS, SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Match cut. Panning up from the footwell, we see Avery (17) leaning through the passenger window. She wears a soccer uniform and a pre-wrap headband.

AVERY

Who ya texting?

Cut back to Safina (17) in a tie dye shirt and Soffee shorts. She looks up and hits send. Avery's phone buzzes. She smiles.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Oh.

Avery throws her giant blue soccer backpack to the backseat and gets in.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Sorry, I got caught up.

SAFINA
With your fan club?

Avery peels off her socks and puts her feet on the dash.

AVERY
My only fan quit on me... which -
don't get me wrong - I fully
respect. KJ and Ella are flirting
with the other team, I told 'em to
hurry up.

SAFINA
No worries.

Safina throws the Taurus in gear and pulls out of the lot.

INT. THE TAURUS, SOUTH JERSEY TOWN - DAY

AVERY
Are we not waiting for them?

SAFINA
They can walk.

Safina points to the dash. Avery moves her foot, revealing the word 'ELLA' carved into the plastic.

AVERY
Oof. Wait, how did she do that
without you noticing?

SAFINA
By stealing my car, of course.

AVERY
Who was driving??

SAFINA
Who do you think?

AVERY
Seriously? Oh my god. I'm sorry.

SAFINA
Why are you sorry?

AVERY

I don't know. For sharing DNA with that monster child? For my family being a terrible influence on your very lovely, very functional one?

SAFINA

Waves, chill. It's really okay.

AVERY

No, they're dumbasses and they're gonna get killed doing shit like that. Have you told your parents?

SAFINA

Nah, I'm not trying to get anyone in trouble. All my mom would do is stress out anyway.

AVERY

True.

Avery opens the glovebox and pulls out a pack of gum.

AVERY (CONT'D)

How was her appointment?

SAFINA

Fine. Same as before.

AVERY

Good. Or, well, is that good?

SAFINA

Yes, same is good.

AVERY

Good.

Avery unwraps the gum. The blue wrapper falls to the floor. Safina breathes out a laugh.

AVERY (CONT'D)

What?

SAFINA

Nothing.

AVERY

Say what you wanna say.

SAFINA

You see that ball there?

Avery pulls a little blue ball out of the cup holder.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

That is a visual representation of
your time spent within my car.

AVERY

Did you... lick the metal off the
wrappers? Like-

SAFINA

Like how we decorated our phones in
middle school, yup.

AVERY

Exactly how much time did you
devote to setting up this joke?

SAFINA

Not that long. I had a lot of
material to work with.

AVERY

(taunting)

Was it worth it? Am I reacting
appropriately?

Safina simply shrugs.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Fine. I'll just have to ruin your
joke by helping you.

Avery picks up a wrapper. She licks the paper side and starts
to peel away at the metal.

AVERY (CONT'D)

You've started something. You've
started something and it is my
solemn duty to ensure that you live
to regret it.

Avery adds the thin sheet of blue to the gumball. She holds
it up and inspects it in the light.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I hate this. This is an objectively
gross thing that you have done.

SAFINA

And what you just did isn't gross?
That is a literal ball of my spit.

AVERY

Oh, you wanna see gross?

Avery pops the gumball in her mouth and stares at Safina.
Safina breaks eye contact first.

SAFINA

I think we can agree that even
grosser than all of this is taking
out your contacts and instead of
throwing them out like a normal
person, flicking them onto my
carpet.

Avery takes the gumball out of her mouth.

AVERY

So that's what this is about.

SAFINA

Tiny shards of plastic. In my foot.
Three to four times weekly.

AVERY

I don't sleep over that much.

Safina side eyes her. Avery fake pouts.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I aim for the trashcan.

SAFINA

Well, your aim is trash.

INT. THE TAURUS - OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Safina pulls into Avery's driveway.

AVERY

As always, it's been a pleasure.
And... I'll see you after dinner.

Avery gets out of the car. She shuts the door and turns to
leave, but instead leans into the open window.

AVERY (CONT'D)

You know, if the wrappers really
bother you that much, you could
stop secretly refilling the pack I
keep in your car. Just a thought.

Avery flashes a peace sign, the gumball held between her
fingers. She smiles innocently and walks up the driveway.

Safina's eyes narrow. The left fully blinks.

AVERY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Saf.

FLASH FORWARD, PRESENT - EXT. SHEETZ - NIGHT

Having fallen asleep standing upright, Safina jerks awake at the sound of her name. Avery stands next to her.

AVERY
Dude.

SAFINA
Hm?

AVERY
You're full on asleep standing up.

SAFINA
It's cool, I'm good.

AVERY
Saf.

SAFINA
Fine. I just need an hour and I'll be good.

AVERY
As in sleep here? Like *here* here?

Safina gestures to a line of cars parked in a dimmer section of the lot. Avery looks skeptical, but gets in the car.

INT. THE TAURUS, SHEETZ PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Safina lays in the driver seat with her hands on her chest. Avery reclines back and forth a bit before settling against the seat belt. Safina's eyes are closed. Avery fidgets.

AVERY
I am suddenly very awake.

SAFINA
I keep thinking I'm going to fall asleep and when I wake up this will all have been some elaborate fever dream.

Safina turns her head toward Avery. Avery reaches over and places the back of her hand on Safina's forehead.

Safina's eyes are open and she doesn't flinch at the touch. Avery waits a beat then retracts her hand.

AVERY

Nope.

Safina turns back.

SAFINA

Dang.

LATER

Safina wakes up. It's still dark out. She stretches and checks on Avery and the kids, all still asleep.

She flips down the sun visor and inspects her face. She pulls off her fake lashes and drops them into a cupholder.

She lays back again and closes her eyes. It is short lived. She springs the seat upright and puts the car in gear.

INT. THE TAURUS, ROUTE 76W, PA - TWILIGHT

Blue hour. Safina drives with the music low. She glances in the rear-view mirror and sees Saf looking at her.

SAFINA

Morning.

SAF

Are we almost there?

SAFINA

Almost. How'd you sleep?

SAF

Okay. Did you and old Avery get in a fight?

Safina tenses.

SAF (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna remember any of it so you might as well tell me.

SAFINA

Did you hear me say that?

Saf doesn't answer.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
I guess we're just on the same
wavelength, huh?

SAF
We literally have the same brain.
And I'm really smart.

Safina laughs.

SAFINA
We're not as smart as we think we
are.

She looks at Avery, who fidgets in her sleep and murmurs
something unintelligible. Safina cracks a smile.

SAF
Why were you fighting?

Safina takes a moment.

SAFINA
We weren't fighting.

SAF
You sounded mad.

SAFINA
Ah, so you were awake... How much
did you hear?

Saf doesn't respond.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Can I ask you a question?

Saf nods.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Do you think we're like each other?

SAF
Um, I know you said you love her
but it doesn't seem like you like
each other at all.

Safina realizes Saf misheard her question.

SAFINA
Oh shit. I meant do you think we're
alike? As in similar. You and me.

Saf giggles.

SAF
You said shit.

SAFINA
Don't say shit.

SAF
But if I can't say shit then you
can't say shit.

SAFINA
Shit. We are the same.

SAF
Are you and Avery enemies now?

A beat. Safina looks through the rear-view at Waves, snoozing in what should be an utterly uncomfortable position.

SAF (CONT'D)
That one, I mean.

She points to Avery, passed out in a configuration similar to her younger counterpart.

Safina proceeds with caution.

SAFINA
What makes you think that?

SAF
You're pretty mean to each other.
And anytime she talks your eye does
that thing my eye does when I'm
thinking about stuff.

Safina's eyes narrow. The left one fully blinks. Saf watches through the rear-view mirror.

SAF (CONT'D)
Yeah, that.

SAFINA
We're not enemies.

SAF
Then why did she say you guys
aren't friends anymore?

SAFINA
Avery said that?

SAF
Yah.

SAFINA
Did she elaborate?

SAF
Huh?

SAFINA
Did she say more?

SAF
No.

SAFINA
Of course not.

SAF
Are you not friends anymore cuz
you're girlfriend and girlfriend
now?

SAFINA
No, we are not girlfriend and
girlfriend.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Did you used to be?

Safina doesn't answer.

SAF
But you said you love her.

SAFINA
Yup.

SAF
Does she love you?

Safina half turns around.

SAFINA
You wanna wake her up and ask her?

SAF
If you love her then why don't you
wanna be her friend anymore?

SAFINA
Is this not upsetting to you?

SAF
I don't know, it doesn't really
make any sense.

Safina returns her attention to the road. We understand the conversation to be over.

The shot lingers on Avery's contorted figure. The early morning light makes her appear blue.

INT. THE TAURUS - ROUTE 376W - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Saf and Waves flick hairbands at each other. Calvin strings a chain of found objects: hairbands; gum wrappers; earbuds.

SAF

What do you think old you is like?

CALVIN

I think I'm an inventor. And I have ten kids and we make stuff together.

WAVES

What kinda stuff?

CALVIN

I dunno... Oo! Maybe I'm a mermaid.

SAF

But the ocean is so far away.

CALVIN

Okay, then I'm a mountain mermaid. And I live in a waterfall.

Saf and Waves concur that this is a good solution.

FRONT SEAT

Avery slouches with her feet on the dash, aggressively scrolling through her phone.

SAFINA

Find anything useful?

AVERY

So far I have a high school soccer record, an 8-Tracks account last updated in 2015, and a petition he wrote demanding that...

(reading)

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

Chipotle employees may not remove any portion of the initial scoop of protein from your bowl if you change your order to half-and-half, nor should the change result in an up-charge for the half-scoop in question.

SAFINA

People were still on 8-Tracks in 2015?

AVERY

That's what you locked onto?

SAFINA

(shrugging)

I think you're entitled to the half-scoop.

Calvin leans forward.

CALVIN

You got games on there?

AVERY

No.

Waves leans forward and zaps Avery. Calvin uses the distraction to grab the phone. Avery groans.

SAFINA

What's it feel like?

AVERY

I can't really describe it. But I don't recommend. You're lucky yours likes you.

SAFINA

(gesturing to Avery's presence)

What is this about?

AVERY

What?

SAFINA

This "Kids don't like me so I don't like them" persona you've crafted. Does it come in one of your lifestyle subscription boxes? Or is it a perk of the zipcode?

AVERY
I liked you better when you didn't
talk.

SAFINA
Oh, I'm sure.

BACK SEAT

The kids, initially confused at the lack of buttons, quickly
get past the learning curve to navigate the phone.

CALVIN
These are weird.

WAVES
Oo! Is that Spyro?

CALVIN
Where?

WAVES
The fire one.

Calvin taps the screen. The kids frown. He swipes and their
eyes widen.

SAF
That's not Spyro...

Avery lunges into the back seat and reclaims her phone.

Safina poorly stifles her laughter. She gets an idea.

SAFINA
Lemme see your phone.

Avery is a deer in headlights. She clutches her phone to her
chest. Safina rolls her eyes.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Fine.

Safina puts on her flashers and pulls over. She takes out her
phone and opens the same dating app. Avery catches on.

AVERY
Honestly, I'm annoyed I didn't
think of this first..

SAFINA
Bet I find him before you.

AVERY

Wait, time out, I need to change my settings.

Safina raises her eyebrows.

SAFINA

Oh do you now?

The kids lean forward.

WAVES

I wanna play.

SAFINA

You can be on my team. Saf and Calvin can help Avery. She'll need it.

AVERY

Rude...

(to Waves and Calvin)

Okay, when you see the name Calvin yell stop.

Time passes. They swipe through a slew of profiles.

Avery, Waves, and Calvin yell out in unison. Avery shows her phone to the group. The profile shows a young man in colorful street wear.

Calvin 25

Lives in Pittsburgh, PA
2 miles away

[he/him]

AVERY (CONT'D)

Should I swipe right?

SAFINA

Screenshot his pics first, they might have clues.

Avery looks through the profile. One of the photos shows him flipping through records. Avery uses her phone to lookup local record stores.

AVERY

Okay, this one was taken at a record store in Southside on Carson Street.

SAFINA

Onwards.

Safina puts the Taurus in gear.

INT. THE TAURUS - SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

SAFINA

(to Calvin)

Any of this look familiar?

CALVIN

Yeah! I think? I dunno.

AVERY

You said you go to your grandma's a lot, yeah?

CALVIN

Gimme a break, I'm only eight-years-old.

AVERY

For twelve more days. You're basically nine.

She sticks her tongue out at Calvin. He giggles. Safina smiles.

EXT. CARSON STREET - SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

They walk to the record store and find it closed. Safina looks in the window and sees a sign: 'New Hours.' She checks the time on her phone.

SAFINA

It's okay, we can ask around some other places 'til they open.

She returns the phone to her pocket. Waves sneaks up and takes it without Safina noticing.

Farther down the block, shops are just starting to open. Avery and Safina take the lead, showing Big Cal's picture to people.

The kids hang back, covertly trying to guess Safina's password. Waves passes the phone to Saf. She takes a moment to think, resting her thumb on the home button just long enough for her fingerprint to unlock the phone.

CALVIN
How'd you do that?!

SAFINA
I don't know...

Waves beams at Saf.

WAVES
You're magical.

The gangs come to a storefront unlike the others. It is a street wear pop-up, the kind that always looks to have too few items and too many staff. Everything sits on cardboard boxes hastily painted to look like pedestals. The idea of transience made tangible.

SAFINA
He did have really good fits in all those pictures.

Safina holds open the door. Avery glances at the squad of AMBIGUOUSLY GENDERED HYPEBEAST EMPLOYEES (20s).

AVERY
Ah, do you wanna take this one? I can watch the kids.

Safina stares at her. She realizes Avery doesn't understand the pejorative subtext of her words. She takes Avery's phone and goes inside.

The kids swing circles around neighboring lamp posts, hifiving with each rotation.

Avery watches through the window as Safina chats up the employees, completely at ease in the environment.

Saf whispers to Waves, who nods emphatically. Waves leans over and grabs Saf's hand. Saf leans over and pokes Avery. A mild shock runs through them. Waves and Saf giggle. Avery yelps in surprise.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Why?

WAVES
The Scientific Method! What's next?

SAF
We need more data.

Calvin hopscotch jumps down the sidewalk. It is unclear if one is drawn there or if he is using his imagination.

Safina come out and find Avery fake cowering behind a lamp post, ready to dodge the kids.

AVERY

Watch out, they're experimenting.

Waves grabs Saf's hand and tries to poke Safina. She sees it coming and raises her leg to block. Waves' finger pokes the rubber sole of Safina's shoe, countering the effect.

SAF

We must revise our hypothesis.

They go join Calvin. Safina holds out the phone to Avery.

SAFINA

Your sister called. Four times.

AVERY

Sorry, ignore her.

Avery takes the phone and is immediately greeted with a double chin view of her own face as it lights up with an incoming FaceTime call. Safina slides out of view.

Avery accepts and KJ appears. She is lying at the foot of her bed, drinking a milkshake.

AVERY (CONT'D)

What.

KJ

Ask me how my babysitting date went.

AVERY

How did your babysitting date go?

KJ

Totally fine. How 'bout yours?

KJ smiles wickedly. Safina snickers from the other side of a sidewalk clothes rack.

AVERY

Huh?

Calvin pauses mid-hop. He looks at the ground with curiosity.

Avery browses the rack. KJ rolls her eyes and rephrases.

KJ

What'd you end up doing last night?

AVERY

Ah, went to the concert, went home.

Calvin stands one foot raised, one foot in a white chalk box. Saf and Waves stand behind Calvin.

A white chalk line extends from box. Their eyes trace the line as it continues down the block and out of sight.

KJ

That all?

AVERY

Oh, and got extorted by my little sister.

KJ shakes a box of chicken nuggets.

KJ

All for a good cause. Where are you right now?

AVERY

Center City. Doing a little self-care shopping before I have to go back to reality. Everything is so much cheaper here...

KJ

Mhm, yeah. So you're like, definitely not in Pittsburgh with Safina Samuels right now.

We see Avery's reaction through KJ's phone. Avery goes red and glances off-screen. Safina shrugs.

KJ (CONT'D)

If you're gonna be shady you should probably turn off Find My Friends.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Expose these hoes!

KJ

And Elliot may have told me.

KJ turns the phone. Elliot sips a milkshake and waves from a beanbag chair. A half-eaten burger and fries sit beside him.

ELLIOT

Thank you for sustaining us!

Safina hears her brother's voice and laughs. She glances past Avery. Her smile drops.

SAFINA

Avery.

Avery turns around and sees that the kids are gone.

KJ

(laughing)

You shady ass bitc-

Avery hangs up. She and Safina look at each other.

AVERY

This is bad.

SAFINA

It's not great.

Safina goes into the shop to ask the employees if they saw where the kids went.

Avery gets a text from an unsaved number.

INT. POP UP SHOP - DAY

Avery steps inside the shop and hands her phone to Safina.

TEXT FROM 856-555-0119

hi it's waves ur rly slow we went to find calvin brb

SAFINA

Of course.

Incoming FaceTime from KJ. Safina answers.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Put my brother on.

KJ

You two are grumpy.

The screen goes wild as KJ's flings her phone to Elliot.

ELLIOT

Howdy, sis.

SAFINA

I need you to go to location share
and tell me where my phone's at.

Elliot raises his eyebrows.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Please, Elliot.

Elliot sighs. He pulls out his phone. A notification appears on Avery's screen.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Thanks, El.

ELLIOT
(exaggerated)
WHATEV-

Safina hangs up. She gives Avery her phone as they exit.

SAFINA
(amused)
Did you delete my number?

Avery rolls her eyes, but is obviously flustered. She brushes past Safina, but ends up holding the door for her. Safina smirks and continues ahead. Avery trudges after her.

INTERCUT - KIDS AND AVERY/SAFINA - EXT. SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

KIDS

An uncharacteristically sunny day in Pittsburgh. The kids follow the white line, moving from concrete to grass to trails and through a series of tunnels.

AVERY/SAFINA

Avery and Safina walk through town. They sweat in the heat. Avery repeatedly calls Safina's phone.

AVERY
Do you leave your phone on silent?

SAFINA
Yes. Because I am a normal human.

Avery redials. Safina can tell she is anxious.

SAFINA
Hey, we know where they are. We're good.

Avery stops abruptly.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
What?

AVERY
It died.

KIDS

They exit a tunnel and arrive at the edge of a soccer field. The line ends underneath a field marking machine.

They peer into the machine's basin. They touch the chalk, getting it all over their hands and then everywhere else.

AVERY/SAFINA

SAFINA

Do you remember the place?

AVERY

Yeah, we're close. I think.

SAFINA

Close doesn't really help us if we don't know where close is.

AVERY

I can get us there.

SAFINA

Or instead of walking around aimlessly we take two seconds to go back to the car and charge your phone.

AVERY

And by the time we do that they'll be somewhere else entirely.

SAFINA

Then we get Elliot to send us their location again.

AVERY

Assuming your location is still updating. I know you. So I know your phone's been half-dead since we left Philly. But because I know you, I know that if I said anything about it you'd tell me to chill.

SAFINA

How is that relevant?

AVERY

How is that not relevant?

SAFINA

Are we really gonna argue about phones right now?

AVERY

You have a car charger!

SAFINA

That you were using.

AVERY

THAT I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU. And you know that. I would have given you whatever. If you had just asked. If you had just asked... me. You know that. I just don't know why it always has to be so like this with you all the time.

SAFINA

YOU ARE FIXATING ON NOTHING.

AVERY

I AM BEING AN ADULT.

SAFINA

YOU'RE THROWING A FIT.

AVERY

YOU NEVER ASKED ME HOW I FELT.

A beat.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Just ask. Next time.

Another beat.

SAFINA

For the charger.

KIDS

Slow motion. Saf and Waves stand side by side. Water sprays over them, washing away the chalk.

Calvin holds his thumb over a hose nozzle.

Waves' and Saf's eyes follow the arc of a soccer ball as it flies through the shower of water.

A whistle blows.

INT. THE TAURUS - SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

Avery and Safina sit in silence as Avery's phone charges. Finally, it turns on. Avery texts Elliot.

AVERY

He says the last update was twenty minutes ago. But we're close.

Safina puts the Taurus in gear.

EXT. EMERALD VIEW PARK - DAY

They walk. Safina is quiet. Avery talks nonstop. Half to herself, half-hoping that Safina will break her silent treatment.

She eventually recognizes that Safina isn't angry-quiet, she's anxious-quiet. Avery switches modes.

AVERY

Hey, they're okay. They're together and they're okay. They're us, right? And we're still alive, so... So we put ourselves in our shoes.

Saf blinks, annoyed.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Saf, just...

Safina stiffens at the nickname. Avery gives the "go along with me" sign.

Avery tentatively takes Safina's hands and places them over her eyes. She holds Safina's shoulders and gently spins her.

AVERY (CONT'D)

You're you. You're eight years old and you're on an adventure. Now, which way are you going?

SAFINA

Avery.

AVERY

Just...

Avery steps back. Safina finishes her turn and reluctantly points ahead. She opens her eyes. Avery walks into view.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Onward.

SAFINA

That's it?

AVERY

Yup.

SAFINA

So your plan is to walk around.
Aimlessly. Seriously, how is this
you being the "adult" in the
situation right now?

Avery looks behind herself.

AVERY

Lucky for us, I won't have to
answer that.

Avery steps aside and Safina sees four figures running toward them.

Waves spreads out her arms as she nears the invisible finish line between Avery and Safina. Saf takes advantage of Waves' showboating and catches up. It's a tie. They fall next to each other.

WAVES

(panting)

I win! I win.

Winded, Saf simply shakes her head and points to herself. They look up at Avery and Safina.

WAVES (CONT'D)

Who won?

The sun beats. The girls breathe heavy as they wait for Avery and Safina to respond. Safina sighs in relief. Avery laughs and shakes her head.

The sound of footsteps. Avery and Safina turn back around. Calvin half skips / half gallops, equating to an easy jog for BIG CAL (25, Black) beside him. They reach the girls.

CALVIN

Ta-da!

Calvin strikes a pose as he presents Big Cal. Despite their differing dimensions, their faces are identical.

Big Cal uses the sleeve of his referee jersey to wipe sweat from his brow. He gives a wave.

BIG CAL

It's been a minute.

Safina waves back.

SAFINA
 Been several.

The adults survey each other, unsure how to proceed. Avery breaks the ice.

AVERY
 Oh, my god, can I give you a hug?

She goes in for the hug. Big Cal laughs and reciprocates.

AVERY (CONT'D)
 I am so happy to see you, I'm gonna cry. I can't believe we actually found you.

WAVES
 We found him! You didn't do anything.

CALVIN
 Don't worry, we already told Big Cal everything and he believed us right away. We didn't even have to thunderbolt him or nothing.

Calvin performs a series of movements with his arms. Big Cal realizes he is doing the Sailor Moon pose and comes in at the last moment with finger guns.

BIG CAL
 I have so many questions.

Waves and Saf slide into view. Waves snaps her fingers at the older girls.

WAVES
 Hey! You're not off the hook. Who won?

AVERY
 (to Safina)
 I think it was a tie?

SAFINA
 Yup, tie.

WAVES
 You know it wasn't! You're just saying that so she doesn't get mad at you again, but you know I won, I always win.

AVERY
Well, today you tied.

Avery flashes an apologetic smile to Safina.

WAVES
I know what you're doing.

AVERY
Sorry kid, there's a first time for everything.

SAFINA
I'm sorry, "first time"?

AVERY
Well, yeah. I mean, I've always been faster than you.

SAFINA
That is patently untrue.

AVERY
I'm not saying you can't beat me.
You just never have.

Big Cal playfully twirls a whistle.

BIG CAL
Tie breaker?

WAVES AND SAF
Yes!

AVERY AND SAFINA
No.

BIG CAL
Just a suggestion.

Waves and Saf log roll over to Big Cal.

WAVES
Big Cal is our favorite now.

CALVIN
My me is the best. He plays soccer
and makes rocket ships and he can
do this!
(to Big Cal)
Do the thing!

Big Cal holds his arms out. Waves and Safina lock their hands around his biceps and he lifts them off the ground.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
He's like Superman!

Calvin punches Big Cal in the gut. Elevation shoots through them. Big Cal winces but maintains his smile.

BIG CAL
And you're like Static Shock.

CALVIN
(laughing)
Ow ow ow! I forgot, I forgot, I forgot!

Big Cal sets the girls down. He looks at Avery and Safina.

BIG CAL
So! If I understand correctly, you came here thinking that getting us all together might make time sort itself out and send these buddies back home.

Avery and Safina nod. Calvin takes a moment, as if waiting for that exact scenario to play out.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)
Well, seems like we're all still here, and it's hotter than Hades, so may I suggest we go back to my house and regroup... and maybe get some ice cream?

The kids are hype.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)
Contingent on you helping pack up all the equipment we left behind.

Calvin tags Saf and they take off for the tree-line. Waves jumps in front of Avery.

WAVES
I'll race you.

She looks at Avery earnestly. Avery doesn't read it as such.

AVERY
Safina and I have to-

SAFINA
Nah, I'll get the car.

Avery looks at Safina.

AVERY
Are you sure-

SAFINA
On your marks, get set, go.

Waves takes off. Avery hesitates, still looking at Safina.

AVERY
Shit.

Avery sprints after them.

INT./EXT. THE TAURUS - SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

Safina waits in the Taurus, passively going through her notes app. She looks up and sees the others walking across the field, still a good distance away.

Safina watches Waves and Avery dance around each other: Waves attempting to poke her and Avery doing a surprisingly good job of dodging.

Safina laughs. She starts a new note, but we don't see what she types.

A knock at the window. Safina looks up.

Avery jiggles the handle. It takes a moment for Safina to realize the door is locked. She unlocks it.

AVERY
You good?

SAFINA
Yeah.

AVERY
(laughing)
You wanna let everyone else in?

Safina turns to see the kids' faces smushed into the windows behind her.

BIG CAL (O.S.)
Trunk too, please!

Safina hits unlock an unnecessary number of times.

EXT. BIG CAL'S HOUSE, SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

The Taurus pulls up to a pretty rowhouse. The kids hop out and tease Big Cal a bit before letting him out of the trunk.

Big Cal unlocks the door and tosses the equipment bag inside. The kids run in.

BIG CAL
(to Safina)
Want some company while you park?

SAFINA
Sure.

Avery dramatically trudges up the steps.

AVERY
Alone, again.

Calvin puts a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

BIG CAL
Hey, you're not alone.
(pointing inside)
We're right there with you.

He giggles and goes to the car.

AVERY
You're really just taking this all
in stride aren't you?

BIG CAL
Make yourselves at home.
(pointing between Safina
and himself)
And then make ourselves at home,
too.

Avery shuts the front door.

INT. THE TAURUS - SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

Safina and Big Cal drive slow, scanning for spots.

SAFINA
It is pretty wild how unfazed you
are about all this.

BIG CAL
Do I seem unfazed?

SAFINA

Uh, yah.

Big Cal smiles and nods for a moment. His whole body animates.

BIG CAL

WHEW! I been trynna keep my cool.
You know, for the kids. But oh my
god, let me tell you, inside I was
like whaaaaaaat.

SAFINA

Okay, so you're freaking out, too.

BIG CAL

Super freaked. Just
(he makes the mind-blown
gesture)

SAFINA

Well, you hide it really well.

BIG CAL

Teacher face, baby. Took years to
develop.

SAFINA

You're a teacher?

BIG CAL

Eighth Grade Physics. One part math
formulas, two parts spaghetti
bridges.

SAFINA

Yesss, okay! I like this for you.

BIG CAL

Big fan of kids. Kids are weird.

SAFINA

Did you really believe them right
away?

BIG CAL

Hell no! But at the same time I'm
not about to crush the imaginative
spirit of a child.

Ight, so I'm finishing up coaching
soccer camp, right.

(MORE)

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

Thinking bout going home to my AC
and my bed, get some downtime
before I go to practice tonight.

I turn around and there's these
three little kids. Just standing
there staring at me.

So lil you very politely tells me
their names - including, of course,
my name - and says they're from the
future. Word, I'm about it, kids
have dope stuff to say and deserve
to be heard.

That's when lil me launches into a
LENGTHY recap of an episode from a
twenty-year-old anime. Not to
convince me of anything, just to
tell me. And then lil Avery grabbed
lil me's hand and electrocuted my
bellybutton.

SAFINA

I thought they said they didn't
have to electrocute you?

BIG CAL

They didn't. She's nuts.

SAFINA

Eh, I'm sure she'll grow out of it.
Oh, wait.

They laugh.

BIG CAL

Good to see you two are still
inseparable.

Safina's laugh is hollow.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

Aw, shit.

SAFINA

Nah, I mean... we had a falling out
a couple years ago. But we're good
now.

Big Cal gives Safina time to elaborate. She doesn't.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Ayy.

She slows down to a spot. It's tight.

BIG CAL
Ah... you think?

Safina gives him a dirty look.

INT. KITCHEN - BIG CAL'S HOUSE - DAY

Safina and Big Cal return to find the kids making elaborate sandwiches. The kitchen table is covered in ingredients and most of the cabinets hang open.

CALVIN, SAF, AND WAVES
Hi!

BIG CAL
(to Waves)
Where's you number two?

WAVES
Pretending to be in the bathroom so
she can talk on the phone.

Safina and Big Cal sit at the table.

BIG CAL
What's on the menu?

CALVIN
Everything! Whaddya want? My treat!

SAFINA
(to Saf)
What are you having?

SAF
Half pb&j, half peanut butter and
fluff.

SAFINA
I'll do the same.

BIG CAL
I think I'm in the mood for peanut
butter and pickles.

CALVIN
Peanut butter?! And pickles?!

BIG CAL
What, you never heard of peanut
butter and pickles?

SAFINA
Adults love pickles. You turn
twenty-five and you start putting
them on everything.

BIG CAL
Facts.

Saf makes a disgusted face. Safina winks at her. Saf gets it.

CALVIN
Nope, I don't trust it, I don't
trust it. You gotta take care of
our body! I'm making you a salad...
what goes in a salad?

Avery appears from the hallway.

SAFINA
Avery, when you turned twenty-five
did you start craving pickles?

AVERY
Of course, doesn't everybody?

CALVIN
It's a conspiracy!

Avery steals a potato chip from the Waves' sandwich. Waves
hisses at her.

AVERY
(to Calvin)
Did Safina flex her parallel
parking skills on you?

SAFINA
Oh, so you like that.

AVERY
Yes, I love hyper-masculine
displays of ego via unimportant
tasks.

Safina pulls out her phone.

SAFINA
Well, babe, therein lies part of
your problem in that you think
parallel parking is an unimportant
task.

AVERY

And part of your problem is using infantilizing names to refer to women.

SAFINA

(reading)

"Passenger testimonials describe Avery Ohtori behind the wheel as follows--"

Avery attempts to take the phone from Safina. Safina boxes her out.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Unnatural; anxious without purpose; reactive in the wrong way--"

Safina tosses the phone to Saf.

SAF

(reading)

"Bad; whatever the opposite of fluid is; no athleticism involved--"

WAVES

Hey!

Waves and Saf start their own fight and Saf passes the phone back to Safina.

SAFINA

(reading)

"helpless; not out of control but not controlled; better suited to riding a bus; dangerous and blaming."

Big Cal and Calvin quietly make their sandwich monstrosities.

CALVIN

Why are they fighting?

BIG CAL

They're not fighting.

Big Cal watches Calvin sprinkle white, milk, and dark chocolate chips on his sandwich.

Big Cal lightly taps the table to get Calvin's attention. He nods toward the door and raises his eyebrows.

Calvin nods emphatically and they exit unnoticed.

EXT. CORNER STORE AND RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Calvin and Big Cal exit the store with matching ice cream cones and walk down the street.

BIG CAL

What do you think of the future so far?

CALVIN

It's cool. I like being a time traveler. I do wanna know how to go back and forth though, cuz I got stuff to do back in my time.

BIG CAL

Things to do, people to see?

CALVIN

Yeah.

BIG CAL

Are you anxious about going home?

CALVIN

I don't really get anxious. I don't think Waves and Saf want to go home, though.

BIG CAL

No?

CALVIN

They really wanna hangout with Old Avery and Safina. And each other.

BIG CAL

Being left out doesn't feel good.

CALVIN

I don't really think we're left out. They don't do it on purpose. It's cuz we're Black.

BIG CAL

Maybe. Maybe it's cuz they're girls.

CALVIN

Being a girl is a part-time job. I think I'm mostly a boy.

BIG CAL
I think I'm mostly a boy, too.

CALVIN
Are we alike?

Big Cal takes a moment.

BIG CAL
Do you feel like we're alike?

CALVIN
I dunno. You're bigger and I'm
littler. But we talk the same, I
think. And we have the the same
nose.

BIG CAL
We do. It's a good nose. You know
they say the bigger your nose the
bigger your brain.

Big Cal licks his cone, purposefully getting a dot of ice
cream on his nose. He makes a funny face and Calvin giggles
as Big Cal wipes his nose clean.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)
Lemme tell you, man. You'll meet so
many other friends besides Waves
and Saf. People that look like you,
like the things you like. And I'm
not just saying all that in the
adult "when you're older" way. Cuz
I lived it. So you will, too.

CALVIN
Cool. I'm not mad at Waves and Saf
or anything. They just be googly at
each other.

BIG CAL
(laughing)
Googly at each other! What's that
mean?

CALVIN
You know. They loveee each other.

BIG CAL laughs again. He smiles to himself, then at Calvin.

BIG CAL
Hey, I love you.

Calvin smiles. They walk in silence for a bit.

CALVIN
Can I stay here with you?

Big Cal winces. His heart hurts.

BIG CAL
You can stay long as you want.

Calvin grins.

EXT. BIG CAL'S HOUSE - DAY

They arrive back at Big Cal's house. Calvin is first to go up the walkway.

BIG CAL
Hey.

Calvin pauses on the steps and looks back at Big Cal, still on the sidewalk. He mumbles through a mouthful of ice cream.

CALVIN
(unintelligible)
What?

Big Cal smiles, but his voice is tinged with sadness.

BIG CAL
Let's just you and me hangout a
little longer.

Calvin looks at him curiously. He hops off the step and skips back to the sidewalk.

EXT. HOUSE - SOUTHSIDE FLATS - DAY

They stop outside of an old but well-loved house. Calvin's face lights up. Big Cal is anxious.

They walk up to the porch. Big Cal opens the door and hollers.

BIG CAL
Yo!

VOICE (O.S.)
Your mother's at the store!

BIG CAL
That's fine, we just came to see
you.

VOICE (O.S.)

We?

Calvin scurries under Big Cal's arm and runs inside. Big Cal follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - WYLIE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

MR. WYLIE (42) sits in a plush recliner, passively watching a Steelers game. He wears reading glasses and a durag.

MR. WYLIE

What's 'we'? You got a girlfriend now?

Calvin runs into the room. He strikes a pose in front of the recliner.

CALVIN

Just me!

Mr. Wylie fist bumps Calvin.

MR. WYLIE

What's up 'lil man?

Big Cal follows anxiously behind Calvin. He takes a seat next to Mr. Wylie and turns off the TV.

Mr. Wylie gestures to say "I was watching that."

BIG CAL

I know it's a re-run, I saw you watching that same game last three times I've been here.

Mr. Wylie leans toward Calvin.

MR. WYLIE

(fake whispering)

Good thing, huh. Or he really woulda got it.

Mr. Wylie takes off his slipper and pretends to smack Big Cal. Calvin giggles. Big Cal sighs in frustration.

Mr. Wylie takes off his reading glasses. He nods his head toward Big Cal.

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)

(to Calvin)

What's up with him?

Calvin shrugs. Glasses off, Mr. Wylie can now see him clearly.

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)
Damn son, you look just like my boy
when he was your age-

BIG CAL
Can we talk? Private?

Mr. Wylie looks at Calvin another moment. He stands up and stretches. He looks back to Calvin and winks.

Mr. Wylie walks to the kitchen.

MR. WYLIE (O.S.)
Do y'all want any leftovers?

BIG CAL
We're not really hungry.

MR. WYLIE (O.S.)
I got some baked chicken your moms
made from last night. Cold
spaghetti we could warm up...

Big Cal passes the remote to Calvin and motions for him to wait there. He joins Mr. Wylie in the kitchen.

KITCHEN

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)
...That'd be good cold, too. Johnny
cakes. We got bacon you can throw
on.

Thinking his dad didn't hear the first time, Big Cal repeats himself.

BIG CAL
I said we're not really hungry.

Mr. Wylie has moved onto the freezer.

MR. WYLIE
Your moms made soup a while back,
should be in here somewhere.

BIG CAL
(whispering)
Dad, I think he's upset. He was
asking me earlier about like, his
friends, and like, other race
stuff.

Mr. Wylie continues rummaging through the fridge.

MR. WYLIE

Race stuff? What you mean race stuff? The boy is Black. Black ain't a bad word.

BIG CAL

(whispering)

I know Black isn't a bad word, but like, he's young, I don't know what I'm supposed to do here.

Mr. Wylie takes out two giant Tupperwares and closes the refrigerator door.

MR. WYLIE

Don't be whispering like he's not right here. He knows about the color of skin. Just like me and you. He knows what we're talking about, and I won't have you pretending like he doesn't.

BIG CAL

(quietly)

I know. You're just better at this stuff.

Mr. Wylie raises his eyebrows and carries the containers to the living room doorway.

Calvin is reading comics section of the newspaper. Mr. Wylie holds up the containers.

MR. WYLIE

Meatloaf and green beans?

Calvin scrunches up his face.

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)

Cereal?

CALVIN

Yes! Yes yes yesss.

LATER

Big Cal leans against the wall. He watches as Mr. Wylie fills two bowls with half Cinnamon Toast Crunch and half Reeses Puffs. He starts pouring cereal in a third bowl.

BIG CAL

I'm good, dad.

MR. WYLIE

Sit down and eat with our guest. No
use talking on an empty stomach.
How we suppose to have a fruitful
conversation if all we can think
about is food?

Big Cal grumbles but sits down. Calvin shovels down cereal.
Mr. Wylie watches with an amused smile.

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)

You know, me and his moms were only
a little bit older then Calvin is
now when he was around your age.

CALVIN

I'm eight.

MR. WYLIE

Eight's a good age.

CALVIN

I think so. I am old enough to stay
out past 9:30 to play flashlight
tag but I don't have to do like
other grown-up stuff.

Big Cal relaxes a little and picks up his spoon.

MR. WYLIE

What typa grown up stuff?

CALVIN

Wives, taxes, complaining, back
pain, road rage, paying for stuff.

MR. Wylie bursts out laughing. Big Cal cracks a smile.

MR. WYLIE

Probably feels good not to worry
'bout all that right now. You've
got time... you got other stuff to
worry 'bout, huh.

CALVIN

I'm not the one who's worried, he's
worried.

Mr. Wylie glances to Big Cal.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I love it here. I could stay here
forever.

BIG CAL
(softly)
I know.

CALVIN
Probably in this house forever.

BIG CAL
I don't know if we... I don't know
what happens if you stay here. If
you can live...

Big Cal cuts himself off as he covers his face with his hand.
Mr. Wylie's eyes flit between them.

MR. WYLIE
Son, are you scared?

Both Big Cal and Calvin look down, then at each other.

Mr. Wylie puts down his spoon. He rests his hands on the
table and addresses them both.

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)
Being scared is okay. Being scared
is smart, it means you're paying
attention. But you can't stay
there, or the world will get you.
You can't stay scared.

CALVIN
How do you know how to not be
scared?

Big Cal looks to Mr. Wylie.

MR. WYLIE
You'll know. Survival is in our
blood. When the time comes to not
be scared anymore you'll know what
to do. You'll know cuz it's here.

He leans touches Calvin on the chest.

MR. WYLIE (CONT'D)
Right here.

Calvin nods. He repeats the gesture on his chest.

Mr. Wylie leans back in his chair. He looks over to Big Cal.

Big Cal nods. He lets out a long-held breath. He stands up
and begins to clear the table.

BIG CAL
 (to Calvin)
 I think our biggest worry right now
 is the girls sending out a search
 party for us.

MR. WYLIE
 You got girls and you're sitting
 here with me?

Calvin giggles. He gets up and helps clear the table.

BIG CAL
 Dad, we don't got girls.

CALVIN
 They've got each other.

Mr. Wylie's amusement leans toward confusion. He stands up.

MR. WYLIE
 Yeah, yeah. Well, you best get
 outta here before your search party
 shows up. Or worse, your mother.
 Cuz I guarantee you, she's gonna
 ask a hellauva lot more questions
 than me.

INT. BIG CAL'S HOUSE - DAY

The girls are doing each other's hair. Big Cal and Calvin
 walk into Big Cal's house. Big Cal gives a small nod hello
 and goes to the kitchen.

SAF
 Calvins!

Waves jumps up to greet them.

WAVES
 We actually almost sent out a
 search party for you! Anyways,
 we're putting on a play and we
 couldn't start without you. C'mon,
 you have to get in costume.

She puts her arm around Calvin and leads him inside. Saf
 finishes Avery's braid and joins them.

WAVES (CONT'D)
 So, Saf is the ship captain and a
 wizard. I'm the queen on the ship,
 naturally, who also might be a spy.
 (MORE)

WAVES (CONT'D)

You're a mermaid and a true spy. So actually, you're the most important character of the show because..."

They retreat down the hall and out of earshot.

Safina gets up and walks toward the kitchen. She playfully slaps Avery as she passes.

SAFINA

Would her highness like some coffee?

AVERY

Aye, Captain.

Safina enters the kitchen and opens a cabinet.

SAFINA

Cal, do you want a cup-

She looks to Big Cal and sees that his face is drawn.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Hey, are you okay?

Big Cal rubs the back of his neck and collects himself.

BIG CAL

Nah, I'm good.

Hearing Safina's question, Avery appears in the doorway.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

We went to see my dad.

Safina's and Avery's eyebrows raise in surprise. Safina gives an understanding nod.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

I'm just like...what do we do about them?

AVERY

It'll be okay.

BIG CAL

We don't know that. And like, you don't get to say that. I know y'all wanna hangout and you've got your own shit to sort out, but y'all have time to do that. Y'all have had time to do that. But that kid... matters, so much to me.

(MORE)

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

Him having a future matters so much to me. I can't think about it any other way.

AVERY

(softly)

I'm sorry.

BIG CAL

We're scared. Me and him. And I think that means we're being smart and paying attention. It just feels like, a little like, y'all are paying attention to each other and not the gravity of the situation.

AVERY

You're right. We're not. I'm sorry. That's why we came here.

SAFINA

We knew you would know what to do.

BIG CAL

I don't know what to do. But I'm trying. And it would be easier if we were all in this together.

Avery and Safina nod. They stand in silence for a moment, not angry, just thinking. The sounds of Calvin's giggles and Waves' stage direction float through the house.

CALVIN, SAF, WAVES

We're ready!

INT. BEDROOM - CALVIN'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Late-day sun streams through slatted blinds of a tall window. The kids bodies move excitedly through the glow, providing fleeting glimpses of their costumes. We hear that they are reciting lines, but the sound is distant.

Avery, Safina, and Big Cal sit on the floor. The light hits them in bands of red, pink, and orange. Safina moves closer and rests her head on Avery's shoulder. Avery lightly taps her own head on Safina's in reassurance.

The adults watch intently, laughing and reacting appropriately to queues for surprise. The camera lingers as the shadows of the kids' bodies dance across them.

The light fades quickly - too quickly to be attributed to the sunset alone. The view through the window clears as dark clouds envelope the sky.

Lightning flashes and a huge clap of thunder pops the eardrums of the previously muted setting.

The kids scream and cling to each other. The adults are startled frozen, unsure if they are still acting.

Another clap of thunder erupts and the adults scramble to their feet as the kids run from the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The kids run into the living room and hide under a blanket on the couch. The pound of rain echoes all around.

The adults crouch beside them. Big Cal attempts to gently pull the blanket back, but the kids recoil, inconsolable.

WAVES

It hurts.

BIG CAL

What hurts?

WAVES

I don't know!

Another clap of thunder and the kids cry out, followed by a moan. The blanket falls away.

Calvin puts on a brave face. Saf sits in the middle, more worried than scared. Waves is on the end, the most scared. All three look ill.

SAFINA

Can you tell us what it feels like?

CALVIN

Bad. My head hurts. And my stomach.

SAF

I'm really dizzy. Like when we electrocuted you. But it's not going away. And it hurts a lot worse.

WAVES

Way worse.

The downpour subsides to steady rain. The kids loosen their grips on each other and curl on the couch.

SAFINA

Is it feeling any better now?

They manage small nods in agreement.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Okay. I think we should try to get some sleep. What do you think?

The kids nod. The adults walk them back to the bedroom: Safina with her arm wrapped around Calvin's shoulder; Waves holding Big Cal's hand.

Saf is last to leave the couch. Avery holds out her hand and Saf gives her a long hug before getting up.

INT. BEDROOM - CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The kids are huddled together in Calvin's bed, each wearing one of his shirts as pajamas.

Avery and Safina sit at the foot of the bed.

CALVIN

Can you put the TV on?

BIG CAL

Sure.

He turns on the TV. It is tuned to the weather channel.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

Nice and boring. Grown-up stuff.

He sets the volume low and leaves the remote on the nightstand.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

We'll be right here in the living room if you start feeling bad again, okay?

Avery and Safina whisper goodnight to the kids and get up.

Big Cal turns off the lights and follows them out of the room, leaving the door open a crack.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Avery and Safina lay opposite on the couch.

AVERY

So.

SAFINA

Mhm.

AVERY

(to Big Cal)

That physics degree teach you
anything about time travel?

Big Cal sits in a big chair, chin rested on his hands in a
thinking position.

BIG CAL

That communications degree teach
you anything about communication?

Safina snorts out a laugh. Avery sticks out her tongue.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

Everything I know about time travel
is from anime.

Avery lets her head fall back. A moment passes.

SAFINA

I guess it's time to consult the
internet.

Avery groans. Big Cal sighs. He walks to the kitchen and
starts making coffee.

LATER

Internet search party: Big Cal's hands clack away on a custom
mechanical keyboard. Avery's hand enters the frame and places
a mug on the table.

BIG CAL

Wanna take a guess how many peer-
reviewed articles there are on time
travel?

AVERY

Zero?

BIG CAL

Slightly more than zero. 945,221 to
be exact.

Avery carries a laptop in one hand. She sits on the ground, partially invading the space where Safina is doing push-ups to stay awake.

AVERY
Sorry, sorry.

SAFINA
Nah, I'm up. You should take a break.

She sits up and looks at the laptop.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Where we at?

AVERY
Wanna guess how many results you get when you cross-reference time travel and tummy aches?

BIG CAL
Zero?

AVERY
Zero.

Avery falls back and lays on the couch. Safina takes her place at the laptop.

SAFINA
It's cuz you Googled tummy aches. And how can you work with this many tabs open?

AVERY
I have a system.

SAFINA
Oh god, there's a whole 'nother window here.

Avery grunts and turns on her side away from Safina.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Chill.

Avery rolls over to face her.

AVERY
Don't tell me to chill.

BIG CAL
Do y'all need separated? Cuz this
flirting/fighting thing y'all been
on is annoying as f-

Movement catches his eye and he stops mid-sentence. He looks
toward the hallways. His tone softens.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)
Hey, buddies.

The kids stand in doorway, dressed in their soccer uniforms.
Waves rubs sleep from her eyes. Calvin stands shyly in the
back with the blue backpack. Saf speaks for the group.

SAF
Calvin says we have to go.

AVERY
Go where?

Waves picks up the remote and tunes the TV to the weather
channel. The map shows an intense swath of rain extending
from Pittsburgh to South Jersey.

Waves jabs her finger at the TV. Bisecting the storm line is
a small dot of clear skies, not unlike the eye of a storm.

WAVES
Here.

Avery and Safina squint at the TV. Big Cal looks at Calvin.

BIG CAL
You sure?

Calvin nods. Big Cal springs up.

AVERY
Okay, so we're doing this.

BIG CAL
Yup. I'll get umbrellas and rain
jackets.

SAFINA
I'll get the car.

AVERY
I'll...

She looks at the kid's bare feet.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Find shoes.

INT. THE TAURUS - ROUTE 76E, PA - NIGHT

The wagon's windshield wipers do their best to fight off sheets of rain as they speed down the empty highway.

The kids flip through Safina's CD binder. They pick one and Saf passes one back to Big Cal, who pops open the CD changer in the trunk.

Safina presses play. She takes a sip from a travel mug. Avery takes a sip from the same mug.

Safina rubs her eye. The first time could be chalked up to being tired. The second leaves a wet streak on her cheek.

QUICK FLASHES

- Heavy rain interchanged with snow

- Present day Avery interchanged with nineteen-year old Avery. She wears a long winter coat over pajamas and looks like she just got punched in the gut.

- Present day Safina interchanged with nineteen-year old Safina. She is in regular winter clothes and looks like she accidentally just punched someone in the gut.

BACK TO SCENE

Avery anxiously rolls a small object between her fingertips. It is the blue gumball, now twice its original size.

LATER

The Taurus slows as it transitions from smooth highway asphalt onto a narrow patch-worked service road.

AVERY

Are we coming up on it, Calvin?

Calvin squints hard through the windows. The rain and darkness obscures all but the road ahead.

CALVIN

I think...I don't know. But I know it's here. But I don't know.

BIG CAL
It's okay, buddy. It's here. We'll
find it.

Waves and Saf scan the windows. Suddenly, Saf points to the
windshield.

SAF
There.

The kids strain forward in their seatbelts over the center
console.

AVERY
Where?

WAVES
You don't see it?

AVERY
No...

WAVES
It's right there!

SAFINA
What is it that you're seeing?

SAF
The line.

BIG CAL
I don't think us adults can see it.

SAFINA
Are we following it in the right
direction?

The kids nod yes.

SAFINA (CONT'D)
Okay, just tell us when it changes.

The reach what appears to be the crest of a hill. They begin
their descent. Halfway down, the kids yell out.

WAVES, SAF, AND CALVIN
Stop! Stop here!

Safina slams on the breaks. The kids are quiet, listening.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the car starts to move
backward, sending them uphill - counter to gravity.

The rain subsides to a shower, then drizzle, then stops altogether as they return to the top of the hill. The car comes to rest. The kids jump out.

The adults fumble to unbuckle their seatbelts. Big Cal rolls over the seats into the middle row.

EXT. GRAVITY HILL - NIGHT

The six stand at the top of a slope. While the distant skies remain stormy, the clouds above them part just enough to let moonlight illuminate the expansive forest below.

Nobody moves, all of them hesitant to venture further into the dark.

Avery, Safina, and Big Cal exchange glances. They take a collective breath, then walk down the slope to bring themselves level with each of their counterparts.

Avery and Waves stand closest to the car.

AVERY

Hey, remember when you cut your foot?

WAVES

Duh, it was yesterday.

AVERY

Just- okay. It was Saf that carried you up to the house when you couldn't walk.

Waves nods.

AVERY (CONT'D)

We're gonna do that for her now.
And for Calvin and Big Cal and Safina. Cuz they're our friends.
And we protect our friends. Right?

WAVES

Right.

Avery holds out her fist and Waves bumps it with hers. They wince at the electrical shock, but both stay strong.

Safina and Saf stand in the middle.

SAF

We have to go in there, don't we.

SAFINA

Looks like it. You good?

Saf nods again. Safina breathes out a laugh.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Yeah, you're always good.

They look out at the forest and distant mountains. Their left eyes blink in unison.

Big Cal and Calvin are farthest down the slope.

BIG CAL

Hey, we got this. You remember what dad said?

Calvin touches his chest. Big Cal does the same.

BIG CAL (CONT'D)

Alright. Let's go.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The forrest floor is damp but navigable, the eye of the storm having sheltered it from the worst of the rain. Their descent is slow as they pick their way around puddles, exposed tree roots, and loose rock.

A sudden steepening in slope catches them off guard. The ground gives way, scattering them in different directions.

Big Cal reacts in time to wrap himself around Calvin. The prolonged contact engulfs them in a cocoon of electricity. They tumble into the distance and blink out of sight.

Avery tries to maintain some semblance of control as she half runs / half slides down the slope. She does a decent job and grabs hold of a tree trunk. She catches her breath and looks around. Total darkness. She calls out.

AVERY

Saf! Calvin? Waves?

Avery gets no response. She tentatively lets go of the tree. She only makes it a few steps before stumbling again, sending her plummeting into the dark.

LATER

A hand claws out of the dirt. Safina emerges from the landslide, spitting out dirt. Brushing herself off, she looks around and finds herself alone.

In the foreground, Avery punches through the dirt. Safina rushes over as Avery unburies herself.

Safina helps Avery to her feet. Avery pulls her into a hug.

SAFINA

You good?

Avery responds by tightening her grip. Safina lets herself settle into the hug.

The faint sound of giggles drifts by. Avery and Safina let go and look uphill.

They carefully make their way out of the dirt avalanche and onto solid ground. They pass through a narrow opening between boulders. As they walk, the voices become clearer.

SAF (O.S.)

...would say to set up a "perim"
and zigzag down the hill. But that
only works if they haven't been
knocked unconscious.

Waves and Saf sit close together, dangling their legs over the edge of a rocky outcrop. Uncharacteristically, Saf is doing all the talking and Waves is giggling.

SAF (CONT'D)

Or mortally wounded.

Waves pretends to die dramatically.

WAVES

(dying voice)

Only the magic... of the most
powerful wizard... can heal this
mortal wound.

Safina goes to step out from the boulder. Avery grabs her arm and motions for her to wait. They watch from below as Saf hovers her hand over Waves' chest and recites a made-up incantation. Then she leans close to Waves and the two are momentarily hidden.

They pop back into view as Waves sits up. They are kissing. It is unknown who kissed who first and it doesn't seem to matter.

Avery and Safina watch wordlessly. Avery takes the blue gumball out of her pocket. She presses it into Safina's palm.

Safina keeps her eyes locked on the kids. She pockets the ball without looking. She knows what it is.

Saf breaks the kiss by tickling Waves' side.

WAVES (CONT'D)
(laughing)
No no no no!

The crack of broken twigs. They jump to their feet and see Avery and Safina standing below.

WAVES (CONT'D)
Look who decided to show up.

AVERY
Can't get rid of us that easy.

A brief silence settles as Avery and Safina scan the girls' faces. Waves and Saf look perfectly happy.

The silence is broken by calls from further downhill.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Averys! Safinas!

BIG CAL (O.S.)
Yell if you can hear us!

They follow the Calvins' voices back to the path. They find them under a patch of moonlight.

LATER

They walk in twos: first the Calvins, then the Safinas, then the Averys.

They are guided by dim moonlight, cutting a path through the tangles of trees that form an inky-black wall around them.

As they travel deeper into the heart of the forest, the moonlight intensifies and transforms into a warm, almost sunny glow. The glow bounces off the many rain puddles, weaving in bright disks along their path.

Slowly, pinpoints of light begin to rise from the disks. Occasionally the lights touch, melting into one. As they gather and take shape, it becomes clear that the lights and the puddles are one in the same.

It is raining backwards.

The raindrops sparkle as they rise. Big Cal and Calvin slow to marvel at them.

Safina looks back at Waves and Avery.

Waves let the drops diffuse against her palm. She turns her hand and the lights rise up to meet again.

Avery and Safina lock eyes. Lights dance between them.

Saf cups her hands around the smallest points of light, just freed from their puddle. She holds their glow for a moment, then opens her hands, releasing the drop of rain like a lightning bug into the sky.

EXT. CLEARING - FOREST - NIGHT

The tree line ends abruptly, giving way to a wide field. The clearing is overgrown with native grasses, wildflowers and clover - save for one area. Directly in the center is a perfectly square patch of lawn, freshly mowed.

The sky above the the square shimmers and bends as a giant translucent beaded curtain, parting and colliding in waves like a Newton's cradle.

The kids make the first move, parting the tall grass by hand and treading lightly as they go. The adults follow.

As the kids get closer, they become eager and pick up speed.

They slow down a few yards from the center, barely breaking stride to pull off their shoes. Their bodies bounce up and down, at times disappearing almost entirely below the grass.

The kids step barefoot onto the bright emerald lawn. They let their shoes fall to the ground. They look at each other, hesitant to proceed.

Calvin opens the giant blue backpack and takes out the soccer ball. He sets up a penalty kick and sends it flying. The ball soars into the invisible curtain and vanishes.

Calvin's face lights up. He runs ahead.

Waves takes a deep breath and takes Saf's hand in hers.

They run, leaving Waves' bandage fluttering behind them as it unravels.

Big Cal, Avery, and Safina reach the edge of the tall grass, stopping just short of the lawn. They watch as the three children run through the curtain and disappear.

2003 - EXT. OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Saf is posed mid-jump, her head canted forward. Opposite her is Calvin, his leg raised into a roundhouse kick. Across from them is Waves, diving with arms outstretched.

They animate and fall to the ground. Waves turns her head and sees the soccer ball sitting in the corner of the goal.

Calvin and Saf stand up and brush themselves off. They look at each other, slightly confused. They walk over to Waves.

SAF
Wanna switch?

Still on her belly, Waves turns her head to look up at them.

WAVES
Mhmm.

She rolls over and raises her hands for them to pull her up.

INT. OHTORI HOUSEHOLD - SUNSET

The low evening sun radiates through the windows, painting the living room in a golden hue.

The kids sit on the couch. Calvin sits upright, gulping down a giant glass of water.

Saf leans against the armrest and sips her water. She acts as a pillow for Waves, who is attempting to drink without sitting up. The cut on her foot is red, but mostly healed.

Calvin gets up takes his glass to the kitchen. He takes out the water pitcher and closes the fridge door.

PRESENT - INT. CORNER STORE - SUNSET

Match cut to the glass door of a store freezer swinging shut. Big Cal juggles three prints of ice cream, a coconut water, and limes. He grabs a pack of Tastycakes on his way to the counter.

EXT. CITY STREET - SUNSET

Big Cal walks down a snowy street lined with old brick rowhouses. He slows down as he nears a stoop to say hi to some KIDS (17-19) who are smoking cigs and listening to music from a phone.

SAFINA (O.S.)

Yo!

Big Cal looks up. Safina leans out of a third story window.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Did you see my text?

BIG CAL

They were out!

SAFINA

How's a corner store run out of
lighters?

One of the kids offers their lighter to Big Cal.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Thanks, Mo!

Big Cal walks up the neighboring stoop and goes inside.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A cozy bedroom with lots of plants. Clear vinyl spins on the record player. Makeup and clothes cover most surfaces.

Safina ducks back inside the window. She wears a sports bra and joggers.

SAFINA

Happy?

The camera zooms out and we see Avery laying on the bed. She lays half under a blanket in a giant sweatshirt and socks. Her haircut is the much the same, but the color is much better.

AVERY

Mhmm.

Safina stands at the bedside. She looks down at Avery with amusement.

SAFINA

You gonna get up now?

Avery pulls the blanket up to her chin.

Big Cal strides into the room and swan dives onto a giant beanbag chair.

BIG CAL
I see neither of you have bothered
to get ready.

SAFINA
Cuz one of us is being a brat.

Big Cal laughs. He takes out the Tastycake.

The doorbell rings. They all look at each other. Big Cal
rolls his eyes. He puts the Tastycake aside.

A cool shirt catches his eye as he stands up.

BIG CAL
Saf, I'm wearing this.

SAFINA
That is actually Avery's.

Big Cal laughs as he buttons up the shirt.

BIG CAL
Ohhh, Avery you got that drip.

AVERY
Don't sound so surprised.

Big Cal makes a funny face as he rips open the Tastycake. He
holds it up and toasts them as he walks out.

Safina pulls off the blanket and sits on the corner of the
bed. She slaps Avery's ankles playfully.

SAFINA
Get up.

AVERY
No.

Avery slides her knees up to make a barrier between them.
Safina sighs in fake annoyance. She gets fully onto the bed
and leans on Avery's legs.

Avery takes Safina's hands and lifts her into the air. They
reach equilibrium and Safina lets go, raising her arms out
into an airplane.

They balance this way for a few seconds. Without warning,
Avery opens her legs and Safina drops.

SAFINA
You did that on purpose.

AVERY

Mhmm.

Safina settles into Avery's arms. They kiss.

They stay intertwined for a moment before Safina rolls off of her and stands up.

SAFINA

C'mon.

She goes to the closet and pulls out two hats.

SAFINA (CONT'D)

Which one?

AVERY

Can you not wear a hat tonight?

Safina stares at her as she slowly raises a hat.

AVERY (CONT'D)

The other one.

Safina flashes a smile and puts the other hat on. She turns around to look through the closet.

Avery reluctantly gets up. She pulls pants and takes off her sweatshirt to reveal a surprisingly cool outfit.

She drags her feet to Safina and hugs her from behind. Avery whispers in her ear and Safina laughs softly as she puts in stud earrings.

Avery whispers again and her grip tightens. Safina smiles and calmly removes Avery's hands from around her waist, keeping hold of one. Avery uses her free hand to grab her jacket as Safina leads her out of the room.

The shot lingers. Through the window, we see Big Cal cross the street and duck behind a car. Avery and Safina come into view and Big Cal unleashes a barrage of snowballs. They retaliate and turns into a free for all.

The battles last for a few rounds as credits roll over the scene. Eventually, they meet in a triangular standoff. They call a truce and walk out of sight.

THE END