

OUTER-BOUND

Written by

Rohan Vechlekar

INT. OFFICE ROOM LOBBY - MORNING

MIA, sharp and passively self-aware, sits in the lobby, well-dressed for a semi-formal occasion, entirely alone. She idles in wait.

After a short while, another girl, BARBARA, strolls in, completely unrelated. It's a surprise meeting: they stand there looking at each other, letting the situation soak in before both break out into smiles.

MIA

Barbara?

BARBARA

Wow, what are you doing here, Mia?

MIA

I'm here for a job interview!

BARBARA

Oh, me too! I'm here for a stenographer's position!

MIA

We're... totally here for the same job, that's astronomical!

BARBARA

Oh. Heh, that's awkward.

MIA

(taken aback: she doesn't think it's awkward at all)

Um... but, wow! This is so great, I was definitely not expecting this when I woke up this morning! How long have you lived here?

BARBARA

A little more than a year. How long have you lived here?

MIA

Like, four. That's wild. How have you been?

BARBARA

Well, I'm just getting over a cold, because, see, when I used to live in Asheboro, and my dad says that I'm especially sensitive to the pollen there, so that's why I moved down here. So yeah, I had a cold, and on top of that my landlord totally ripped me off, he raised my rent out of nowhere, which really sucks! So, I've had a few problems lately!

MIA

Ow, that sucks.

BARBARA

Yeah, he just randomly slips a note under my door one day and now I owe him more! And I don't know where that came from!

MIA

(bewildered)

Sounds stressful. I'm sorry you don't have anything happier to say.

BARBARA

Yeah, it's only a few more dollars, so it's not that bad, but... I wish I knew where it came from!

MIA

Did you ask him?

BARBARA

Well, he's never around! I'm like, I'm paying you to live in a building that you own, but you're never in the building! I'm just saying!

MIA

(unsurely)

Well that's... unfortunate, I, uh, hope you get all that worked out.

BARBARA

I do, too. So tell me about your life!

MIA

(recovering from the weirdness)

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

Well, last-- starting from February
I've been juggling two plays.

BARBARA

Really? Wow! That's awesome, I wish
that was me!

MIA

Hm... it's... it's a lot of work.
Sometimes I feel that one play
would be plenty, but at the same
time, it's like paradise! You know?
I'm having a lot of fun with it.

BARBARA

Yeah, you're doing what you love!

MIA

I'm pulling off what I love.

BARBARA

But if you're so busy, why are even
trying to get another job?

MIA

Well, after the two plays are done--

BARBARA

Oh, yeah, what are they?

MIA

Um, *The Crucible* and *Stop Kiss*. I'm
playing Abigail in--

BARBARA

Nope! Never heard of them! Wait,
I'm sorry, I interrupted you.

MIA

No, it's okay. But I mean, that
after they're done, the plays,
everything's going to be really
uncertain, and right now I need
some stability. Like, financial
stability.

BARBARA

Mm-hm.

MIA

Because no matter how horribly
theatre dies, people are always
going to be sued by other people.

BARBARA
(guffawing)
My gosh, that's awful!

MIA
Well... it's nothing to what you
must be going through, with your
landlord and--

BARBARA
Yeah, like I said, it was just a
couple more dollars, but still,
that's just what I need! I'm
kidding.

MIA
So what are you doing now?

BARBARA
My dad is helping me out right now.
I have a couple hundred dollars
saved up, I think I have maybe six
hundred, seven hundred, but that's
supposed to be for emergencies.

MIA
Mm. Well, it's good that your dad's
helping.

BARBARA
It's good for me. He doesn't want
to be helping me for much longer,
he thinks I'm old enough. And he's
right.

MIA
You'll do fine. Don't worry about
being too old.

BARBARA
Yeah, but I hate mooching off my
dad, at my age! I'm pretty sure
he'd have his own house by now! I'm
pretty sure!

MIA
I don't have my own house.

BARBARA
Where do you live?

MIA
Greatwood.

BARBARA

That's a nice place! I had a friend who lived there, he said his rent was like, \$500 a month!

MIA

Well, I live on the border, so it's a little cheaper there.

The door to the office opens and PATRICK, the interviewer, leans out.

PATRICK

Hello... is one of you Mia?

MIA opens her mouth.

BARBARA

(interrupting her)

That's Mia. I'm Barbara.

PATRICK

(stepping out for handshakes)

Oh! Well, I'm Patrick, I'm going to be conducting the interview, so... hello to both of you! You two seem to know each other.

BARBARA

Yeah, we just met again by coincidence! We were friends in high school, and I'm here now because my landlord started charging me extra for no apparent reason! But no I'm here, so I guess there's silver lining on everything!

PATRICK

(slightly taken aback)

Well, as it stands, Mia is scheduled to go first, so Barbara, if you would just wait out here for a little while, I'll get to you next.

BARBARA

Okay!

MIA gets up and follows PATRICK into his office.

MIA
(on her way)
When I'm done, I'll wait out here
until you've finished too.

BARBARA
Okay!

INT. PATRICK'S OFFICE - MORNING

MIA takes a seat across PATRICK's desk.

PATRICK
So, you're going for the same
position as your friend, huh?

MIA
Apparently! It was a huge surprise
to see her sitting there, it's been
years!

PATRICK
(shuffling papers, getting
to business)
Well, I guess I'd wish you both
luck then, but there's no denying
math. Anyway, you said that you
were a typist at the *News & Record*
for three years? Just as a matter
of interest, did you ever write
anything?

MIA
No, I just typed and formatted. You
know... built the ship but didn't
sail it.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE ROOM LOBBY - MORNING

BARBARA sits by herself in wait, her neutral expression on: a
blank, concerned little smile, to herself.

CUT TO:

INT. PATRICK'S OFFICE - MORNING

Nobody's moved.

PATRICK

How'd you get into acting if you were an English major?

MIA

Just chance. The same thing that got me into stenography when I was an actress.

PATRICK

Well, the reason I ask is because you're very well-qualified for all three.

MIA

I'm qualified to be an English major?

PATRICK

Well, you did graduate.

MIA

I guess that's a third of all it takes.

PATRICK

It's actually a third of what you have. Luckily it's more than a third of what it takes.

MIA

Oh, that's good news.

PATRICK

You should feel very confident about the position.

MIA

Well, I... I mean, I'll try not to feel anything until I hear back from you.

PATRICK

Right, I can't guarantee anything, but what I'm saying is that, you shouldn't worry about going hungry wherever you go.

MIA

So when will I-- when can I expect to hear back?

PATRICK

Depends.

MIA
Depends?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE ROOM LOBBY - MORNING

MIA slinks out of the office looking shy and ecstatic.

BARBARA
What happened to you?

MIA
I got a date.

BARBARA
(a bit sharply)
You got a date?

MIA
Yeah! Day after tomorrow at seven!

BARBARA
Wow, he just asked you out during
the interview?

MIA
Well, at the tail end, after all
the interviewing was out of the
way.

BARBARA
That's crazy, I can't believe he
did that!

MIA
I can... is something wrong?

BARBARA
No, nothing's wrong, I just can't
believe he did that!

MIA
Why not, what's the matter?

PATRICK opens the office door again, beckoning BARBARA. He doesn't make eye contact with MIA but his grin is definitely for her.

INT. PATRICK'S OFFICE - MORNING

BARBARA sits across from PATRICK just as MIA did.

BARBARA

Hi! I heard you asked Mia out on a date!

PATRICK

(vaguely surprised)
Indeed I did. Is that a problem?

BARBARA

No, I just wasn't expecting that at all.

PATRICK

(slightly confused)
Are you usually able to predict things like that?

BARBARA

No, I can't predict stuff, but I don't think people go to job interviews expecting to be asked out on dates. I'm just saying, I'm sorry. So, um, what do you think about this?

(she points to her resume on PATRICK's desk)

PATRICK

(switching gears)
Well, your resume is very complete. You have a lot of good experience, and out of that, a whole lot of it's relevant.

BARBARA

Oh, so I have a good chance!

PATRICK

If you don't hear back from us this time, you shouldn't be afraid to keep trying, in other words.

FADE TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

MIA and BARBARA are walking together after the interviews.

BARBARA

That's really cool that he asked you out! I mean, he's not my type, but if he asked me out I'd probably say yes.

MIA
I'm sure he's plenty different off
the job.

BARBARA
Are we going anywhere?

MIA
I'm not, I'm just walking.

BARBARA
Cool.

MIA
You did mean right now, right? Not
in the context of life or anything
like that?

BARBARA
Yeah, I meant right now.

MIA
I guess it doesn't matter, my
answer'd be the same.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - MORNING

MIA and BARBARA are sitting on a bench next to each other.

BARBARA
Like, the bathrooms aren't any
cleaner! The A/C's not any better!
So I don't know why he's cranking
up the rent! It's just a few extra
dollars, it's not that big of a
deal, but still! My income hasn't
gone up with it! I'm just saying!

MIA
(subtly fed up)
Have you told your landlord
everything you just told me?

BARBARA
I told you! He's never there! It's
really annoying! But there's
nothing I can do about it, so I'll
just pay the extra.

MIA

Gee, I don't know what to say.
(she's finding it harder
to care)

BARBARA

Well, I mean, there's nothing you
can do about it.

MIA

There has to be some positive stuff
going on in your life! Tell me
about that.

BARBARA

I think the interview went okay.

They share a chuckle.

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - MIDDAY

THORPE and PATRICK are lounging about.

THORPE

So, how'd the interview go?

PATRICK

Thorpe, I was the interviewer.

THORPE

You're telling me that things can
only go awry on one side?

PATRICK

Not for you, I guess.

THORPE

I guess that if things don't go
caput on both sides then the half-
victory makes up for the half-loss.

PATRICK

I was interviewing people, man, not
gambling with cards. Although if
you must know, it went wonderfully.

THORPE

Well there you go! Why would you
take such a detour around
"wonderful?"

PATRICK

I have a date.

THORPE

With one of the people you interviewed?

PATRICK

Yep. There were two girls, friends, both were on the good-looking side, but one of them just grabbed at me, man. So we're going out day after tomorrow at seven.

THORPE

...is it okay to do that?

PATRICK

(reminiscent of his reaction to BARBARA)

Yes! It is!

THORPE

No wonder you built it up, Pat, that's awesome! What's her name?

PATRICK

Her name's Mia, and she'd get the job even if it's not up to me.

THORPE

Jeez, is she a supermodel or something, what's that mean?

PATRICK

No, I mean she was very well-qualified.

THORPE

Oh, you're talking from an honest man's perspective now? You don't have a tell for when you switch.

PATRICK

Neither do you.

THORPE

I don't have an honest man's perspective.

PATRICK

Thorpe, that was supposed to be my punchline.

THORPE

Hey, it's not my fault that you don't have a tell for when you're being funny, either.

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - LATER

PATRICK is at work at the table, THORPE is bent over his homework, and their third roommate NOAH accompanies them. Everyone has a can of beer.

THORPE

Imagine that you're writing an essay on the literary works of Ernest Hemingway.

NOAH

(affirmative)

Mm-hm.

THORPE

Have you ever read Hemingway?

NOAH

(negative)

Mm-mm.

THORPE

Well, have you ever read Watterson?

NOAH

Watterson?

THORPE

Bill Watterson wrote *Calvin & Hobbes*, and he was a master at constructing sentences. So if you can appreciate *Calvin & Hobbes*, you can understand why Hemingway deserves all his praise. It's his sentences.

NOAH

Well, what else would it be for?

THORPE

You'd be surprised how often a writer can get away with bland sentences. Usually it's a matter of what the sentences say... my point is still that Hemingway's sentences were precise. You can't change a word, or it'll be ruined!

(MORE)

THORPE (CONT'D)

Now here you are, writing a paper on all this.

NOAH

Thorpe, I'm not going to know what you're talking about.

THORPE

Come on, if everybody had conversations with that logic then nobody would be able to complain!

NOAH

Well, that's a good thing, right?

THORPE

Complaints... are what make civilizations thrive! Now listen to me, Europe is a continent of whiners. No disrespect of course, we whine A LOT here too, but, over there, they are steadfast in how they live, and so they view any deviation as a catastrophe! So they complain their way back into their idea of what the swing of things should be. That's why Cortes beat the Aztecs. Native Americans never complain, because they're at peace with the world, and to be at peace with the world you must understand that it changes. So they don't complain. And they didn't delude themselves into thinking that their current lifestyle was so crucial to the fate of their species!

NOAH

(quite lost, not too interested anyway)
Did Hemingway say that?

THORPE

Did-- no, I said that. Just now. I'm flattered that you'd think that, though.

NOAH

Because, you know, you were talking about Hemingway.

THORPE

I got off-topic. I'm pretty sure that Hemingway would've slaughtered all those Aztecs and then he would've gutted Cortes himself-- anyway--

NOAH

--and I think the reason you got off topic was that I pulled you away from your point. So I assumed that you would get back to it as soon as you could.

THORPE

Here it is then! Jesus. It's... oh, no. What did I say before?

NOAH

Complaints are--

THORPE

Hemingway's sentences are to die for! Yes! And here's my paper on it!

(he gestures to his homework)

And now my teacher says that, I have to write "my age." My words are too small, my sentences too "basic." I need to toss up the predicate nominatives and shuffle the prepositions and their objects. Does she hear what she's saying? It's like I need to quote a pro-colonialist on a paper about Gandhi.

NOAH

I'm sure that Gandhi spent lots of his time talking with pro-colonialists, that was kinda his job. Going up against them, you know.

THORPE

...or I'd have to quote you when writing about great American thinkers.

PATRICK
(off, from his desk)
Thorpe, shut up and do your
homework.

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - LATER

The three of them sit around the TV. THORPE has a laptop on his lap, totally out of it.

NOAH
(to PATRICK)
Heard someone has a date, man.

PATRICK
(absently)
Hm? Who's that?

NOAH
(dryly)
With a sexy stenographer.

THORPE stifles a laugh from behind his laptop.

THORPE
I didn't know they still made
those.

PATRICK
Thorpe, why do you talk? Why do you
even talk?

THORPE is suddenly focused on his work.

NOAH
Don't worry, Pat, we're all with
you in your time of need.

PATRICK
(baffled)
When did stenographers suddenly
become ugly? First of all, she
doesn't have the job yet, and
second of all, have you never seen
a hot... lunch lady, for instance?
I have. Especially in college,
where a bunch are students in work-
study.

NOAH

I was... joking. You see me and Thorpe as the same person too often. If Thorpe suddenly stopped doing the dishes you'd say "we need to get our act together." I could have a sponge in my hand!

PATRICK

(leaning over to see THORPE's laptop)
That is not true. Thorpe lies compulsively and I recognize this. For example, his essay is on Kafka, not Hemingway.

THORPE

(shrugging)
People change, that's the point.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAFETERIA - THE NEXT DAY

Here we see more of BARBARA and how she acts alone. She sits at an empty table with her food, and although no company is expected, she has a vague smile that suggests that she thinks a friend will come by at any moment. Perhaps she just doesn't realize the difference between being alone and being with people.

THORPE is also there, with a full plate in hand, looking for a table. He ambles around, and suddenly spots BARBARA, and is instantly taken. His target has been sighted, and he heads over to her table--

Nope.

Fear gets the best of him and he sits by himself nearby.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAFETERIA - MINUTES LATER

THORPE finishes his plate, stealing whimsical glances at the oblivious BARBARA, until he puts his dishes away and deliberates as quickly as possible in the middle of the cafeteria. Eventually he goes back in line, gets dessert, and approaches her properly.

THORPE

(hesitantly)
Hello, is... is anyone sitting here?

BARBARA
 (brightly)
 Nope!

THORPE
 (taking a seat)
 My name's Thorpe.

BARBARA
 I'm Barbara!

THORPE
 Heh, nice to meet you.

BARBARA
 (sniffling)
 You too! Sorry if I sound kinda
 gross, I think I may be coming down
 with something.

THORPE
 Oh, it's fine, I can't even tell.

BARBARA
 So what are you studying here?

THORPE
 Uh, English, you?

BARBARA
 I'm actually not sure about that
 anymore. Most of my time is spent
 looking for a job. Yesterday I went
 to a job interview, and I met my
 old friend Mia there, and then she
 was asked out by the interviewer!

THORPE
 (subtly startled)
 Huh.

BARBARA speaks without pause, as if she's been expecting THORPE and their conversation was merely being continued from an earlier date.

THORPE (CONT'D)
 She was asked out by the...

BARBARA
 What?

THORPE
 Never mind. But yeah, jobs are a
 tough thing to get.
 (MORE)

THORPE (CONT'D)

I have an English degree, I know what I'm talking about.

BARBARA

What does that mean?

THORPE

If you love your major, you'll probably end up hating your job. I don't hate anything right now.

BARBARA

Well, why didn't you chose a major with a better job market or something?

THORPE

(dismissive)

Ah, I dunno.

BARBARA

So why'd you decide to come sit with me?

THORPE is vaguely taken aback by the direct question, but he also kind of appreciates it.

THORPE

(with a shrug)

Because you're pretty.

BARBARA

(beaming, but unsurprised)

Thanks! You're actually quite attractive too.

THORPE

Heh, thanks. Do you have class after this?

BARBARA

Not until six.

THORPE

Hm. You like night classes?

BARBARA

Kind of, I guess. I don't really mind one way or another.

THORPE

I prefer them just because I can get up whenever I want.

BARBARA

Ha, yeah. But if you don't have anything to do for a while, I guess we can hang out?

THORPE

(pleasantly surprised)
Well, yeah, sure!

BARBARA

I was actually just going to go by CVS and pick up some tissues. I *might* have a cold, I'm not sure. I might be contagious. I'm not telling you to stay away from me, but if you don't there's a chance you could get sick. I'm just saying.

THORPE

Ah, colds are nothing. For me at least. Even without medicine mine pass within a week.

BARBARA

Really? You're not taking cold medicine?

THORPE

Uh, no, I don't have a cold.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - MINUTES LATER

THORPE and BARBARA walk across the grounds. It's a nice day.

BARBARA

Like, my nose is kinda stuffy, which is why I'm getting tissues, obviously, but I don't have a headache or a sore throat or anything else that people with colds get. Oh well. I'll just blow my nose a lot I guess!

THORPE

Hm.

They approach the CVS parking lot.

EXT. CVS PARKING LOT

BARBARA
Sorry if I'm a bit flustered, I'm
kind of stressed out. Because my
landlord--

CUT TO:

INT. CVS PHARMACY - SECONDS LATER

A WIDE SHOT OF THE AUTOMATIC DOOR FROM WITHIN.

The door opens and THORPE and BARBARA enter. Her story is not over.

BARBARA
...he just slides an envelope under
my door out of nowhere! I'm like, I
have enough stuff to deal with
right now as is! I don't mean to be
a bitch, but you're being really
unreasonable!

THORPE
(jokingly)
My fault.

BARBARA
(no humor)
No, I mean my landlord.
(humor)
Ha, Thorpe, no, you haven't even
done anything! You're cool, you
sound totally reasonable!

THORPE
Well, thanks, I always like trying
new things.

CUT TO:

EXT. CVS PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

A SIMILAR WIDE SHOT OF THE DOOR, THIS TIME FROM WITHOUT.

THORPE and BARBARA head out, BARBARA in the process of putting a small pack of tissues in her pocket.

THORPE

My grandfather once told me a story about having a cold back before everyone had tissues, they all had handkerchiefs back then. He said it was like trying to amputate a limb with a doorstep. I mean, that's how frustrating it was to have one handkerchief during a cold.

BARBARA

Wow.

THORPE

I always try to remember that whenever I feel sick.

BARBARA

If it doesn't make me feel better it'd probably at least make me laugh.

THORPE

Which should be one and the same under most circumstances.

BARBARA

Thinking about stuff in those terms might make any sickness feel better, as long as you're not *really* sick.

THORPE

Then what happened was my grandfather's diabetes caused the doctors to have to amputate his leg.

BARBARA

(mildly outraged)

WHAT?

THORPE

As a matter of fact, that event may have retroactively influenced my memory of his story. He actually might've said "*cutting hair* with a doorstep..."

A mighty pause. Then...

BARBARA

I was thinking of going back to my place now. It's about two miles off campus, want to stop by?

THORPE

(trying admirably to sound casual)

Sure.

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT EVENING

THORPE arrives through the door well into the night. He appears to be in something of a daze. PATRICK and NOAH are playing video games in front of the TV.

PATRICK

Out for a 24-hour stroll?

THORPE

(breaking out into a grin)
A fifteen-minute stroll.

PATRICK

That's probably not long enough.

THORPE

(slyly)
I dunno, I was panting by the end of it.

PATRICK

(oblivious)
Then you really need to do it more often, man. Fifteen minutes is not sufficient. As a friend.

THORPE

(sitting next to them)
I agree, I'll shoot for twenty next time and achieve my goal through steady repetition.

PATRICK

(glancing over at THORPE)
Am I missing something?

NOAH

(absently, eyes never leaving the screen)
He's been talking about sex this whole time, Pat.

PATRICK

(an unenthusiastic
chuckle)

I see. Well, congrats, Thorpe. How
are your feet feeling from that
walk?

THORPE

My feet feel like they haven't met
the ground in a year and spent the
whole time resting in jello.

NOAH

(minimal attention given)

Oh, so having your feet stuck in
jello is considered a good thing
now?

THORPE

(to PATRICK)

Pat, what were the two girl's names
that you interviewed yesterday?

PATRICK

Well, there's Mia, and the other...
well! There's Mia.

NOAH

We guessed.

THORPE

Was her name "Barbara" by any
chance?

PATRICK

Yeah, it was! Wh--
(he cuts himself off)

A moment of revelation.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(never looking away from
the screen)

Thorpe, you opportunistic little
devil, did you really?

THORPE

She said that she had a job
interview yesterday. That's all I'm
saying.

PATRICK
Are you guys gonna go out or...
(considering his wording)
...not?

THORPE
Well, yeah, Pat, we're going to go
out.

PATRICK looks at him expectantly.

THORPE (CONT'D)
Gotta hold up my end of the
bargain!

NOAH
(to PATRICK)
Those weren't the only two girls
you interviewed, right?

PATRICK
(bluntly)
The only two under forty.

NOAH furrows his eyebrows as he continues to play. PATRICK
looks over at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
What?

NOAH
I'm thinking.

CUT TO:

INT. SIT-DOWN RESTAURANT - THE FOLLOWING EVENING

PATRICK and MIA on their date.

PATRICK
Greatwood?

MIA
Mm-hm.

PATRICK
Never heard of it.

MIA
(coyly)
Oh, well.

PATRICK

(knowingly)

Oh, well. You know, I didn't know where my parents lived for the longest time after I moved out. They sold our house less than a year after I went out on my own and every time I talked to them over the phone their directions would be different. They gave me a ten-mile radius in which to look.

MIA

Well, that's what they're supposed to do, isn't it? Christen you to the weirdness of reality or something?

PATRICK

It's certainly something, yes, and it's certainly weird... and it's certainly real. So yeah, you nailed it.

MIA

Did you ever find them?

PATRICK

Well, of course I found them, they wouldn't have it for more than a presidential term without seeing me. Eventually it was my father on the phone and that time the directions were fine.

MIA

My father... was a terrible navigator. He could fit that car between two trees in the jungle like Luke Skywalker, but he could never... figure out directions! My mother used to say he could've been in NASCAR but he couldn't figure out what "keep going left" meant.

PATRICK

(scoffing)

Uh, ouch!

MIA

He figured it out for me, though.

PATRICK

Aw, that's good to hear. That's what parents do, after all.

MIA

Change who they are for the sake of their kids?

PATRICK

Well, that, and they go around in circles with their family.

MIA

That goes for kids, too.

PATRICK

But my parents hate racing. They avoid NASCAR like the plague, if you'll excuse the cliché.

MIA

You know, I've never understood why *avoiding something like the plague* was repeated enough to become a cliché. You can't avoid plagues, they're microbes! They live in the air and water! You can't duck down an alleyway and hope that a plague doesn't notice you.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - LATER

MIA and PATRICK walking together after their dinner.

PATRICK

So... what music do you like?

MIA

Dude, I don't know. I just like catchy melodies and good lyrics.

PATRICK

I had a friend who was a DJ, and-- you know how dubstep is kind of, like... like if you take a song and break it?

MIA

(a scoff-laugh)
Yeah?

PATRICK

He used to try to put dubstep songs "back together" during parties. He said that if you "fix" dubstep it sounds like the um, the-- a soundtrack for like, a CSI-esque crime show...

(He's really embarrassing himself. He tries at redemption.)

Like, *duuunnn, duunn, DUUNNNNN,,* like, just drawn-out tones...

PATRICK has succeeded in ruining his own night with this failed train of thought and he trails off in a flustered mutter. He is very embarrassed.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Never mind.

MIA looks at him with an affected look of mild pity. She scrunches her nose, analyzing the situation, and decides to give PATRICK a hand.

MIA

Hey, Patrick, give me a kiss.

PATRICK

(startled, still recovering)

A--what?

MIA

Touch my lips with your lips like they do in the movies.

PATRICK

(unsurely)

Now?

MIA sighs softly, smiles, and leans into him and gives him a kiss. They never stop walking, and they share a chuckle.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I'm more of a jazz guy anyway.

MIA

Oh, yeah, I was at this coffee shop with live music a few years ago and... I'd never really been exposed to jazz before this, but then these guys came up on the little dais at the back of the shop, and they just played!

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

They played jazz like it hadn't been invented yet and they were starting over from scratch!

PATRICK

You can't predict what comes next, but when it does, it's inevitable?

MIA

Yes, very much so. Kind of the opposite of dubstep.

PATRICK

Hey now, dubstep is very misunderstood.

MIA

I think I get dubstep. I think I get what it's trying to do.

PATRICK

Since it's dance music it tries to tap into the most basic primal urges of the listener. So that their minds are linked to their bodies or something.

MIA

Yeah, which is why it's so, just... *there*. You know, unsubtle.

PATRICK

I don't think they do it right, though. The idea is sound but the execution is off. I mean, for the genre in general.

MIA

Ah, nobody cares because it sells.

PATRICK

Music doesn't always sell because it's good.

MIA

If people appreciated good music, the Grammys would be entirely posthumous.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY CENTER - MIDDAY

A young man, GAVIN, around twenty, is trying to find his way around this building. He walks with a very vaguely odd gait. Coming the opposite way down the hall is THORPE and BARBARA, walking as a couple.

GAVIN

Uh, excuse me, do you guys know where the food court is?

BARBARA

Yeah, it's right downstairs, we're heading there right now, actually!

GAVIN

Oh! You mind if I just go with you guys?

BARBARA

Sure, you can come!
(to THORPE)
Do you still want Subway?

THORPE

(shrugging)
Uh, sure.

The couple continues on their way with GAVIN now following.

BARBARA

My name's Barbara, and this is Thorpe.

GAVIN

(with a liking to Barbara)
I'm Gavin. Nice to meet you.

BARBARA

(motioning to herself and THORPE)
We're going to Subway, so we can show you the way down there. It's just down the stairs, but you can still come with us.

GAVIN

You guys mind if I eat with you?

BARBARA

Yeah, you can eat with us.

THORPE accepts that he is not part of the conversation.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Actually, I'm going to stop by the QuikMart first to get a drink, they don't have espressos in that Subway.

GAVIN
Yeah, I'll just wait outside.

INT. UNIVERSITY CENTER (OUTSIDE THE QUIKMART) - SECONDS LATER

BARBARA heads in and THORPE makes to follow her, but GAVIN gently holds him back.

GAVIN
Hey man, are you... uh, are you two dating?

THORPE
Yeah.

GAVIN is visibly (and rather shamelessly) disappointed.

THORPE (CONT'D)
(clapping him on the shoulder)
Hey, don't worry, that happens to me all the time. I'm not even stretching truth, I'm just telling it.

GAVIN
Ah, it's okay. Can I still eat with you guys?

THORPE
Of course you can, I'm not gonna tell you to leave just because we share, um, a common interest.

BARBARA comes out of the store with a bottle of espresso.

BARBARA
Okay, come on.

THORPE
(out of the corner of his mouth, to GAVIN, so BARBARA can't hear)
(MORE)

THORPE (CONT'D)

In fact it'd be good for me and for her if she found out that I'm not the only one who doesn't want to derail her train.

CUT TO:

INT. FOOD COURT SUBWAY - SECONDS LATER

BARBARA is sitting at the table with her food, and THORPE approaches her, having just gotten his own. GAVIN is still in line.

THORPE

Were did that guy come from?

BARBARA

Who?

THORPE

Um... Gavin. You don't know him?

BARBARA

No. Why would I say I knew him if I-

THORPE

Yeah, that makes sense, but he doesn't.

BARBARA

(eyes closed, suddenly
trying to keep calm)

Please... don't interrupt me.

THORPE

Oh. Right. Sorry.

A beat.

BARBARA

Well, you already knew what I was going to say...

(THORPE opens his mouth
and then quickly shuts
it.)

...so I don't have to say it.

THORPE

He likes you.

BARBARA

What? How do you know?

THORPE

He told me. I mean, he asked if we were dating and was disappointed when I said "yes." Kind of weird, actually. Very blunt.

BARBARA

Thorpe! You don't just *tell* people that! That wasn't meant for me to know! Now it's uncomfortable!

THORPE

Oh. Um... sorry?

BARBARA

No, I mean, it's not a big deal, but you don't repeat everything that someone says.

THORPE

I didn't--okay. Well... we'll pretend like it never happened.

GAVIN arrives with his food and takes a seat with them.

BARBARA

So, Thorpe just made the big reveal that you like me.

THORPE's hands go straight into the air, but it goes unheeded by the other two.

GAVIN

Yeah, apparently he's in the way of me asking you out.

THORPE

(snide, a bit pissed under the surface)

Well, you can always ask her out, but it's very likely that her answer would be influenced by me.

BARBARA

(to GAVIN)

So, Gavin, what are you studying here?

GAVIN

Uh, I'm trying to be an ASL interpreter.

BARBARA

Oh, wow! I know a bit of sign language, I haven't used it in a good while though. I applied for a job as a courtroom stenographer just a few days ago, actually. It's kind of the same. Interpretation.

GAVIN

What would be ideal is if I could be a Spanish-to-ASL interpreter, because they make much more money, but I'm not doing as well in the Spanish part as I need to.

BARBARA

I learned ASL for about three years, but that was a while ago.

GAVIN

Do you know what this means?
(he signs "tell me my name")

BARBARA

(a concentrated grin)
Uh... "tell something..." "you..."
I think...

The two sign away happily as a burly young man, WAYNE, with sunglasses indoors, approaches their table, quite out of nowhere. He holds a vending machine bag of M&Ms. THORPE is the only one who seems startled by this randomness.

WAYNE

Excuse me, my name is Wayne, I'm with the university society group, and I just wanted to know if you're enjoying your meal?

BARBARA and GAVIN affirm, but THORPE is still recovering from the increasing bizareness of the situation, because it's getting worse.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

(suddenly noticing GAVIN)
Oh, hey, Gavin. I didn't notice you were there until just now!

GAVIN

(a bit curtly)
Yeah...

BARBARA

(to WAYNE)

I'm sorry, you're with what group again?

WAYNE

(he would sound professional and outgoing, had it not been for his dehumanizing sunglasses)

It's the college's Society Group. We're an on-campus organization dedicated to inspiring full interaction and participation in campus life.

Suddenly his cell rings.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

He takes the call, but does not walk away from their table. GAVIN leans in towards BARBARA. THORPE is frozen in his seat.

GAVIN

(a whisper)

I know that guy. He's a complete dick. He's in my class.

BARBARA

(whispering back)

Which class?

GAVIN

I have to take this stupid communications class. I hate it so much. There're people in it who are so stupid! And he's one of them. There's another girl in it who literally acts like she's two years old.

THORPE

(gleefully dripping irony, whispering)

Hey, who are we talking about?

BARBARA

(louder, since they're no longer talking directly about WAYNE)

Wow. What does she do?

WAYNE is not saying anything to his phone. He stands there at the table as if still a part of their conversation, bouncing the M&M bag off his thigh absent-mindedly. THORPE eyes his sunglasses suspiciously, as if wondering what he's looking at under them.

GAVIN

She sits in the front and just literally acts like a two year old!

THORPE

(absently)

I think she's asking what two-year-
esque things she does.

GAVIN

She just asks the stupidest questions, and nobody else cares! I hate that class!

BARBARA

Wow, that sucks.

GAVIN

I mean, the teacher has to explain *everything* to her, even the simplest things! But the class is so easy! Because it's a special needs class and--

BARBARA

(disregarding her own aversion to interruption)

Wait. She has special needs?

GAVIN

Yeah, it's a special needs communication class.

THORPE nearly chokes on his food. WAYNE is still standing guard with his phone to his ear, bouncing his candy off his leg, sunglasses disguising his expressions.

BARBARA

Well, if she has special needs, of course she may have trouble understanding some stuff!

GAVIN

You're saying that just because she has special needs that she can't do anything as good as everyone else?

BARBARA
 (passionately, but
 remarkably not angry)
 Well, that's the whole meaning of
 special needs, that you need some
 extra help in some stuff!

GAVIN puts his hands on his hips in mock-disappointment.
 THORPE is deteriorating where he sits. It's the random
 creeper standing over them with his candy, and the random kid
 making fun of someone with a disability, and his random
 girlfriend who seems confused but hardly offended by it.
 THORPE buries his face in his hands and waits for it to be
 over.

GAVIN
 I have some special needs, and I'm
 doing fine in that class! She just
 needs to stop acting like...
 (THORPE mouths along with
 him)
 ...a two-year-old!

BARBARA suddenly gets a text.

BARBARA
 (taking out her phone)
 Well, that's good for you, but you
 probably have other things that
 you're not as good at, just like me
 and Thorpe and everybody!

GAVIN
 Do you consider yourself good at
 sign language?

BARBARA
 (texting back)
 I'm okay. I can make my way around.

GAVIN signs the letters "A-S-L."

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 (chuckling)
 That's easy, they're just letters!
 (gasping, abruptly very
 excited)
 Oh my God! My mom's pregnant!

THORPE and GAVIN perk, but WAYNE is too invested in his own
 phone call to notice.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 (ecstatic)
 I'm gonna be a sister!

THORPE
 (a bit too weary to be
 very excited, but still
 happy for her)
 That's great!

BARBARA
 I've wanted to be a sister for so
 long!

WAYNE finally puts his cell phone away.

WAYNE
 All right, guys, sorry for being on
 the phone like that. I had to take
 a call.

THORPE
 (underneath his breath)
 No shit.

GAVIN
 (to WAYNE, curtly)
 I don't know why you're here, we
 don't even know you that well.

THORPE's eyes grow wide, and he hides behind his hands. He's probably laughing, but we can't see it.

BARBARA apparently assumes that GAVIN's story was unbiased, but she is still smiling from her news.

BARBARA
 (to WAYNE, chuckling good-
 naturedly)
 Yeah, we don't even know you. He
 doesn't even know you.

THORPE
 (to BARBARA)
 Does your sandwich have olives? I'd
 like to borrow some if it does.

BARBARA
 (unsurely)
 No...

A pause.

THORPE
Jalapenos?

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - A SHORT WHILE LATER

THORPE and BARBARA are walking together from Subway.

THORPE
I feel traumatized. That was so
bizarre.

BARBARA
(a bit irked at that,
incredulous)
What are you talking about?

THORPE
First we have Gavin what's-his-face
coming out of a hole in the wall
and making fun of people with
special needs and crashing our
lunch! He was like a salesman who's
out of merchandise but can't fight
his training.

BARBARA
I don't know what you're talking
about, I'm just happy that my mom's
pregnant.

THORPE
Well, yeah, that's cool too. But
then there was Shades with his bag
of M&Ms standing guard over us like
the Holy Spirit.

BARBARA
(getting annoyed)
I don't know why you're
overreacting so much over this!

THORPE
He wasn't even talking! He just had
his phone up to his ear! I felt
like he was sent by the NSA because
the guys watching the surveillance
cameras didn't know sign language.

BARBARA
(trying to keep her cool)
Can we just...
(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 talk about my new baby brother or
 sister now? Because you're starting
 to piss me off.

THORPE
 (bemused)
 All right, all right... um,
 congratulations?

BARBARA
 (almost a scoff)
 Thank you.

They walk in newfound silence for a while.

THORPE
 Maybe you should start the
 conversation, it's your sibling.

CUT TO:

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - NOON

An unknown length of time later. MIA's apartment is tidy and
 quaint. She, however, seems slightly nervous, bustling about,
 formally dressed, trying to prepare for something important.
 Her phone rings.

MIA
 Hello?

INT. BARBARA'S APARTMENT - NOON

BARBARA's room is very messy. Rather, it is clean, with one
 very messy spot quarantined for junk. She's calling MIA.

BARBARA
 Mia? It's Barbara!

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - NOON

The focus of the scene is on MIA.

MIA
 Oh, hi, Barbara! What's up?

BARBARA
 My mom is pregnant with my sister!
 I'm so happy! Or my brother, I
 guess.

MIA
 (preoccupied)
 That's awesome, Barbara,
 congratulations!

BARBARA
 Thanks! I'm seeing my parents at
 their place next week, and I'm even
 more excited because I convinced
 Thorpe to meet them! And I was
 wondering if you wanted to get
 lunch today?

MIA
 No, not today, hun, sorry. I have
 work that I need to get to, uh,
 now, and tomorrow... I have
 rehearsals... but the day after
 tomorrow is completely free!

BARBARA
 (a bit deflated)
 Work?

MIA
 I am totally a stenographer now!
 For some reason Patrick thought it
 was funny... I've got to run. I
will call you the day after
 tomorrow, okay?

BARBARA
 Okay...

BARBARA is let down more by the fact that MIA got a job while
 already employed than by the fact that she's currently busy.

MIA
 Bye!

MIA hangs up, looks slightly exasperated for a second, then
 continues hurrying on her way.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

MIA and BARBARA sit together having breakfast. BARBARA seems
 to be more invested in her phone and her meal, but she's not
 exactly rude.

MIA

I love being busy. I don't know, I think... I think it's because everything I'm doing is voluntary. I spent twenty years stressing over being busy because of things that I was very uninterested in, and other things that were downright counterproductive. Now I'm splitting time between being an actress, going to a job I wanted to apply for, and spending time with people I like. I genuinely believe that I have made it.

BARBARA

(around her phone)

Nice...

(kind of snapping out of it, giving MIA her full attention)

God, I don't feel that way at all! I feel like... sometimes I feel like I'm driving on the wrong side of the road.

(laughing at herself, then growing somber)

And I think, "if I'm on the wrong side of the road, then that means that... I'm probably on the wrong side of the ocean. I'm really far from where I need to be and I can't even pull over to look around."

MIA

Welcome to me just a year ago, Barbara. It's really okay. Like, seriously. It has no reflection on you. In fact, being able to state it so eloquently the way you just did means that you have a better grasp of it than you might think.

BARBARA

(suddenly impassioned)

Ha, uh-uh! That wasn't eloquent! That was just me rambling about all the stupid shit happening in my life! Excuse my language. But really! Thanks for saying that I'm eloquent, but I am really far from having a grasp on my current situation!

MIA
(vaguely defensive)
I'm sorry, Barbara, I was trying to
make you feel better.

BARBARA
(she's smiling, it's even
somewhat in her eyes, but
she's not happy)
Thanks. No, I'm sorry. I should be
focusing on my new brother or
sister, but even that can't help
when I don't have a job and my
dad's paying for everything! It
sucks being dependent on my dad!
I'm just saying!

MIA has a semi-concealed "here she goes again" face.

MIA
Well, just... tell me some details.
Tell me the delivery date.

BARBARA
I don't know yet. I haven't
actually had a real conversation
with either of my parents about it
yet. But next week I'm taking
Thorpe to meet them and I'm going
to get all the details then.

MIA
It seems kind of soon to introduce
Thorpe to your parents. To me, at
least. How long have you two been
together?

BARBARA
Just a few weeks. But it's not a
big deal, he's just meeting my
parents. It's not like we're moving
in together. He could be my friend
and the same thing would happen.

MIA
Did he like the idea when you first
told him?

BARBARA
I don't know, he's kind of hard to
figure out.

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THORPE and NOAH. Work is out for both of them, but currently being ignored. THORPE's first line here is an explicit example of BARBARA's last.

THORPE

(outraged, to NOAH)

What kind of childhood trauma would lead you to believe that an explosion of oatmeal would be a bad thing?!

NOAH

Oatmeal is hot! Oatmeal is very hot, Thorpe, like coffee.

THORPE

(trying to focus on his work)

Yeah, well, it can't possibly be hotter than an actual explosion.

NOAH

Yeah, and getting shot with a handgun can't possibly be worse than getting shot with an RPG.

THORPE

(focused on his work)

I am officially back to work now, Noah.

PATRICK enters through the door. He looks a bit distant, and kind of down, as he walks across the room and sits at his desk. THORPE watches him briefly.

THORPE (CONT'D)

Looks like something undesirable happened to you.

PATRICK

(snapping out of it)

Oh? Um, nah, I'm just kind of spaced out.

He furrows his brows in thought for a moment, then gets up and walks over to the kitchen to fix himself something.

THORPE

You haven't looked this tired since Oasis came to town.

PATRICK
(rummaging through the
fridge)
Yeah, I'm tired. Mm-hm.

CUT TO:

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - HOURS BEFORE

MIA is sitting on the couch as PATRICK approaches with a bag of nachos and a jar of dip. MIA is off in deep thought until she is pulled back into the present when PATRICK sits down.

PATRICK
You okay?

MIA
Oh, yeah, I just got into a fight
with a friend.

PATRICK's face says "I should care, but I don't."

PATRICK
Huh. So, no big deal? Just a
skirmish?

MIA
What are we watching?

PATRICK
Netflix.

MIA
(sardonically)
I love that show.

PATRICK
Jumps around a lot, though. You're
invested in the U.S.S. *Enterprise*
and all of a sudden *Courage the*
Cowardly Dog out of nowhere.

MIA
They have *Courage the Cowardly Dog*?

PATRICK
For a strong while, yeah.

MIA
(slightly strained)
Well, what do you mean "what are we
watching?"

PATRICK
You asked that.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

PATRICK and MIA sit eating nachos and watching *Courage the Cowardly Dog*. But MIA seems very far away. PATRICK glances at her and notices.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Back to MIA and BARBARA at breakfast. Somewhere between now and then things got heated. They're keeping it down as best they can (BARBARA being the louder by far), but they're still attracting stares.

BARBARA
(clearly angry, but with an apparently involuntary passive-aggressive smile, as if she doesn't realize that she's angry)
You're in two plays at once! You said you're really busy, so I don't think it's very practical for you to go and get a third job! I'm just saying!

MIA
(baffled)
I don't know why you're so adamant about this! Jesus, what, honestly, is it to you?

BARBARA
(now she's offended)
Uh, really? You're gonna take my job, and juggle it with two plays while I have to mooch off my dad at my age? I don't think so!

MIA
Are you shitting me?

BARBARA
(obliviously loud)
I just don't think it's fair that you already have two jobs and you're still competing with me!

MIA

(thinly veiled disgust)
That is not fair. What you're doing is really unfair, Barbara, I'm doing nothing wrong! And will you keep your voice down, we're in a public place!

BARBARA

Oh, all of a sudden projecting your voice to a crowd is a bad thing?

CUT TO:

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Back to PATRICK and MIA watching Netflix on the couch.

MIA

Seriously, Pat, it was an argument with Barbara.

PATRICK

Barbara, she's--

MIA

Yeah, that one. It's stupid, it's just drama.

PATRICK

Well, even if you think that it's stupid, or silly, I'm just letting you know that I'm perfectly happy to listen either way.

MIA

Thanks.

PATRICK

Because you do seem pretty down.

MIA

(snapping)
Jesus, Patrick, we haven't been dating for that long, will you try not to dive headfirst into my personal problems all at once?!

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - HOURS LATER

Back to THORPE, NOAH and PATRICK at the apartment.

THORPE
We don't really have anything
there. If you guys want to order I
can pay for it.

PATRICK, to THORPE's surprise, pulls out a slice of cake.

THORPE (CONT'D)
How long has that been there?

PATRICK
As long as it needed to be.

NOAH
(drolly, never looking up)
It's a watchful protec--

THORPE
No... no.

PATRICK
(sitting with his slice of
cake, to THORPE)
And if you want more, you're going
to have to buy it your own damn
self, because I've got work
tomorrow.

THORPE
I'm meeting Barbara's parents
tomorrow.

Both heads slowly turn to NOAH.

NOAH
Alright, but please note that to
me, food is considered a "fragile
object."

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

There is a knock on BARBARA's door: she's ready to head out
to her parent's. She answers the door to see THORPE, ready to
take her. They head out to THORPE's car.

EXT. PARKING LOT AND ROAD - SECONDS LATER

En route to THORPE's car. During the conversation, they get in and head out.

THORPE

I always wanted a little brother myself.

BARBARA

Yeah? I guess a lot of people do.

THORPE

I've actually had... I've had two dreams about my mom having another son.

BARBARA

I've been there, too!

THORPE

The weird thing is, in both of those dreams, the baby was developing outside of the womb.

BARBARA

(the humor is shocked out of her)

What?

THORPE

Yeah, the kid's like, developing in an hourglass test tube thing. It was a dream, what can I say? And it was as if my mom was fertilized, and then the fetus was taken out, and when it's done growing outside of her they'd put it back in to... have her give birth to it...

BARBARA

That is nasty. Like... I just-- I can't even respond to that.

THORPE

It's like how dogs always want to be let outside, only to immediately ask to come back in. Maybe that's why I'm an only child. My parents were always talking about thinking outside the box.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LATER

THORPE pulls up their driveway and lets BARBARA out: they head up to the door and ring the bell. THORPE is slightly nervous (at the very least he seems hyper-aware), but BARBARA doesn't seem to remember he's there.

The door is opened by her FATHER, who looks like he used to have a manly mustache but decided to shave it several years ago.

BARBARA
(ecstatic)
Hi, Dad, we're here! This is
Thorpe!

They shake hands. THORPE is on his toes, and BARBARA'S FATHER is scrutinising.

ALLEN
Hello, Thorpe, I'm Allen.

THORPE
Hello, sir! It's a pleasure to--

ALLEN
Very nice to meet you, come on in.

INT. BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - SECONDS LATER

It's a very nice house: not too fancy, and quaint.

THORPE
Wwwwhat should I call you?

ALLEN
"Allen" is just fine, Thorpe. Diane should be down in a moment, I'll be right back.

He heads upstairs to help his wife.

THORPE
(hesitantly after him)
Right... they're two of you...!

BARBARA
So what do you think?

THORPE
This house is great. Nice and clean and simple. I wanna live in a house like this someday.

BARBARA
(taking a hint that THORPE
didn't mean)
Oh, really?

THORPE realizes what just happened and shoots her a look of pure panic, but at that moment the stairs creak, and a rather pregnant woman arrives. She looks tired but cheerful. ALLEN follows close behind her.

After a long warm hug from BARBARA, she shakes THORPE's hand.

DIANE
You must be Thorpe, it's very nice
to meet you. I'm Diane.

THORPE
Oh, you too! I'm... well...

DIANE
Sorry it took me a while, I'm
adding another room to the house.

THORPE
In your condition? That's
impressive.

DIANE
(a very warm laugh)
Ah, no, I was talking about the
baby!

THORPE
Wow, it was a metaphor, that makes
more sense.

ALLEN
We'll have dinner ready in a few
minutes. Take a seat, feel at home.

THORPE
I do feel at home! This house is
very housey! Uh, homey. Like, I'm
not calling you "homie," it feels
very hospitable-like.

ALLEN
Well, when we're all done with it
we'll all be tired of hospitals.

DIANE
(playfully)
Oh, Allen, shut it.

ALLEN
 (heading off to the
 kitchen)
 All your exertion has to go
 somewhere, honey.

DIANE
 Well, have a seat, Thorpe!

She, THORPE, and BARBARA sit in the living room together.

BARBARA
 I'm so glad to see you guys are
 getting along!

DIANE
 Well, Thorpe seems like a very
 amiable young man.

THORPE
 Thanks, I'm yet to break character.

DIANE
 Barbara tells me you're an English
 major?

THORPE
 Mm-hm.

The conversation hangs unfinished in midair.

BARBARA
 So, how's the baby doing, Mom?

DIANE
 Oh, probably much better than I am.
 In any case it prefers to be
 carried upstairs. I prefer that
 too!

BARBARA
 Why don't you spend more time
 downstairs, then?

THORPE
 (unthinking)
 She already did.

He abruptly claps his hand over his mouth in sheer terror.
 The comment goes right over BARBARA's head, but DIANE gives
 him a refreshingly mischievous look of wary approval.

THORPE (CONT'D)
 I, uh--

BARBARA

(to DIANE)

I don't think you should be sleeping upstairs if it's that strenuous for you. Don't you guys have a couch that pulls out?

DIANE gives THORPE a look of sly warning and he actively keeps his mouth from opening.

DIANE

(to BARBARA)

I'm sure I can just sleep on the couch as it is.

BARBARA

I don't know, what do you think, Thorpe?

THORPE

I think that, um, I am male, and so I shouldn't talk right now.

DIANE

Well, we want you to be a part of our conversation!

THORPE

Well, I am apart.

ALLEN emerges from the kitchen and announces dinner: the other three migrate to the dining room where the table is nice and set.

INT. BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE (DINING ROOM) - SECONDS LATER

They all sit around the table and, to THORPE's hesitant confusion, take hands.

DIANE

Would you like to say "grace," Thorpe?

THORPE

Oh, uh, well, I'm not very religious.

ALLEN

(to THORPE)

Well, you have to have someone to thank. Go ahead, play it by ear.

DIANE

(to ALLEN)

Well, honey, don't infringe on his beliefs!

ALLEN

If his beliefs leave him with nobody to thank, then his beliefs are wrong. Simple as that.

(he gestures to a pie on the table)

DIANE

If he doesn't want to do it, I think we have no right to press him.

BARBARA

Will you guys please stop arguing?

ALLEN

(to BARBARA)

Honey, we're not arguing.

BARBARA

Uh, yes you are!

ALLEN

No, we are. Your mother and I were not.

BARBARA

You--

THORPE

Okay, I'll do it! I'll go for it, I want to!

DIANE

Thorpe, you don't have to if you don't want to.

THORPE

It'll be like snowboarding down a ski slope, how hard can it be?

(he bends his head)

Well, thank you Allen, for preparing us this meal, it smells fantastic and I can't wait! Surely you are worthy of saying "grace" to, because like God you have the ability to bestow life upon--

DIANE
(very abruptly)
Okay, okay, let's eat! Help
yourself Thorpe, you deserve it
after that.

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - THAT SAME TIME

NOAH stands at the closet, holding up two tuxedos in each
hand by the hanger. MIA stands before him doubtfully.

NOAH
They both fit, Mia, I've worn them
before. But the stakes were never
quite so high as they are now.

MIA
Well... I dunno, are you trying to
stand out or fit in? If you're
trying to fit in, you're in luck,
because they're both kinda...
Boring.

NOAH
Well, I think that it's good that
they're boring. Because if they
were more interesting, she wouldn't
be as ready to see them on the
floor.

MIA
I mean, I guess. I really don't
know.

NOAH
You can imagine my surprise when
she brought this up.

MIA
I can imagine your surprise very
easily, Noah, yes.

NOAH
I feel like I'm cosplaying as a
grown-up.

MIA
(unsurely)
Um... okay.

NOAH
You know what "cosplaying" is,
right?

MIA
I think so. I don't think I
understand the distinction between
it and acting. You're putting on a
costume and pretending to be
someone else, right?

NOAH
Okay, you watch superhero movies,
right?

MIA
Yeah, sure.

NOAH
You know how the bad superhero
movies just put an actor in an
exact replica of the comic book
outfit, but the really good ones
always contextualize it and make
the character fit into the real
world?

MIA
Mm-hm?

NOAH
Cosplay's the former.

MIA
You know, I should be angry at you
because this is first conversation
we've ever had and it's based off
you assuming I know about clothes
because I'm a woman.

NOAH
You should be mad...
(slinking into the closet
and closing the door
behind him)
...but you're not!

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (IN FRONT OF THE TV) - SECONDS LATER
MIA plops down next to PATRICK on the couch.

PATRICK

I love that guy.

MIA

He's having a rough afternoon. That girl's riding him like a bike.

PATRICK

See, I told him she would do that, but of course he misunderstood me and became overzealous.

MIA

I want to meet Thorpe.

PATRICK

Thorpe? Yeah, he's... he's a person, all right.

MIA

Barbara's painted quite a picture of him. She says he's like a stand-up comedian who's always practicing for a gig that will never come.

PATRICK

Oh, wow. Barbara said that?

MIA

Yep.

PATRICK

That's pretty spot-on, I'm impressed. They must be close.
(studying MIA's face)
Do me.

MIA

Patrick, at least wait for Noah to leave.

PATRICK

No, give me a metaphor like that. I want to know what I am.

MIA

Barbara said it, not me.

PATRICK

Hey, if she can, you should be able to.

MIA
But I think Barbara said it in
something of a fit of rage.

PATRICK
"A fit of rage?"

MIA
But that's her resting face, I
couldn't do it.

PATRICK
(bluntly)
American intervention in Syria is a
good idea.

MIA
(in a fit of rage)
You're like a drill sergeant who
never went to boot camp!

PATRICK
(grinning)
Wow, I don't know what that is.

MIA
(chuckling)
It's you. There you go, I did you.
I might as well go back home.

PATRICK
(scotching closer to her)
Or, I could do you.

MIA
Why do I get the impression that my
metaphor got you hot and bothered?

PATRICK
Because it means I can order you
around.

MIA
("the look")
But it implies you're unqualified.

PATRICK
Ordering around a girl out of my
league, even better.

MIA
(sensuously)
In that case, maybe I should start
us off.

PATRICK

Maybe.

MIA

Give me your hand.

PATRICK

(softly)

Why?

MIA

(lustily, and even softer)

You want some action? That's an order... Private. Give me your hand or you're not getting anything.

PATRICK gives MIA his hand. MIA holds it for a short moment, pulling it slowly towards her body, until she abruptly lifts it up and sticks it in front of PATRICK's face, letting it go and leaving it hanging there.

MIA (CONT'D)

(standing up and walking away)

Teach a man to fish.

PATRICK

You're paying on our next date.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE (DINING ROOM) - THAT SAME TIME

Dinner is in full swing. THORPE, BARBARA, ALLEN, and DIANE all eating at the table together.

ALLEN

(to THORPE)

Well, you see, the issue, Thorpe, is not that you are properly equipped for your future, it's that you are not distracted by another life that could be.

THORPE

I don't-- what?

ALLEN

Even if you succeed in pursuing an education that doesn't interest you, and obtain work in a field that is objectively of a higher caliber, you still won't be able to fully dedicate your potential to your job because of your desires. It's not about misery... well, it is, but I'm talking with a practical angle.

THORPE

I think... I think you misunderstood me. I am an English major.

ALLEN's eyebrows go straight up.

ALLEN

You are? Oh!
(he bursts into laughter)

THORPE

Is this where you tell me that I should have pursued an education that will help me obtain work in a field of an objectively higher caliber... uh, after all?

DIANE

(to ALLEN)
Don't be so cruel to a young man with a niche passion, Allen!

ALLEN

Oh, it's hardly niche, that's the problem.

DIANE

Well, its market sure is, especially these days.
(to THORPE)
You don't realize that Allen has a very good friend who is very artistic.

ALLEN

(bluntly)
Former.

THORPE

Oh, snap! We gonna get a story?

ALLEN
Formerly artistic, Thorpe.

THORPE
Oh... we gonna get a story?

ALLEN
He was cleaning latrines in college.

DIANE
(to ALLEN)
Must you during dinner?

THORPE
Hey, someone has to, it's not gross.

DIANE
(to THORPE)
You don't understand, it's a story.
(to ALLEN)
So you can stop right there.

THORPE
(resting his head on his hand whimsically)
No, no, I want to hear this.

BARBARA
(realizing she hasn't been part of the conversation this whole time)
Who are we talking about?

ALLEN
My friend was a janitor when we were in school together, and one day as he cleaned the toilets, he for whatever reason failed to wear gloves--

BARBARA
Ew, Dad, really?

THORPE
(to BARBARA)
Wait, you haven't heard this story?

BARBARA
I just don't think that Dad should be telling stories about the bathroom while we're all eating dinner!

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

It's not something you talk about while eating! I'm just saying.

THORPE

Mm-hm, it's much more appropriate after eating.

DIANE

(to BARBARA)

Well, honey, you had the chance to object when Allen brought it up.

BARBARA

He doesn't have to finish the story just because he started it!

THORPE

He kinda does, unless he wants to write it on a napkin or something and slide it to me.

ALLEN

Well, I think the message belittles the setting. My friend is gloveless, cleaning a stall, and his hand slips, and he *makes contact*. Of course, he is revolted, but later, he tells me that as he crouched there, wiping off his hand, he realized that in fact, all the disgust was a result of culture. Truly, it was just water on his hand, and his own reaction was what brought him his revulsion. And he truly believed that he had made a significant self-discovery and was closer to the world around him. But I then reminded him that every doctor before Robert Hooke looked at cork through a microscope had the exact same thoughts, and they didn't help stem the spread of disease.

THORPE

(to BARBARA)

Your father is a poet.

ALLEN

My friend said it.

THORPE

(still to BARBARA)

Your father is friends with a poet.

ALLEN

Rather, he said it and I restated
it in my own words.

THORPE

(to nobody in particular)
Your father is part of the greatest
two-man poetic team since... uh,
Shakespeare and whoever actually
wrote *King Lear*.

BARBARA

What, Shakespeare didn't write *King
Lear*?

DIANE

Well, many of Shakespeare's plays
have questionable authorship. They
didn't have modern copyright laws
to protect their work.

THORPE

And if they did, they just ignored
them. Copyright laws in
Shakespeare's time were like anti-
drug laws today. I mean, everybody
smokes pot, it's just illegal to be
careless about it.

ALLEN throws him a dirty look. THORPE frowns and focuses on
his food. They all eat in silence for several minutes, until--

THORPE (CONT'D)

Wait, toilet water is clean.

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - THAT SAME TIME

NOAH stands in front of the mirror, shaving. PATRICK stands
in the hall, leaning on the doorframe, staring off into
space.

NOAH

Pat, does Mia like facial hair?

PATRICK

(totally out of it)
I assume she'd shave any off, but
I've never asked her about it.

NOAH

On guys, Patrick.

PATRICK
 (slowly coming back to
 Earth)
 Uh, well, why are you asking me
 that, Noah? You're already halfway
 shaven!

NOAH lowers his razor, studies his face in the mirror, looks
 at his razor, and frowns. PATRICK turns and calls to MIA
 who's in the living room watching TV.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
 Hey, Mia! You like facial hair on a
 guy?

MIA
 Don't grow a beard.

PATRICK turns back to NOAH in the bathroom.

NOAH
 Well, that's you, man.

PATRICK turns back to the living room.

PATRICK
 (to MIA)
 What about on other guys?

MIA continues looking at the screen as if she hasn't heard.
 Eventually tilts her head and raises her eyebrows: "that's a
 good question."

PATRICK (CONT'D)
 What about on Noah?

MIA
 Isn't he already halfway shaven?

PATRICK turns slowly back to NOAH.

PATRICK
 Just don't grow a beard, Noah.

NOAH
 (finished shaving now,
 drying off his face)
 It's not as if I have a choice
 anyway. When the package advertises
 "the closest shave you've ever
 gotten," I still want there to be
 stubble left over.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - MINUTES LATER

Dinner is finished. THORPE is helping ALLEN wash the dishes. ALLEN scrutinizes THORPE thoughtfully.

ALLEN

Thorpe, do you agree that cliches are the perfect summaries of ideas?

THORPE

Yeah, I suppose. Didn't Khaled Hosseini say that?

ALLEN

Yes, I believe he did. Or at least, he quoted the idea.

THORPE

(with a snort)

"Khaled Hosseini and whoever actually wrote *The Kite*--"

ALLEN

--because I am going to ask you a very classic question. A cliché, if you would.

THORPE

I'm enraptured.

ALLEN

Thorpe, if you found a wallet on the sidewalk and it had \$5000 in it, what would you do?

THORPE

Depends on the denomination.

ALLEN

What?

THORPE

Well, if it has fifty \$100 bills, I would return the wallet with perhaps forty-seven \$100 bills. It also depends on the face on the driver's license.

(a pause)

I would also assume it's a trap.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE (FOYER) - A SHORT WHILE LATER

THORPE and BARBARA are getting ready to leave. ALLEN and DIANE are bidding them goodbye. ALLEN has come to accept THORPE.

THORPE

Thanks so much for having me over,
that food was fantastic!

DIANE

I'm glad you liked it, Thorpe. It
was a pleasure meeting you.

BARBARA

I'll come by again soon to check up
on the baby!

DIANE

I hope you do, hun!

ALLEN

(to BARBARA)

I hope you enjoyed dinner, sweetie.
(to THORPE, amiably)
Drive carefully.

THORPE

I will.

(to DIANE, shaking her
hand)

It was great to meet you! Bye!

(to ALLEN, over his
shoulder as he follows
BARBARA out the door)

You're a great cook sir! Now I know
where Barbara gets it!

(he cackles and quickly
shuts the door behind
him)

EXT. OUTSIDE BARBARA'S PARENT'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER
(EVENING)

THORPE rushes away from the door and pulls BARBARA with him
hastily.

THORPE

(all cleverness gone)
Shit, we gotta get outta here.

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - A FEW HOURS LATER

MIA and PATRICK together as NOAH, elsewhere, is getting ready to leave. MIA is in the middle of a story.

MIA

...so, he says that because the kid is his, that he should have visitation rights to the mother... like, since the kid doesn't live with the mother, he should still be able to violate the restraining order... He wants to bone her again, and I actually don't think that she's too opposed to the idea, however, before the restraining order was filed and they were in a relationship, he apparently lasted so long in bed that he kept going after she was finished and it became "assault with consensual basis..." It's a precedent. I think it might get bumped to superior court.

PATRICK

You're not supposed to talk about the cases you dictate, are you?

MIA

No...

The door leading out opens: THORPE enters.

THORPE

Hi, every...
(he sees MIA)
...body!

He closes the door behind him as MIA stands to greet him.

MIA

You must be Thorpe!

THORPE

And you're Mia? Great to finally meet you! You're friends with Barbara, right?

MIA

Yep, and you just got back from her parents', didn't you?

THORPE

I did.

MIA

How was that?

THORPE

It was a lot of fun. A truly wonderful dinner with some great people. I'm not going back there until that baby's all the way out.

(to PATRICK)

How are you, buddy?

PATRICK

I had a good day.

THORPE

Great! Where's Noah?

PATRICK

He's getting ready for a good night.

THORPE

Yeah, I might hit the sack a bit early myself.

PATRICK

No, he's going out on a date.

MIA

A very formal date.

PATRICK

You're not going to believe it, just wait til he gets out!

THORPE

Ever the opportunist, I seem!

(to MIA, very fleetingly)

You're hot.

(to PATRICK as if he never said anything)

Do we have any beer left?

PATRICK

(spreading his hands in disbelief)

Do you need any?

THORPE

I was offered a glass of wine by Mom after dinner, but Dad's face was about the same color so I turned it down...

MIA

Did he really get so drunk?

THORPE

Oh no! It was just his natural reaction to someone who's been inside his daughter.

NOAH emerges from the bathroom, dashing in his tuxedo.

THORPE (CONT'D)

Whoa! Hey there, handsome!

NOAH

(dryly)

Thorpe, how nice of you to intercept me.

PATRICK

Dude, you look like Jude Law.

NOAH

Dude. Seriously.

THORPE

He means that looks like something Jude Law might wear.

MIA

You actually look really good, Noah. And that I would know. When I was younger I wore these awful glasses with these embarrassingly thick lenses that made my eyes look like planetarium ceilings? I used to tell people "excuse me, my eyes are back here."

NOAH

I imagine I'll have the same problem about averting people's eyes. This is my seduction costume.

PATRICK

Playing on easy mode, I see.

NOAH

I'm going to conquer her.

PATRICK

"First her, then the world!"

THORPE

You hear that? You're gonna rule the world, Noah. What're you gonna call yourself, "Emperor Penguin?"

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (IN FRONT OF THE TV) - A SHORT WHILE LATER

THORPE and MIA marinate passively on the couch in front of the TV. They talk to each other but hardly turn their heads.

MIA

We had an argument. She's just really stressed right now.

THORPE

Uh, yeah. I think she's going to leave me for her baby sibling.

MIA

That sounds like her.

THORPE

Wonder how that'll turn out.

MIA

Did she say anything to you?

THORPE

Yeah, lots.

MIA

About what?

THORPE

I don't even know.

MIA

Her state of employment?

THORPE

Oh-ho, you got that shpill too?

MIA

As if she can't keep looking.

THORPE

As if that's what caused the BP oil spill and melted the ice caps and kicked Hitler out of Russia.

MIA

That last one's a good thing.

THORPE

Well... yeah... but the point is that she's in love with that tree, and she's hugging it, in the middle of a big forest.

MIA

We're totally talking shit about her behind her back.

THORPE

Well, are you going to say it to her face?

MIA

No, but we should still stop.

THORPE

You're right.

A moment of silence. Then--

THORPE (CONT'D)

Like, on the ride home, she talked the whole way, and it just about blew my mind when I realized she had only said, like, three different things, and just repeated them.

MIA finally turns her head and gives THORPE a critical look. THORPE looks back at her lazily, before lolling his head back to the TV.

THORPE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

CUT TO:

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT (LAUNDRY ROOM) - DAY

It is some time later. MIA is washing a load of clothes when her cell phone buzzes in her pocket. She answers to BARBARA.

MIA

Hello?

BARBARA

(over phone)

Hey, Mia, it's Barbara.

MIA

Hey...

BARBARA

I really hope that there's a way to like, properly apologize for the last time we met. I'm so sorry for being a bitch. I was just really stressed and... well, you know why.

MIA

Yeah, I know why. And it's okay, I'm just sorry to have caught you on one of those days. I mean, because we all have them.

BARBARA

You sure? Because I feel really bad, and I need for you to be honest.

MIA

Trust me Barbara, I really feel you. I wouldn't lie.

BARBARA

Well good! I was thinking that we could have a double date with Thorpe and uh... Patrick!

MIA

Oh! Um, okay... I actually kind of like that idea.

BARBARA

You're not too busy, right?

MIA

I will be, come this Friday, so can we try to make it before then?

BARBARA

Yeah, sure, whenever! We're both always free after seven. Me and Thorpe, I mean.

MIA
Does he know about our plans?

BARBARA
He will.

MIA
(chuckling lightly)
Ah. So... how's your mother?

BARBARA
She's doing great! And she got
along so well with Thorpe, we both
had a lot of fun.

MIA
I'm glad to hear that. Baby doing
okay and all?

BARBARA
Mm-hm! Couldn't be more excited!
Well... I'm sure that like, on the
delivery day I'll be a lot more
excited, but I'm getting more and
more excited as it gets closer, at
least.

MIA
Okay Barbara, well, I'm happy for
you. You tell Thorpe and I'll tell
Pat and we'll put it together,
okay, hun?

BARBARA
Yes! Bye!

MIA
Bye!

MIA puts her phone back with a content look on her face.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - A COUPLE DAYS LATER

MIA and PATRICK are awaiting THORPE and BARBARA, dressed semi-formally.

PATRICK
If we call it a night at eleven, I
can get back home by midnight.

MIA
Pat, it's only twenty minutes away.

PATRICK

Yeah, like, from each of us, but if I can get back to your place and drop you off by what? 11:15? Then it'll be at least half an hour before I can cut back across town to here.

MIA

That's not too late.

PATRICK

Not too late, no.

MIA

Can we both just sleep at one place?

PATRICK

Uh, okay. You want me to sleep here or should you sleep at my place?

MIA

That's up to you.

PATRICK

You think we'll sleep at all?

MIA

That's up to me.

There's a knock on the door: MIA lets in THORPE and BARBARA. They all greet each other enthusiastically.

THORPE

Ah, together at last!

BARBARA

Hi, Patrick, it's nice to see you again!

PATRICK

You too! How have you been?

MIA and THORPE both brace for impact.

BARBARA

Well, I finally got my rent back to normal, it was kind of embarrassing though, because I had to bring my dad down to like, iron out all the details, but I tried to learn something from it.

PATRICK

I heard you're gonna be a sister?

BARBARA

Yeah! I'm just so excited, you have no idea.

THORPE

(under his breath, to MIA)

I do.

MIA

Well, guys, our reservation isn't for a while, so, anybody want a drink?

THORPE

Wha--when's our reservation?

MIA

(dismissive, heading to the kitchen)

Forty-five minutes, it takes twenty to get there. What do you like to drink, Barbara?

BARBARA

(following MIA)

Oh god, I can't even pick one out...

THORPE

(to PATRICK)

What are we doing here, then? You lied to me!

PATRICK

I told you exactly the time you needed to be here.

THORPE

No, you told us...

(gesturing to himself and BARBARA in the kitchen)

...so why didn't you add twenty minutes onto that time so we could have actually arrived on time?

PATRICK

Fine. Go.

THORPE

I will.

THORPE stands still, and PATRICK looks at him.

PATRICK
Back so soon?

THORPE
Yeah, I came back to get Barbara.
Might as well stick around.

PATRICK
Oh, cool, good to have you join us!

CUT TO:

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

The four of them are lounging about, each with a goblet of wine.

MIA
...you turn left off of the
Stemberg exit, then you go straight
and take a right on Elton Street...
then there's a shopping center
right there. That's it.

THORPE
I have no idea this place I'm
supposed to be imagining.

BARBARA gets a text.

MIA
Well, you'll be following us.

THORPE
Down the interstate? Why can't we
all fit into your car?

MIA
I'm not dropping you guys off--

PATRICK
I'm not dropping you guys off.

MIA
Right, Pat's driving.

THORPE
(to PATRICK)
You again! Now listen here, buster!

BARBARA suddenly stifles a cry while reading her phone, and everyone's views snap to her.

THORPE (CONT'D)
...Barbara?

BARBARA stuffs her phone into her pocket and storms off into another room. THORPE looks unsurely at PATRICK and MIA, before rushing after her.

PATRICK
Um... well.

MIA simply shrugs, looking after THORPE and BARBARA at the doorway they both disappeared through. She and PATRICK stand alone for a short while until BARBARA blunders back, past them, towards the door, through which she bursts out. THORPE races after her, slowing down as he passes MIA and PATRICK. He looks very grave.

THORPE
(quickly and bluntly)
Her mother just had a miscarriage.
I'm taking her home.

He follows her out, leaving MIA and PATRICK in absolute shocked silence.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAYS LATER, AFTERNOON

THORPE sits on the edge of his bed miserably, and a bit bored. BARBARA lies in his bed, enveloped in sheets. THORPE glances at her: she's sound asleep. He stands up and gently leaves the room.

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (IN FRONT OF THE TV) - SECONDS LATER

PATRICK and NOAH are sitting in front of the TV lazily. THORPE passes by behind them.

THORPE
I'm gonna go grab some food, can
you guys call me if Barbara gets
up?

PATRICK
Sure thing, man.

NOAH nods.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - SOME DAYS LATER,
AFTERNOON

THORPE and BARBARA sit together on the bed. They are perusing a shopping website together. BARBARA seems to be pulling through.

BARBARA
Ooh, I've always wanted that belt!

THORPE
Why is it fifty dollars?

BARBARA
Probably because of the brand.

THORPE
So clothes have brands like food?

BARBARA
Yeah, I guess.

THORPE
Which implies that there are equal-
quality non-brand clothes!

BARBARA
What?

THORPE
You really want me to spend fifty
dollars on a belt that's too thin
to swing from?

BARBARA
Thorpe, come on, I really want it!

THORPE
Yeah, all right, sure. And if we're
ever short on gas you can just wear
it to the station and get a free
tank.

He adds the belt to the cart.

BARBARA
Okay, now let's look at bras.

THORPE
Wait, what?

BARBARA
Well, I need a bra, I thought I told you.

THORPE
No, you don't need a bra.

BARBARA
Uh, excuse me, yes I do, lots of the ones I have are wearing out.

THORPE
They're "wearing out?" What, should we crank up the thermostat?

BARBARA
They get worn out just like all clothes do, Thorpe, they're not...
(she leans to the laptop and clicks about)
...they're not made of Kevlar, Thorpe.

THORPE
Okay, fine, just one bra?

BARBARA
Just one.

THORPE
Okay, not a big deal, we-- Jesus Christ, why does it have to be that one?

BARBARA
That's the only one in my size?

THORPE
Dude, it's thirty-five dollars!
You're gonna have to drop the belt!

BARBARA
Did you just call me "dude?"

THORPE stares at her wordlessly for a few seconds, before swooping in and pecking her cheek.

THORPE

I consider your body to be valuable, but I don't feel comfortable when a giant corporation does too.

(pointing to the screen)

What about that one? That's the same size, half the price.

BARBARA

Yeah, it's half-price for a reason, look how ugly it is. And it'll probably fall apart in a month and shrink in the wash.

THORPE

I don't even know why you need a bra at all.

BARBARA

Oh my god, Thorpe.

THORPE

What if I stop wearing underwear, will you stop wearing bras?

BARBARA

I'm not going to stop wearing bras, but you don't have to wear underwear if you don't want to.

THORPE

It's just, I can't shell out eighty-five dollars, Barbara, I'm sorry.

BARBARA

Hey, come on, this would be like, your first gift to me!

THORPE

Aside from the fact that I pay for all your meals?

BARBARA

(eyes closed, not quite able to literally even)

Thorpe, please. Just buy me the belt and bra. I won't ask for anything else.

THORPE

(chuckling nervously)

You don't need both, Barbara.

(MORE)

THORPE (CONT'D)

I understand that you need the bra,
that's cool, I'll buy you the bra,
but you don't need the belt!

BARBARA

I don't have any belts, Thorpe!

THORPE

You have like, six.

BARBARA

Okay, seriously, Thorpe, I'm not in
the mood to fucking argue, okay?
You know what I just went through.
I don't need this.

THORPE

(under his breath)
Yeah, but you need a belt.

BARBARA

What?

THORPE

I can't pay for all that. It's one
or the other, I can't drop eighty-
five bucks on two items of
clothing.

BARBARA

Seriously? You're gonna do this to
me? I just want something to take
my mind off of things, I won't ask
you for anything else, okay?

THORPE tries out a baffled-looking grin, but he's confronted
with BARBARA's pathetic angry/sad/scary/pitiful look and
eventually he just rolls his eyes and makes the purchase.

THORPE

Remember, like you said, I can't
buy you anything else, for a good
while.

BARBARA

(sounding a bit relieved,
and plenty grateful)
That's okay, Thorpe, I know it's a
lot. Thanks!

She hugs THORPE and hives him a kiss, and he grins a bit
morosely.

THORPE

Yeah, but, Barbara, because of this, I need to ask you...

(very carefully)

You just relax for a few more days, okay, and after that maybe you can look for a job.

BARBARA

(nodding)

Oh, yeah, definitely, I agree, I need to pull some weight for once. I'll... I can start calling around later today, I just want a nap.

THORPE

Okay, cool.

(closing his laptop)

All right, Barbara, I'll see you in a few hours.

They share a parting kiss and THORPE leaves the room.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSIDE THORPE'S APARTMENT - DAYS LATER, NOON

MIA's car pulls up into the parking lot and parks, and MIA sends BARBARA a text, getting out and leaning against her car as she waits for her. BARBARA emerges and MIA greets her. She's wearing her new belt.

MIA

Hey, Barbara, how are you?

BARBARA

I'm fine, thanks! Thorpe's been taking real good care of me, Patrick too. And that other guy, Jonah.

MIA

Noah?

BARBARA

Right, him.

MIA

Well, hop on in.

They get in MIA's car and head out.

INT. MIA'S CAR - NOON

MIA drives, BARBARA rides shotgun. Initially there's a silence that's not exactly awkward, but not quite comfortable either. Eventually...

BARBARA
 (relaxing back in her
 seat)
 Mm, I got a new bra and it feels so
 good.

MIA
 (chuckling)
 Really?

BARBARA
 Yeah, I didn't even realize how
 badly I needed new ones until I put
 this one on. It's like they're
 floating...

MIA bursts into laughter. BARBARA grins.

MIA
 But you only got one new one?

BARBARA
 Yeah, I had to ask Thorpe, you
 know. But, I'm making up for it!
 I've really been looking hard for
 work lately.

MIA
 Good for you, Barbara, you've been
 really trying, you know? I bet
 you'll get a big break soon enough.

BARBARA
 God, I hope so. I could use one!

MIA nods.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 How are your plays, Mia?

MIA
 Oh! Well *The Crucible* has ended, so
 there's a lot off my plate, and I
 have *Stop Kiss* for a few more
 weeks, and after that, I think I'll
 take a break from acting for a
 while. Because, you know, I'm beat.

BARBARA

How's the stenographer job?

MIA

Well, one thing's for sure, you see a lot of interesting people. Sometimes I spend two days in a courtroom and the theater just looks bland.

BARBARA

Heh, well, I must spend a lot of time in courtrooms then!

MIA

(after the briefest
stunned silence)

You don't like watching plays?

BARBARA

Well, I do, but they always seem to go on for such a long time!

MIA

Well, the thing for me is to see your audience react to you in real time. Sometimes it's like a play watching another play.

BARBARA

I don't know, I guess I just can't do that. Like, for half an hour, okay, that's cool, but if like, a five-act play goes on longer than a movie I can't spend that much time watching other people who are actually standing in front of me! It's like, it's really cool, and it's amazing that you can do that, but for three hours, to be standing in front of me, it's just a bit more than I can handle! No offense.

MIA

No, it's not for everyone. You know, they made a *Crucible* movie.

BARBARA

Huh.

Some more weird silence.

MIA
So, where have you looked during,
um, during your job hunt?

BARBARA
Well, I applied again to the
stenographer's position.

MIA
Wow, you're really determined about
that job, aren't you?

BARBARA
I think I'll be really good at it!
And plus, you know, it'd be my only
job.

MIA actively holds her tongue. They pull into BARBARA'S
apartment parking lot.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Maybe you could give me a good
word!

MIA
What do you mean?

BARBARA
Like, for the job!

MIA parks in front of BARBARA'S apartment.

EXT. OUTSIDE BARBARA'S APARTMENT - NOON

MIA and BARBARA stay in the car.

MIA
You didn't try to apply again to
the same place, did you?

BARBARA
Uh, yeah!

MIA
Are they even hiring?

BARBARA
Well, why wouldn't they be hiring?
It's not as if you're the only
stenographer for the whole company!

MIA

Well, Barbara, if they are actually hiring, I'll put in a good word, of course, but you should have a lot of other options that... options that you're considering much more strongly. You know, that are more likely.

BARBARA

Well, why wouldn't this be likely?

MIA

Like I said, they're probably not hiring right now! Where else have you applied?

BARBARA

I'm just calling around, you know. Walking around town, seeing who has signs up.

MIA

It sounds like you've only really looked at the stenographer position, Barbara.

BARBARA

(in her happy-angry voice)
Uh, no, actually I've been working my ass off trying to find other places, okay?

MIA

All right, I'm sorry, let's just get you back home.

MIA gets out of the car, and BARBARA follows.

BARBARA

(fully cheerful again)
So thanks for the ride!

MIA

Don't mention it. Good luck with the search.

BARBARA

Thanks. See you!

MIA

Bye.

BARBARA heads off to her door and MIA slumps back in her car, looking exhausted.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (IN FRONT OF THE TV) - DAY

MIA and PATRICK watch TV together like they have before. MIA is in a bit of a slump: she looks distracted. She watches the screen in a tired, wearisome daze. PATRICK notices, looks at her, and wants to say something: he keeps his mouth shut for fear of backlash. He wants to say something but MIA looks to be on a hair trigger right now. He simply puts his hand on hers. She doesn't move away, nor does she hold it: but she looks at it, sighs quietly, and seems to relax ever so slightly.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - DAY

THORPE is alone doing his homework. His phone rings: it's BARBARA. His reaction is neutral.

THORPE

Hello?

INT. BARBARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

BARBARA is sitting on her clean bed surrounded by mess. The scenes alternate over the phone.

BARBARA

Hey baby!

THORPE

Hey there! What's up?

BARBARA

Can you come pick me up?

THORPE

(face falling)
What, now?

BARBARA

Yeah.

THORPE
Why, what's going on?

BARBARA
You know, I want to see you!

THORPE
Barbara, I'm doing my work right now, I told you.

BARBARA
You don't want to see me?

THORPE
What? Of course I do, just not right this second, I'm doing my homework, and you just spent a week over here, and I just want some quiet time, you know.

BARBARA
But I miss you!

THORPE
(monotone)
Barbara. Come on. We saw each other yesterday.

BARBARA
Are we not supposed to see each other every day?

THORPE
I just want some time alone. From everyone. Remember?

BARBARA
Well, I really need some company now, okay? This is the first time I've been alone since what happened!

THORPE
(weary and a bit fed up)
Barbara, you'll have to ask someone else. I'm busy and I'm tired, just give me a day recoup, okay?
(a pause)
Maybe two.

BARBARA
Who else am I supposed to ask?

THORPE
Anybody! Your friends!

BARBARA
I already hung out with Mia
yesterday.

THORPE
Are we your only friends?

BARBARA
Well, you're the two closest
friends.

THORPE
Seriously, Barbara, then just
stretch your legs and go out!
Just... go to a bar, hang out, get
laid--
(fuckfuckfuckfuck oops)

BARBARA
(pretty outraged)
What?!

THORPE
(evasive maneuvers)
I was joking, Barbara, okay? I
meant just go have fun, meet some
new friends, you know? You like
people!

BARBARA
Okay...

A beat.

THORPE
Sorry about that joke.

BARBARA
That was just-- I think that was
really inappropriate.

THORPE
(not very sorry)
Yeah, sorry. Just... ignore the
part about getting laid and--

BARBARA
Just stop saying it!

THORPE

Wha... Come on, what's the big deal, it's-- never mind, okay-- how's your bra?

BARBARA

(all in a huff)

It's really comfortable. Thank you. But don't change the subject.

THORPE

(beyond caring)

What subject, you getting laid?

BARBARA

(angry)

Oh my god, you know what, if you don't want to stop saying all this stuff-- Jesus, what, are you getting laid?!

THORPE

That's ridiculous, Barbara, you know that. I'm only getting laid with you.

BARBARA

Oh, yeah, sure!

THORPE

(perking up)

Hold on, are you seriously asking me this?

BARBARA

Uh, yeah!

THORPE

Barbara, I am not cheating, I would never do that! Why do you think I'd ever do that to you? You think I'd do that to anyone?

BARBARA

Well, considering how you're going around talking about getting laid!

THORPE

Do you not know me? Do you not get how I act? I don't always mean what I say, Barbara, I'm sometimes under the employment of sarcasm!

BARBARA
Well, I don't like it!

THORPE
Well, then I'll quit, and you can
take my job! Two birds, no problem!

BARBARA
(outraged)
Excuse me?

THORPE
Barbara, I have to go. Seriously.
I'll talk to you later. Okay?

BARBARA
Fine, you obviously don't care.

THORPE
Oh, bullshit.

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT

THORPE hangs up angrily, tosses his phone aside, and stares
off into space, nowhere near his books. We do not see
BARBARA's side.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THEATRE HOUSE LOBBY - DAY

BARBARA is sitting alone. People pass by, but she's not with
anyone in the theatre house. She appears to be waiting for
someone. Eventually, two people emerge who BARBARA seemed to
have been waiting for: an older man (CHARLES) and a younger
woman (LAKE). They come out of a room, heading to the exit,
unaware of the woman waiting for them. BARBARA gets up and
heads over to them.

BARBARA
(to CHARLES)
Excuse me, are you Charles?

CHARLES
Yes, I am.

BARBARA
Hi, I'm Barbara, I'm a friend of
Mia's!

CHARLES

Barbara! Well, your name sounds a bit familiar, maybe she mentioned you?

BARBARA

Hah, well, I doubt it, there's not much to tell, except how my mom--uh, I just wanted to tell you that I really enjoyed the play! Is Mia here?

LAKE

Actually, I think she left a whole ten minutes ago.

CHARLES

Well, I appreciate your kind words!

BARBARA

(to LAKE)

Yeah, and you were really good with her, like, I actually thought they beat you up!

LAKE

(laughing)

Thank you very much! That... that's a funny way to put it, but it's very sweet, I appreciate that. Have you known Mia long?

BARBARA

Pretty long time, actually! But we haven't seen each other in years, we just reconnected a few months ago! I thought she'd be here, but if she isn't, I can just call her later.

CHARLES

Well, in case you didn't know, I don't know if Mia's told you or invited you, we're celebrating our final performance with a, uh, a dinner party! In about two weeks. Did Mia mention this to you?

BARBARA

Uh, no, she just said that the play's almost done.

CHARLES

Well, I'm sure she'd be happy to send you the details, maybe you could join us? Your compliments really mean a lot!

BARBARA

Yeah! Yeah, that sounds like a lot of fun, maybe I can go, and like, bring some food back for Mia, or just kind of tell her what happened.

LAKE

I'm sorry, what?

BARBARA

Well, she's not gonna be able to come!

LAKE

What are you talking about?

BARBARA

Well, I wanted to come catch Mia because it was her last performance with you guys and everything!

CHARLES

I think there's some mistake, uh... miss.

BARBARA

Barbara.

CHARLES

Yes, do you mind telling me what you're talking about, Barbara?

LAKE

Mia has three more performances with us.

BARBARA

What, did she not tell you? She's going out of state! I think she's leaving this evening, with her boyfriend, they're going to be out of state tomorrow.

LAKE

(dryly)
I've met Patrick, ma'am.

CHARLES

Young lady, Mia is not going out of state, with her boyfriend. You're mistaken. She would have told me days ago unless it's an emergency.

BARBARA

(kind of thinking on her feet now)

Or maybe it's a private thing, like, she didn't want you to know about, um... her abortion.

LAKE scoffs and CHARLES laughs uncomfortably, but soon his expression yields to pure disapproval and uncertainty.

CHARLES

Okay... Barbara, that's quite enough. Lake and I need to go.

BARBARA

I just wanted to let you know--

CHARLES

Please, I said that's enough.

He turns to LAKE and they hurry away awkwardly, whispering to each other, their day ruined.

BARBARA stands in place, watching them leave. She has her typical neutral "worried happy" expression.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

PATRICK is in the kitchen cooking dinner. NOAH is in front of the TV.

NOAH

(not looking from the screen)

I don't smell any meat cooking, Pat!

PATRICK

(nonchalantly)

Come over here, Noah, I'll fill the entire building with the smell of cooking meat.

Suddenly there's an urgent knock on the door. PATRICK glances over, startled, turns the burner down, and answers the door. MIA barges in, nearly hysterical.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Mia! What's wrong?

MIA
(on the verge of tears)
She talked to my boss and tried to get me fired!

PATRICK
What?! Who? Who...
(quietly)
Barbara?

NOAH is in an uncomfortable verbal position as he sits in front of the TV.

MIA
(freaking out)
Charles called me and said that Barbara went to the theater after we were done and told him and Lake some... bullshit story about me, trying to...
(choking up)
She tried to sabotage my job, Patrick! She lied to my boss and tried to get me fired from my fucking job! I never thought she could do that!

WIDE SHOT: NOAH IN FOREGROUND, PATRICK AND MIA IN BACKGROUND.

NOAH is frozen, trying to figure out what to do. Eventually he slowly takes the remote and lowers the volume.

MIA (CONT'D)
(to NOAH, outraged)
What are you doing, Noah?!

NOAH
Uh, I didn't want to, like, disrespect you with the uh, TV noise, so I thought--

MIA
Turn it back up!

NOAH
Okay.

He does so as PATRICK turns the stove all the way off and ushers MIA into the next room.

PATRICK
 (holding her shoulders
 securely)
 Okay, Mia, just take a breath, take
 your time, tell me what Barbara
 said.

MIA
 (shaking her head
 fiercely)
 I don't want to, I really don't
 want to repeat what she said.

PATRICK
 What...? Well, what happened then?

MIA
 Of course Charles isn't going to
 believe her, so he calls me and I
 go over and talk and just... I'm--
 oh my God!
 (her misery yields to
 anger, and she gains
 control of herself)
 I really didn't know that she was
 capable of something like this,
 but... hmm, I dealt with it, okay,
 and it's gone. Okay, it's done,
 Pat, she failed.

PATRICK
 Do-- do you want anything?

MIA
 I just need some time to relax.

PATRICK
 I'm making dinner.

MIA
 Thank you.

She gives him a tired smile and a kiss.

MIA (CONT'D)
 I'm going to take a nap, I'll be
 out in an hour or so.

PATRICK
 Okay, whatever you want to do.

They hover in front of each other, close, for a short while before MIA nods and PATRICK returns to the kitchen.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Dead of night. THORPE is sleeping soundly, but his cell phone on the night stand wakes him up. He grumbles and shifts about, grabbing his phone and checking the ID. He groans, and plants his face into the pillow, but answers. We see none of the caller's side.

THORPE
Mmmmello?

BARBARA
Hey babe.

THORPE
(sitting up)
What's wrong, Barbara, it's high noon in Japan.

BARBARA
I'm sorry, I know, I just couldn't sleep.

THORPE
Good.

BARBARA
What?

THORPE
Maybe you can't sleep from the wracking guilt... ugh, Barbara, what do you want?

BARBARA
Sorry, Thorpe, I just can't sleep and I miss you! I haven't seen you in a long time!

THORPE
(slowly waking up)
Barbara... wh-why did you do that to Mia?

BARBARA
What? What does that matter to you?

THORPE

Like, she's like, my friend, and my friend's girlfriend, and like, a human being, so you know...

BARBARA

Yeah, let's not get off topic, Thorpe, I just want to talk.

THORPE

No. Barbara, Jesus, it's two in the morning and you woke me up and you just tried to blackmail somebody--

BARBARA

(angry)

Okay, seriously, I am tired of you talking about that, that is not what I called you for!

THORPE

You probably didn't call me for anything.

BARBARA

Oh my god, you are pissing me off.

THORPE

Good, piss yourself to sleep.

BARBARA

Excuse me? What did you just say?

THORPE just sags silently.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Thorpe?! Thorpe, this really isn't working.

THORPE

Just like you?

BARBARA

(maximum pissiness)

You-- DON'T SAY THAT TO ME! YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH, OKAY? And you're still not here to support me? This is a really hard time, I don't know what to do, I was just... Mia was making me so angry, she took my job and I didn't know what to do--

THORPE
Barbara, go to bed.

BARBARA
Why don't you care about me?

THORPE
Because you don't care about anyone else.

BARBARA
You don't think I care about you?

THORPE
Maybe not anymore.

BARBARA
Well then, I guess we're done.

THORPE
Done? Like, done?

BARBARA
Yeah. It's over.

THORPE
Seriously, you're breaking up with me?

BARBARA
...yes.

THORPE
Oh. Then... may I ask who's calling?

CUT TO:

INT. THORPE'S APARTMENT (IN FRONT OF THE TV) - MINUTES LATER

MIA is mildly catatonic, sitting in front of the TV. THORPE joins her, equally dazed. They hardly look at each other.

MIA
Hey there. What are you doing up?

THORPE
Eh, can't sleep.

MIA
Yeah?

THORPE

How are you?

MIA

Oh, I'm fine. I had some hearty alcohol and twice as much dinner as I should have eaten, I feel fine.

THORPE

Good.

MIA

(briefly glancing at THORPE)

You okay?

THORPE

Yeah, I-- broke up with Barbara.

MIA

Huh.

THORPE

Yeah.

(glancing briefly at MIA)
So Pat says everything's fixed up with the play, no damage done?

MIA

In a manner of speaking.

THORPE

Cool.

(sighing)
What a relief.

MIA

Breaking up with her?

THORPE

My god, yes.

SLOW ZOOM TO CLOSE UP OF MIA

MIA

I feel you.

THORPE

You kinda broke up with her too I guess.

MIA

(chuckling, searching for
words haphazardly)

Yeah, I guess. I mean, things happen, I guess it doesn't quite matter, there'll be something else tomorrow. But it's... you know, you can't do much more. I guess she got fed up and I guess that got me fed up, and we all get fed up and just push things away and... you know, there's our life, suddenly big and empty, until some little speck in the background gets closer and becomes a big boulder or something. But then everything's always empty, if you can look around what's in front of you, just a big span of blank time, we're just... waltzing into it. You know, we're trying to get to that emptiness, so we can furnish it the way we would want to. That's just what we do. Hell, we'll probably spend our whole lives clearing shit away. I guess we just like that freedom of movement. We're outer-bound.

CUT TO BLACK

The End