

Staged Reading Fest
presents...



The House Isn't Burning

Written by Eden Leavey & Leah Perlman
Directed by Ella Greene

Join us in Andrews 101
Friday, Feb. 7 @ 6.30pm

THE HOUSE ISN'T BURNING

by

Eden Leavey &
Leah Perlman

Edited by

Abigail Carpenter &
Ella Greene

Synopsis

"The House Isn't Burning" is a story about a young woman named Mila Barrett as she navigates a series of relationships, told as a collection of non-linear moments, beginning with her college girlfriend Ember Beckett. Mila thinks she has found "the one," but their relationship ends when Ember moves to New York to pursue her writing career and insists on going alone. Heartbroken and searching for a fresh beginning, Mila moves to San Francisco with her childhood best friend, Noa Katz, who is about to start law school.

As she processes the loss of Ember, Mila begins to seek out love again, wandering into a toxic casual relationship with James Peterson and a "right person, wrong time" situation with Aaron Fisher. Eventually, Mila meets Dahlia Rhodes, who is able to offer Mila a love that is healing yet fleeting. Meanwhile, Noa struggles with the rigorous yet monotonous reality of law school, coming to terms with the importance of self-care.

As Mila and Noa move through their twenties, they learn to let go of the expectations of the past and embrace the present. "The House Isn't Burning" explores themes of self-discovery and heartbreak, as well as the power and beauty of relationships--even the ones that don't stand the test of time.

Cast of Characters
(in order of appearance)

Mila Barrett	<i>Mila feels deeply, loves openly, and falls hard and fast-- but she is not ditzy or foolish; she is very emotionally intuitive. Mila is learning the beauty and power of relationships, even the ones that do not stand the test of time.</i>
Dahlia Rhodes	<i>Dahlia emerges once Mila has radically accepted the reality of the finality of their relationship with Ember, offering a love that is both healing and fleeting.</i>
Ember Beckett	<i>Ember is an aspiring writer who craves adventure and independence. She was Mila's long-term college girlfriend and made a significant impact on Mila's life.</i>
Noa Katz	<i>Noa has been Mila's best friend since middle school. She is a massive support system to Mila but often neglects to take care of herself. Noa learns how to break out of her monotonous cycle of work and live more freely.</i>
James Peterson	<i>James acts as a distraction from Mila's heartache. He is clearly not ready for any type of committed relationship when he enters Mila's life, although he grows with time and eventually settles down with someone else.</i>
Annie	<i>Mila's co-worker and friend with whom she goes out to a bar on New Year's Eve.</i>
Denise Barrett	<i>Denise is Mila's mother, who takes care not to over-involve herself in her young adult daughter's life, but also offers maternal support to both Mila and Noa in their lowest moments.</i>
Carmen	<i>Mila's college roommate.</i>
Mila's Boss	<i>Superior at Mila's marketing agency.</i>

Aaron Fisher

Aaron is a co-worker of Mila's who becomes the first true potential love interest following Mila's acceptance of her break up with Ember. They understand each other well, but ultimately, Aaron is still grieving his past relationship and does not feel ready to open his heart to the possibility of getting hurt again.

Mateo

Aaron's friend.

Party-Goers

Friends and acquaintances of Noa.

Waiter

Brings drinks to Noa and Emilio in Spain.

Emilio

A Spanish man whom Noa befriends during her travels through Europe.

Scenes

Act I

- Scene 1 Int. Mila's apartment bedroom - San Francisco, March 2018
- Scene 2 Int. Mila's dorm room - Philadelphia, December 2015
- Scene 3 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, June 2016
- Scene 4 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, August 2018
- Scene 5 Int. Bar - San Francisco, December 31, 2016
- Scene 6 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, January 2017
- Scene 7 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, February 14, 2017
- Scene 8 Int. Mila's dorm room - Philadelphia, May 2016
- Scene 9 Int. Office building - San Francisco, March 2017
- Scene 10 Int. Office building - San Francisco, March 2017
- Scene 11 Int. Mila's dorm room - Philadelphia, April 2016
- Scene 12 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, June 2019

Act II

- Scene 1 Int. Mila's and Aaron's apartments - San Francisco, April 2017
- Scene 2 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, January 2019
- Scene 3 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, March 2017
- Scene 4 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, March 2017
- Scene 5 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, November 2018
- Scene 6 Int. Mila's apartment bedroom - San Francisco, November 2018
- Scene 7 Int. Aaron's apartment - San Francisco, April 2017
- Scene 8 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, April 2017
- Scene 9 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, April 2017
- Scene 10 Int. James' apartment - San Francisco, May 2017
- Scene 11 Ext. Sidewalk - San Francisco, February 2018

Scene 12 Ext. Restaurant Patio - Southern Coast of Spain,
April 2019
Scene 13 Ext. Sidewalk - San Francisco, May 2019
Scene 14 Int. James' apartment - San Francisco, May 2019
Scene 15 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San
Francisco, June 2019
Scene 16 Int. Mila's and Noa's apartments - June 2019

Scenes (Chronologically)

Act I Scene 2 Int. Mila's dorm room - Philadelphia, December 2015

Mila and Ember's two-year anniversary gift exchange. At this moment, their future plan is to move into an apartment together in New York City after graduating college.

Act I Scene 11 Int. Mila's dorm room - Philadelphia, April 2016

Mila and Ember are trying to find a movie to watch. Their inability to agree on a film frustrates Ember, ultimately leading to her telling Mila she wants to break up.

Act I Scene 8 Int. Mila's dorm room - Philadelphia, May 2016

Mila and Carmen are studying for finals. Mila is struggling to handle her emotions related to her break up with Ember.

Act I Scene 3 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, June 2016

Mila and Noa are moving into an apartment together. They reflect on Mila's break up with Ember - and coming to terms with it - as well as how Noa is feeling about starting law school.

Act I Scene 5 Int. Bar - San Francisco, December 31, 2016

Mila and Annie go to a bar on New Year's Eve. Mila meets James, and the two celebrate the New Year together in an intimate setting.

Act I Scene 6 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, January 2017

Mila and Noa are getting ready for Shabbat, which is when James is supposed to meet Noa. However, he cancels at the last minute, so Mila and Noa enjoy a girls' night. Side note: Mila really loves challah.

Act I Scene 7 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, February 14, 2017

A text exchange between James and Mila is displayed, showing that the two have Valentine's Day plans. Once again, James flakes on Mila. Meanwhile, Noa is spending her Valentine's Day doing work for law school.

Act II Scene 4 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, March 2017

Mila is practicing a presentation she needs to give at work in front of Noa. After she finishes, Mila checks her phone for a text from James, prompting a conversation between Mila and Noa

about what she is looking for in a relationship now that she has moved on from Ember.

Act I Scene 9 Int. Office building - San Francisco, March 2017
Mila gives her presentation at work, and it goes well. Aaron compliments Mila on her public speaking skills and the two have a rather flirtatious conversation.

Act I Scene 10 Int. Office building - San Francisco, March 2017
Aaron spontaneously brings Mila Chinese takeout one night when he notices she is working late at the office. The interaction maintains the flirtatious energy from before and resolves in Mila getting Aaron to ask her on a date through a game of hangman.

Act II Scene 3 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, March 2017
Noa is buried in work for law school and is clearly struggling to keep her composure, although she tries to hide her stress from Mila.

Act II Scene 1 Int. Mila's and Aaron's apartments - San Francisco, April 2017
Mila and Noa debrief Mila's date with Aaron in immense detail. Simultaneously, Aaron plays video games with Mateo, who inquires whether anything physical transpired on his date with Mila.

Act II Scene 7 Int. Aaron's apartment - San Francisco, April 2017
Mila and Aaron are spending time together at Aaron's apartment. Aaron confesses that he is still not over his ex-girlfriend, which ends Mila's and his relationship.

Act II Scene 8 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, April 2017
Feeling lonely following the loss of Aaron, Mila hooks up with James again.

Act II Scene 9 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, April 2017
Mila and Noa talk about Mila's decision to see James again. Mila recognizes she is truly ready for another committed relationship but that that relationship should not be with James.

Act II Scene 10 Int. James' apartment - San Francisco, May 2017
Mila returns James' jacket to him and explains that she is shutting the door on their relationship for good.

Act II Scene 11 Ext. Sidewalk - San Francisco, February 2018
Dahlia accidentally trips on Mila's feet on the sidewalk. Mila helps Dahlia up and is immediately intrigued by her. They exchange phone numbers.

Act I Scene 1 Int. Mila's apartment bedroom - San Francisco, March 2018
Mila and Dahlia play the game We Were Never Really Strangers at the end of a date, which pushes the two to learn more about one another.

Act I Scene 4 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, August 2018
Dahlia meets Mila's mom, Denise. Before meeting her, Dahlia is reassured by Mila that Denise will like her. Mila also tells Dahlia she loves her.

Act II Scene 5 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, November 2018
Mila is throwing a surprise party for Noa's 24th birthday. Ember is in town, and she and Mila finally get to reconnect and have closure. Noa freaks out about getting older.

Act II Scene 6 Int. Mila's apartment bedroom - San Francisco, November 2018
Mila and Denise comfort Noa, and Noa admits that law school has been more draining than she let on. Noa realizes she needs to take a step back from school and do something to take care of herself. She makes a plan to travel abroad.

Act II Scene 2 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, January 2019
Mila and Dahlia play Mario Kart. Dahlia asks Mila if she can move in since Noa is traveling for the foreseeable future. Mila agrees.

Act II Scene 12 Ext. Restaurant Patio - Southern Coast of Spain, April 2019
Noa is sitting on a restaurant patio on the Southern Coast of Spain. She is talking to a man named Emilio who she has met on her travels through Europe.

Act II Scene 12 Ext. Sidewalk - San Francisco, May 2019
Mila sends Noa a voice memo about how living with Dahlia has been more complicated than she expected, highlighting some of the cracks in their relationship. While recording the message, Mila sees James, who is now happily engaged.

Act II Scene 13 Int. James' apartment - San Francisco, May 2019

Mila and James spend an evening together, catching up on one another's lives. Mila neglects to answer Dahlia's calls, and Dahlia becomes progressively more worried about where Mila is and whether she is safe, demonstrating the lack of communication.

Act II Scene 14 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, June 2019

Dahlia asks Mila if they can adopt a dog, and Mila says no. Dahlia is persistent, and it sends Mila into an outburst. Mila tells Dahlia she can no longer continue to be in a relationship with her, spurring their break up.

Act I Scene 12 Int. Mila's apartment living room - San Francisco, June 2019

Direct continuation of II-14. Mila walks out of the room and Dahlia breaks down, devastated about the break up.

Act II Scene 15 Int. Mila's and Noa's apartments - June 2019

Mila calls Noa to tell her about the break up. Mila is exhausted by the heartbreak she has experienced over the past few years, but Noa reminds Mila of her growth. Ultimately, Mila and Noa decide that the only constants that can be found in life are change and, perhaps, each other.

THE HOUSE ISN'T BURNING

ACT I

I-1 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 2018

(Lights come up. MILA and DAHLIA sit across from each other on MILA's bed. They are at an intimate point in their date where everything is slow, burning, and intense. "We're Not Really Strangers" is open in between them.)

DAHLIA

(picking up a card)

What's the first thing you noticed about me?

MILA

Umm... The scarf, the scarf you were wearing.

DAHLIA

What?

MILA

(blushing)

It made your eyes stand out.

(MILA grabs the next card.)

MILA

(cont')

What do my shoes tell you about me?

DAHLIA

That's a strange question.

MILA

No, it's not! Shoes can tell you a lot about a person. Here, I'll go first.

(DAHLIA presents her feet. She is wearing Blundstone boots. MILA demonstrates to DAHLIA how to analyze a person by their shoes. MILA demonstrates to DAHLIA how to analyze a person by their shoes.)

MILA

Blundstones. You value longevity. You're adaptable.
Always up for anything.

DAHLIA

Okay, that's not entirely wrong. I see what you mean.

MILA

Also, there's clay all over them.

DAHLIA

I'm sorry! I came straight from the studio.

MILA

No, it's okay. I like that about you... It's cute.
(Beat). Okay, my turn!

(MILA presents her feet. She is wearing clean,
white sneakers.)

DAHLIA

(jokingly)

Well, your feet are easy to trip over.

(MILA laughs, recalling a memory.)

MILA

True, but what else?

DAHLIA

Uh... You single-knot your laces.

MILA

Okay?

DAHLIA

I think that means you're trusting of people.

MILA

I try to be. Plus I can slip them on and off without
untying the knot if it's a loose single! Makes things
easier.

DAHLIA

(flirtily)

When was the last time you untied that knot?

MILA

(thinking)

Umm... Just before moving to San Francisco.

DAHLIA

Mila! That was two years ago!

(MILA laughs.)

DAHLIA

(cont')

Also, they're well-kept. You take care of your things.

MILA

Yeah.

(DAHLIA draws another card.)

DAHLIA

Do you think I fall in love easily? Why or why not?

MILA

(exhaling, tentatively)

Yeah. I think you do... Am I right?

DAHLIA

No. It actually takes me a while to fall in love. But once I do, I think I love pretty deeply. And I don't really fall out of it... How about you?

MILA

(small smile)

I do. Fall hard and fast-- that is.

(MILA reaches for another card.)

MILA

(cont')

Do you think the image you have of yourself matches how people see you?

DAHLIA

I'm not sure. I think I come across as pretty easygoing, but it actually takes me a little bit to let my guard down. At least, I think. Does that answer the question?

MILA

Sure it does. You think you're more reserved than the outside eye would notice.

(DAHLIA takes another card.)

DAHLIA

Oh... You don't have to answer this. Let's pick another card.

MILA

What? No, that's cheating!

(MILA grabs the card out of her hand, which DAHLIA is trying to put in the discard pile. MILA reads the card but realizes the gravity of the question and trails off toward the end.)

MILA

(cont')

What is your first love's name and the reason you fell in love with them? Oh...

DAHLIA

We don't have to go there.

MILA

(cautiously)

No, it's okay. Umm... her name was Ember. We found each other in college. Dated for almost three years. And she was-- I thought she was my forever.

DAHLIA

Why did it end?

MILA

I wasn't hers.

DAHLIA

I'm sorry.

(DAHLIA reaches over and holds MILA's hand. Beat. MILA picks up another card.)

MILA

How would you describe the feeling of being in love in one word?

DAHLIA

Safe.

I-2 INT. MILA'S DORM ROOM - PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 2015

(Lights come up. MILA and EMBER are sitting on a bed in MILA's dorm room. MILA is holding a wrapped gift.)

EMBER

I thought we weren't doing gifts!

MILA

I know, I know, but two years is a big deal!

(MILA shoves a large wrapped gift towards EMBER. EMBER hesitantly begins to open the gift, revealing a hand-made photo album. Without saying anything, EMBER smiles and flips through the pages.)

MILA

(cont')

So... What do you think?

EMBER

It's beautiful. I love all the little--

(EMBER flips through the book, getting caught on one photo, entranced. She doesn't finish her thought.)

EMBER

(cont')

I've never seen this picture before.

MILA

Which one?

EMBER

(pointing to a photograph)

This one.

(A selfie of MILA, smiling at EMBER with love in her eyes is projected. They are standing in a field.)

MILA

Oh, it's from our backpacking trip last summer. In the wildflower meadow at the top of that awful hill.

EMBER

I love it. You look so beautiful. And happy.

MILA

Yeah, I was happy. I'm always happy when I'm with you.

EMBER

Oh, but you were *such* a grump that day.

MILA

I was not!

EMBER

Yuh-huh! You spent the entire climb up complaining.

MILA

Like I said, that hill was *awful*. And my back hurt!

EMBER

I warned you not to pack so much!

MILA

Okay, okay maybe I could have gone without the inflatable kayak. But my point is, you didn't get frustrated with me.

You just insisted we keep going, like you always do. And you were right, the view was so worth the climb.

EMBER

It always is.

MILA

When we got up there, nothing else seemed to matter. It was just me and you. *(Beat)*. For the first time, I felt entirely safe. *(Beat)*. Thank you for that.

(EMBER smiles and grabs MILA's hands.)

EMBER

Of course. That was such a great trip.

(EMBER continues to flip through the album.)

EMBER

(cont')

Oh my God! No way you put that photo in here!

(A photograph of EMBER with chopsticks in her mouth like walrus tusks is projected.)

MILA

It's your favorite bit! I had to commemorate it!

EMBER

(grabbing MILA)

I'm your walrus!

(MILA laughs.)

EMBER

(cont')

Thank you for making this. It'll be the first book on the shelf when we move into our apartment.

MILA

(excitedly)

Flip to the back!

(EMBER flips to the end, and pulls out two concert tickets.)

MILA

(cont')

Two tickets to Imagine Dragon's New York show!

EMBER

(smiling)

Aww, Mila! You're too sweet. The photo album was more than enough!

MILA

(laughing slightly)

I know, but you're the only person I want to go with.

EMBER

I'm looking forward to it, thank you. *(Beat)*. Okay... So I also cheated, and I got you something, too.

(EMBER reaches behind her to reveal a bag, handing it to MILA, who opens the bag and pulls out a water bottle.)

EMBER

(cont')

I know it's not much, but yours is all dented up and I thought you might like a new one before our weekend on the Appalachian next month.

MILA

No, it's perfect. Thank you. I love you.

EMBER

I love you, too.

(Lights fade to black.)

**I-3 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, JUNE
2016**

(Lights come up. NOA is unpacking a box when MILA enters with a box in her hands, which she promptly drops to run towards NOA as they meet in a bear hug.)

MILA and NOA
(embracing)

--Noa!
--Mila!

(The two continue to hug. NOA begins to pull away when she is interrupted by MILA)

MILA
No. Not yet.

NOA
Awww.

(They hug tighter for a long moment, then both pull apart. NOA softly grabs MILA's cast.)

NOA
(cont')
Ugh, you poor thing. How much longer?

MILA
Just under a week.

NOA
That's not so bad! But on the other hand... Sorry! No pun intended! How are you doing?

MILA
A little better every day. Honestly, once this cast is off, I think I'll get over it. No more constant reminders, you know?

NOA
(gently)
You dated for almost three years, it's perfectly reasonable to take longer than a month and a half to "get over it."

MILA
(deflecting)

I guess. But maybe I should just move on with my life. There's so much to look forward to! I mean, you and I have been talking about living together for almost *ten years*, and it's finally happening!

NOA

We have, and believe me, I'm ecstatic, but give yourself some grace. (*Beat*). Two things can be true at once: you can be loving your new life here in San Fran, and still be hurting because of Ember.

MILA

I don't wanna hurt!

NOA

But you are.

MILA

(exasperated)

Yes, because I don't understand how someone I thought was a good person, *my* person, could just drop me like I don't matter.

(MILA tenses up and lets out a massive sigh, losing the fight to hold back her tears. NOA extends her arm to comfort MILA, looking at her.)

NOA

I can't imagine the pain you're feeling.

MILA

I'm... numb, honestly. I feel empty, hopeless. (*Beat*). It-- It feels like my house just burnt down. Like I was on my way home, and when I got there, smoke poured out the windows and it all burned to the ground in some tormented orange haze, right in front of me. And now I'm stuck asking myself where the fuck I'm gonna live?

(*Beat.*)

NOA

You're gonna live with me. And we're gonna get through this, together.

MILA

I don't know. I can't even picture my life without Ember in it. I've been trying to, but she's there at every turn.

NOA

Walk me through that.

MILA

Umm... I still sleep on the right side of the bed, even though no one else is there now. And sometimes, when I wake up in the morning, I expect to see her lying next to me. And then I remember... So I get out of bed. And I get dressed. Go on with the day. Forget about it. But then I'm at the grocery store, in the snack aisle. And I pass by a box of Oreo Cakesters. They're disgusting, but they're Ember's brother's favorite. And then they're in my cart. And it's back to square one.

NOA

But I don't think you're back at square one. The work you do doesn't just disappear. Healing isn't linear, you know?

MILA

But it's *constant*. And I'm trying so damn hard to let go, to not let a shitty cookie, or a crosswalk, or a candle, or whatever it is, ruin my day. But the list of things I need to let go of just seems to get longer and longer. (*Beat*). Like, it stormed last night. And Ember has this weird thing about thunderstorms, she's not afraid of them, per se, but she could never bring herself away from the window, from watching it come down. And then I would watch her, watching it come down. She used to say that the rain felt cleansing, something about the water being a reset.

NOA

You know, I think Ember's onto something with that. Maybe we stop fighting these moments, and let the pain run its course. Just, let it wash over you.

MILA

Like the rain.

(MILA rests her head on NOA's shoulder.)

MILA

(cont')

God, I've missed you.

NOA

I've missed you, too. More than you know.

MILA

(recollecting herself)

Enough about me. How are you feeling about law school?

NOA

Excited. Anxious to get started. I wish I had my syllabi already so I could get ahead on readings...

MILA

That sounds like you. (*Beat*). You're gonna be a great lawyer, Noa.

NOA

I'm really, *really* excited. Not just for school, but for what comes after.

MILA

I know!

NOA

It was just so hard on my mom when dad left. She didn't know *what* to do. The system-- it's confusing and convoluted and... I hope I can make it better. I can be the advice and listening ear my mom needed.

MILA

"Noa Katz: Attorney at Law." The world won't know what hit 'em. C'mon. Help me with the boxes. My hand hurts.

NOA

Well, that's what you get for punching a tree.

MILA

Okay! I get it!

(MILA links arms with NOA, giving her a hip bump. Together, they begin to exit.)

NOA

What kind of tree was it anyway? Oak? Maple?

MILA

Shut up!

NOA

Birch??

MILA
(under her breath)
Birch... more like bitch!

(NOA and MILA exit, laughing.)

**I-4 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, AUGUST
2018**

(MILA and DAHLIA are standing at the table, DAHLIA looks a little preoccupied. MILA puts her arm around DAHLIA's waist, resting it on the small of her back.)

MILA
You alright?

DAHLIA
Yeah, just a little nervous.

MILA
Don't be. She's gonna love you just as much as I do.

DAHLIA
What?

MILA
Huh?

DAHLIA
(smiling)
What'd you just say?

MILA
That she's gonna love you just as much as I do. Love you.
(Beat). I love you, Dahlia.

DAHLIA
I love you too.

(MILA and DAHLIA kiss as DENISE walks in.)

DENISE
(shielding her eyes)
Whoops! Sorry, sorry. I'll come back--

(MILA and DAHLIA separate, both smiling. DAHLIA blushes, embarrassed.)

MILA

No, you're okay. It's good to see you.

(MILA goes to DENISE and gives her a big hug, still smiling.)

DENISE

Well, you look happy!

MILA

I am.

(MILA goes and places her hand in DAHLIA's. Then she looks back at DENISE.)

MILA

(cont')

Mom, this is Dahlia. Dahlia, this is my mom, Denise.

DAHLIA

It's so nice to finally meet you!

(DAHLIA reaches to shake DENISE's hand, but DENISE pulls her into a hug.)

DENISE

Likewise! I've heard great things, and anyone who is important to my daughter is important to me.

DAHLIA

(to MILA, teasingly)

So you've been talking about me?

MILA

(grinning)

Maaaaybe.

(DAHLIA smiles. DENISE glances between MILA and DAHLIA, smirking.)

MILA

(cont')

Shall we sit?

DENISE

Yes! Dahlia dear, tell me about your family.

MILA

Mom!

DAHLIA

(chuckling)

No, it's okay. I respect the interrogation.

(DENISE, MILA, and DAHLIA sit down.)

DAHLIA

(cont')

I'm from the Bay Area. S.F. born and raised. My dad's a practitioner and my mom runs a small art business. I have two younger sisters, one in college, one in high school. We're very close.

DENISE

What kind of art does your mom make?

DAHLIA

Mostly oil pastels and acrylic. Abstracts.

DENISE

Beautiful, and you're in sculpture, right?

(DAHLIA is surprised DENISE knows this much about her and gives MILA a look.)

DAHLIA

Yeah! My mom got me a wheel when I was fourteen, and I fell in love.

DENISE

I tried throwing pottery once, when I was in college. It's much harder than it looks. My bowl blew up in the kiln and took out the instructor's piece as collateral.

DAHLIA

(laughing)

That's actually much more common than you would think!

DENISE

What drew you to sculpture?

DAHLIA

Initially, it was how tactile it is. Sculpture is such an intimate medium. Over time, I think I learned I could incorporate storytelling into my work, too. I grew more ambitious and started throwing these massive, thirty-to-forty-pound pots. They let me capture multiple perspectives. Clay is uniquely dynamic.

MILA

It's incredible, mom. You should see her work! I love the piece in the kitchen.

DENISE

(to DAHLIA)

I would love to see it-- if that's okay, my dear.

DAHLIA

Yes, of course!

(DAHLIA stands up and leads DENISE and MILA off stage.)

I-5 INT. BAR - SAN FRANCISCO, DECEMBER 31, 2016

(JAMES is leaning against the bar counter, men and women around him are hanging onto his every word.)

JAMES

(to his buddy)

Hey man, it's like, what do you call a frat boy in a suit? The defendant!

(EVERYONE bursts into laughter, including JAMES. MILA walks into the bar with some of her girlfriends. It's crowded, but she hears the laughter coming from the bar counter and her eyes immediately land on JAMES. JAMES notices MILA too.)

ANNIE

Hottie alert, 12 o'clock!

MILA

(not breaking eye contact with JAMES)

Oh, trust me, I see him.

ANNIE

(shaking MILA's arm)
And he's looking back! Go get him!

MILA
No, I can't leave you. We just got here.

ANNIE
Mila, I demand you go over there. Besides, I gotta find my perfect stranger for when the ball drops.

MILA
Well, you don't have long.

ANNIE
(beginning to run off)
I know!-- And you! Over there. At the bar. Now. I'm watching you!

(MILA laughs and returns her glance to JAMES. He makes eye contact and gestures for her to walk over to him. She does.)

JAMES
(offering a full-body handshake)
James. James Peterson.

MILA
Mila.

JAMES
Pretty.

MILA
What?

JAMES
Your name... and you.

MILA
Thank you.

JAMES
Where are you from, Mila?

MILA
I just moved here from Philadelphia a couple months ago. You come here a lot?

JAMES

Every night.

MILA

Every night?!

JAMES

Yeah, I actually live just upstairs.

MILA

What? Above the bar?

JAMES

(nodding)

Mhm.

MILA

God, where do you find any peace and quiet?

JAMES

(shrugging)

Who needs it when all the bartenders here get me drinks on the house?

EVERYONE

Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven!

JAMES

(taking MILA's hand)

C'mon.

MILA

Where are we going?

EVERYONE

Four! Three!

JAMES

(drawing MILA close)

Somewhere peaceful. And quiet.

EVERYONE

One! Happy New Year!

MILA

Okay.

(EVERYONE celebrates. JAMES pulls MILA upstairs to his bedroom. Lights fade to black.)

I-6 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO, JANUARY 2017

(NOA is sitting at the table with her nose in a book. MILA enters excitedly.)

MILA

(almost jumping up and down)

Is it ready? Is it ready?

NOA

(smiling, rolling her eyes)

Almost, Mila.

MILA

I love challah day!

NOA

I think the word you're looking for is Shabbat.

MILA

Yes! Oh, your mom always made the best Friday night dinners.

NOA

No promises mine will be as good.

(MILA checks her phone anxiously.)

NOA

(cont')

When will James be here?

MILA

Any second now! Hopefully.

NOA

Well, I'm excited to meet him. Cooking has been a much-needed distraction from the bogs of first-year law school.

MILA

How are you doing with that?

NOA

Good! It's a lot of work, but my emotional-support Google Calendar keeps me going. Nothing I can't handle. Plus the readings are so interesting. Like today, in my criminal law class, we went over this English criminal case from 1884 where a group of men ended up stranded on a lifeboat without food. After two weeks, they ended up killing and eating one of the men.

MILA

That wouldn't have happened if they had had your challah!

NOA

Exactly! And a few days later, they were rescued and taken back to England, where the remaining men were charged with homicide. When asked why they did it, they pleaded hunger! The case ultimately set the precedent that necessity for survival isn't a defense for murder. Isn't that so cool!?

MILA

(shaking her head)

My little nerd. Geeking out over cannibalism.

NOA

That's me!

(MILA's phone rings. She answers.)

MILA

Hi, James!... Oh, okay... No, of course... Well, if you get away early-- James?

(MILA hangs up. She sighs.)

NOA

Hey, it's all good. I'm sure I'll meet him eventually.

MILA

Yeah, I know.

NOA

(having a realization)

You know what that means?

MILA

(curious)

What?

NOA

Girls' night!

MILA

We live together, Noa. Every night is girls' night.

(A timer in the kitchen goes off.)

NOA

Okay, true. But now it's girls' night with challah! C'mon!

MILA

Ugh, fine, I'm sold!

(MILA and NOA walk into the kitchen.)

I-7 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO, FEBRUARY 14, 2017

(NOA is working on her laptop. MILA is reading a book. MILA opens her phone. JAMES' and MILA's text messages are projected.)

Wanna get dinner next week?

Yes! Tuesday?

Sure. Pick you up at 7.

Can't wait!

Happy Valentine's Day <3
Still on for tonight?

(MILA sends JAMES another message.)

James?

(MILA closes her phone and reopens her book.)

MILA

(to Noa)

Did you have a good day?

NOA

Mhm.

(Beat. MILA reads her book.)

MILA

How much more work do you have tonight, Noe?

(Silence. MILA looks up, but NOA is nose-deep in her book. MILA closes her book and reopens her phone. Her messages are still unanswered. MILA sighs, closes her phone, and gets up.)

MILA

I'm gonna make those stuffed shells for dinner. Do you want some?

NOA

I'm okay, thanks.

(MILA nods and walks into the kitchen.)

I-8 INT. MILA'S DORM ROOM - PHILADELPHIA, MAY 2016

(MILA and CARMEN are sitting on their dorm room floor with their books and laptops out, studying and doing work for finals in silence. After some time, MILA lets out an exasperated grunt, throws her pencil across the room, closes her notebook shut, shakes her cast, and winces. CARMEN glances up from her computer and looks at MILA.)

CARMEN

You wanna talk about it?

MILA

No.

CARMEN

Okay.

(CARMEN goes back to her laptop to work on her paper. She only gets a few seconds before she is interrupted again.)

MILA

What I don't get is how I didn't see this coming.

CARMEN

(closing her computer)

Oh, babe. Trust me, none of us saw this coming.

MILA

Right?! Not even twenty-four hours before, we were together and everything seemed fine. *Nothing* about this makes any sense. Do you think it was a spur-of-the-moment thing? Do you think she'll come back around?

CARMEN

I don't know.

MILA

Maybe there's something else going on with her, something I missed. A family thing?

CARMEN

I think there's no way of knowing unless you talk to her.

MILA

No, I do not want to talk to her. I'm pissed off. She lied.

CARMEN

How so?

MILA

She said she loved me. Said we were going to make it out of UPenn. For fuck's sake, we talked about baby names! And she dropped this bomb on me right before finals! It's sick and twisted!

CARMEN

So sick and twisted!

MILA

The worst thing about this is that she never gave me a real reason *why*. So now I'm stuck grasping at straws, and as much as I want to believe that there's some deep-rooted explanation, I can't help but think I just wasn't enough.

CARMEN

No, don't do that. Don't blame yourself. It's her loss.

MILA

Then why did she go and quit on me? On *us*?

(MILA begins to cry. CARMEN extends her arm to comfort MILA.)

CARMEN

(tiredly)

I don't know, Mila.

MILA

How am I supposed to get through this? I can't eat. I can't sleep. I have term papers to write, and MY HAND FUCKING HURTS. (Beat). How much longer is this gonna last?

CARMEN

Oh honey, I wish I could give you a timeline.

MILA

I hate everything.

(MILA grumpily grabs a blanket and throws it over her. She lays in fetal position on the ground, the blanket is fully covering her, head-to-toe.)

CARMEN

Can I get you anyth--

MILA

NO.

(Beat. CARMEN retrieves Sour Patch Watermelon gummies from her backpack. MILA hears the rustling of CARMEN opening the packet. MILA extends her hand from the blanket and taps on the floor. Then she retreats her hand. CARMEN sighs, placing the bag in front of MILA. Beat. MILA snatches the bag of gummies, pulling it immediately into her blanket lair.)

I-9 INT. OFFICE BUILDING - SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 2017

(MILA is giving a presentation to her colleagues and boss at her marketing agency. MILA is standing by her slideshow while everyone sits, listening.)

MILA

To summarize, by implementing my proposed two-prong strategy, we can expect to see higher engagement with our current audience as well as improved outreach to potential customers. Thank you.

(EVERYONE claps.)

MILA'S BOSS

That was excellent, Mila.

MILA

Thank you, I'm so glad you're happy with it.

MILA'S BOSS

Have the outline on my desk by the end of the week and we'll proceed, okay?

MILA

Yes, sir.

MILA'S BOSS

Take five, everyone.

ANNIE

(nudging MILA)

He loved it!

MILA

I think you're right!

ANNIE

Go girl!

(MILA begins to pack up her things. Her co-workers are standing up to stretch and mingle. AARON approaches MILA.)

AARON

That was a great presentation. You're very well-spoken.

MILA

Oh, thank you so much!

AARON

I'm Aaron Fisher. We met at the holiday party--

MILA

Yes, I remember. It's good to see you again, Aaron. I'm Mila Barr--

AARON

Mila Barrett.

MILA
(slightly taken aback)

Yes.

AARON
I remember.

MILA
(smiling)
You're in... HR, right?

AARON
You have a good memory.

MILA
It seems we both do.

AARON
I wonder what else we have in common. *(Beat)*. Vanilla or chocolate?

MILA
Vanilla.

AARON
Oof.

MILA
No, wait! I mean chocolate! Fuck.

AARON
(chuckling)
Hey, no fuck-ing in the workplace. I don't want any more paperwork.

MILA
(blushing)
So you're chocolate?

AARON
I'm chocolate. Just dark chocolate, though. None of that other shit.

MILA
(mocking)

"Hey, no shit-ing in the workplace."

AARON

(laughing)

Touché. (Beat). Listen, I was just in here to drop something off and now I gotta head out, but it was great seeing you again.

MILA

Sure, okay.

(AARON starts to exit.)

MILA

(cont')

Uh-- wanna get coffee sometime? See what else we have in common?

(AARON turns back around and smirks, nodding his head.)

AARON

Let's do it.

I-10 INT. OFFICE BUILDING - SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 2017

(It is late at night. MILA is still working. AARON enters holding a box of Chinese takeout.)

AARON

Knock, knock.

MILA

Oh! Hey, Aaron!

AARON

Still here at this hour?

MILA

Yeah, it's been a busy week. What are you doing here so late?

AARON

I tend to work pretty late most nights, actually.

MILA

Gotcha. Impressive. What can I do for you? Do you need something?

AARON

No, no, no. I actually-- I went downstairs to pick up some food, and I noticed your office light was still on. So I thought I'd just check if anyone was in here.

MILA

Check if anyone was in... my office?

AARON

Yeah, you know, just to check in on... you.

MILA

(smiling)

Alright.

(MILA gestures for AARON to take a seat across from her.)

AARON

What's going on? How was your day?

MILA

I'm good! It was really good, thanks.

AARON

Yeah? What made it good?

MILA

I woke up in the middle of the bed this morning.

AARON

(curious)

Okay. Good for you. I guess? (*Beat*). You hungry?

MILA

I could eat.

AARON

Yeah? You like Chinese food?

MILA

Yeah.

(AARON sits down across from MILA, placing the takeout box between them.)

AARON
(handing MILA chopsticks)

Here you go.

(Right before MILA reaches them, AARON pulls them back, starting a grabbing contest.)

AARON
(cont')
Oh! Too slow! Come and get it!

MILA
(laughing)
Hey! Gimme!

(MILA lurches over and grabs AARON's hand, stopping him from pulling away. The two are left looking at their hands, fingers intertwined. *Beat.* AARON clears his throat.)

AARON
Sorry, couldn't help myself.

MILA
Never stand between a woman and her Kung Pao chicken.

AARON
Noted.

(MILA digs into the food container. AARON watches her intently.)

MILA
Okay, I know I'm not the best at using chopsticks, but it's functional! Stop judging me!

AARON
(snapping out of his daze)
No, no. I'm not judging you. I'm just distracted, Mila.

MILA
Oh?

AARON

Mhm. Can't focus.

(MILA smiles, putting her chopsticks down. She jumps up and starts writing on the whiteboard.)

MILA

Let's play a game!

AARON

(laughing)

What? What game?

MILA

I don't know... Uh, hangman.

AARON

Okay. Wow, I haven't played that in years.

(MILA looks at the board. She has something in mind, "Go on a date with me," and is debating whether she is ready to take the risk.)

AARON

(cont')

You got a word?

MILA

(decisively)

Yes-- well, no. A sentence.

AARON

Lay it on me--but I should warn you, I'm pretty competitive.

(MILA draws the hangman stand and the number of characters in her sentence.)

AARON

(cont')

E... N... T... O...

(MILA fills in the letters of her sentence.)

AARON

(cont')

U?

MILA

(drawing the hangman's head)

Ooooh! Bad luck!

AARON

Okay, okay. I'll get it, though.

(AARON continues to guess letters until the sentence is mostly complete, reading "go on _ d _ te wit _ me." AARON stares at the board, puzzled until it finally clicks and he snaps his fingers and chuckles.)

AARON

(cont')

Go on a date with me.

(MILA smiles, filling in the final letter.)

MILA

I thought you'd never ask.

I-11 INT. MILA'S DORM ROOM - PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 2016

(MILA and EMBER are sitting on the floor, leaning against Mila's bed. EMBER is flicking through Netflix, trying to find a movie to watch.)

EMBER

"Kill Bill?"

MILA

(laughing)

Not again!... "Boyhood?"

EMBER

Too slow... "Texas Chainsaw Massacre?!"

MILA

Too scary, Ember!... "But I'm a Cheer--?"

EMBER

(annoyed)

--"But I'm a Cheerleader," are you kidding?!

MILA

I don't know!

(MILA falls onto EMBER's shoulder, giggling. EMBER lets out a sigh. MILA looks up at her.)

MILA

(cont')

Let's just watch "Kill Bill."

EMBER

Hm?

MILA

"Kill Bill," It's perfect.

EMBER

But you said you didn't want to watch it again.

MILA

(smiling)

I don't mind. Besides, when we move in together you'll have to put up with "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" every other day.

(Silence.)

EMBER

Umm... Mila. About New York...

MILA

(turning to EMBER)

What's up?

EMBER

I'm starting to think maybe it isn't the best idea--

MILA

Hey, hey! We've talked about this. I know you're worried about making it as a writer--

EMBER

Mila--

MILA

But you've got what it takes! I know you do. And I'll be there every step of the way.

EMBER

(exasperated)

That's the thing though, Mila! You can't be there all the time anymore!

MILA

I don't understand.

EMBER

If I'm going to do this - and I am - I need to go to New York. And I need to go alone.

MILA

What?

EMBER

I want to break up.

MILA

Ember?

EMBER

I can't do this anymore.

MILA

I don't understand! What can't you do anymore? Us or me?

EMBER

I don't know. I guess the feelings faded.

MILA

What did I do wrong?

EMBER

It's too complicated. Too hard. More work than it's worth.

MILA

What the hell, Ember?

EMBER

I'm sorry.

(EMBER gets up and begins to exit.)

MILA

Ember!

(Lights fade to black.)

I-12 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO, JUNE 2019

(Lights come up. MILA and DAHLIA are sitting at the table, looking at each other. They have both been crying.)

MILA

I don't want to keep holding you back.

(MILA is fully crying at this point, DAHLIA is struggling to hold back her tears. MILA tries to collect herself.)

MILA

(cont')

I love you, Dahlia, but you deserve better. I'm so sorry.

DAHLIA

(desperate)

Are you sure?

MILA

Yes. I hope you can forgive me.

(MILA gets up and walks out. DAHLIA sits in the silence. She stands and starts to pace the apartment, back and forth, as she falls apart, crying heavily. Over time, DAHLIA loses control of her breathing and begins to hyperventilate.)

DAHLIA

Fuck. Fuck! FUCK!

(Lights fade. End of Act I.)

ACT II

II-1 INT. MILA'S AND AARON'S APARTMENTS - SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL, 2017

(Lights come up. MILA and NOA are sitting on MILA's bed. Simultaneously, AARON and MATEO are sitting on AARON's couch, playing Call of Duty.)

NOA

So? Spill! How was your date with Aaron? I need every detail.

MILA

Oh my God, Noa! It was incredible!

NOA

So he picked you up at eight--

MILA

On time. Already an improvement from James!

NOA

Babe, the bar is on the floor. And then?

MILA

We went to dinner. This really nice sushi place-- but honestly, we really didn't even eat that much we were so busy talking!

NOA

Awww!

MILA

I said we should split the check, but he wasn't having it.

NOA

Hey, a free meal is never something to complain about.

MILA

I tried to pay! I've never seen someone put their card down so fast.

NOA

(laughing)

Okay, okay. Next time you'll be prepared, then.

MATEO

What'd you get up to last night?

AARON

You know Mila, from my work? You met her at the holiday party.

MATEO

You mean the girl you've thought was cute since she joined the company? The one you've been pining over for months? Oh, yeah, I think you've mentioned her once or twice.

AARON

(smiling)

I took her to Nobu last night.

MATEO

Dude!

(MATEO daps AARON up.)

MATEO

(cont')

Glad you finally grew a pair. Maybe now you'll finally get some play.

AARON

(shooting MATEO a dirty look)

Okay, buddy!

(AARON kills MATEO's video game character.)

MATEO

Did you just shoot me? We're on the same team, Aaron!?

AARON

That'll teach you to watch your mouth.

NOA

What happened after dinner?

MILA

He drove us out to Golden Gate Park.

NOA

Oh, that must've been beautiful!

MILA

So beautiful. The sky was pink and orange.

(NOA groans with envy and excitement.)

MILA

(cont')

I asked Aaron what his favorite spot is, and he said Metson Lake, so that's where we went. Down by the water.

NOA

And??

MILA

(recalling the evening)

And... I really wanted to go swimming.

NOA

(saucily)

Skinny dipping!

MILA

But he wouldn't let me. Said it "wasn't safe."

NOA

Oh booo!

MILA

I know! So... I had an idea. I started taking off my jacket and shoes, telling him I was getting in the water anyway until he had to put his arms around my waist to stop me.

NOA

Oh!?

MILA

So I turned around and we were standing, super close. I said "Kiss me or I'm jumping in."

NOA

Mila!

MILA

I know!

NOA

Well, you didn't come back soaked... So how was the kiss?

MILA

Noa, it was perfect. Like gentle, and then he started running his fingers through my hair. And I put my hand on his cheek.

NOA

Oh, you're killing me!

MILA

I know! I know!

(MILA and NOA collapse on the bed, giggling together.)

MATEO

So uh, was there dessert?

AARON

Huh?

MATEO

Did you seal the deal?

AARON

(warningly)

Mateo...

MATEO

Did you score, man?!

(AARON kills MATEO's video game character, again.)

MATEO

(cont')

Stop shooting me!

II-2 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, JANUARY, 2019

(MILA and DAHLIA are sitting together on the bed, knees touching, playing Mario Kart.)

MILA

No! Not another frickin' blue shell!

DAHLIA
(laughing)
That may or may not have been me...

MILA
Dahlia!

DAHLIA
You're too far ahead! How can I be expected to catch up?

MILA
(jokingly)
I dunno, just drive better?

DAHLIA
Hey!

(DAHLIA grabs at MILA's controller to make her mess up. MILA struggles to get the controller away from her.)

MILA
Uncalled for! Now I'm smashing into the wall!

DAHLIA
That's what you get!

MILA
Well, two can play at that game.

(MILA grabs at DAHLIA's controller. They both laugh and get lost in each other's eyes, not caring about the game anymore.)

DAHLIA
Hey, I've been thinking.

MILA
About what?

DAHLIA
What if we... moved in together?

MILA
(hesitantly)
Oh, I uh--

DAHLIA

You don't have to answer me right now. And it doesn't need to happen right now.

MILA

Okay...

DAHLIA

I've just been playing with the idea in my head and wanted to run it by you. Sorry if it's too--

MILA

(cautiously optimistic)

No, it's okay! I'm not opposed to the idea, it's just a big thing to think about.

DAHLIA

It could be nice. Waking up next to each other, every day. All the little things.

MILA

(smiling)

It could be. And Noa will be away for a while...

DAHLIA

Yeah?

MILA

I can't seem to think of a good reason not to. But let's talk about it more tomorrow, I'm getting tired.

(MILA flops backward onto the bed.)

DAHLIA

Sounds good. But I wanna be little spoon tonight!

(DAHLIA flops backward onto the bed, next to MILA.)

II-3 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 2017

(NOA is working, completely surrounded by open books, papers, and pens. She opens her laptop and the screen is projected to reveal the world's busiest Google Calendar. Beyond class and assignments, NOA has

scheduled her meals, sleep hours, bathroom breaks, and showers. It is beyond overwhelming to look at.)

NOA

(quietly angry)

Fuck, I'm behind.

(NOA starts shuffling through papers, trying to find what she needs, but she doesn't even know where to start.)

NOA

(cont')

Where is... Well, what if I just... If I could find... WHERE IS IT??

MILA

(from offstage)

You okay, Noe?

NOA

(startled)

Yeah, just looking for my phone.

MILA

I think it's on the coffee table?

(NOA looks at the coffee table, which is completely covered in her work.)

NOA

Uh-huh. Got it, thanks.

(NOA sighs and digs around for her phone until she finds it sandwiched into a book like a bookmark. She opens it and her emails are projected. There are 22 new emails. NOA quickly closes her phone and laptop, shutting off the projections.)

NOA

(to herself)

It's okay. You're okay. Everything's under control.

(NOA takes a deep breath and returns to her textbook.)

**II-4 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH
2017**

(MILA is practicing a presentation for work in front
of NOA.)

MILA

To summarize, by implementing my strategy, we can expect to
see higher engagement with our current audience as well as
improved outreach to potential customers.

(NOA claps enthusiastically.)

NOA

Woohoo!

MILA

Was that okay?

NOA

Yes, so good! One note-- at the end, say it's your
"proposed two-prong strategy." People love big fancy
planning words. Oh! And say "Thank you."

MILA

(relieved)

Okay, will do. Thank you, Noa.

NOA

Of course.

(MILA checks her phone for a text from JAMES. Nothing.
MILA sighs.)

NOA

(cont')

James?

MILA

You know me too well. Haven't heard anything in days.

NOA

What are you hoping to hear?

MILA

I don't know. I mean, that he's alive would be nice. That I'm going to see him again because I'm never quite sure?
(Beat). That he's thinking about me?

NOA

(gently)

I think if he was thinking about you, you'd know. He'd make it clear that you're his priority.

(MILA doesn't respond.)

NOA

(cont')

You know, when you first found James you said you were just looking for some fun, but now it sounds like you might be looking for more?

MILA

I don't want a relationship.

NOA

Okay... Why not?

MILA

Because opening that door means... Well, it means letting go of Ember, for real. Plus, I do not see him as a boyfriend-- James is a moron.

NOA

Evidently. You know I never liked him. What a waste of homemade challah.

(MILA laughs.)

NOA

(cont')

But Mila, I think you already have let go of Ember. (Beat). And maybe that's not such a bad thing.

MILA

Maybe not. But it's scary. (Beat.) I guess that's not a bad thing either.

NOA

What are you scared of? Getting hurt again?

MILA

No. Being hurt means that I found something worth hurting for. I'm more afraid of accepting that Ember wasn't the one? Like, truly coming to terms with it, if that makes sense?

NOA

It does.

MILA

But also, I *have* accepted it. That's the fact that's scary right now. When she first broke up with me, it was like my world had been shattered. The most dependable thing in my life ended. And if Ember could disappear, then I guess I realized everything else could, too.

NOA

I get that. I had the same fear when my dad left. People come and go-- it's terrifying.

MILA

I'm learning that.

NOA

That's okay. I'm proud of you.

MILA

(reassuring herself)

I think I'm ready to date, though.

NOA

Just not James?

MILA

Just *not* James.

**II-5 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO,
NOVEMBER, 2018**

(MILA is struggling to pin up a Happy Birthday banner.
DAHLIA walks over to help MILA reach.)

MILA

(stepping back from the banner)

Ugh, thank you.

DAHLIA

Of course.

(DAHLIA walks over to MILA and puts her hand around her waist.)

DAHLIA
(cont')

How are you doing?

MILA
I'm alright.

DAHLIA
Worried about seeing Ember tonight?

MILA
I don't know. I'm not sure how I feel yet.

DAHLIA
Well, I'll be here with you the whole way if you need anything.

(MILA kisses DAHLIA. DENISE walks into the apartment, making a beeline toward DAHLIA.)

DENISE
(embracing DAHLIA in a hug)
Ah! Dahlia! It's so lovely to see you, my dear.

MILA
Hello?! Over here! Your only daughter!

DENISE
(laughing, to DAHLIA)
Oh! Do you hear something? Is there a voice out there?

(DENISE jokingly searches the room for MILA, who is in plain sight. She eventually finds her and gives MILA a massive hug.)

DENISE
(cont')
Ah! There she is! My beautiful girl.

MILA
Good to see you too, Mom.

DENISE

(handing MILA a wrapped gift)

When will Noa be here?

MILA

(placing the gift by the birthday
banner)

Soon!

(Party-goers trickle in. Small talk. EMBER is standing
at the back. MILA makes eye contact with her.)

DAHLIA

(touching MILA's arm)

You got this.

(MILA smiles and takes a deep breath, walking over to
EMBER.)

MILA and EMBER

(overlapping)

How are you?--

It's good to see you--

(MILA and EMBER awkwardly laugh.)

EMBER

Thanks for the invite. I hope it's not weird that I
reached out.

MILA

Of course not. You were in the area. How did the book
thing go in San Jose?

EMBER

It went well, I think.

(EMBER notices DAHLIA watching the conversation.
MILA smiles and waves DAHLIA over.)

MILA

(to EMBER)

Hey, I want you to meet someone.

EMBER

Okay.

DAHLIA

I'm Dahlia! It's good to meet you.

EMBER

You too, I'm Ember.

PARTY-GOER #1

Shhhh! I hear footsteps, hide!

(EVERYONE crouches. Lights dim. NOA enters and the lights go up.)

EVERYONE

Surprise! Happy Birthday!

NOA

Aw! You guys!

MILA

Happy birthday, Noe!

NOA

(hugging MILA, giggling)

Thank you!

(NOA notices DENISE still crouched and runs to her.)

NOA

(cont')

Denise!

DENISE

Noa, dear. Happy birthday.

NOA

Here, let me help you.

(NOA helps DENISE up.)

DENISE

I'm afraid my knees aren't what they used to be! I'm getting too old for this shit.

MILA

(laughing)

Mommmmm.

DENISE

(putting an arm around NOA and MILA)

How is law school going, Noa?

NOA

It's going. One more year.

(NOA'S face falls.)

DENISE

(with a knowing look)

Mhm. Oh my girls! Growing up!

PARTY-GOER #2

(holding a cake, singing)

Happy birthday to you!

(EVERYONE joins in, gathering in a circle around NOA.
NOA becomes increasingly anxious.)

EVERYONE

Happy birthday to you!

Happy birthday, dear Noa!

Happy birthday to you!

(EVERYONE cheers.)

PARTY-GOER #1

Are you one? Are you two? Are you three? Are you--

NOA

I'M TWENTY-FUCKING FOUR!

(EVERYONE goes silent.)

NOA

(cont')

And I'm exhausted. For the first time in my life, I have no idea what I'm doing. Twenty-four. Oh my god, I'm twenty-four and everything is wrong. And I only have a year to get this right. Doesn't everyone have their lives figured out by twenty-five!? The big "quadricentennial!" But I know that can't be true. I'm in the prime of my life! In my twenties! Living in an amazing apartment with my amazing best friend. I'm so close. I'm almost out of school, about to *finally* get what I've been working towards

this whole time but... was it worth all this? Will it be worth working myself half to death?

(Silence.)

NOA
(cont')

Well? Will it?

(NOA runs out of the room. Lights fade to black.)

**II-6 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, NOVEMBER
2018**

(Lights come up. They are dim. The birthday banner is gone and NOA is sitting on the floor, leaning on MILA's bed. MILA enters.)

MILA
Hey, you.

NOA
I'm so sorry.

MILA
Don't apologize. (Beat). Wanna talk about it?

NOA
No, I'm fine.

(MILA sits down next to her, giving NOA a look. NOA sighs.)

NOA
(cont')
I just feel like every day is the same. Wake up, work out, eat breakfast, read, go to class, read more, lunch, read again, more class, come home, still reading, dinner, bed. Repeat. Oh, and sometimes shower. And I know that this is what I wanted, that I can handle this, but why don't I feel joy yet? After year three, will I finally get there? Or will it be more of the same, but class is replaced with work? And who am I without school, anyway?

MILA
Maybe it's time to find out.

NOA

I just don't have the time.

MILA

Then make time. What you're doing right now isn't sustainable.

NOA

Are you saying I should drop out?

MILA

No, not necessarily. But work or law school or whatever it is isn't going to *make* you happy, we have to do that for ourselves.

(DENISE enters, holding a single slice of cake with a candle burning. She sits down on the other side of NOA.)

DENISE

Everyone knows the best part of a birthday is the cake.

NOA

Thank you.

(NOA eats a bite of cake. Her mouth is full.)

NOA

(cont')

I can't just quit law school.

DENISE

Maybe not quit, but Noa, darling, give yourself permission to... deviate from the plan.

NOA

What would I even do?

MILA

Something entirely devoid of reading, or a Google Calendar.

DENISE

How do you wish you could grow?

NOA

I wish I could-- I wish I could hop on a plane not knowing where it would land, or where I would go next.

MILA

Then do that. Take a leave of absence for next semester.
Law school will still be here if you want it again.

DENISE

And so will we.

NOA

Thank you.

DENISE

(sighing)

Now eat your cake, Noa. I didn't make this for nothing.

(NOA takes a bite of cake, but not before picking up a
bit of cream up on her pinky finger and plopping it on
MILA's nose. Lights fade.)

II-7 INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL, 2017

(Lights come up. AARON and MILA are on AARON's couch.
They are cuddling.)

MILA

How was your day?

AARON

Productive. Got stuff done. How about you?

MILA

It was good. We're moving forward with my marketing
proposal.

AARON

Incredible. I'm proud of you.

(AARON sighs, gently.)

MILA

You okay?

AARON

Yeah, yeah. All good.

MILA

What are you thinking about?

(Beat.)

AARON

Laila.

MILA

(pointing to herself)

Umm... Mi-la.

AARON

What? Yes, I know that!

MILA

(teasingly)

Hey, it's okay! They both have L's in them-- it must be confusing!

(AARON laughs, pulling MILA closer.)

MILA

(cont')

Who's Laila?

AARON

My ex-girlfriend.

MILA

Okay. Why are you thinking about her?

AARON

Mila, I'm coming out of a pretty long-term relationship.

MILA

Me too, actually.

AARON

Yeah? How long?

MILA

Almost three years.

AARON

Mine was four.

(MILA nods, understanding the loss AARON feels.)

AARON

(cont')

I... thought she was who I was supposed to be with, but I lost her.

MILA

I know that feeling pretty well. I'm sorry.

AARON

I really like you, Mila. But I don't think I've fully moved on yet.

MILA

That's okay. It took time for me, too. I can wait. I'm patient.

AARON

(sighing)

The thing is, Mila, when my relationship with her ended, I resigned myself to being alone. To protect myself. And I'm worried that if we spend more time together, one of us is going to get their heart broken.

MILA

I am *willing* to get my heart broken again.

AARON

But see, I'm not. I've come to terms with not finding love again for a long time.

MILA

Not finding love again? It sounds like you're punishing yourself.

AARON

Maybe that's what I deserve for losing her in the first place.

MILA

I want more for you than this.

(Beat.)

AARON

Thank you, Mila.

MILA

So this is it, isn't it?

AARON

I hope you can understand.

MILA

(nodding)

I do, but I think you're very worthy of being loved, Aaron.
And I hope one day you see that, too.

(MILA gets up to leave, and AARON walks her out. Right before MILA reaches the door, she turns around and throws her arms around AARON. They share a long hug.)

II-8 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL, 2017

(JAMES knocks on MILA's apartment door. MILA opens the door.)

JAMES

(smirking)

I thought you said you didn't want to do this anymore.

MILA

Just shut up.

(JAMES kisses MILA and she pulls off his jacket, tossing it onto the floor and pulling him further into the house. Lights fade to black.)

II-9 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 2017

(Lights come up. JAMES' jacket is still on the floor. NOA is sitting in the living room working. MILA walks out of her bedroom into the living room, defeated.)

NOA

Good morning, my love.

(MILA crawls into NOA's lap, clearly emotional. NOA looks at JAMES' jacket.)

NOA

(cont')

It seems we had company last night.

MILA

(quietly)

I'm sorry.

NOA

Hey, there's nothing to be sorry about. What's going on?

MILA

(distracted)

I don't know. I just-- I was thinking about how much I miss Aaron, which is silly because I don't think we were even officially together, and then the next thing I knew I was texting James, and he was standing right there in front of me!

NOA

Shhh... it's okay. Come here. You know, it's completely normal to grieve Aaron-- maybe it wasn't official but your feelings for each other were very real.

MILA

I miss him.

NOA

I know. You've been through a lot, opening yourself up again and not having it go according to plan. Give yourself some grace.

MILA

But why'd I have to go and hook up with *James*?!

NOA

Because your heart needed a break-- but that doesn't mean I condone you distracting yourself with crapbag man.

MILA

(smiling)

I hate it when you're right.

NOA

I always am.

MILA

Thank you, Noe.

(NOA kisses MILA's forehead.)

NOA

Of course.

II-10 INT. JAMES' APARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO, MAY 2017

(MILA knocks on JAMES' apartment door. JAMES opens the door.)

JAMES

(smirking)

Back for more already?

MILA

(putting JAMES' jacket from her bag)

No, James. Ew. I'm just giving this back.

JAMES

(taking the jacket)

Oh, okay. Wanna come in?

MILA

(stepping inside)

Uhm... Sure, I actually want to talk to you about something.

JAMES

Mila, we've been over this. I don't do the talking stuff. I'm just good for a fun night.

MILA

That's what we need to talk about.

JAMES

You're not going to change my mind.

MILA

I know.

JAMES

Okay?

MILA

I know I can't change your mind, I've tried. But you can't change mine either. I'm a committed relationship person, and you're a casual "fun night" person. So, I don't think I can do whatever this is anymore.

JAMES

Okay.

MILA

Goodbye, James.

JAMES

(hands in pockets)

Hey, if you ever change your mind...

MILA

(shaking her head, smiling softly)

I won't.

(MILA leaves JAMES' apartment. Lights fade to black.)

II-11 EXT. SIDEWALK - SAN FRANCISCO, FEBRUARY, 2018

(MILA is sitting on a bench, talking on the phone when DAHLIA walks by and trips over MILA's feet and falls to the ground, dropping her purse and scarf.)

DAHLIA

(exacerbated)

Ugh, not again!

MILA

(quickly, into her phone)

Mom, I gotta go. I'll call you back later.

(MILA goes to help DAHLIA up. They don't break eye contact.)

MILA

(cont')

Are you alright?! I'm so sorry!

DAHLIA

(still holding eye contact)

I-- Yes-- I'm-- This happens a lot.

(MILA looks down and realizes she's still holding DAHLIA's hand. She lets go, still maintaining eye contact.)

MILA

(smiling)

That's alright. *(Beat)*. Here. You dropped your scarf.

(MILA picks up DAHLIA's scarf and hands it to DAHLIA.)

DAHLIA

(wrapping the scarf around her neck)

Oh, thank you so much.

(MILA watches DAHLIA put the scarf on, mesmerized. DAHLIA catches MILA looking at her and meets her eyes. They remain frozen for a moment, softly smiling at each other. *Beat*. DAHLIA turns and starts to keep walking.)

MILA

Hey! Wait!

(DAHLIA stops and turns back to MILA)

DAHLIA

Yes?

MILA

Can I get your number? I'm sure that sounds crazy, but--

DAHLIA

(walking back to MILA)

Absolutely.

MILA

I know! Absolutely crazy, but--

DAHLIA

No, absolutely. Give me your phone.

(DAHLIA puts her contact information in MILA's phone.)

DAHLIA

(cont')

Text me, okay?

MILA

I will.

(DAHLIA carries on walking where she was going. MILA sits back down on the bench.)

II-12 EXT. RESTAURANT PATIO - SOUTHERN COAST OF SPAIN, APRIL 2019

(NOA has taken a break from law school and is currently traveling through Europe. She is on the Southern Coast of Spain, sitting at a table on a restaurant patio. Across from her is a man named EMILIO. A waiter brings them their drinks.)

WAITER

(handing them each their drink)

Señor, for you. (*Beat*). And for you, Señorita más bonita, enjoy.

(NOA blushes profusely. She looks very happy and relaxed.)

NOA

¡Gracias!

(WAITER gives NOA and EMILIO a nod and exits.)

NOA

(cont')

And they say chivalry's dead!

EMILIO

It's to get larger tips with the tourists.

NOA

Hey, don't burst my bubble!

(EMILIO laughs.)

EMILIO

(raising his glass)

Salud, Noa. To new friends.

NOA

To new friends. And impromptu adventures! Salud, Emilio.

(NOA and EMILIO clink glasses and each take a sip, smiling at each other.)

EMILIO

Tell me, Noa. What else do you want to do here?

NOA

Well, we've already seen the Sagrada Familia. You made me paella, and today we're having Cava by the coast, I don't know what more. *(Beat)*. But you know, I've always wanted to go paragliding.

EMILIO

Paragliding!? You are a wild one.

NOA

I don't know if I would go that far... But I've been trying to step outside my comfort zone recently. *(Beat)*. Any chance you'd be up to join me? Tomorrow, maybe?

EMILIO

(sighing)

Noa, I'd love to. But I have to go back to work tomorrow.

(EMILIO checks his watch.)

EMILIO

(cont')

In fact, my ferry leaves in a few hours.

NOA

Ferry?

EMILIO

Back to Morocco.

NOA

You're from Morocco?!

EMILIO

Yes. I grew up here, but my life is there now.

(NOA sighs and her face falls. EMILIO places his hand on top of her hand.)

NOA

Well, it's been fun, Emilio. Thank you for all your help.

EMILIO

Say, why don't you come with me?

NOA

To Morocco? I can't do that!

EMILIO

Ahh, yes you can. It's only a short ride. You can stay with me. And next weekend, we go paragliding in the mountains near Marrakech!

NOA

I don't know...

EMILIO

(slyly)

What was that you were saying about new adventures? Stepping outside your comfort zone? In Spanish, we have a saying: "Donde fueres, haz lo que vieres." Where you go, do what you see.

NOA

When in Rome. Hm.

EMILIO

(snapping his fingers)

Exactly! Except, we are not in Rome, Noa.

(NOA laughs. Lights fade to black.)

II-13 EXT. SIDEWALK - SAN FRANCISCO, MAY 2019

(Lights come up. MILA is sitting on a bench, holding her phone out in front of her, talking into it)

MILA

Hey, Noa! So happy to hear from you. And oh my gosh! You're in Morocco? How did *that* happen?! Ooh! Ooh! Get a fez for me! Also this is a voice memo because I don't feel like typing all of this out. But things here are okay! I think.

(MILA takes a deep breath)

MILA

(cont')

Actually, things could be better. I mean, they could always be better, and they could always be worse, but you know. Maybe right now they could be a bit better. Living with Dahlia... has been GREAT. I love her. I love making her breakfast every morning and falling asleep looking at her. That sounds weird and creepy. Falling asleep in her arms. I love falling asleep in her arms with my eyes not looking at her. Because my eyes are closed. Because I am asleep. Anyways. Point being, living with her is good, but not exactly what I expected? There's no particular reason, per se, but I feel like we might be on slightly different pages? Like I get the feeling she wants to propose. Maybe not now... but eventually? I-I'm not sure I want that. Not that I wouldn't want that with her, I love her! But I don't think I'm there yet. And she is. So I'm thinking maybe a little distance could be good.

(JAMES walks by, seeing MILA and stopping. MILA quickly wraps up her message.)

MILA

(cont')

Alright! That's all, gotta go, bye Noa!

(MILA hits send and puts her phone down.)

MILA

(cont')

James!

JAMES

Mila, I haven't seen you in ages.

MILA

I know. You look... grown up.

JAMES

(chuckling)

It's the argyle, isn't it? Yeah, my fiancé got it for me.

MILA

Fiancé?!

JAMES

Yeah, I know. It still sounds crazy to me too. Her name is Rachel. We got engaged a few weeks ago.

MILA

That's so exciting! I'm happy for you, James.

JAMES

Thank you. I am too. (*Beat*). We should catch up sometime.

MILA

How about tonight?

JAMES

(surprised)

Oh! Sure, sounds great.

II-14 INT. JAMES' APARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO, MAY 2019

(MILA and JAMES are sitting on JAMES' couch, watching television.)

MILA

Remind me again why "Alice in Wonderland" is your favorite movie?

JAMES

Hey, hey, hey. I never said it was my favorite movie. I said it was my favorite *Disney* movie.

MILA

Okay, what makes it your favorite *Disney* movie?

JAMES

It's ludicrous! It's unpredictable and nonsensical. I feel like I'm on an acid trip every time I watch it.

MILA

(laughing)

This would be a good one to watch while high. Lots of swirling colors.

JAMES

Exactly.

(MILA's phone rings. She turns her phone on silent. DAHLIA is on the other line. She leaves a voice message.)

DAHLIA

Hey, Mila. Just wondering what time you'll be home? I'm making that butternut squash soup for dinner. Okay, I love you.

MILA

So, what made you finally settle down?

JAMES

You know, I met someone really cool. But they had no interest in the way I was approaching relationships.

MILA

So you changed for her?

JAMES

No, no. I let her go... and then I realized what a mistake I had made. So I started opening myself up more. Looking for the kind of love she had talked about wanting to find. And that's when Rachel came along.

MILA

I'm proud of you.

(JAMES and MILA continue watching the movie. DAHLIA calls again. She is sent straight to voicemail.)

DAHLIA

It's me. I went ahead and ate, but there are leftovers in the fridge for whenever you get home. Let me know you're okay, please.

JAMES

You said you're seeing someone, too?

MILA

Yeah. Her name is Dahlia. We met about a year and a half ago.

JAMES

Is she the one?

(Beat. JAMES looks at MILA.)

MILA

I don't know why not, but... I don't think so. I mean, I could be spending time with her tonight, but I'm here.

JAMES

I see.

MILA

God, how do I explain all of this to her?

JAMES

(sighing)

I think you should go.

MILA

Yeah.

JAMES

It was nice seeing you, Mila.

MILA

Congrats again on the engagement, James.

(MILA leaves JAMES' apartment. JAMES switches off the television and exits the other side of the stage. DAHLIA calls again. She is sent to voicemail.)

DAHLIA

Mila! Where are you? It's two in the morning? I'm starting to think I should call the-

(MILA walks through the front door. She is standing in front of DAHLIA as DAHLIA is leaving the voicemail.)

DAHLIA

(cont')

Mila!

(DAHLIA drops her phone on the floor and runs to MILA. They hug, tightly.)

DAHLIA

(cont')

Thank God.

(Lights fade to black.)

II-15 INT. MILA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAN FRANCISCO, JUNE 2019

(MILA and DAHLIA are sitting at the table, both scrolling through their phones.)

DAHLIA

I have a question.

MILA

I have an answer!

DAHLIA

Thoughts on getting a cat?

MILA

No.

DAHLIA

O-or a dog!

MILA

Better, but I don't think so.

DAHLIA

I know, puppies are a lot of work, but I would do most of it, I promise!

(DAHLIA rapidly types and scrolls on her phone, finding a dog adoption site.)

MILA

Can we talk about this later?

DAHLIA

(showing MILA her phone)

But look at Bruce! Nine-week-old rescue who is gentle, affectionate, and fun-loving. Just look at his eyes!

MILA

(curtly)

They're very sweet eyes. But we can't get a dog.

DAHLIA

Why not? You love dogs! I would handle all the training, and we would do the fun things together! We could take him to the dog park, and go on walks around our neighborhood!

MILA
(putting her phone down)

No, Dahlia.

DAHLIA
Ooh! And we could have a picnic with him in front of the Painted Ladies on a sunny weekend! And take him hiking or camping at the redwoods state park! Or we could get him a doggy life-jacket and go to the beach--

MILA
I DON'T WANT A DOG, OKAY!?

DAHLIA
WHY? (*Beat*). Just say it.

MILA
I think we might be at slightly different places.

(DAHLIA puts her face in her hands, sighing.)

DAHLIA
(groaning)
What do you mean?

MILA
You know I love you, but--

(DAHLIA makes direct eye contact with MILA.)

DAHLIA
I love you too. That's *why* I want to get a dog with you.

MILA
(coldly)
If you think a dog is going to bridge the growing distance between us, then I don't know what to tell you.

(DAHLIA tears up.)

DAHLIA
(quietly)
I don't know. I feel like I'm losing you, Mila. And I don't know what to do.

(MILA takes a deep breath and softens her voice.)

MILA

I know. I'm sorry. I don't know why this is happening either.

DAHLIA

Did I do something?

MILA

(tearing up)

No. God, no. Hey, look at me. You are the best thing that ever happened to me.

DAHLIA

Then where do we go from here? I don't want to just give up.

MILA

Dahlia, you deserve someone who wants the same things you want in this moment, and who doesn't leave you staying up late, worrying where they've been or--

DAHLIA

That was only one time, and you apologized. I trust you.

MILA

That's not the point. (Beat). You can't just go along pretending that what you want can wait indefinitely. And I can't keep forcing myself to go along pretending that at any moment now, what you want will become what I want. We're just in two different places.

(DAHLIA doesn't respond.)

MILA

(cont')

I think we've outgrown each other. Or at least, you've outgrown me.

DAHLIA

You don't see a life with me?

MILA

That's not it. I'm not quite ready to imagine that life with anyone right now. Even if it is down the road. I just don't know. (Beat). And I don't want to keep holding you back.

(MILA is fully crying at this point, DAHLIA is struggling to hold back her tears. MILA tries to collect herself.)

MILA

(cont')

I love you, Dahlia, but you deserve better. I'm so sorry.

DAHLIA

(desperate)

Are you sure?

MILA

Yes. I hope you can forgive me.

(MILA gets up and walks out. Lights fade.)

II-16 INT. MILA'S AND NOA'S APARTMENTS - JUNE 2019

(Lights go up. MILA is sitting in her apartment. She calls NOA, and NOA picks up. NOA is sitting at her table.)

NOA

Hey Mimi! What's up?

MILA

I just broke up with Dahlia.

NOA

I'm sorry. Are you okay?

MILA

No.

NOA

Did something happen?

MILA

No. But I couldn't keep pretending like I could see myself with her forever. I love her, but I don't see that future.

NOA

Then it sounds like you did the right thing.

MILA

But I feel like I just made a terrible mistake.

NOA

Why?

MILA

Because she *could* have been the one. I just couldn't love her how she loved me. And now I'm afraid I've hurt her in a way that she doesn't deserve... I don't want to be the person that thoughtlessly blindsides someone, sending them into a spiral that ends with them punching a tree.

NOA

(gently)

I think that was just a you thing, Mila.

(MILA laughs.)

NOA

(cont')

But regardless, you didn't blindside her. And you weren't thoughtless. This conversation right here proves that.

(MILA doesn't respond but takes a deep breath.)

NOA

(cont')

What are you thinking now?

MILA

What if that was my only chance and I just blew it?

NOA

No. No, you have to trust your gut that when it doesn't feel right, it isn't. And that when the right person - at the right time - comes along, you'll feel it. You have to believe that the love you envision for yourself is out there, somewhere, waiting.

MILA

I guess. (*Beat*). But it's just so exhausting. I feel defeated. I'm tired of this.

NOA

Of what?

MILA

Of pain. I ache from the inside out.

NOA

I'm so sorry. I wish I could be there to hug you right now.

MILA

I miss you.

NOA

I know, I miss you, too. *(Beat)*. But I'm so proud of you, Mila. Look how much you've grown. End-of-senior-year Mila wouldn't believe that she could enter a casual relationship, or date a colleague, or fall in love with another girl and be willing to let her go when the time came.

MILA

Dating fucking sucks. I rebuild my house over and over again, let someone new move in, and for what? To watch it catch fire right before my eyes? What's the point of repairing things just for them to come falling down again?

NOA

(thoughtfully)

You once told me that being hurt means you've found something worth hurting for.

MILA

But I don't want to hurt anymore.

NOA

Growing pains are hard. Especially on the heart.

MILA

Exactly! So, I'm done with growing. I've had enough growth.

(NOA laughs.)

NOA

But Mila, the most dependable thing in life is change. We need it. And when things happen, you have two choices: you either die or keep growing. *(Beat)*. Maybe the house isn't burning, it just exists in a world engulfed by flames.

MILA

(sighing)

There's some beauty in that, I suppose. And there's no one else I'd rather walk through the fire with than you.

(Lights fade to black. End of Act II.)